

John 6:41-51 Just The Carpenter's Kid

(Taught by Kelley & John Carpenter)

John:

Good evening!

I'm excited about tonight's message! I'm excited because I get to teach it with one of my most favorite teachers... my wife Kelley!

We're doing something a little different here. We're **tag teaming** the message. You'll get to hear from **both** of us as we work our way through this passage.

Our passage tonight is one of those sections of Scripture where there's a whole lot going on! We're focusing on John 6, verses 41 through 51, if you want to turn there.

While you do, let me tell you it almost seems unfair, or too cursory to pick **one thing** from this chapter to focus on, but we have to or else we'd be here for **a week**.

The 6th chapter of the book of John is a real **Baker's Choice**, as throughout the chapter, the focus is on bread... both literal bread, and spiritual bread. The chapter begins with Jesus feeding the five thousand. It's **spectacular** miracle, one that really sets the tone and focus for the rest of the chapter. Verses 1 through 14 tell **that** story.

Verses 16 through 21 record a couple **more** miracles of Jesus. First, He walks on water in the middle of the night... scaring the bejeebers out of the disciples, and **then**, when Jesus gets on the boat... it **instantly** arrives at its destination. That's a pretty nifty, if somewhat **underrated** miracle of Jesus.

The topic of the chapter turns to ***spiritual bread*** beginning in verse 22... and continues in that vein all the way to the end of the chapter 37 verses later in verse 59.

Tonight... we want to focus on the eleven verses, 41 through 51... because it really is the ***heart*** of what Jesus is trying to communicate... to His disciples, and the people who are listening to what Jesus is saying, including those who are trying to understand Jesus as well as those who are there to try and ***discredit*** Jesus.

John 6, verses 41 through 51. Is everybody there? I'm going to have Kelley read those verses again, Kelley?

Kelley:

41 So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” **42** They said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’” **43** Jesus answered them, “Do not grumble among yourselves. **44** No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. **45** It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me—
46 not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. **47** Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. **48** I am the bread of life. **49** Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. **50** This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. **51** I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” (**John 6:41-51**)

I am a teacher and often look at things in all areas of life as a "lesson". That being said, I am continually grateful that God faithfully uses my natural surroundings to teach me lessons in the spiritual...to give me a deeper understanding of what He wants me to know. Sometimes that understanding comes from other people, even John, Sam, or my students....or sometimes it's the weather, it's planting in my garden. Using whatever is in front of me at the time, God creates a path to Him. He creates a tangible situation that underlines spiritual truths.

Jesus said, in verse 41, "I am the bread that CAME down from heaven." The mention of bread that Jesus has earlier in this chapter, this manna, should take us back many years. The manna that was first given as provision in the desert so long before Christ walked the earth pointed to His plan for saving us. His purpose of being my fulfillment, my way to keep living, my everyt hing.

It is the same bread that was broken and shared at the Last Supper and the same bread, a few verses earlier, that miraculously nourished the crowd. Jesus tried to explain earlier in verse 32, "It was not Moses ...but my Father who gives you true bread from heaven" and in verse 33 He said that bread "gives life to the world".

In verse 35, after they asked for this life-giving bread, He told them "I am the bread of life".

So after hearing this REPEATEDLY, the Jews grumbled. Their reasoning? "It can't be that guy...we know his parents!" Jesus has already claimed who His Father is. They missed it. Imagine the complexity of His situation....living as the Joe the Carpenter's son, but living as the Savior of the world, sent from heaven. Even Jesus' parents, Joseph and Mary, were challenged in grasping the magnitude of His purpose on earth. In Luke chapter 2, they think he's lost for THREE days...and the whole time Jesus is "in his Father's house" or as some biblical versions say "about my Father's business". And he was twelve years old! I get worried when I haven't heard from Sam for about an hour, but if you know Sam... Seizing the truth of God being Jesus' Father, of God purposely putting Him here on earth to be our "bread" is enormous.

