

Dr. David Turner, Gospel of John, Session 8, John 6

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This is Dr. David Turner in his teaching on the Gospel of John. This is session 8, A Significant Meal and a Difficult Teaching. John 6:1-71.

Hello, welcome to our video on John chapter six. Since we last saw Jesus in Jerusalem, he was debating with the religious leaders about his behavior on the Sabbath and having healed the paralytic on the Sabbath and getting into great difficulties there, leading to his teaching about him simply doing what the Father had given him to do, pointing out to them that they were having problems not simply with him but with the Father, and they were not even understanding Moses aright. So, as we move to John 6, we have a transitional time where Jesus is traveling from Jerusalem up to the northeast area of the Sea of Galilee, pretty much the area today that we hear about on the news as the area of the Golan, the Golani area as the Israelis call it.

So, the Golan, the rather high plain area to the east of the Sea of Galilee. And to just follow the narrative flow of the passage briefly, Jesus is feeding the multitudes there with very little to go with, and so we have the miraculous meal there, withdrawing to the mountain to avoid the press of the crowd. Just after that, the disciples are in the boat heading back over to probably the northwest side of the Capernaum area, and they're in a storm.

Jesus appears to them walking on the sea and brings them to the land. That brings eventually the people who experienced the multitude, the meal, the multitudes, it brings them back chasing Jesus around following him. Additionally, there are people from Tiberias who have heard about this and have gone over to the Golan and not finding Jesus there are pursuing him back over to the area of Capernaum.

And so, he is teaching them there, and it becomes a very difficult discourse. Jesus is using the miraculous meal as a way to allude back to the manna in the wilderness and alludes to the fact that the one who gave the manna was actually his father, comparing himself then to the manna, saying he's the bread of life, using some teaching about eating his flesh and drinking his blood, a very grotesque in a sense way of describing their necessity to experience, relate, in a sense imbibe him as their portion from God rather than simply to want to have their bellies full having experienced the miraculous meal. So, this text becomes a very difficult teaching.

Many of the disciples go away and don't follow him any longer. And so, you have at the end of the chapter, Peter being asked if he's leaving as well. He says he's not.

And Judas also rather cryptically alludes to Judas at this point. And so, the chapter has a bit of foreboding and conflict in it, just as we saw in chapter 5. And so, it becomes an interesting chapter with a lot of geography. We turn to the geography next.

We're told in 6.1 that this occurs on the Sea of Galilee. Israelis today refer to it as the Kinneret. The reference to the mountain in verse 3 and in verse 15 is not really to a clear place, but evidently somewhere over on this side of the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus is then with the disciples in Capernaum. People from Tiberias are evidently coming across the sea hoping to meet Jesus here and then eventually coming back over to see him at Capernaum. So the geography becomes a bit complicated in the text.

Another way to understand the same thing, is a nice topographical map here showing the mountains and things along there. It's another way to look at it. Today if you go to the area, you will find there at Tabgha, just southwest of Capernaum, the Church of the Multiplication of Loaves and Fishes.

And they have this nice Byzantine mosaic under one of the altars there in the church. And if you like it, you may buy any number of coffee cups, saucers, or bowls that have it emblazoned upon them. So, turning then from the geographical setting of the text back to trying to analyze what's happening here.

I guess we could say that in John 6, there are two miracles that lead to three conversations. The primary miracle would be the feeding of the multitudes in John 6, verses 1-15, which happens to be the only miracle that's narrated in all four of the Gospels. Matthew, Mark, and Luke alike have versions of this story.

A miracle that is sort of on the heels of that, I'm calling it a secondary miracle here because it doesn't have quite as much importance in the rest of the chapter, is where Jesus is walking on the water. In the aftermath of these meals and people following Jesus around then, we have these conversations. And the conversations, as I like to picture them, sort of go from a wider group to a smaller group and then to the twelve.

We'll go back and look at this again in more depth, but the multitudes seem to be confounded by what Jesus is saying. Even the followers of Jesus, the disciples, have trouble with it and many of them leave. Then Jesus speaks to the twelve at the end of the chapter and confronts them with what he's teaching.

