

John 6.22-40 / COB / 05.11.14

Introduction

- † **[Slide 1: Peter's house]** Two questions.
- † First, if you experienced a miracle on your way here today, wouldn't you share it with the rest of us? Suppose you were driving along and a dump truck was about to smash into your car, but an angel suddenly moved your car out of the way? Or what if the truck did hit your car and smashed it to pieces, but you walked away without a scratch, when you got to church, wouldn't you be praising God for your deliverance, telling everyone about it? Of course you would.
- When I had my neck surgery, I had been in constant discomfort or pain for about a decade. I couldn't remember what it felt like to be without it. After the surgery, I woke up, the Morphine faded, and I was free! I had no pain, no discomfort! I felt a lot like when I was first born again! Do you think I went to church the next day and asked if I could stand up and praise God for what he had done for me at both services? You bet I did.
 - Keep that in mind for later in the sermon. It will help us understand something.
- † Second question: What if God had not delivered for me? What if the surgery had not been successful, or even worse, what if I tragically had been paralyzed? Would I have been willing to continue praising God and walking in faith?
- I have a friend, whom I hope you will meet someday, named Chris. Chris did something stupid one day, and it left him paralyzed. But now he praises God for allowing him to be paralyzed, because he is convinced that he would never have come to faith in Jesus if he had remained on this previous path. That is an astounding level of discernment and submission. And now Chris spends his days sharing his testimony, sharing the gospel, and working with at-risk youth, from his wheelchair, constantly praising God.
 - Keep this in mind also, because I think sometimes we demand that God or Jesus give us what we want, and if we don't get it, then we react by weakening in our devotion, weakening in our obedience, or weakening even in our willingness to depend on them. In this sense, we are demanding a sign from Jesus. That will be relevant later in this sermon also.
- † Today, we are going to begin at John 6.22. This is the beginning of the Bread of Life discourse, a little sermonette by Jesus. We will look at half of it today and the other half next week.
- Jesus is going to point out some things about the crowd that we might find convicting ourselves, but he also is going to share some truth that we should find thrilling. Let's pray, and then we'll take a look...

[Slide 2: 6.22-24] John 6.22-24 NET: ²²The next day [the day after Jesus miraculously fed thousands] the crowd that remained on the other side of the lake realized that only one small boat had been there, and that Jesus had not boarded it with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. ²³But some boats from Tiberias came to shore near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. ²⁴So when the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and came to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

- † The crowd was on the east side of the lake, where the miraculous feeding had occurred. They realized the disciples had gone in the only boat, without Jesus, so where was Jesus? They couldn't find him, because in the middle of the night he had gone walking off across the water, so they left in the boats that stopped by the shore.
 - Many of them would have had to walk, for – as we said last week – there were thousands of people there. Probably, most of them had already set off for home, but – of those who remained – as many as could fit in the boats went off across the lake.

[Slide 3: 6.25-27] John 6.25-27 NET: ²⁵**When they found him on the other side of the lake, they said to him, “Rabbi [which was a term of respect for a religious teacher], when did you get here?”** ²⁶**Jesus replied, “I tell you the solemn truth [this is ἀμὴν ἀμὴν, truly truly, which Jesus uses to signal something important is coming], you are looking for me not because you saw miraculous signs, but because you ate all the loaves of bread you wanted.** ²⁷**Do not work for the food that disappears, but for the food that remains to eternal life– the food which the Son of Man will give to you. For God the Father has put his seal of approval on him.”**

- † Last week, we saw that the crowd began to wonder if Jesus was the Great Prophet whom Moses had predicted would come, because Jesus miraculously fed them with bread and fish. And they got so excited by this miracle, that they wanted to make Jesus their king, expecting he would deliver them to independence from Rome just as Moses had led the Jewish people out of oppression in Egypt.
 - **[Slide 4: 6.26]** But here, Jesus reveals that they got excited because they were well fed, not because they really understood the sign, the significance of the miracle. They see Jesus as a potential political deliverer, but they do not understand who he is as the Son of God and savior from sin and death.
 - They want what he could give them in this life – political independence, greater freedoms, and prosperity – but they are not seeking what he wants to give to them: eternal life, spiritual freedom from sin, guilt, and evil, and personal significance and purpose that would transcend their circumstances.
- † **[Slide 5: 6.27]** Just like these people, we today are apt to seek from God blessings or even miracles that bring benefits related to our physical lives. But Jesus says people should seek something better. He says to seek food that is eternal and thus sustains eternal life.
 - In Florida, LeeAnn and I for a time were leading a Bible study in our neighborhood. We had two ladies coming every week, and we would study the Bible, encourage each other in life, and pray together. One week, one of the ladies said to us, “You always pray about your French doors; is that really your biggest concern?” We were trying to install two sets of French doors, but they were defective, and this really weighed on us because our house was not secure, we had gaping holes to the outside because the installation was incomplete, to us a lot of money was involved, and Home Depot was resisting replacing the doors. We were trying to guide this lady spiritually, but God used her to give us a kick in the pants about the focus of our prayer life!
 - We tend to worry a lot about what we want in this physical life, but Jesus wants us to think about what we need in spiritual life. Jesus’ main thought was about people finding salvation through faith in him; but even Christians make this mistake in emphasis during their prayers, so I hope you will do the devotion this week, and reflect on the types of things you pray to receive. It’s ok to seek physical blessings, but we should seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.

