

In the previous passage, Jesus had exposed the motives of the people's hearts. They weren't following Him because of who He is and that He is the satisfaction for our spiritual hunger, but because He fed them physically. They wanted another Moses who feeds them every day. In response to that desire, Jesus told them that they should work for spiritual food that lasts, not the temporal food. (John 6:27) We saw that we can fall into the same pattern, seeking Jesus to fix our physical world, our difficulties or illnesses, but not our soul. We can want the gifts and not the Giver.

We are picking up in the middle of that conversation. Jesus had just told them how they could have their souls healed now and forever. They just needed to look to Him and believe. He promised that all who do that will be raised by Him at the Last Day. (John 6:40) Jesus was trying to show them, and us, that a relationship with Him is so much more than the gifts He gives us.

Our passage today begins with them grumbling about His earlier statement that He was the bread that came down from heaven. They knew His parents, so how could He have come down from heaven? Actually, they didn't know His Father. Maybe they should have asked Mary whom they claimed to know. They must have interpreted His statement to be like the angels in Scripture, suddenly appearing from heaven, instead of the virgin birth. (Judges 6:11) That is a problem with many today. Is Jesus from heaven or is He a fraud? Is He the son of Joseph or some other man, or is He the Son of God? The only way we can really tell is to see if His life backed up His claim. Those who lived with Him for three years were convinced, and if anyone should know, it would be those men who knew Him intimately.

There is an obvious parallel in this passage with the Jews in the wilderness that murmured against Moses. Jesus' opponents are murmuring against Him in spite of being miraculously fed, which follows the Moses pattern. (Exodus 16:2; Numbers 11:4-6) John is continuing to show how Moses foreshadowed Christ and, therefore, that the Old Testament Scriptures are about Jesus.

Jesus responded not with a clarification but with an imperative command. ⁴³ "Stop grumbling among yourselves," We have seen so many times that Jesus' answers are not what we would expect. He didn't explain the virgin birth like we might have been tempted to do. They would have just claimed He was illegitimate.

This kind of murmuring about Jesus' claims is sin. When we take the words of Jesus, which are truly a gift of revelation from heaven, and complain about them or argue that they can't be true, we are throwing a gift from God back at Him. Jesus tells us, "Stop whining!" You might not receive His words at this point in time, but don't complain about them or you harden your heart against the next gift of revelation. If you can't accept what Jesus is saying, don't complain; just wait until you are ready. Jesus' words are very challenging. Just hold on to the tough sayings and pray about them and ask God for insight and spiritual growth to be able to receive His words.

Commented [notes1]: John 6:27 (NIV)
27 Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."

Commented [notes2]: John 6:40 (NIV)
40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

Commented [notes3]: Judges 6:11 (NIV)
11 The angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites.

Commented [notes4]: Exodus 16:2 (NIV)
2 In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron.

Commented [notes5]: Numbers 11:4-6 (NIV)
4 The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, "If only we had meat to eat!
5 We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost-- also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic.
6 But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!"

In this passage, the grumbling is referring specifically to what Jesus has said, but we could apply it in a more general sense as well. Every church could use a "No Grumbling" sign in the foyer. We should always focus on solutions, not the problems. God's will for us is to be thankful for everything. (1 Thessalonians 5:18) If there is a legitimate problem, as opposed to a personal preference, then what is God's solution? Consider the proper way to address it in love.

Commented [notes6]: 18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.
1 Thess 5:18 (NIV)

The people in this passage were missing the teaching of God incarnate because they were busy grumbling about something they didn't understand. And isn't that most of our complaining? If we could see the whole picture, we'd probably find we had no just reason to grumble.

I caught myself grumbling about something the other day and it shocked me like a slap in the face. I thought, "What am I doing? I'm so blessed! I have been given so much, physically and spiritually, that I ought to live in constant praise. Instead of praising God for the mountains of mercy and grace that have filled my life, I was focusing on some little passing issue that I know I'll have completely forgotten in a month. In my heart, I could hear Jesus' words, "Stop grumbling and start praising!" Suddenly, my attitude changed and I began to climb out of that dark hole I was digging myself into with my grumbling. (Psalm 33:1) Grumbling is the perfect shovel with which to dig a pity pit.

Commented [notes7]: 1 Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him.
Psalms 33:1 (NIV)

Jesus went on to tell them why they should stop grumbling. They were really complaining about God, and that isn't a good idea. ⁴⁴ "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. Unaided reasoning about who Jesus is will not bring you to the truth. (Isaiah 55:9) God must draw you to His Son. He knows the moment in your life that you are most open to being drawn. You won't be drawn to Jesus by figuring out the virgin birth or any other doctrine, but in God's time His Spirit will draw you. What will you do then? If you look to Him and believe, you will be raised at the last day.

Commented [notes8]: 9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.
Isaiah 55:9 (NIV)

Notice that it is Jesus that will do the raising. This is another of Jesus' radical claims that we can't overlook. He's not just an enlightened man. He claims He is the One that will raise the dead regardless of where their bones or ashes are scattered. That is power beyond our comprehension. Now don't grumble! If they were upset with His claim of having come down from heaven, what will they do with His promise to personally raise the dead at the last day? What will we do with it?