So, you sort of have a, I guess we would call it a centripetal force in this chapter, sort of move from the outside into the rest of Jesus' most intimate associates. It's this group in the middle that's sort of hard to gauge, the multitude or the crowd, people

who are following Jesus to see whatever spectacular thing will come. But there again are people who are disciples, at least in some sense of the word, but who are not able to handle the teaching here in John 6 and who walk away.

And finally, Jesus puts the onus on the twelve and speaks directly to them about these difficulties. So back to just trying to analyze the chapter a bit, Jesus' conversation with the folks who are following him around is rather difficult to follow in some ways because he says to people who saw what he did that they really didn't see what he did. So, we have a bit of a double meaning here to the word see and it's a bit difficult to figure out exactly what's going on.

So, the thing that leads Jesus to withdraw to the mountain after feeding the multitudes is what goes on in chapter 6 verse 14. The people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, surely this is the prophet who is to come into the world. Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him a king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

This is an interesting window into the Messianism if you want to call it that, of Second Temple Jewish folk because they are evidently working from their understanding of Deuteronomy 18 when they say, surely this is the prophet. But they come to Jesus in John's view, he describes it, they intended to come and make him the king. So whether we have here a sort of a correlation or a combination of a messianic kingly figure versus a messianic prophetic figure folks who study the Dead Sea Scrolls notice that in some of the texts, there is a duality of messianism in the scrolls as well.

So, we're not going to get into that now, but it's interesting just the popular views of the Messiah that were out there. These are going to become a big issue in chapter 7 as well. Much debate there about Jesus, whether he is really the Messiah or not, and debate going on about why this, why that.

So, we can see something of a window into that here in this chapter. So, Jesus is having nothing of being forced to be their king. It's a bit paradoxical isn't it that someone who has the power that Jesus had could be forced into anything, but that was their intention.

They were going to run him up and turn him into a popular Messianic figure and he withdrew away from that because that was not the kind of Messiah that he was. So, in the evening, verse 16, the disciples went down to the lake and set off across from evidently the eastern side to the northwest to Capernaum and they are in a storm and they are not really getting anywhere. So, Jesus walks on the water and approaches them, and they are frightened.

Well, who wouldn't be to see a figure approaching you? They probably couldn't see him very well. We understand of course that these are seasoned fishermen. They've been out there on the lake before.

This is not evidently a mild little blow. This is a serious storm. So, their fright must have been something really exceptional going on.

So, he says, it's I don't be afraid. They take him to the boat and evidently and miraculously the boat is immediately at the shore. The next day, verse 22, the crowd is going to see they don't have Jesus there anymore and they're going to have to catch up with him.

So, they come over to meet Jesus in Capernaum along with the folks from Tiberias. It's a bit confusing here how all this must have worked out historically. So they get in the boats and they head over to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

So, when they catch up to him, the discourse, the debate, and the difficult teaching begins in verse 25. When they found him then on the other side of the lake, they said to him, Rabbi, when did you get here? Jesus' response to that question is unresponsive. He's not really speaking to them about when he got there.

He's addressing their motives in seeking him to begin with. So, he says, you're looking for me not because you saw the signs I performed, but because you ate the loaves and you got full. You ate your fill.

Do not work for the food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. On him, God the Father has placed his seal of approval. This idea of God placing his seal of approval on Jesus perhaps is an implicit way of referring to, again, the Father gifting Jesus, enabling Jesus with the Spirit of God, going back to the teaching of John the Baptist in John 1 and the text at the end of chapter 3 that John gives Jesus the Spirit without measure.

So, this becomes a bit of a quandary for us as we attempt to understand the passage. Jesus speaks to people who saw what he did and who experienced what he did, and he says to them, you did not see what I did. You just got full.

So, they saw a sign at one level. They did not see that to which the sign pointed. They did not get the meaning of the sign as far as pointing to who Jesus really was.

They simply saw the outward part. They did not get the message that the sign was portraying. Hence, we get into this long discourse now about who Jesus really was.

