

SERIES: Gospel of John: Seeing is Believing?  
 SERMON: ***Unless the Father Draws Him***  
 SCRIPTURE: John 6, Part 2  
 SPEAKER: Pastor Josh Black  
 DATE: November 27, 2011

Open your Bibles to John 6. This morning we will continue to look at the bread of life discourse. In the book of John there are a number of miracles, which are called signs. The signs tell us something significant about Jesus; not just what he's able to do, but who he is. John 6 records the 4<sup>th</sup> sign in the book of John, the feeding of the five thousand. What follows the sign is Jesus' teaching on the significance of the sign, which has been called the bread of life discourse. We will read the verses in the bread of life discourse that we didn't read last week.

**John 6:35–48, 60-71 (ESV)**

<sup>35</sup>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. <sup>36</sup>But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. <sup>37</sup>All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. <sup>38</sup>For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. <sup>39</sup>And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. <sup>40</sup>For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

<sup>41</sup>So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." <sup>42</sup>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'?" <sup>43</sup>Jesus answered them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. <sup>44</sup>No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. <sup>45</sup>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— <sup>46</sup>not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. <sup>47</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. <sup>48</sup>I am the bread of life.<sup>i</sup>

<sup>60</sup>When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" <sup>61</sup>But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, "Do you take offense at this? <sup>62</sup>Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? <sup>63</sup>It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. <sup>64</sup>But there are some of you who do not believe." (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) <sup>65</sup>And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."

<sup>66</sup>After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. <sup>67</sup>So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" <sup>68</sup>Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, <sup>69</sup>and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." <sup>70</sup>Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the Twelve?

*And yet one of you is a devil.”<sup>71</sup> He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray him.*

### ***The Offense of Exclusivity***

Last week we said that John 6 is Jesus’ church shrinkage strategy. Jesus starts with 5,000 at the beginning of the chapter and ends up with 12 at the end of the chapter.<sup>1</sup> Jesus is not trying to win a popularity contest with his audience. Rather, he says some hard things that cause the crowds and religious leaders to grumble and eventually leave. But not only do the crowds and religious leaders leave, even those who would have considered themselves his disciples leave.

Verse 60 says, “*When many of his disciples heard it, they said, ‘This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?’*” The “disciples” spoken of here are not the twelve; but they are people who had been following Jesus. And the saying is not hard to understand; it is hard to accept. In the book of John, true disciples are those who *continue* in Jesus’ teaching and believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (20:30-31).<sup>2</sup> Many of the “disciples” couldn’t accept (listen to) Jesus’ teaching (cf. v. 60). As Jesus says in verse 61, they find his teaching offensive, they “*take offense*” at it. Literally, they find his teaching scandalous, a stumbling block.<sup>3</sup> And so, verse 66 tells us “*After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.*”

But why did they leave; what was so offensive? I want to propose that the exclusive claims of Jesus are scandalous to many people. That was the case in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century and it is the case today. We live in an age of pluralism, which says there are many paths to God. We live in an age of relativism, which says there is no objective truth; what is true *for you* is true. In an age of pluralism and relativism, exclusive claims are offensive.

There are two really exclusive claims in John 6 and they both contain the word *unless*. First, in verse 53, “*...unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.*” We covered much of the significance of this verse last week. Second, in verse 44, “*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.*” The first is a claim that the only way to God is through belief in the substitutionary death of Christ (cf. Jn. 14:6). The other is a claim that the only way to believe in Christ and thus be saved is if God takes the initiative in salvation.

These exclusive claims can be offensive or scandalous, but they can also be extremely powerful. 1 Corinthians 1:22-24 says, “*For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block [offense] to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*”

I’d like to look at these 2 exclusive claims this morning and examine why they are offensive to some and why they are powerful for those who believe them.

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<sup>1</sup> White Horse Inn. “Consumers or Disciples?”

<sup>2</sup> Don Carson. *The Gospel According to John*.

<sup>3</sup> The verb “take offense” comes from the Gk. *skandalizo*.

