

I Am (Part 2) – The Bread of Life

Jamin Roller – February 7, 2016

Good morning. If you would, grab your Bibles and turn to John 6, starting in verse 25. We'll read John 6:25-35. While you're turning, I'll introduce myself. My name is Jamin Roller. I am on staff at our Plano Campus, but my time on staff at The Village actually began here at the Flower Mound Campus. I know some of you. Some of the faces are familiar. In some ways, this feels like a homecoming. Just know this. I'm very humbled and honored to be with you this morning. John 6, starting in verse 25. We'll read the next 10 verses together and then talk through those.

"When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, 'Rabbi, when did you come here?' Jesus answered them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.'

Then they said to him, 'What must we do, to be doing the works of God?' Jesus answered them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.' So they said to him, 'Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat."

Jesus then said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.' They said to him, 'Sir, give us this bread always.' Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.'

I came across an article the other day that listed 12 ways to have a crowded funeral. Any time I come across an article that has a list in it, like 12 ways to do this or five things to be sure are present

in your life, I'll always read them. I don't actually read the article. I just scroll down and read the list to make sure I'm doing okay. Right?

If it's five ways to be a godly dad, I'll click on the article, skip the intro, skip the body, and just go down to those five ways and be like, "Okay, I'm all right there. I do that really well. I disagree with that. I struggle there." Then I just move on. This one was just particularly captivating to me, 12 ways to have a crowded funeral. There is something that is very provocative about that, right?

I read that, and I think, "Okay, a crowded funeral almost equates to a meaningful life. If there are a lot of people there to celebrate your life, then that means your life mattered. It means it had an impact. I think about my funeral. I'm like, "Man, I want the place to be packed. I want it to be standing room only. I want it to be a perfect combination of laughter and memories and sadness and grief. I want at least one person there who made a tee shirt with my face on it. I want a Coldplay song to play. I want it to be a big deal."

I read through this article, and it lists things like, "Sit on your front porch and not your back porch. Invite people over for dinner. Get to know your neighbors." It appeals to this notion that we want our lives to have meaning, we want our lives to matter. We want our funeral to be crowded because we want our lives to have been big, to make a big splash.

I read through that list, and I thought, "Okay, what am I not currently doing that I need to be doing so I do not miss out on life?" Maybe for some of you, you come at that a little bit differently, but you think in your mind, "These are the kinds of things that need to be present in my life for my life to have meaning, for my life to carry weight. If I don't do certain things, then life hasn't actually happened for me. If I never get married, if I never have kids, if I never get that promotion, if I never travel to that place..."

In some ways, waiting for life to come to us when all of those gaps are filled. Look. I'm not very old, but I realized that as I grow older, life grows more precious. The fear of squandering that precious life grows more haunting. The "I am" statement we're considering this morning cuts to the very heart of these life issues. Jesus is having a conversation with a crowd of people who are looking for life. They are after life. They are seeking life, looking to define their lives, and they believe they have found that life in Jesus.

He's a young teacher, a young miracle worker, a young prophet. If you were in the crowd on that day as Jesus is teaching, if you were in the crowd having the conversation Jesus is having, here's what you would have at least heard about and maybe even seen first hand. In the beginning of the gospel of John, Jesus has this conversation with Philip and says, "Before I met you, I saw you." He had some sort of divine knowledge, some sort of divine power.

Then maybe you would have been at the wedding where Jesus turns the water into wine. You're sitting there, and you're partying with your friends, and you drink this wine, and you're like, "Wait, this is the best wine. Why didn't they serve the best wine at the beginning?" Someone comes along and says, "No, no, no. Jesus made that wine from water." There was this buzz and this excitement. People freaked out about it.

Maybe you heard about the conversation Jesus has with the woman at the well, and all of the city is buzzing about that conversation. Maybe you heard about him healing the official's son. Maybe you were even there, and you watched a man crawl into the pool lame, and you watched Jesus have a conversation with that man, and he walks away from the pool of Bethesda healed.

What you would have been a part of if you were the crowd is you would have been a part of this rhythm of seeing Jesus heal and hearing Jesus teach. Each time that happened, it's followed by belief, followed by a crowd of people who say together, "There's life in him. We found life." When you get to chapter 6, the chapter we're in now, at the very beginning of chapter 6, what happens is the crowd has grown to thousands. It says 5,000 men, so another thousands of women and another thousands of children would have been present.