But it's not meant to confuse us, it's meant to inform, comfort, and assure us. He loves us so much, wants to be in relationship with us SO much, His grace paves a way for understanding. Growing in that understanding of Him is something He wants us to pursue. The Jews in this passage had a hard time seeing that...

Have you ever done something or KEPT doing something just because it's what you've always done or it's what others expected of you? What about developing an opinion, evaluating something (or even someone), based on what you "thought" should be? I can see the Jews in this sort of situation....

They hear about and see Jesus performing great miracles, giving powerful teachings, even experience some of it themselves. But the background in who they believed the Messiah would be didn't fit with the man in front of them. Their traditions of who a religious leader would be, how a religious leader would act...blocked their view of Who the Messiah actually was.

Jesus laid out the statement that He was "the bread that came down from heaven": the provision, the sustenance, the gap-filler for everything they're missing in life.

Of course, these educated leaders must've connected the dots all the way back to Exodus 16:4 when "the Lord said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you." as the children of Israel were desperate for something to sustain them. Even those Wanderers seemed to have a much different picture of what their "deliverance" should look like.

If the Jewish scholars and the Children of Israel can miss the boat...I'm sure we can, I can, too! Pause for a moment and consider: What traditions, expected behaviors, do I allow to block me from seeing Who God really is? What expectations of each other, of how church should be, of how Christians should be, should look like, get in the way of me experiencing all that God has for me?

I was raised a non-denominational church that was often referred to as "Charismatic". The way things were done became much of what I would consider "my" traditions. Stepping outside of those years of what molded me, outside of that comfort zone gave me cause to often judge, unfairly, experiences that were different than mine. Different than I was used to, what I'd been raised on, what had been part of the "right" way to do things.

I can now see how God intentionally took me out of that setting so I could see Him in a way that wasn't blurred by my traditions.

When I think beyond myself, to our church community, what traditions may get in the way of moving forward in our walk? Get in the way of seeing and experiencing Jesus the way He wants us to? Because we're human, it could be anything that takes us (like me) outside our comfort zone. Things like how many elders/deacons

to have, who runs ministries, pre/post-tribulation theologies, communion structure, worship styles, colors of the carpet, women in ministry....even a Christmas tree in the church!

Of course, any follower of Christ that truly wants to know Him more wouldn't want to have any of those things to blur the vision of what He wants us to see. So how do we avoid the situation the Jews were in of missing the "bread of life from heaven"?

For myself, when I was able to see God's hand in moving me OUT of those traditions to see more of HIM, I was able to draw closer to Him. I had to remove the "I'm right because that's the way it's supposed to be" out of the equation.

It didn't happen overnight...but as it did, I began to see how God intentionally created each difference around me as a picture of His grace working in my life. Areas that used to really get under my skin because they were "uncomfortable", are now areas that I am so glad He's allowed me to experience. It is humbling to be a "lifelong Christian" and suddenly get new revelations about your walk...admitting that growth you pridefully thought was all taken

care of, is just beginning. All because my own traditions, my own perspective of who God was or should be like... was blurred.

How do we keep our traditions from getting in the way of our relationship with Christ?

John:

I think it's **interesting** that the question you asked there... when we honestly consider it, really kind of answers itself. Let me repeat the question.

You asked, "*How do we keep our traditions from getting in the way of our relationship with Christ?*"

In other words, what's the **antidote** for the trap of tradition?

The **answer** and the **key** is... **relationship**. How it is we **Maintain** our relationship **with** Christ.

Listen, traditions aren't bad in and of themselves. There are some traditions we have and we keep that are very good. Communion is one that comes to mind. The thing we have to guard against is allowing tradition to **supersede** or **usurp** the primacy of the relationship.

That is, we must understand the **lens** we are using. Are we trying to look at God through the lens of our tradition to **Maintain** or hold up **our end** of the relationship? If we **are**, that's a problem. The relationship must **always** be primary!