## **WITHOUT BELIEF IN CHRIST THERE IS NO ETERNAL LIFE (v. 53)**

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As I said earlier, this exclusive claim comes from verse 53. *“Truly, truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.”*

As we said last week, Jesus’ flesh and blood are metaphors used to refer to the sacrificial death of Christ, *“for the life of the world...”* (v. 51).<sup>4</sup> And as we said last week, “eating is believing” (cf. vv. 47, 51; 40, 57).<sup>5</sup> When Jesus says, *“...unless you eat the flesh...you have no life in you,”* he is saying unless you believe in the sacrificial death of the Messiah you do not have eternal life.

### ***Unbelief***

Jesus uses different metaphors in chapter 6 to refer to belief. Eating is one.<sup>6</sup> Another metaphor for believing is *coming*. We see this in verse 35. *“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.’”* Coming to Jesus is believing in Jesus in this context.

But the crowds don’t “come to him;” they don’t believe. This is explicit in verse 36. *“... ‘But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.’”* And it is implied in verses 41. *“So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, ‘I am the bread that came down from heaven...’”* In the book of Numbers the Israelites grumbled about the manna (bread) God sent down from heaven (11:4). Their grumbling was associated with their unbelief.<sup>7</sup> I think John uses the word grumbling intentionally here in the bread of life discourse to refer to the Jews’ unbelief.

He also uses the word *grumbling* to refer to the would-be disciples’ unbelief in verses 61-62. *“But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling, said to them, ‘Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?’”* They didn’t believe Jesus claim that he was from heaven. So he says, “If you take offense at this, if this is a stumbling block for you, then wait until you see me ascend.”

Remember in the book of John ascending is often associated with Jesus being “lifted up” on a cross. While it is true that Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father, it is equally true that the path to glory is through the cross. If the disciples were offended by Jesus’ claim that he was from heaven, how much more will they be offended when their Messiah, the king of the Jews, is crucified? But if they don’t believe in his sacrificial death then they don’t have eternal life.

Look at the response in verses 66-69: *“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.’”*

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<sup>4</sup> The reference to the Passover in v. 4 helps substantiate this view.

<sup>5</sup> See sermon, “Unless You Eat the Flesh of the Son.”

<sup>6</sup> The “work of God” is another metaphor explained in the sermon “Unless You Eat the Flesh of the Son.”

<sup>7</sup> Andreas Köstenberger *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*.

So most of the people in this passage don't believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and they don't believe that it is only through his sacrificial death that they will have eternal life. But some do believe. Why do some believe and others don't? There are a few reasons, but John highlights one in particular. And that brings us to our second exclusive claim.

**WITHOUT THE EFFECTUAL CALL THERE IS NO BELIEF IN CHRIST.** (vv. 37, 44, 65)

There are some here who may disagree with the designation "effectual call" because it is associated with Calvinism. Please be patient with me and allow me to explain the meaning of this term and why I have used it. While I do hold to the Calvinistic understanding of John 6, I will also explain the Arminian position. At the end of the day, you may agree or disagree with my conclusions, but please don't tune me out just yet.

In an effort to explain this second main point, I want to borrow an outline from Sam Storms. We will look at 3 impossibilities we find in John 6.<sup>8</sup>

***1) It is impossible for a person to come to Christ apart from the "drawing" of the Father.***

Remember in verse 36 Jesus says, "...you have seen me and yet do not believe." Jesus gives the reason for belief/unbelief in both positive and negative terms. The positive is in verse 37. "*All that the Father gives me will come to me [believe]....*" The negative is in verses 44 and 65. "*No one can come to me [believe] unless the Father who sent me draws him...*" and "... no one can come to me [believe] unless it is granted him by the Father."