They're listening to Jesus teach, and they're getting hungry, so they start to make their plan about how they're going to go and get food. Maybe they have to go all the way back to their village or all the way back to their city. Jesus says, "No, you don't have to go anywhere." He grabs this young man. He takes his lunch. He multiplies the bread and multiplies the fish, and he feeds everyone and then some. There are leftovers.

And the people freak out. They say, "This is the one they prophesied about." Jesus has to slip out of the crowd because he knows that this crowd of thousands is about to come and take him by force to make him king. What do you have? You have a crowd of people. You have a megachurch of people who have left their homes, left their jobs, left their livelihood to follow Jesus. They are ready to

reorient their lives around this man, to make him king because they believe they have found life in him.

By the end of this conversation we just read, the thousands are reduced to dozens. There is a massive shift in the heart of the massive crowd, and many of them leave Jesus that day and never return. Verse 60 says they respond to Jesus' teaching by saying, "These are hard words. Who can listen to them?" Verse 66 says many that day turned from Jesus and no longer walked with him.

What happens? That's a devastating day for Jesus, right? To look out among the crowd, and by the end of the day, to look at your Twelve, and that's it. What happened? Jesus looks at a people who are looking for life, and he offers them a definition for life that they do not accept. That's what happens. They're coming to Jesus looking for life, and Jesus responds to that search for life and exposes the emptiness of the life they're after.

We're going to look together right now, and we'll see three things Jesus exposes in the crowd. He exposes their need. He exposes their motivation. And then with his "I am" statement, he exposes their allegiance. Let's look together at verse 25. **"When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, 'Rabbi, when did you come here?' Jesus answered them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.'"**

You know, Jesus doesn't answer their question right. He completely changes the subject. They say, "When did you get here?" He says, "You're only here because you're looking for bread." In this conversation, there is an event that the crowd references. There's an event that Jesus references. If we don't know what event that is, this could kind of feel like listening to two friends talk about a movie you've never seen.

What happens is in Exodus, God's people are in slavery, and there is this tyrant named Pharaoh who is enslaving God's people and murdering God's people and oppressing God's people, so God sends his servant Moses and sends his plagues and delivers his people from slavery with a mighty hand. He brings them out through the waters of the Red Sea and into the wilderness.

In chapter 15 of the book of Exodus, they sing a song called the song of Moses, and they're saying, "God is our deliverer. God is strong. God prevailed over Pharaoh and his chariots." Then in chapter

16 of the book of Exodus, they sing a song about how God has left them because they don't have any food. They're terribly grateful for what God has done.

What happens is they get into the wilderness, and they say, "We had food in Egypt, and we have no food here." So God provides. God sends bread from heaven called manna, and he sends enough bread, enough manna for his people every day, just enough for that day. On the sixth day, he sends enough for two days so the people could rest on the seventh day, which was the Sabbath.

God sends this manna from heaven, this bread from heaven. God sends it to his people for 40 years. Every day, they wake up. God provided. Every day, they wake up. God provided. Fast forward from that event in Exodus 16. Follow me here. Fast forward from that event a couple thousand years, and there are people prophesying about the Christ who is to come, prophesying about the Messiah who is to come.

They say that when the Christ comes, guess what is going to come with him. Bread from heaven. There is more manna that is coming. Fast forward from that prophecy another couple hundred years, and what have the people just seen Jesus do? Multiply the loaves. They see that, and they say, "Okay, this is the sign that accompanies the coming of the Messiah." They come to Jesus and start this conversation with Jesus, but Jesus knows their hearts.

They're not coming to him saying, "You provided the bread, which means you are God become man, sent to save us from our sins and save the world." They come to him and say, "Do you have any more bread?" Look at 26. **"Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal."**

This is where the conflict begins. This is where Jesus starts to expose certain things about their expectation, about their heart. First, Jesus attacks them at their need and says, "Your perceived need is not your actual need. You're coming thinking, 'There is more manna on the way. How great would it be if this guy fed us for 40 years? That would be the life.' But that's not your actual need."

In Greek, there are a few ways to talk about life. In English, we only have one, right? I could ask you two different questions with very different meanings but use the same root word for life. I could come to you, and I could say in a panic, "Is he alive?" Or I could come to you casually and say, "Hey,

how's life?" Same word, but in Greek, they have different words to express those different meanings of life. One of the words for *life* in Greek is the word *bios*, and it means physical life, material life, essentially.