So, Jesus having spoken of the works of God, says, what must we do to do the work God requires? Jesus says, believe in me. They said, will show us a sign. Well, of course, he's already shown them signs.

What sign then will you give that we may see and believe you? What will you do? Our ancestors ate the man in the wilderness. As it's written, he gave them bread from heaven to eat. So, Jesus doesn't have an understanding of this.

So, he says in verse 32, it's not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but my father. The bread of God is a bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. Of course, this is an ambiguous way of putting it that describes not only what God did through Moses, but what God is doing now much more importantly through Jesus.

So, they say, much like the woman at the well, I'd like to have more of this water. They say, well, we want to have more of this bread. So the same type of meaning of Jesus, the same type of teaching technique here, using double meanings of the words to make a spiritual point.

Jesus said then a long red-letter section, if you're looking at the red-letter Bible from verses 35 through 40, teaching that he indeed is the bread of life. Those of us who are Calvinists like this section as well, particularly due to verse 37, all that the Father gives me will come to me. Those who come to me, I will never drive away.

I've come down from heaven not to do my will, but to do the will of him that sent me. The will of him who sent me is that I lose none of all that he has given me and will raise him up on the last day. It's the Father's will that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him will have eternal life.

640 sounds a lot like chapter 3, verse 14, which alludes back to Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness. So, Jesus is teaching them that he is the real bread and they should be more concerned about him than simply having someone who will take care of their physical needs. So, they say, we don't really get what he's saying.

They say, what does he mean? I'm the bread of life that came down from heaven. Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph? We know about this guy. What's this bread of heaven business? How can he say I came down from heaven? So we as readers of the text, having read the prologue, have an understanding of this that they do not have.

And so, Jesus continues to try to deal with them to get them to understand who he really is. He says, no one can come to me unless the father who has sent me draw him. I'll raise him up on the last day.

The Old Testament allusion in verse 45 to Isaiah chapter 54 in verse 13, everyone who has heard the father and learned from him comes to me. Alluding to the Isaac text, they will all be taught of God. Now he begins to make very specific the association between himself and bread.

So, in verse 48, I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness and they died, but here's their true bread that comes down from heaven. I'm the living bread.

This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. So, they say, how can he give us his flesh to eat? So, in verse 53, Jesus doubles down on the association. He says, truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in yourself.

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life. I'll raise him up on the last day. He said these things while teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

Verse 59 then brings us back to the geographical setting. So, Jesus is making it very plain here that he is true bread and that they must literally eat him and drink his blood in order to have eternal life. This is a very difficult teaching.

So, we're not surprised at all at verse 60, where his disciples say, we don't really get this. Using the disciples as a backdrop, Jesus then teaches them that if you have trouble with this, what if you see the son of man ascend to where he was before? The spirit gives life. The flesh counts for nothing.

The words I've given you are spirit and life, yet there are some of you who don't believe. Again, an allusion perhaps to Judas in verse 64. He went on to say to them, this is why I told you no one can come to me unless the father has enabled them.

Jesus is apparently teaching these people that the reason why they are having trouble getting him is they have not really listened to what God is saying through his miracles. He is essentially saying to them, God works in mysterious ways to help you understand. You need to submit yourself to God and listen to what his spirit is saying to you about me as the son of man, who is not really just someone who has come to take care of your physical and material needs, to provide for your goods and services, but someone who has come to meet your much deeper needs than that.

So, as we look at it again, we note how Jesus then talks to the 12 about these things and asks them if they're going away too. Peter speaks up for the group in verse 68 and says, Lord, to whom should we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are truly the Holy One of God.

This is a nice, warm, fuzzy moment. We're glad that Peter stands tall there and says these things the way he does. Peter in the Gospels will frequently speak up for the disciples and say things about Jesus that they have on their minds, but on the other side of it, Peter will also frequently do dumb things and say dumb things that the rest of the disciples are probably thinking about doing.

