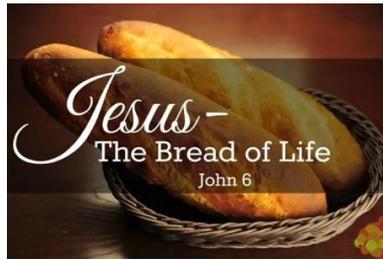


## “Following the New Hope”



Good morning to my brothers and sisters on the Isle of Man, - this morning I am taking us back to a classic movie – Star Wars Episode IV – “A New Hope.”

There are two scenes in this movie I would like for us to recall and apply to how we approach what we are traditionally comfortable with vice having faith in something that is vastly more powerful. Please pay attention to two parallels found in this movie, the first being when Luke Skywalker begins lightsaber training aboard the Millennium Falcon when he squares off against the remote droid. You see Luke first without a helmet visor in which he can see and defend against the laser shots. Next you see Han Solo doubt the “force.” Obi-Wan changes up the scenario and makes Luke don a helmet visor that blacks out his sight and Luke must rely on the “force” to defend against the remote droid’s lasers. After a one “zap” you see Luke get a little frustrated but after using his “feelings” and “instincts” he is able to garner the “force” and defend against the remote droid. The second scene is when Luke is making his battle run against the battle star and is flying in the trench. You see Luke drop down his targeting computer, but then you hear Obi-Wan’s voice telling Luke to “use the force” and “to let go...trust me...” next you see Luke struggle with this decision, but ultimately he decides to lift up the targeting computer and trust the “force.” The rebel command center is confused and broadcasts “Luke you switched off your targeting computer” and Luke responds with “nothing, I’m alright.”

You might be asking the same thing as the rebel command center, why is Scott talking about Star Wars and using the “force?” How does this apply to “the Bread of Life.” It is simple, John is giving us a “New Hope” and Christ is the bread of life. But to first understand what is the bread of life, we need to understand what Jesus means and why He brings up “manna.”

So what is manna? In Hebrew it is “man hu” translated as “What is it?” Well what is it – a gift from God. When the Jewish people escaped Egypt and crossed over the Red Sea, unfortunately they ran out of the food. As we find this story in Exodus Chapter 16, they

began to grumble, recalling the meals they had enjoyed when they were slaves. The Lord told Moses he would rain down bread from heaven for the people. That evening quail came and covered the camp. The next morning, when the dew evaporated, a white substance covered the ground. In Exodus 16:14 and Exodus 16:31, manna is described as a fine, flaky substance, white like coriander seed, and tasting like wafers made with honey. Moses instructed the people to gather an omer, or about two quarts, for each person each day. When some of the people tried to save extra, it became wormy and spoiled. Manna appeared for six days in a row. On Fridays, the Hebrews were to gather a double portion, because it did not appear on the next day, the Sabbath. And yet, the portion they saved for the Sabbath did not spoil. In the ESV, which is the bible version we use, the title of this chapter is the "Bread from Heaven." Let us pay attention to the propositional phrases of "from" and the contrast to how John uses "of."

Let us now transition to today's Gospel "the Bread of Life." Of all the Gospels, we only find John connecting Christ and Bread and that Christ is the Bread of Life. Strangely, you might expect Matthew to extensively connect Christ and Bread, but we only see John strongly emphasizing this theme. Many centuries later, we find Christ repeating the miracle of bread in the feeding of the 5000 and the 4000 which are found in all four Gospels. But it is John who connects Christ to Bread. John points this out in verses 43-44 where he connects to what Christ refers to in Exodus, "Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day." Here John is stressing that Christ is the "New Hope" and the old ways are no more. John really is focused on telling his followers to stop with the old ways – meaning the Old Covenant – and follow the New Covenant, which is the Bread of Life – Christ.

I had mentioned early the propositions of "from" and "of", yes – this is English not Hebrew or Greek, but with thousands of scholars, I think we can trust the translation. In Exodus we see "from" heaven but now we are seeing "of" which I would like for us to interpret as static and everlasting where as "from" is temporary and for periods of time for sustainment. John is very clever on how he records what Christ is saying. We see Christ frequently referring to himself as the Bread: "My Father gives you the true bread from heaven" (John 6:32), "the bread of God" (John 6:33), "the bread of life" (John 6:35, 48), and (John 6:51) "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."

For us to make this connection from John's Gospel, Christ is the Bread of Life because it is His sacrifice (his flesh) that provides the means for everlasting life and salvation where as manna sustained the life of the Israelites during their exodus from Egypt. Understanding our covenant, it is a binding promise with God, where we promise obedience to his

commands, in order to be given eternal life. The Jews depended on the God for daily manna to sustain them temporally; however, the bread of the sacrament renews our covenant weekly. Hence, John, throughout all of Chapter 6, pleads with his followers to follow the New Covenant. The New Covenant is the “Bread of Life” which is Christ.

Now at this point of the sermon, you are wondering why did I bring up Star Wars and those two scenes in the movie. First, I want us to vividly remember to trust in Christ. In both of these scenes, you see Han Solo doubting the “force” and then the rebel command questioning Luke’s decision not to use the “targeting computer” and Luke’s decision to trust in the “force.” From a hermeneutical standpoint, this is exactly what John (Obi-Wan) is telling us (Luke) to do – to trust in Christ. Second, it is understanding that the Bread of Life is the “New Hope” for our church. It is also part of our work to bring new hope and to proclaim the Good News to those who doubt. We are his witnesses who testify the Scriptures and to be one with the force – the “Bread of Life.” Amen!