God takes the initiative in salvation, period.<sup>9</sup> Both Calvinists and Arminians agree on this point. Calvinists and Arminians both believe in the idea of Total Depravity. In our sin, we are unable to turn to Christ apart from God's gracious initiative. And without God's gracious initiative we wouldn't turn to Christ. In one of his sermons, Charles Spurgeon put it this way in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

If Jesus Christ were to stand on this platform tonight, what would many people do with him? If he were to come and say, "Here I am, I love you, will you be saved by me?" not one of you would consent *if you were left to your will*. He himself said, "No man can come to me except the Father who hath sent me draw him."<sup>10</sup>

***2) It is impossible for someone whom the Father "draws" not to come to Christ.***

This is where the Calvinist and the Arminian disagree. The Calvinist position is the one represented on the screen. It comes from verse 37. "*All the Father gives me will come to me.*"

The Arminian says that there is a "prevenient" grace that goes before all people to enable them to believe. The Father draws all people, but there is a choice given to all people after the Father draws them; they can believe in Christ and be saved or reject him.

<sup>8</sup> Sam Storms, *Chosen for Life*, 92-93.

<sup>9</sup> Mike Bullmore. "Salvation is from God."

<sup>10</sup> Quoted by Iain Murray. *The Forgotten Spurgeon*, 93. Emphasis mine.

It's like a man who is drowning. God initiates by throwing the proverbial life preserver to the person drowning. And God throws the life preserver to all people and all people have the opportunity to take the life preserver or reject it. They can believe if they want to and be saved or they can choose not to believe and drown.

The Calvinist says that we are already dead in the water. Dead people can't choose the life preserver. In keeping with the analogy, God must dive into the water, pull the man out and perform divine mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. The man dead in his sins must be made alive in order to believe.

In addition, the Calvinist says that God only rescues the elect, the ones the Father gives to the Son (v. 37). Verse 37 says, "*All the Father gives me will come.*" Verse 39 says, "*And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all he has given me...*" If God threw the life preserver out to everybody then why does Jesus continue to speak of the ones the Father gives to him?

Yes, salvation is for "whoever" would believe; it is for the "world;" not just for Jews, but for all peoples; pedigree doesn't matter. Salvation is for Jews and Gentiles, men and women, rich and poor, black and white, Nicodemus and the woman at the well. "Whoever" doesn't necessarily mean everybody – it means any type of person.

Lastly, the Calvinist says all of the elect *will come* (believe). It is not an invitation; it's more of a summons.<sup>11</sup> Verse 37 says, "*All the Father gives me will come.*" The late John Murray said it this way:

"It is not that he may come, not that he has the opportunity to come, not that he will in all probability come, and not simply that he is empowered to come, but that he will come. There is absolute certainty. There is divine necessity; the order of heaven insures the sequence."<sup>12</sup>

But although it is certain that those the Father draws will come, he does not coerce people to come against their will. God's elect come willingly as the Father draws them.<sup>13</sup> It is like the wooing of a lover.<sup>14</sup> I'd like to quote again from the same sermon of Charles Spurgeon:

"What!" you say, "can God *make* me become a Christian?" I tell you yes, for herein rests the power of the gospel. It does not ask your consent; but it gets it. It does not say, *will* you have it? but it makes you willing in the day of God's power...It knocks the enmity out of your heart. You say "I do not want to be

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<sup>11</sup> Kevin Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 118.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted by Sam Storms. *Chosen for Life*, 92.

<sup>13</sup> Sam Storms. *Chosen for Life*, 92; "Grace enables human freedom to do what it otherwise couldn't do." And Kevin Vanhoozer. *First Theology*, 101.

<sup>14</sup> Don Carson. *The Gospel According to John*.

saved;” Christ says you shall be. He makes your will turn round, and *then* you cry, “Lord save, or I perish!”<sup>15</sup>

This is called effectual calling – God’s calling is effective – God gets done what he intends to get done without compromising man’s will.<sup>16</sup> This is the position I hold. This isn’t what is going on consciously as someone is converted, but it’s what the Bible tells us is going on behind the scenes.<sup>17</sup> Without effectual calling there is no belief in Christ.