So, Peter becomes probably the person who is in one moment the hero and the next moment he's the goat. This is one of Peter's hero moments, but instead of allowing Peter to bask in the glow that he has achieved here, the chapter tends to conclude with Jesus saying, Have I not chosen you, the 12, yet one of you is a devil? Wow, what a way to come down from a nice, warm, fuzzy moment that is. So then the narrator concludes the author by saying he was speaking of Judas Iscariot who would betray him later.

So, a couple of allusions to Judas here. So, as we noted before, we sort of have a way in which this text takes us from the whole wide group right down to Peter and Judas as two people in the 12. Judas is currently associated with the 12.

However, Judas is going to eventually become one of the disciples who turns back from following Jesus and even worse than that, actually betrays him. So, what was the problem that Jesus' audience was having? They were having a problem with someone who said, You need to eat my flesh and drink my blood in order to have eternal life. It's a very abrupt and difficult thing for a Jewish person, especially to hear, for all of us to hear of something that smacks of cannibalism, it's difficult.

But especially for a Jewish person to hear about drinking blood is a total offense according to the Torah. So, what was Jesus really saying here? Apparently what Jesus was saying is he was just speaking of flesh and blood as a way of describing himself. And instead of telling them that they literally needed to imbibe him, he was saying to them that they needed to appropriate him by faith.

It's interesting to compare passages in John 6 that speak of the results of believing in Jesus with what he says about the results of eating his flesh and drinking his blood. So, for example, if we look at chapter 6, verse 35, Jesus says, I'm the bread of life who comes to me will not hunger. He who believes in me will never thirst.

So, we move from the metaphor of bread to simply saying he who comes to me and who believes in me coming to him in faith will result in someone who is not hungry or thirsty. So just as he isn't speaking about physical bread here, he isn't speaking about literal hunger and thirst. So, this will be a simile.

A simile is simply a comparison without using like or as. Jesus is saying I'm like bread. The person who appropriates me will be like a person who has a good meal.

Faith will lead you to a point in your life where you won't be hungry and thirsty spiritually. You'll understand what it is to be a human being and you won't hunger and thirst in that sense. You will indeed get hungry and thirsty again and you'll need to have food, but your spiritual needs will be satisfied.

So, compare what he's saying here in 635 to what he said in 651. I'm the bread of life. I'm the living bread that came down from heaven.

If anyone eats this bread, whoever comes to me, he will live forever. He will not hunger. And the bread that I give for the life of the world is my flesh.

Also, we could compare chapter 6 verse 40 to chapter 6 verse 54. This is the will of my father that whoever looks on the sun and believes, similar to I'm the bread of life, whoever comes to me and whoever believes in me. So, whoever looks and believes in me will have eternal life, never thirst, and I will raise him up on the last day.

Similar to verse 54, whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood, whoever looks on the sun and believes, eats and drinks, has eternal life. I'll raise him up on the last day. I'll raise him up on the last day.

So, this, to us, rather a harsh comparison between Jesus and having a meal and eating Jesus, which sounds rather grotesque on its face, is an abrupt way, a very direct way of saying to them, unless you personally appropriate me as the father's bread, then you will never really have eternal life. So why does Jesus speak in this way? I think it's interesting to look back to the expositions of Calvin on scripture, and his commentaries, now and then to understand the theology of certain texts. Calvin was, of course, a very influential theologian.

Calvin was also in many ways the father of modern biblical exegesis. And the commentaries that he wrote were amazing in his day, because they weren't just taking the text topically and doing topical sermons on it, they were actually looking at the text. In Calvin's commentary to the Romans, he has a preface that he wrote to his patron, Simon Grineus, in which he said, my philosophy of writing commentaries is to get to what the author said and to move on.

He said, what I want to achieve is lucid brevity. I want to say clearly what is said by the author and then move on without going into extraneous matters. Of course, Calvin, like all of us, wasn't a perfect man and didn't perfectly carry out his agenda.

He had issues, just as we all do. But I like what he says about this particular text. Calvin said that Jesus uses metaphors here that are accordant with the situation.