In Luke 8, Luke uses this Greek word to talk about a woman who had been sick for a decade. It said she had gone from one doctor to another doctor to another doctor looking for a cure, and she spent all of her *bios* on medical bills. All of her what? All of her life, specifically all of her money, all of her livelihood, all she needed to be sustained physically.

There's another Greek word for *life* and it's the Greek word *zoe*. It's not talking about a physical life. It's talking about a life that transcends the physical, the quality of life, an eternal life. Paul uses this word for life in Romans 6:4 when he says we've been buried with Christ and raised to walk in newness of *zoe*, eternal life.

John is writing about this account, and he has these two words he can use, and you have a people who are coming to Jesus looking for bread, looking for something physically to meet their physical need, and you would expect to see the word *bios* used, but what Jesus says is, "Don't look for food that perishes, but look for the food of *zoe*, eternal life."

In other words, you have a hunger that transcends your physical hunger. Hear me. You have a thirst that transcends your physical thirst. You have a *zoe* need that you're trying to fill with a *bios* solution, and it will fail you. Jesus exposes their need. He says, "Look, guys, you are concerned with your stomach, and I am concerned with your heart."

I read about these people, and I think, "Man, they still don't get it." As I sit in a seat of judgment over them, I'm humbled by the reality that that's just the human heart, right? I'm right with them. That's the deception of the human heart. We know something is wrong. We're not foolish. You are not a foolish people. Any of you who are intellectually honest, spiritually honest, emotionally honest, you realize that things are not perfect. Something is wrong.

You and I look in the mirror. We look out the window, and we realize something has gone wrong. The question is not, "Do we agree that something is wrong?" The question is, "Do we agree with God about what that thing is?" I think often, the human tendency is to minimize our problem and then to look for a solution to our problem that we can control and that we can manage.

Maybe it manifests itself like this. "I need life. I have a problem, but my problem is the pressures of life. My problem is the circumstances of life. I will find my *zoe* in a bottle or in a drug." Or, "My problem is that I need satisfaction. I'm just incessantly dissatisfied, so I will find my *zoe*, I will find my life in the pleasures of life, in the lusts of life, in the flesh of life." Or maybe what I really need is I just need more affirmation, so I will make my *zoe* all about the opinions of others and the affirmation of others.

What Jesus is saying is that whatever you're looking to for life, that's what you're feasting on. That's your meat and your drink. That's what you're looking to for sustenance. If you find your life in things that perish, you will never be filled. That high is going to wear off. That pleasure is very fleeting. Those compliments will fade. Ultimately, none of those things will fill you because you need a *zoe* solution for your *zoe* need. It goes on in verse 28.

"Then they said to him, 'What must we do, to be doing the works of God?' Jesus answered them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.' So they said to him, 'Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

Jesus then said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.' They said to him, 'Sir, give us this bread always.'" They still don't get it. Jesus exposes their need, and to that, they respond by saying, "Obviously you're talking about some sort of higher end version of manna."

They miss what he's saying, and they think, "Okay, there is some sort of manna 2.0 that is going to fall from the sky. Tell us what we need to do to get that." Jesus exposes their motivation and says, "You're not here for me. You are here because of the benefits you get from me, not because of the relationship you get with me."

That's why they say, "What work can we do?" When you remove the relationship, that's all they have left to do, is work. "Let's barter with God." They wanted Jesus to be a mediator between them and God, giving them goods from God. They didn't want him to be a Messiah. They just wanted him to mediate. Jesus says, "All you want are benefits from me. You don't want a relationship with me."

You're not coming to me for sustenance. You're not coming to me for relationship. You're coming to me because of what you think you can get out of this."

He exposes their motivation. This is what Chandler talked about last week, right, the danger, especially in our context, of just impersonal religion and impersonal religious activity. There is a man who was a missionary several years ago, and he was ministering in a desert region. One of the ways he would serve and love the people he was ministering to is he would go into the city to get clean water because the villages had no clean water.

He would take the clean water from the city to the village and then leave that village and go to another village. He would load up a wagon, barrels and barrels full of clean water. He would take and distribute that to the people so they could live. One day, he leaves the city and takes the clean water to the first village. Then he leaves the first village to go to the second village, and he never makes it.