When we do something out of a sense of tradition or religious duty, even though it may not be our **intention**, we supplant the **primacy** of the relationship, specifically the primacy of **Jesus** in our relationship...

what ***He's*** done to establish that relationship. And *our “doing”* becomes what we ***think*** is keeping us ***in*** relationship with God.

But when we look at God through the lens of our ***relationship*** with Jesus as the ***reason*** for keeping a tradition, the tradition becomes the response ***to*** the relationship... that is our ***love response*** to what ***Jesus*** has done to make our relationship with Him ***possible***.

That may seem to be a fine hair to split, but honestly, it's not.

And I think that's what Jesus is saying in verse 43 when He says, "*Do not grumble among yourselves.*"

The people, in particular, the ***religious*** people who were really the antagonists in this episode, were trying to make ***sense*** of what Jesus was saying about Himself being the bread that came down from heaven.

They ***knew*** if that were true... and it ***was***... then Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah, the Christ.

And they just couldn't ***fit*** that into the neat little box of their religion and tradition that ***they*** had set up and ***they*** thought they had ***perfected*** as a means to maintain their end of their relationship with God.

Using normal human patterns of identification, they looked at Jesus and thought, "*This can't be the guy we've been waiting for, he hardly looks or talks like a king!*" "*We're supposed to believe this is the guy who's going to take over the throne of David? Heck, we watched him grow up! We know his mom and dad! He's a Nazarene for crying out loud! Can anything good come from Nazareth?*"

They were trying to square the ***truth*** of what Jesus was saying ***through*** the lens of their humanly designed ***traditions***... and it just wasn't going to fit!

Jesus ***knew*** that, and He tries to ***correct*** that. That's why He tells them "*Do not grumble among yourselves.*"

What Jesus is basically saying there is, “*through the lens of religion and tradition that you are using... you’re never going to be able to figure this out.*”

And in verse 44, Jesus tries to **correct** their orientation by sharing a simple truth: *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.*

To kind of piggyback on what Kelley said a couple of minutes ago, Jesus knew the people were starting off with the **wrong** premise. **Joseph** wasn’t His father... **God** is Jesus’ Father!

If you go back through chapter six... from verses 26 through 40, **seven times** Jesus makes it **clear** God is His Father! Verse 44 is the **eighth** time in this conversation that Jesus makes this claim.

But we also need to pay attention to what Jesus is **adding** to that claim in this verse, which explains **why** the people aren’t getting it. Let’s read that again: *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.*

Jesus is saying God **the Father** is the one who **initiates** a relationship with people. Not the other way around!

We see that in **1 John 4:10**, where John tells us; *In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

John bottom lines that crucial truth just a few verses later, when he says in verse 19, *We love because he first loved us. (1 John 4:19)*

God is truly reaching out to **each** of us, **all** of us! **2 Peter 3:9** tells us that God is, *not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

The truth is... God wants every human being He **has** ever, or **will** ever, breathe breath into... to come to **know** Him and **choose** a relationship with Him.

Because while salvation is never **achieved** apart from the drawing power of God, neither is it **consummated** apart from the willingness of human beings to enter into a real relationship with God, which involves **hearing** from and **learning** from God.

Too often our traditions, our religion, keep us from **hearing** what God is saying and **learning** what He's trying to teach us!

That's the problem Jesus is running into with the people here, and the problem He **still** runs into with **us**. That's why He **constantly** appeals to Scripture, the Bible, the Word of God, to keep us on track!

In verse 45 of our passage, Jesus says, *It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me...”*

Jesus is referring here to the passage in **Isaiah 54:13**, where God promises His children that, *All your children shall be taught by the Lord...*

The word LORD in that verse is spelled out in **all** capital letters. And whenever you see that in Scripture, that's referring to God by His **proper** name... Yahweh... I AM. The promise of God that Jesus is **reminding** the people of here... is that God **Himself** is going to be the One who teaches us **about** Himself. And the promise **within** that promise... the last part of verse 45, is that “*Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me...”*

The **antidote** to the tradition trap that draws us **away** from God... is for us to **reject** those empty traditions, those things we hold on to and rotely do that **don't** lead us to a deeper relationship **with** God... and turn back **to** the Word of God!