In other words, the bread of life discourse, as it's sometimes called, is something that is a riff, if you want to call it that, on the miracle of the feeding of the multitudes. He

says Jesus spoke like this because they ran to their fodder like cattle. That's a pretty good line, don't you think? Because they run to their fodder like cattle, Christ frames his discourse metaphorically and calls everything pertaining to the newness of life food.

We know that our souls are fed by the teaching of the gospel when it's efficacious in us by the power of the spirit. Jesus says, the words that I speak to you are spirit and they are life. So, here's the bottom line.

As faith is to the life of the soul, all that nourishes and advances the faith is compared to food. I think Calvin pretty well nailed what's going on here by this comment. And since they were only seeing things at a superficial level, they couldn't get beyond the metaphor to the reality that it was describing.

So, when Jesus was speaking of food, all they were thinking about was this guy will feed us and we'll be full. They weren't thinking of the fact that by feeding them, he was showing them that he was the real true bread of God who comes down to heaven to meet not only their felt needs, what they wanted, but what they really needed, even though they didn't realize it. Another thing that we need to think about in terms of John chapter 6 is this language about the way in which the signs and the faith work out and how in this particular chapter divine sovereignty plays into the matter.

So, I'm not trying to become a systematic theologian here and teach you about the doctrine of election and things like that, but we do need to somehow relate to what Jesus is saying to them when he says, to everyone that God is calling to me will come to me. And everyone who comes to me, I won't cast out. We've been looking at this situation from the standpoint of signs and faith.

And some people believe in Jesus in some sense of the word. We noticed that way back at the end of chapter 2 the first time. So, you have people sort of like that here in John 6 who see what Jesus has done.

And so, they believe that if they can hang on to him, he'll keep on doing that for them. So, in that sense, they believe in Jesus. They saw the signs, but they didn't really see the signs because they didn't really understand what the signs were pointing to and what God was trying to do through Jesus.

John 6 then injects another perspective onto this whole issue of signs and faith. And that is the issue of divine sovereignty and what God is saying here through Jesus about only those who really get it will be those who have been shown by the spirit what's going on. So, consider this passage in your whole thinking about divine sovereignty and human freedom, which also needs to be taught very clearly.

Another issue here is the way in which the typology of Moses comes into John. Recall that back in chapter 1 John the Baptist was asked whether he was the prophet. These people have come to believe that Jesus is indeed the prophet who would come into the world.

Their understanding of that prophet was one who would feed them and take care of all their felt needs. Not exactly the portrayal of the prophet that we originally got back in Deuteronomy, which is a prophet to whom you better pay attention or you're going to be sorry. Unless you pay attention to the prophet, you'll regret it according to Deuteronomy.

But they weren't really thinking of Jesus as a prophet so much as someone who would feed them, unfortunately. So as Jesus goes on to teach them, he tells them more about what the meal and the water are all about. We have some allusions here to the manna from heaven, the wilderness wanderings, Exodus chapter 12, Psalm 107 reflects on that at some length as well.

And so, we could compare, if we want to get the background of this, Exodus 12, Psalm 107, and other texts. Reminding ourselves also here that Moses is implicated in this text once again, taking us back to the prologue where we're told the law indeed did come by Moses. So, understanding how the manna functioned during the wilderness wanderings is essential to understanding what Jesus is teaching them here about his own role and his own function.

Additionally, in John 6, we would want to think about the way in which Jesus is using, for perhaps the first time in John, I am statements. I am statements in John are of two sorts. There are statements that are qualified and statements that are absolute.

Sometimes the qualified, what I'm calling the qualified statements are called in the scholar literature, statements with predicates, predicated statements. So, there are statements where Jesus says, I am in this case, the bread of life. In chapter eight, Jesus is going to say, I am the light of the world.

And he says several other things like that. John 10, I am the door of the sheep. I am the good shepherd.

I am the true vine. So, we're going to be seeing a lot of these kinds of statements in John and people spend a lot of time studying them to understand what they mean. In addition to that, there are some of these statements that are called absolute statements, statements where Jesus simply says, I am.