Even Jesus supports His claims with Scripture. How important it is for us to form our opinions on the Word! He quoted Isaiah 54:13. "They will all be taught by God." Then He explained, "Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me." Another all encompassing claim! If you listen to and learn from God, you will come to Jesus. Anyone who hears the heart of God will find Jesus is the bread of spiritual life. "How narrow minded!" some would say. But that is missing the word "all". *They will all be taught by God.* (John 1:9) It depends on what we do with what God teaches us. Will we yield as God draws us to Jesus, or rebel and resist the love of God?

Commented [notes9]: 9 The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.[
John 1:9 (NIV)

⁴⁶ No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. Since God is a spirit, we cannot see Him. The only One that has seen God, not

with physical eyes, but perceived all that He is in their heart, is Jesus. He's the only One that can really tell us all that God is. The prophets heard His words and some even caught a glimpse of the glory of God (Exodus 34:6), but only Jesus has truly seen all that He is. That is another radical claim! Imagine if someone told you they were the only one to ever see God. You'd call the guys in the white coats to come get them. You'd tend to take a person more seriously if they walked on water, calmed storms and raised the dead. (John 10:38)

⁴⁷ *I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.* Another of Jesus' "Amen, amen!" statements. It's His way of saying, "Listen up! This is important. This is revelation from heaven." Believe that Jesus is the One God sent, the One that reveals God. The word, "believe" is not used just as head knowledge, but to receive in your heart. (Romans 10:13) If you do, you have entered into everlasting life. It is yours, now! Remember, it is not a ticket or permission or anything outside you. It is a state of being in Jesus and Jesus in you. (John 17:21-23)

⁴⁸ *I am the bread of life.* He repeated the phrase in verse 35. Just in case you didn't get it the first time, Jesus said He is the solution to our spiritual hunger. Without Him, our souls will die of starvation. Does Jesus have to be so radical, so exclusive? Yes! He can't help but speak the truth. There are a lot of manmade answers to our fallen condition, but there is only one God given solution to our alienation from God.

⁴⁹ *Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died.* ⁵⁰ *But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die.* Jesus is desperately trying to get them to see that they are after the wrong thing. "Which do you want? Bread like your ancestors ate? They died in the desert. Here is the bread that you can eat that causes you to enter eternal life. Why would you prefer the temporal? How could you prefer the temporal, when the eternal is standing right before you?"

⁵¹ *I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.* Jesus repeated the claim they were stumbling over and reiterated the claim that to believe in Him was to possess eternal life. This time instead of saying "believe", He said, "to eat". Then He added that the bread is His flesh given for the life of the world! It almost sounds like Jesus is trying to drive them away. The thought of eating someone's flesh was outrageous to Jews, but remember that they think in analogies. They called the Torah bread. John said the word became flesh and dwelt among us. (John 1:14)

In the Jewish way of thinking in pictures, what Jesus is declaring is that His life perfectly demonstrates the Father. To eat His flesh is to accept what He does and says as a revelation of God. Jesus is declaring that His life is the heart of God made manifest just as the Torah is God's heart revealed to man. The thought is not foreign to the Jews. A midrash on Ecclesiastes states that all references in the book to eating and drinking signify the Torah and good deeds. One later rabbi even referred to "eating the Messiah" (b. Sanh 99a). This is not Jesus' deliberate attempt to cause them to stumble. It's a declaration of spiritual reality that they needed to deal with.

Commented [notes10]: 6 And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, Ex 34:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes11]: 38 But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." John 10:38 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.
22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one:
23 I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. John 17:21-23 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: 14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14 (NIV)

We think of the Torah as being for the Jewish people, and it certainly contained a covenant with the Jews. Yet, it was, and is still, for the world. Many rabbi realized this. Jesus was saying the same was true in regards to His life. It is for the world. Of course we know that He came to save the world, but the story of His life revealing the heart of the Father is for the world to know also. That is why Jesus said that this Gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world and then the end would come. (Matthew 24:14) The perfect sacrifice of a sinless life is for all who will receive Him is, in Jesus' current analogy, to eat His flesh.

The prophets spoke of eating the word of God. (Jeremiah 15:16; Ezekiel 3:3) Eating the word pictured receiving the word into your life. Sometimes they described it as sweet and other times as sour. (Revelation 10:9) We can relate to how sometimes the word isn't so tasty. Jesus was using this analogy to say they needed to take His words and life in the same way. The prophets' lives and our own don't always match up with our words, but with Jesus, the Word was made flesh. There was no separating the two. His message included both His words and His life.

^{52b} "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" One of the themes that run through the book of John is people taking Jesus' analogies in a literal sense and being confused or upset. He used the picture of a spring of water in our heart, which the woman at the well took literally. (John 4:15) He used the picture of being born again, which confused Nicodemus. (John 3:4) Now He is using another picture they should understand but seem to be so dull to comprehend.