To focus on hearing ***His*** voice ***in*** Scripture, and let His Holy Spirit train us to learn what it is that ***God*** is wanting to ***teach*** us! And ***what*** God wants us to ***learn*** and to ***know*** and to ***live***... is ***the way*** to eternal life ***through*** God and ***with*** God!

He wants us to know ***the gospel!***

Kelley:

He DOES want them to know...In 2 Peter 3:9, it tells us He is "***patient towards you***" in His efforts to bring everyone to the knowledge of Him and to repentance. Jesus is right in front of them, showing them He CHOSE them (they are who He's talking to). Telling them what He's done for them (came down from heaven), what He has waiting for them (eternal life) and what He's willing to do to make it happen (give His life). **This is the WHAT of His message.**

He is earnestly drawing them in.

As Jesus continues, he AGAIN says "truly, truly". (Some translations say "verily, verily") This is the **third** time He's said this line, and He'll say it again before the chapter is up.

This term was most commonly at the end of a phrase, kind of like an exclamation point on what someone was saying...pointing out that what was just said was true or you hope it is true. Jesus uses this phrase at the beginning of His statements. When he states, "truly, truly" at the beginning, He's using it in a way that gives firsthand knowledge of what He's going to say. That phrase isn't just "believe me, this is true"...but "I know it's true because I represent this information", "I AM this".

For as many times as Jesus stated Who He is, some may think He comes off as frustrated. It's almost as if you can see His hands waving up and down in exasperation...but I don't think He's frustrated. I do think He's URGENT. He knows His time is short. His heart is that "none would be lost". He's already explained in various ways what they

should be looking for, what is being provided through Him (**eternal life**), and Who gives Him the authority to grant that life (**God, the Father**). STILL, they needed more to go on... So, He kept going.

I point this out because one thing I can count on God for is **intentionality**. He is a God of intention...not just things working out as He goes along, or figuring it out, "oh, that didn't work, so now I'll try this". He knew this "stiff-necked" audience would need His purpose, His explanation in multiple ways. Jesus expresses His heart....and the bottom line of His heart is that He wants to be with us. Forever. **This is the WHY of His message.**

He was **intentional** when He modeled loving and serving for the disciples as He washed their feet. He was **intentional** to pursue and connect with people as He journeyed through His ministry. He was **intentional** in pursuing the hearts of this misguided group, just as He is **intentional** in pursuing us. Psalm 139, one of my "life chapters" in the Bible, says, "where can I go from your Spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?"

If each of us paused to make a timeline of events in our lives...you would see the hand of God present in many circumstances throughout your life. You would realize how much He has pursued you, been patient with you...all to bring you to this point here in your life. Making a choice to love Him. To live your LIFE for Him.

Have you ever spent a significant amount of time around people, but realize they don't **really know you?** Those people that can see you, identify you by name, describe what you look like, maybe even a few of your personality traits...those people really don't know you. How many of us are blocked to REALLY KNOWING Jesus because we're too busy doing worrying about **HOW** we're serving (tradition) and not **WHO** we're serving (relationship).

Does the "way worship sounds" get in the way of you fully embracing how Jesus chose YOU to be His son or daughter? Are the pastor's clothes distracting you from realizing Jesus' sacrifice for you ...**on a daily basis?** Do the way committees are run in this church dull the picture in your heart of living in glorious eternity with our King? Do any of those traditions get in **your** way?

Jesus was well aware He was "Joe the carpenter's" son to these people. He had a reputation that included his physical features, his family background, and maybe even a few places where Jesus liked to hang. But they didn't know Him. They were looking for a leader like the Kings they knew. They were looking for someone who fit into their idea of a Jewish leader, a spiritual and political trailblazer.