The villagers wait. A day passes. Two days pass. Finally, they send a party out looking for him, and they find this man in his wagon full of water, and he is dead. They take him back into the city and take him to the hospital, and the doctor looks at him and says, "He died of thirst with water all around him." Everything he needed to stay alive was within his reach, but he failed to drink.

Listen. Friends, if we are in this for the benefits of Christianity but not the Christ of Christianity, we will be that guy. We come to church, give our money, do religious things, never drink. Motivated by guilt, motivated by self-righteousness, motivated by emotionalism, motivated by friends and family, motivated by Bible Belt culture, and never drink, never taste and see.

Look. If this is us, then it will manifest itself in our lives in a very specific way. If we are in this for the benefits and not for Jesus, then there will be a disparity between the public appearance of our relationship with God and the private reality of it. We talk a lot about God, but we don't talk to God. We talk a lot about God's Word but don't read God's Word. Believing that what matters most is what everyone else says about us in the crowd instead of what God says about us in the quiet.

Look. It may be easy for us to fool a lot of people, but God is no fool. He's no fool. What will happen is that wanting the benefits of Christianity but not the Christ of Christianity, wanting things from Jesus but not wanting Jesus, that may change your schedule. It may change my schedule, but it won't change my heart. Relationships are what bring lasting change in your life, right?

I'm a huge Dirk Nowinski fan, I really am, but I'm not different because of that. That hasn't changed me. But my parents have. My wife has. My kids have. The staff at The Village Church have. You see the effects of those relationships all over me. How much truer is that with Jesus, the Christ, that if you're in relationship with him, it will change you? You will become holy as he is holy. You will conform into the image of God's Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

You will look like him, but you don't get that by circumventing a relationship with him. You don't. It's impossible. Those things don't come wanting things from him. Those things come by wanting him. He exposes their motivation. "This is why you're here." Then look at verse 35. This is where everything falls apart. **"Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.'"**

The rest of this chapter is Jesus unpacking that statement. He'll go on from here to say, "You have to eat my flesh and drink my blood," but the rest of this chapter is him unpacking that "I am" statement. "I am the bread of life," and this is the turning point for the crowd. This is the definition of life that they just cannot accept. Jesus comes and says, "I have not come to bring bread. I have come to be the bread. I have not come to improve your life. I have come to be your life." To that, they reject his definition of life.

God says that what true *zoe* is that Jesus is the, "I am the bread of life," which means that he is both the means and meaning of life, the means by which we live, and the meaning of what life is all about. But it didn't stop there. He goes on to be even more polarizing than that. He says, "Whoever comes to me in faith will never hunger. Whoever believes in me will never thirst."

Here's what Jesus is saying. Jesus looks at them and says, "I'm all you need. I am the thing you are looking for. To have me and nothing else is to have everything. Therefore, turn from whatever it is you're currently looking to for life." To that, the crowd responds and says, "Nope. Not going to do that." For them, they were fine as long as they got Jesus and the bread. They loved that guy.

They wanted to make that guy king. But as soon as Jesus demands an ounce of allegiance from them, as soon as Jesus says, "The thing you're currently looking to for life, the bread you want won't actually fill you. Turn from that and trust in me," as soon as he draws a line in the sand, the crowds, in wave after wave, walk away. They say, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"

I think maybe the most surprising thing to me in preparing for this sermon was finding out how long Jesus had been ministering at this point. When this conversation happens, it's John 6. We're not very far into the books, so you would think surely Jesus has been doing this for about a year. His entire ministry was about three years and some change. Surely at John 6, you're in maybe month 11 or something like that.

The reality is that John's gospel mostly covers the third year of his ministry. When this conversation happens, Jesus is exiting year two and entering year three. That means some of those who are walking away had been with Jesus for over two years, seen him, walked with him, heard from him. They missed him.

If I were not a pastor, I would be a storm chaser. I'm obsessed with storms. I just love them. Specifically, I love tornadoes. I get that they cause a lot of damage and destruction. I'm not making light of that, but there is something about me that is just captivated by them, captivated by their power, and I just love them. I always have.

Right out of high school, I worked for a company travelling around the state of Texas and into some other states, and they gave us a company truck, and it was this huge white truck that had a massive gold Texas star on the hood. Amen? They gave us this truck to travel around in. One weekend, we were driving on Interstate 40 into Oklahoma City.