Allow me to summarize. People who are dead spiritually must be made alive spiritually before they can come to Christ. Verse 63 says, “*It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all.*” A person must be born again before they can believe. John 3:3 says “*Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.*”

Seeing is another metaphor used in John for believing. Sometimes John uses the metaphor of seeing to refer to everybody; sometimes only to the ones who believe. In John 1:9 we are told that the light of revelation shines upon *all people*, but we know that not all people believe in the book of John. In 6:36 we are told that the crowds see, but don’t believe. So they see in a sense, but they don’t see in a believing sense. Without spiritual rebirth we cannot see. Verse 40 says, “*For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.*”

If it’s dark in the room and the lights come on, can everybody then see? Not everybody. The blind in the room still can’t see when the lights come on. The only way a blind person can see is if they are cured of their blindness. God must turn on the lights. “*No one can come to me [believe] unless the Father who sent me draws him*” (v. 44). The dead must be made alive. The blind must be given sight.

And God doesn’t give life to everybody; he doesn’t turn on the lights for everybody. John 3:8 says, “*The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.*”

“*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him*” (v. 44). This is such an important truth for us. It is offensive to some, but it is a powerful truth. Our salvation is not based on anything we have done. It is based entirely on what God has done in Christ.

This truth is also found in Ephesians 2:8-9. “*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*” Even our faith is a gift of God. Nobody comes to Christ unless the Father grants belief (v. 65). This truth should produce in us a profound humility and gratitude.<sup>18</sup> We have absolutely no reason to boast.

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<sup>15</sup> Quoted by Iain Murray. *The Forgotten Spurgeon*, 92-93. Emphasis mine.

<sup>16</sup> This is called compatibilism. Cf. Don Carson’s *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility: Biblical Perspectives in Tension*.

<sup>17</sup> Mike Bullmore. “Salvation Is From God.”

<sup>18</sup> Mike Bullmore. “Salvation Is From God.”

Before we move on to the third impossibility we need to answer an important question about the Father drawing people to Christ. How does the Father draw? The Father draws through the Spirit. But it is not through the Spirit alone that the Father draws; it is through his Word and Spirit.

***The evangelical call always accompanies the effectual call.***<sup>19</sup> (vv. 45, 63, 68)

Verse 45 says, “*It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.*”<sup>20</sup> *Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.*” The Father uses his Word to draw people. Or in other words, the Word does the work.

Verse 63a says, “*It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all.*” We’ve established that the Spirit gives new life (rebirth), but look at verse 63b. “*The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.*” The Spirit gives life through the words of Christ. The true disciples hear the Word of Christ, they believe it and obey it, and it gives them life. That sounds like something Paul said.

**Romans 10:17** (ESV)

*17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

In verse 68 Simon Peter says, “*You [Christ] have the words of eternal life.*” Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that flows from the mouth of God (Mt. 4:4). God uses his Word to accomplish a lot. God says, let there be light and there was light (Gen 1:3). God’s Word was used in creation. Jesus says to Lazarus come out and he comes out (Jn. 11:43-44). The Word of God is effective – it is God’s means of getting his work done.

**Isaiah 55:10–11** (ESV)

<sup>10</sup> *“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven  
and do not return there but water the earth,  
making it bring forth and sprout,  
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,  
<sup>11</sup> so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;  
it shall not return to me empty,  
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,  
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*

So how does the Father draw? By his Word and Spirit. The message is the medium.<sup>21</sup> The Word does the work. The Spirit comes to the Word (advent) – this informs and empowers the Word; makes the Word effectual.<sup>22</sup> Consider this illustration from Kevin Vanhoozer.

<sup>19</sup> The evangelical call is sometimes called the external call, and the effectual call the internal call.

<sup>20</sup> Andreas Köstenberger, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Taught by God means literally disciples of God.

<sup>21</sup> Kevin Vanhoozer. *First Theology*, 120-122. “The application of salvation is first and foremost a matter of applying both the propositional content and the illocutionary force of the gospel in such a way as to bring about perlocutionary effects: effects that in this case include regeneration, understanding and union with Christ.”

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 119.