And we catch this for the first time, probably in chapter eight. This is another interesting statement because it seems to have some background in the Old Testament because the people in chapter eight are viewing it as a statement where

Jesus is saying too much and is having pretensions and maybe even thinking of himself as God and they're not having that. So, when we get to John eight, we'll have more to say about this.

Often people try to say the background of this is in Exodus chapter three, where God says, I am who I am, or I will be who I will be. In Hebrew in Exodus three, it seems to me more likely that Jesus is alluding to the I am he text, which we begin to see in the book of Deuteronomy. And there are several of them in the book of Isaiah.

So, we'll talk more about this in John chapter eight, but just to clue you in these I am passages, both the ones where Jesus says, I am the bread of life or something else as here. And the absolute statements where he simply says, I am are important things to understand in the theology of John. We also need to note that we have another reference to Judas here.

We're ultimately going to see Judas do his dastardly deed dirt cheap in chapter 13. What really is perplexing in John six, and I have the gospel of John over all though, is the way in which the meal that Jesus provides here for the multitudes is tied into Eucharistic texts. Particularly if we look at the language that's used in John six and compare it to passages where Jesus institutes the table in the upper room in the synoptic tradition.

So, if we look at John chapter six and verse 11, Jesus has the people sit down in verse 10, then he takes the loaves, he gives thanks and he distributes them to those who are seated nearby. This sounds very much like the way in which the Eucharistic meal is carried out in the synoptic tradition. We were just to look back for a moment to Matthew chapter 26 as one example of that.

Matthew 26, verse 26, while they were eating, Jesus took bread. Of course, that's what it says here in John chapter six, verse 11, he took the loaves. It goes on to say, of course, he broke it and gave it to his disciples.

Of course, we read in John chapter 6 and verse 11, they took the bread, he gave thanks, and he distributed it to those who were seated as much as they wanted. Matthew 26, 26, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, take and eat, this is my body. So, it seems that for anyone who is familiar with the tradition about Jesus, today in our Bibles, the synoptic tradition, back then perhaps just an oral tradition if they hadn't actually read it, would have scratched their heads when they read this text and heard it and thought this has something to do with the Eucharist, with the ceremony of the bread and cup instituted by Jesus.

So, the question would be, is this a Eucharistic text? We could also bring in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, where Paul portrays the tradition of Jesus to the Corinthians and talks to them about how they should be carrying out the Lord's table. So, we ask

ourselves, the question, is John six a text about the Eucharist, which is particularly interesting in light of the fact that, as you probably already realize, when we read Jesus last week in Jerusalem in the Gospel of John, there is no institution of the Lord's table in the final meal that Jesus has with his disciples. There are many differences between that in John 13 and the synoptic tradition.

We'll say more about that when we get there, but it is quite apparent that in John 13 there is a mention of them eating a meal. It's not even clear whether it's a Passover meal. And there is the foot washing ceremony, but there is no bread and cup ceremony, no institution, no this is my body.

So, the question is, is this John's version of the Eucharist? Is this John saying to us that when Jesus did that, he was prefiguring what he would do as the Eucharist, but of course, John doesn't directly speak of that. It also would perhaps give us some pause as we think about the controversy in the church through the years when it comes to the table of the Lord with the low church views of the sacrament, which basically low churches are calling ordinances, where things are strictly symbolic. At the other end of the spectrum, in the higher churches, the Roman Catholics and the Anglicans, perhaps even the Lutherans, there's much more of an emphasis on the real presence of Christ in the sacrament.

Perhaps the Reformed tradition is in between the two, where Calvin spoke of how the sacrament is an activity that enforces the propositions that are taught in the Word. So, it's then an appendix to the Word, and if you rightly focus your mind on the promises of God in the Word, as you receive the elements, or as you even participate or observe baptism, there is a powerful working of God, a dynamic relationship in which you are receiving sanctifying grace as you observe or participate in the sacraments. So, John 6 perhaps is a text that speaks to these things and makes us consider what is all about this.