We're getting near Oklahoma City, and I look around, and I just notice that the weather is kind of changing a little bit. It had been gray, and the sky was changing to some sort of pinkish purple, just an eerie color. I noticed that the wind was picking up. Then it started hailing. Then I noticed that we were actually the only vehicle left on the road, that everyone else had pulled over and turned their hazards on. I thought, "Okay."

I turned the radio on, and there was a weather broadcast that said, "Hey, a tornado has touched down." It didn't say, "Hey." It's very casual in Oklahoma. It said, "A tornado has touched down by Interstate 40 in between mile marker 90 and 91." I looked up, and we had passed mile marker 88. I look over at my buddy and said, "Hey man, do you think we should pull over under a bridge or something? I don't know. Maybe we should just go see it."

He just starts crawling into the back and covering himself with pillows and praying. Like an idiot, I just punched the gas like, "Let's go," and just flew down the interstate. Things got really hectic. The

wind picked up, and things were flying in the air, and the hail was just pelting this vehicle I didn't have to pay for. We were just driving and driving and driving. My eyes were peeled open looking for this thing because I knew we were close. My truck is moving on the road.

All of a sudden, we punch through the storm. Nothing. I look in my rearview mirror, and I see the storm behind me, but nothing. We drive on into Oklahoma City and do what we were there to do. Then that night, we went up to our hotel room. I turned on the TV and watched the news. They're showing this feed from the storm earlier in the day, and it's this picture of the tornado tearing through this open field.

You can see Interstate 40 in the background. I kid you not. As I'm watching, I see this white truck with a gold star drive right by. I missed it. I was right there. I felt all of the effects of this storm. I was moved by the wind, emotionally affected by the power of this thing, and I completely missed the source. That's where the crowd is. They wanted Jesus to be a meal ticket. They wanted Jesus to be a politician. They wanted Jesus to be an entertainer. They wanted Jesus to be a healer.

They wanted Jesus to conform to their own image and their own expectations, and they were around him. They were affected by him. They experienced him, were impassioned by him and impressed with him and missed him. As a result, they missed life. Friends, sincerely, I'm afraid that may be where some of us are. Maybe you've been at this a long time, been around this building even for a long time. Jesus comes, and he says, "I'm the bread of life, so turn from whatever it is you're finding life in."

My fear is that we will look at the bread that is in our hands, and we will look back at Jesus, and we will close our hands around that thing and say, "I have all the life I need right here, all of it. I have all I need in my job. I have all I need in this addiction. I have all I need in this relationship. I have all I need in my dreams. I have all I need in this sin. If you're telling me, Jesus, that to get you, I have to give up this, I don't know. I might walk away because that's not the life I'm interested in."

If that's you, then let me plead with you with this. Jesus is the only bread that will break for you. Of all the breads that are out there, Jesus is the only one who breaks for you. Of all the breads that are out there, every other bread will break you. Try it. It will perish. It will leave you wanting. It will leave you broken. Jesus comes along, and he says, "I am the bread of life." He finds us starving to death with a stomach full of Savior substitutes, eating to become hungry again, drinking to become thirsty again, looking for life and never finding it.

Jesus comes, and he says, "I am what you're looking for. I am all that you need. I am enough for you." Then he goes to the cross, and the bread of life is broken for us. He dies in our place, bears the penalty that was ours to bear, raises again in victory over sin and death so hungry sinners might feast on grace, that thirsty sinners might drink cups of forgiveness and cups of love and cups of allegiance to Jesus.

In as much as the manna from heaven came down and fed our fathers in the wilderness, Jesus is the bread of life come from heaven, and he is enough for you and me every day. That's what the disciples knew, not the false disciples, not the crowd. There are two groups having this conversation. One of the groups is the crowd, and one of the groups is the Twelve. The Twelve don't respond the way the crowd does.

Look at verse 66. **"After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the Twelve, 'Do you want to go away as well?' Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.'"**

In their response, you see the difference between true belief and false belief. What does false belief say about Jesus' words? It says, "These words are hard. Who can listen to them?" See, false belief is hardened by the Word of God. False belief is hardened by the words of Jesus. Listen. Friends, that could be happening even now. There could be some of you sitting under this word, and your heart is hardening because of something in your life, because of something you're thinking, because of something you believe, and your heart is hardening.