Jesus wants them to set all their traditions aside and focus on the PATH that He's created for them. From His heart, the Bread Of Life has come from heaven, resulting in the sacrifice of His very flesh, just because He loves you and wants to live with you in all of eternity. If you've been a Christian for a long time, does that PATH still draw you in?

Does the realization of Jesus loving you, choosing you, and dying for you take a larger part of your heart than the beloved ways we function at church? Have you gotten "over" your salvation?

Jesus knows we're much like the crowd He's addressing in Chapter 6. He patiently repeats Himself throughout the chapter, "*I am the bread*", "*I am the bread of life*", "*I am the living bread*" in an effort to help them...to help us... see more clearly.

Bread was a tangible path to give them understanding....but they had their **eyes on the provision, not the provider**.

Bread. That bread keeps coming up over and over. For the Jewish people Jesus is addressing....I think we understand bread was one of the main staples of their diet, it was a product of how many made their

living, their ability to make it the way they wanted represented their resources, bread was used in different ways to signify religious practices.

The connection story took them back to the Wanderers of the Desert...what was provided for them. This is history for His audience, something He knows they can connect with. But with this example, He's telling them **He needs to be their provision**. He needs to be **what sustains them**. Those in the desert ate the "bread from heaven", but died. Almost like, "You all got excited about this **miracle bread** that showed up when they were desperate to live, but you're missing the **Miracle Worker!**"

In verse 50, "*This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die,*" Now He introduces Himself, again, as the bread. Jesus is the "THIS".

He's basically saying; "**Let me be what you have to have to live**".

He's expressed that the **spiritual bread** John mentioned, that **living bread**, is the way to eternal life. But what makes it all possible is the last line of this verse, "*And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.*"

"Let me be what you have to have to live....AND if you take me in, I'm willing to give my very life for you."

Take a moment and think about your own life. What "paths of provision" could God be using to relate to you? What is He using to be your "**your manna from heaven**". Are you seeing it? Are you taking in the "**living bread**" He's offering to you?

Don't let your neck be stiff.

God doesn't stop pursuing you because you've made the declaration to follow Him, because you once said the "**sinner's prayer**". He continues

to offer Himself, continues to reveal Himself, continues to pursue you. Like those in the crowd at the temple, He knows what's inside of each of us. He knows what will distract us, make us weak spiritually, what will pull us away from Him.

Inside each of us, we have to determine whether or not we take in the **living bread**, how often we partake of it, and whether or not we recognize the love that motivated His sacrifice to "**give for the life of the world**".

John:

The people in this passage, the Pharisees, the regular folks who had shown up out of curiosity, even the disciples **themselves**, didn't know **who** Jesus was.

All of them had a different idea of what Messiah **should** be or **should** look like. **All** of those ideas were based on **beliefs** and **traditions** that were actually keeping the people from seeing who Jesus **truly** was! Ideas and traditions that were keeping people from **understanding** what Jesus was patiently and persistently declaring **to** them!

Tonight... we want to challenge **you** to examine **your** traditions, **your** beliefs! To **intentionally** take the time to match up what **you** believe against what **God** says to you in **His** Word!

Are there things you **do**, things you **believe** that you are doing out of a sense of religious duty? Things you believe **that** you believe because, "Well golly gee, someone once told me I should believe that."

People! **Your** faith is **your** faith! And the **truth** is, when push comes to shove, when the storms of life hit, you will **only** lean on those things that you **truly** believe!

So it is **essential** that **prior** to those storms hitting, you know **what** you believe... and you know **why** you believe what you believe!

Jesus is **emphatic** when He says, “*Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life.*” (**John 6:47-48**)

Do you **believe** that? Do you **know** that? Are you **living** that?

When we look at God through the lens of **our tradition**, all we'll see is Jesus; Joseph and Mary's boy, **the carpenter's kid**.

But when we look at God through the lens of **relationship**, specifically **our** relationship **with** Him, we'll see Jesus, as He **truly** is! Jesus; **my** Lord, **my** Savior, my **God**!

Amen?