I think the problem or the issue that we should be thinking about though is much broader than this. We should be thinking more broadly about the whole theology of meals in the Bible and how food is often a matter of portraying the faithfulness of God. So, if we were to go back all the way to Genesis chapter 1, we would begin to note how even there, God gives Adam and Eve sustenance from the created world, and they imbibe it in various texts through there.

In fact, that was the very issue that was problematic for them in chapter 3, eating something that was off-limits despite the fact nothing else was available to them. So, food continues to be a matter of great importance to the people of God. In Deuteronomy chapter 8, the famous text alluded to by Jesus in his temptation account, humans are not to live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

Let's not take that text platonically and make light of physical food. Human beings have to have food. Poverty and the famine, the lack of food that comes from that is a horrible thing and something that is not part of the intent of God for his people.

So, food is an important thing and something that humans are meant to use as part of praising God and thanking him for his benefits. The problem is with humans is they get their eyes set on the food and forget about the God who gave it to them. That was a problem to Israel in the wilderness, Deuteronomy 8, and a similar problem here in John chapter 6. So, food and the faithfulness of God, when we pray, we pray to the Father to give us our daily bread and meet our needs.

Bread, I think, stands for everything that humans need, food, clothing, shelter, simply asking God for sustenance. When we sort of put all this into play and think about how meals and food play out in the scriptures as a whole, we would think, of course, about the institution of the Passover in Exodus chapter 12. Other texts speak of it, Numbers 9, how the Passover was reinstated in Joshua 5, 2 Kings 23, Ezra 6, key points in Israel's history where Passover meals were reinstated and that practice was made a normative practice again.

Of course, what Jesus is directly alluding here to in John 6 is the manna from heaven in Exodus chapter 16, and the other texts speak of that as well in the Old Testament. Perhaps the text in Nehemiah 9.15 is the closest to what's being said in John 6.31. So, from this whole tradition of God providing food for his people, providing a special meal for the Israelites, commemorating their departure from Egypt, and the purpose of God to give them freedom from slavery, we have then Jesus in the synoptic tradition setting out the Eucharistic meal as a new development of that and how the church in Acts 2 and following in the book of Acts had a ceremony involving breaking of bread on probably a weekly basis. Paul, of course, alludes to it as a local church practice at Corinth and that Corinthian practice was a misuse and so Paul is instructing them about the proper way this is to be done.

Ultimately, however, the meal doesn't stop at the Lord's table. All these meals, I think, anticipate an ultimate feast, the marriage feast of the Lamb in Revelation chapter 19. Other texts sort of hint at such a feast, I think, as well.

Matthew 22, John 2, and Ephesians 5 even speak in terms of this, I think, that are significant. So, what are we saying here? We're saying that when we look at John chapter 6 and the way in which Jesus is comparing himself to food and saying you have to eat me as it were, as you eat food, in order to have eternal life, what Jesus is saying here is that you have to have an intimate relationship with me just as God has faithfully provided for his people through the centuries in very different ways. So, when you look then at John 6 and understand the consternation of the crowds, many of them were just totally put off by this, couldn't get it, left.

Even Jesus' followers, in some sense of the word, the disciples, many of them had difficulties with it and they left. So, Jesus then pairs it down to the twelve. Peter speaks up for them in a positive way.

However, Jesus alludes to the negative example of Judas. So, the question then comes down to all of us now that we've narrowed it down to whether are we going to be like Peter or are we going to be like Judas? Are we going to go away as well? We're going to swallow the teaching of Jesus here, which tells us that we had better be imbibing him and having an intimate relationship with him that parallels the intimate relationship we have with our food. Some of us are foodies.

Some of us have to have just the right kind of coffee. We won't even touch it. We're very particular about the way we have our food if we have the ability.

Perhaps we should think back to the fact that we don't live to eat, we eat to live. What we learn in John chapter 6, there are people who, for them, eating was pretty much it. That was life.

Jesus is trying to teach here that there's more to life than eating. The life that he is talking about is a life that means imbibing him and that is life indeed.

This is Dr. David Turner in his teaching on the Gospel of John. This is session 8, A Significant Meal and a Difficult Teaching. John 6:1-71.