⁵³ Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴ Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. Translation for our Western minds, "Receive my whole life as the manifest revelation of God, and receive my words or you are spiritually dead. Those who have received me have eternal life and will have resurrected bodies at the last day." The Jews used the phrase "flesh and blood" to refer to the whole person, but Jesus may have a deeper meaning in mind. By referring to drinking His blood, Jesus was also pointing to the Old Testament teaching that the life of the flesh is in the blood. (Leviticus 17:11) The flesh analogy is the word so then the blood would be the life of the word. That is the Spirit. We'll see that again next week at the end of the chapter. (John 6:63) Jesus tied the Word and the Spirit together several times already in the Book of John. In John 4 it was Spirit and truth. (John 4:24) In John 5:37-39 the religious leaders had memorized the Word but the Word (Holy Spirit) was not living in them. Do you have life or just memorized words? Are you continually receiving the life of Jesus? In Jesus analogy, we need to be eating the flesh and drinking the blood. We continually need the Word and, just as importantly, we continually need the Spirit of the Word. What Isreal was missing, Jesus had come to bring.

This verse caused quite a schism in church history. A part of the church decided to take it in a literal way. They believed that in communion the bread actually becomes the body of Jesus and the wine becomes the blood. According to them, this only happens when the properly ordained people do it in just the right way. So unless you receive the wafer and wine from them, you have no life. This made it absolutely necessary to go to church each Sunday. That might help church attendance, but it

Commented [notes14]: 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. Matt 24:14 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: 16 When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God Almighty. Jer 15:16 (NIV)

Commented [notes16]: 3 Then he said to me, "Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it." So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth. Ezek 3:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: 9 So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, "Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey." Rev 10:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes18]: 15 The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water." John 4:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes19]: 4 "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" John 3:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: 11 For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life. Lev 17:11 (NIV)

Commented [notes21]: John 6:63 (NIV) 63 The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.

Commented [notes22]: 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." John 4:24 (NIV)

Commented [notes23]: John 5:37-39 (NIV) 37 And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, 38 nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. 39 You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me,

distorts this passage. Of course no investigation has ever verified that the wafer was transformed into human flesh or the wine into blood, and yet, the doctrine persists.

Part of the church saw it as symbolism and understood the Old Testament roots of what Jesus was saying. The church split over this issue among others. You can see how important it is for us to have Old Testament background to interpret the New Testament so that we don't go off on these strange tangents. (Isaiah 8:20)

⁵⁵ For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. ⁵⁶ Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. If you receive the life and words of Jesus as a revelation of God to you, you will remain in Christ, and Christ will remain in you. John clarified this further in John 15. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. Do you see in that verse how it is the words of Jesus that parallel the flesh and blood in verse 56?

⁵⁷ Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. Verse 54 and this verse tell us that to feed is not a onetime thing. If you feed on Christ, you should continue to feed on Christ. The ones that continue to feed on Him are the ones that live. So, are you feeding on Christ? Are His life and words continually a source of spiritual nourishment for you? Or have you yet to find life? If His Word and Spirit remain in you, then you live because of Him. (John 5:26)

This brings us to a whole new understanding of that line in the Lord's prayer, "Give us the day our daily bread..." Do you see now that Jesus' emphasis is not physical food but receiving His life and words? This sermon may be your daily bread today, but what about tomorrow?

⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever." Jesus was saying, "So make up your minds which of the two you are going to live for. Are you going to follow your ancestors that died in the wilderness? Or are you going to enter into the rest of God and let my life and words live in you?" (Hebrews 4:2) It's your choice.

⁵⁹ He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum. He said this in a synagogue! Wow! He sure didn't tone it down to not offend anyone. He told the truth knowing it would really upset some people. It was so unlike anything they had ever heard (Mark 1:22), and yet, it came right out of their Scriptures.

Are you eating His flesh and drinking His blood? By that I'm not asking if you take communion. Yes, that is a picture of it, but what Jesus was asking here is, are His life and words continually feeding your spirit? Do you want to be alive today? That is our source of life. Are His word and Spirit as real and important to you as your lunch today? They should be even more real and important! (Job 23:12) If they aren't, you can begin eating His flesh and drinking His blood today. Go home and sit down with your Bible. Open it up to whatever passage you feel led. Ask God to open your eyes and for a heart to receive His word. Taste and see that the Lord is good! (Psalm 34:8) I used to sing a song before meals, but it is really a song about spiritual food. "Come and dine the Master's calling, 'Come and dine.' You can feast at Jesus' table all the

Commented [notes24]: 20 To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn. Isaiah 8:20 (NIV)

Commented [notes25]: 26 For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. John 5:26 (NIV)

Commented [notes26]: 2 For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. Heb 4:2 (NIV)

Commented [notes27]: 22 The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. Mark 1:22 (NIV)

Commented [notes28]: 12 I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread. Job 23:12 (NIV)

Commented [notes29]: 8 O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. Psalms 34:8 (KJV)

time. He fed the multitudes, turned the water into wine, to the hungry, calling now, 'Come and dine!' All things are ready come to the feast. Come for the table now is spread, you famishing, you perishing, and you will be surely fed. Here's the invitation. Come whomsoever will."