- This is also a mistake we make in how we invest our time. Jesus wants us to invest in his kingdom – in his gospel mission and the church’s ministry – and to invest in becoming righteous, not so much in career development, material prosperity, or worldly pleasures.

† **[Slide 6: seal of approval]** Jesus says we should seek the eternal food, but only Jesus can give us this spiritual food, because only he is the Son of Man, certified by God the Father.

- In case you don’t remember, the Son of Man was a figure from Old Testament prophecy in the book of Daniel. In Daniel’s prophecy, the Son of Man was the one whom God chose to rule in God’s name over the earth for eternity. God has certified – or put his official seal on – Jesus, this Son of Man.

[Slide 7: 6.28-29] John 6.28-29 NET: ²⁸So then they said to him, “What must we do to accomplish the deeds God requires?” ²⁹Jesus replied, “This is the deed God requires– to believe in the one whom he sent.”

† Jesus stressed the need to seek eternal benefits rather than temporal ones, but the people fixated on his use of the term “work.” So here they ask what they need to do to please God and receive the food that is eternal in nature.

- The reply of Jesus is super important: what we need to do to get right with God and have eternal life is to believe in the one whom God sent! We are to believe in Jesus, the Son of God who came to earth as a man.
- God does not require works or deeds; he does not require us to earn our way to eternal life [in fact, we couldn’t]; instead, God requires faith, specifically faith in Jesus the Christ!
- Now, those of you who already believe, there is a lesson in here for you too. While it is true that God saved you for a purpose – which we are going to discuss in a couple of weeks – and so it is true that God has expectations for you regarding your attitudes and behaviors, it still is true that you cannot do anything to get right with God. Even as a believer, the way to stay right with God is through faith. It is faith in who Jesus is and faith in what he has done, is doing, and will do for you, that brings your mind to focus on God, your heart to repentance, and thus your relationship to harmony.
- If you have been trying to earn God’s love or prove your worthiness, give it up! Only through complete dependence on Christ can we satisfy God the Father.

[Slide 8: 6.30-31] John 6.30-31 NET: ³⁰So they said to him, “Then what miraculous sign will you perform, so that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?” ³¹Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, just as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

† The people are quoting from Psalm 78.24, which describes the events of Exodus 16. When the Israelites were wandering in the desert wilderness, God miraculously provided manna, a bread-like substance, to feed them.

† Now, this dialogue is interesting. First of all, Jesus just the day before had miraculously fed many thousands of people; second, the fact that he miraculously fed them bread so close to the Passover holiday had caused many in the crowd to believe he was the Greater Moses Prophet. Yet, the very next day, here they are demanding a sign so they can believe in him! What is going on with these people?

- Some scholars figure the crowd in Capernaum this day must have been composed of some who had seen the miracle and others who had not, and it was the latter who asked for the sign. But if you had just experienced the miracle feeding of thousands of people the previous day, would you not be telling everyone you saw? So why would there be people in the crowd who didn't know about it?
- One scholar, D. A. Carson, in his commentary on John, says he thinks that the feeding miracle was enough to spark speculation that Jesus was the prophet promised by Moses, but that speculation in turn suggested to the crowd that they had a right to expect even more spectacular signs to validate that Jesus was an even more powerful prophet than Moses.
- The devotion this week explores ways that we might put Jesus to the test, ways in which we might fail to show devotion or dependence if Jesus does not perform up to our expectations. I hope you will take some time this week to reflect on these questions. You don't want to be inadvertently demanding a sign of Jesus.
- If I were Jesus, I probably would be exasperated with the attitudes of people most of the time. I know I would have been exasperated with these people in Capernaum! Let's see how Jesus reacted...

[Slide 9: 6.32-33] John 6.32-33 NET: ³²Then Jesus told them, "I tell you the solemn truth [ἀμὴν ἀμὴν], it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but my Father is giving you the true bread from heaven. ³³For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

- † Even the manna was from God, not Moses. But Jesus has more important points to make. The manna was perishable and so the people who ate it eventually perished too. Now God provides the true bread from Heaven, which lasts to eternal life and thus can sustain eternal life.
 - And this bread is Jesus, the Son of God who came from Heaven to give life to the world!
 - So not only does Jesus provide the bread of life, he is the bread of life, and not just for the Jews, notice, but for the world.

[Slide 10: 6.34-36] John 6.34-36 NET: ³⁴So they said to him, "Sir, give us this bread all the time!" ³⁵Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. The one who comes to me will never go hungry, and the one who believes in me will never be thirsty. ³⁶But I told you that you have seen me and still do not believe.