May that be a warning to you because true belief hears the words of Jesus and says, "Your words are life. There is life in them." True belief is softened by the words of Jesus. True belief is broken by the words of Jesus. True belief is sustained by the words of Jesus. False belief bails when the allegiance is demanded. When Jesus draws the line in the sand and says, "I am all you need," false belief looks at all of the other things and walks away.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, "Anyone who has any conceivable alternative to Jesus Christ is not a Christian." That's not what true belief is. True belief doesn't have it all figured out. True belief doesn't not wrestle. True belief doesn't have all of their questions answered. True belief just simply and basically, in a raw way, comes to Jesus and says, "Where would we go? If we left from this spot

right now, where would we go? Who has the words you have? Who has the ministry you have? There is nowhere for us to turn to but you, Jesus." That's true belief.

Four years ago, I sat right there at an Acts 29 conference. I was ministering in another church at the time and just really believed that God was going to one day move me from that church into some other work. I had known for a while he wanted me to do ministry for my life, but I wasn't sure what that looked like, so I came into that conference believing that God was going to tell me what my life plan was. I almost came in believing God owed me that because I had been doing this for so long.

I walked in, and I just hung on every word from every pastor and thought, "Okay, God. Am I going somewhere? Am I moving? Am I planting? Am I going to revitalize? What do you want me to do, and I'll do it?" I hung on every word, and that expectation built, and that anticipation built to the point where I really thought that at any turn, he could just audibly speak to me, and I would know.

Then the conference ended, and I hadn't heard anything. I went to dinner that night with the guys I had come with, and I was just anxious, and I couldn't eat, and I was stressing over it. I looked at them and said, "Guys, I just have to go pray." They said, "We'll come with you." I said, "No, I need to do this alone. This needs to just be me and God."

I dropped them off at the hotel, and I just drove and prayed. "Whatever it is, God, just tell me. Whatever you want me to do, just talk to me." I wasn't hearing anything, so I thought, "Okay, well after all of this driving, maybe I just need to find a church somewhere and go and pray." As I look around, I realize that I am not far from Lakeside Baptist Church in Duncanville, Texas, where, in 1987, my dad became the pastor, the year I was born. I grew up in that church.

I was close. I thought, "Okay, that's it. Right? That's what God's doing. I'm going to go, and there is going to be some old man there dressed like Moses who is going to give me some tablet with my life plan on it." I was confident in that. I drove, and I passed all of these things that I hadn't seen in so long, these restaurants and schools. I drove.

Guys, as I pulled into the parking lot, there was a car. It was like a Honda Civic, something Moses would drive, just sitting right in front of the fellowship hall. I go, "Okay, that's it." I get out of my car, and I go, and I knock on the fellowship hall doors, and no one comes. I knock harder, and no one comes. I bang on these doors at 11:00 at night. Then all of a sudden, the church janitor walks down the hall.

He peers through the glass, and he says, "Can I help you?" I was like, "Yeah, man. I'm just here to hear from God. Can I come in?" He goes, "No." He turns around and walks away. I was like, "Okay, God bless." I'm like, "Okay, well surely the sanctuary is open." I go around to the sanctuary doors and pull on them, knowing that one of them is going to be unlocked, and they're locked, so I just turn around and go to the steps of the church right outside the sanctuary, and I just sat down.

"Come on, God. I'll go. Just talk to me." As I'm sitting there, I look down at the steps, and I think to myself, "All of this is just so familiar. I've sat on these steps before countless times. After church, after VBS, after Awana, after all of those things you do growing up as a pastor's kid." I look over, and there is this grassy area, and that's where my brother and I used to play football together.

I look over to the side of the church, and that's where my friends and I used to climb on the roof of the church. I look across the street, and there's the parsonage there. It's where my family lived. It's where I spent the first 10 years of my life. It's where I learned to walk. It's where I learned how to pray. It's the place where I first spoke the name of Jesus.

I looked behind me at these sanctuary doors, and I remember that behind those sanctuary doors is the first place I heard God's Word preached. It's the first place I heard the gospel. It's the first place I ever lifted my hands in worship to Almighty God. It's the place where 20 years before that moment, I was baptized with my brother by my father and began to publicly follow Jesus as his disciple.

It's as if God just said, "Hey, I'm the bread of life. You don't have to be thirsty. You don't have to be hungry. Just trust me. Your life, Jamin, is not your plans. It's not you having it all figured out. Your life is me. I am your life plan." It's as if he said, "Look, I didn't bring you out here to reveal something you don't know but to remind you of what you've always known. I'm enough." He's enough.