“The best analogy to adventitious grace [effectual calling] I have yet come across comes from the autobiography of Helen Keller. Her problem – how someone blind and deaf could be brought to understand language – parallels that of the sinner, one whose mind is darkened and whose ears are closed to the call of God; and indeed Keller writes of her coming to understand in terms of a religious conversion.

“When her teacher first came, she spelled words into Helen’s hand. Helen learned to imitate the finger movements that spelled various words, but she failed to understand that these movements were words. One day her teacher spelled the word *water* into one of Helen’s hands as she held the other under a spout, and the mystery of language was revealed. Helen later wrote: ‘I knew then that “w-a-t-e-r” meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. The living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free.’ Here is no impersonal physical force but a wonderful example of how communicative acts can achieve a liberating effect. Helen’s teacher, a miracle worker like the Holy Spirit, ministered the word and brought about understanding.”<sup>23</sup>

If it is the Word that does the work then we need to faithfully proclaim the gospel and call people to believe, for it is God’s means of drawing people to Christ. It is the power of God for salvation (Rom 1:16). Use the means God has delighted to use – his Word – and let the Spirit do the work the Spirit has been given to do. Let’s look now at the third and final impossibility.

### **3) *It is impossible for the person who has come to Christ to be cast out.* (v. 37)**

Verse 37 says, “*All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.*”

Verse 39 says, “*And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.*”

This is an amazing truth that flows out of the effectual call. True believers cannot lose their salvation. If our salvation is based solely on the work of God then salvation is secure because God will preserve the faith he gives. Paul says it this way.

#### **Philippians 1:6 (ESV)**

*And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

God initiates salvation and he completes salvation. The one who awakened us from our spiritual death will raise us on the last day. Belief in this truth will give those who believe great hope. Belief in this truth will give those who believe great confidence and comfort<sup>24</sup> and will help us to endure the hardships in life.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 122-123.

<sup>24</sup> Mike Bullmore. “Whom Christ Saves, Christ Keeps.”

I think of the first verse of the hymn “Blessed Assurance.” *Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine, O what a foretaste of glory divine. Heir of salvation, purchase of God, born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.*

And the last verse of “How Firm a Foundation.” *The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose, I will not, I will not desert to his foes; That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake, I’ll never, no never, no never forsake!*<sup>25</sup>

If left to ourselves we wouldn’t choose life and we wouldn’t endure in the faith. But Christ keeps all those the Father gives to him firm to the end. We don’t look to ourselves or our faith for confidence; we look to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2).

### ***Hard Words, Words of Life***

The exclusive claims of Jesus are indeed hard words to accept. There is *no way* to the Father *unless* you believe Christ died for your sins. And there is *no way* to believe that Christ died for your sins *unless* the Father draws you with his Word. In a world of pluralism and relativism these are hard words. But they are also words of hope and security. They are words of eternal life.

I will ask you the question Jesus asked the twelve. What about you? Do you want to go away as well? Will you reject these words or accept these words. I pray that you’ll accept them, for the alternative is a life lost in sin without God and without hope in this world. I pray that you’ll respond like Simon Peter; “*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*” (vv. 68-69)

Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. Believe in him and you will have life in his name.

#### **Benediction:**

#### **Numbers 6:24-26 (ESV)**

The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

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<sup>25</sup> Quoted by Sam Storms. *Chosen for Life*, 94

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<sup>i</sup> There seems to be a chiasmic structure in verses 35-38 (an inclusio at a minimum).

- A. **I am the bread** of life (v. 35a)
- B. Whoever comes to/believes in me shall never hunger/thirst (v. 35b-c)
- C. You have seen me and yet do not believe (v. 36)
- D. All that the Father gives me will come... raise up (v. 37-40)
- E. So the Jews grumbled about him because he said... (v. 41a)
- F. **I am the bread** that came down from heaven... (v. 41b-42)
- E. Jesus answered them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. (v. 43)
- D' No one can come to me unless the Father... draws him... raise up (v. 44-45)
- C' Not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God... (v. 46)
- B' Whoever believes has eternal life (v. 47)
- A' **I am the bread** of life (v. 48)