- † Jesus offers himself as life-giving bread that will sustain these people forever and give them eternal life! And they say, "Sir, give us this bread all the time." They were having trouble grasping the true significance of what Jesus was saying. They still were thinking in terms of worldly blessing.
 - Your Bible might say they addressed Jesus as "Lord." The Greek word for "Lord" and "Sir" is the same. So you can think of them calling him "Lord," but they meant it as a polite address, they did not believe in his divinity yet.
- † **[Slide 11: 6.35 οὐ μὴ]** I think our English translations under emphasize what Jesus says here. He uses the Greek term "οὐ μὴ," which Greek grammar scholar Daniel Wallace calls the strongest way to negate something in Greek.

- Based on what Wallace says, I would translate v.35 like this: “Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; the one coming to me certainly will not hunger, and the one believing in me certainly will not thirst ever.’”
 - If you believe in Jesus, he guarantees you will never lack for anything spiritually.
- † **[Slide 12: 6.35 verbs]** Note the parallelism between coming to Jesus and believing in Jesus. To John, these are the same thing, the positive response to Jesus that we think of as “saving faith.”
- It is not brought out well in the English translation, but Jesus and John use the present participle to emphasize the continuous nature of coming and believing. This is not a one time, pray the prayer, and then forget about Jesus while you go your merry sinful way. True faith is continuous, it is coming to Jesus, believing in him, all the time.
 - That doesn’t mean we never have questions, doubts, or fears, but it means we keep coming, keep believing in Jesus.
 - And if we do come, we do believe, then we will be satisfied forever; we will never hunger or thirst for spiritual things, if we are coming and believing in Jesus.
- † **[Slide 13: 6.34-36]** Sadly, in v.36, Jesus notes that they don’t really believe yet. Jesus said the same thing to the religious leaders in Judea in chapter five, and now he says it to the people in Galilee.
- The crowd sees in Jesus a man gifted by God, a prophet and potential king, but they do not see the Son of God. They see bread and power, but not what they signify.
 - What about us? We know who Jesus is, but do we live like it? Do you live like Jesus is your God and king? What would that imply? Wouldn’t you have to do everything Jesus commanded? And wouldn’t you have to put him first all the time?
 - Do you live like that, or do you live like he is just a kind provider of blessings? In other words, do you live your own way, seeking blessing on what you want to do when you want to do it? Or do you live for Jesus, submitting and sacrificing, to do what he wants, when he wants, even though it might not be attractive to you?
 - The young men in Christian Service Brigade memorized a passage from 1 Corinthians, in which Paul said, “So let the one who thinks he is standing be careful that he does not fall” [10.12 NET]. We all are vulnerable to making this mistake. We require daily focus and discipline to put our desires behind the will of Christ and the needs of others.
- [Slide 14: 6.37-40]** John 6.37-40 NET: [Jesus continued] **Everyone whom the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will never send away.** ³⁸**For I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me.** ³⁹**Now this is the will of the one who sent me—that I should not lose one person of every one he has given me, but raise them all up at the last day.** ⁴⁰**For this is the will of my Father—for everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him to have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”**
- † Again in v.37, we have “οὐ μὴ”: If God gives you to Christ, then you will come in faith to him, and he *certainly* will not cast you out or send you away. We have seen before that Jesus said he came to do the will of God the Father, so of course he will not turn away anyone the Father gives to him.

- † **[Slide 15: 6.39-40]** And the will of God the Father is that nobody given to Jesus should be lost, but rather they each would be saved all the way through the bodily resurrection at the end.
 - It is the will of God the Father that everyone believing in Jesus will have eternal life, which guarantees resurrection to life on the last day.
 - If you have an ESV or NASB, they confuse the Greek pronouns and talk about things instead of people, but the context is clear: God the Father chooses people, those people invariably come in faith to Jesus, or come to faith in Jesus, and thus their salvation is guaranteed right through to the end.

- † I want to talk about this guarantee a little. This is the thrilling part. Think through this with me.
 - If we cannot earn our salvation, as we noted a few minutes ago, then we cannot unearn it either. Salvation is a gift from God, it is grace, which is unmerited favor, a gift when we did not deserve it. So as our sense of our merit or deserving goes up and down, that does not change the fact that God gave us this gift.
 - When we sin [go against God's will for us], we will experience real negative effects, but we cannot lose our salvation. Jesus will say later in this gospel [10.27-29]: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."
 - The Bible says that with his sacrifice, Jesus made peace for us with God about all our sins [1 John 2.2]. So our salvation is based on Jesus' righteousness, not on our own. And Jesus now is in Heaven, advocating for us so that we receive mercy instead of judgment.
 - When we come to faith, we are born again as the Holy Spirit regenerates us spiritually. This is not something that can be undone.
 - Also, the Holy Spirit baptizes us into Christ to identify us with Christ in the spiritual sense, and indwells us as our seal to guarantee salvation right through the day of resurrection.

- † Jesus says he will not lose a single person God the Father has given him, because he is the eternal food that can sustain eternal life. If you have put your faith in Jesus, you can rest assured that you will go to Heaven when you die and you will be resurrected to new physical life at the end of this world.
 - Let's pray...