As I sat there, and those memories flooded in, all I could do was confess to God, "God, you started all of this in recount." Countless moments from that time in my life until now where God sustained me, where he guided me where I needed direction, rebuked me when I tried to find life outside of him, picked up my face when I was downcast, and reminded me time and time again that he and he alone is the bread of life.

Where I found myself on that night on those steps is where I find myself on this day on this stage. Where would I go? That's what Peter says. "Where would we go, Jesus? What rabbi would teach us

like you? We heard you teach in the temple. Who has authority like you? We saw you walk on water. Who has power like you? We were there when you calmed the storm. Who has mercy like you? We heard you with the woman at the well. Who has courage like you? We saw you before the mobs. We saw you on trial. We saw you speak truth in the face of your accusers.

Who has faith like you? We heard you weeping in the garden where you said, 'Not my will but yours be done.' Who has loved like you? We saw you beaten. We saw you mocked. We saw you nailed to the cross board and driven into the ground. Who has grace like you? We heard you speak forgiveness over your enemies. Who has victory like you? We saw you walk over death's dead body on the way out of the grave so death has no sting, and death has no victory.

Who has a rule like you? You ascended to the right hand of the Father, and everything is in subjection under your feet. Jesus, who has an ending like you? You will burst through the clouds, and you will bring final and complete defeat over your enemies, final and complete restoration of all that was lost. Where would we go?"

I mean, I could make my life about my job, or I could make my life about my kids, or I could make my life about my body, or I could make my life about my dreams, or I could make my life about my hobby, or I could make my life about anything else and end up just as empty as I started, or I could come to the bread of life and never thirst again. Where would we go?

There is no life outside of Jesus. There is not. That's my prayer for us today, that we would arrive at that place, no matter what circumstance you're going through, no matter what level of healthy belief you're walking in, that all of us would have as that foundational confession of our heart, "Jesus, where would we go? Life is about you, Jesus."

What I would ask in closing is I would like to lead us in confessing some things together if they apply to you. If you'll just listen with me for a minute, you can go ahead and bow your head and close your eyes. As you're doing that, would you just open up your hands like this? You would bow your head and close your eyes, that you would just leave your hands open before God.

If your bread is a relationship, an idolatrous relationship, an adulterous relationship, a codependent relationship, if that's your bread, would you confess that that's a Savior substitute? As a sign of surrender, with your hands open, would you just say to God, "You and you alone can sustain me,

Jesus. As great as that guy is, as great as that girl is, they are not you. They are not the bread of life." Just confess to God, "You can take this imitation and give me yourself, the real thing."

Friends, if your bread is a substance, if it's a drug, if it's a drink, if it's a food, would you confess that it has left you empty and hungry and wanting? As a sign of surrender, would you open up your hands and say to God, "You can have this. You can have this. I want you, Jesus. I want the better bread." Listen to me, friends.

Brothers and sisters, hear me. If your bread is the approval of people, the opinions of others, would you confess that the compliments are fleeting, and the criticism is crippling? As a sign of surrender, with your hands open to God, say, "I don't need a thousand empty words I can't keep. I need your words over me that will never change."

If your bread is empty religious works, if there's no real relationship, and your hands are open, would you confess to God that who you are in the crowd is not who you are in the quiet? As a sign of surrender, with your hands open, would you confess, "Jesus, I want to know you. To not have you is to have nothing. To have you is to have everything. I want to know you, Jesus."

My prayer is that together, our hearts would say as Saint Augustine once said, "You have made us for thyself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you, God." Jesus doesn't come to his disciples and say, "You better not leave." He doesn't command them. He asks them, "Are you going to walk away too?" Maybe for some of us this morning, he's asking.

Jesus, we love you. We thank you for your goodness and your grace. I confess, Jesus, you are life, you and you alone, and I don't want to leave that. I don't want to treat you like a fool. I don't want to pretend. I want to sincerely and genuinely be sustained by you. I know you're eager to do that. We give this to you, God.

Whatever this bread is that is our hands, whatever it is that is currently failing us, whatever it is that is failing to sustain us, we give that to you. What a rich trade for us, to give up this thing and to get you in return. How merciful are you to offer that to us? We as a people want to take you up on that. Life is about you. Life is found in you, Jesus. You are the bread of life. We believe that. Help us. Amen.