

The Good News of God's Effective Call

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[0 : 00] So if you have your Bibles open, we're going to be looking there at John chapter 6 verse 35 to 40. So we're thinking again about the good news of redemption.

! And here we're thinking about the good news that God's call is effective. We're thinking about the difference between possibility and certainty.

I imagine we know the difference and we know that the difference matters as we come to exam season. There is the big difference between I might possibly get an A or B and the certainty when you get your results in.

Or the difference between looking to buy a house and you begin to picture yourself in that house and you make an offer on it. That's still just possibility until all the paperwork is agreed and you have certainty that you are a new homeowner.

Rescue at sea. There's a world of difference between possibility and certainty. Whether we're in the lifeboat, safe and secure, we've been hauled on board, versus you're still in the water and you're struggling to stay afloat and you see the boat in the far distance.

[1 : 13] There's a big difference between possibility and certainty. The question is then, which is it when it comes to salvation? When it comes to the call of God the Father?

When it comes to the work of Christ the Son on the cross? When it comes to the work of new birth from the Holy Spirit? Is that possibility or certainty?

And I imagine we can see why the difference matters and the answer matters. And so it's really good news for us that none other than Jesus supplies the answer for us in John chapter 6.

As Jesus finds himself speaking to a really skeptical, hostile audience, who just the day before have borne witness to a great miracle, feeding of the 5,000.

They've seen his great power. They've seen his great power. But still they have many questions. Well, when it comes to salvation, Jesus wants to make clear to us is that we're not dealing with mission possible.

[2 : 21] Jesus hasn't come simply to create the potential that people might be saved. He has come in order that there would be a mission accomplished.

That he will, through his work, that God the Father, the Son, and the Spirit will be effective in creating new life and saving people. And so we're going to hear Jesus make clear that God certainly saves all those he calls.

That God's grace is effective. God's sovereign rule overrules. God's work through his Son makes it certain without a shadow of a doubt.

So why do we call this good news? Well, perhaps as Christians we think, well, it's apparent. But if mission is accomplished and God's call is effective, then that means if we are in Christ we can rest secure in the work that God our Father has done.

In the work that Jesus, his Son, has done. It is his work and it cannot and it will not fail. I would also suggest it's good news for us in our mission.

[3 : 38] So think about the fact that we have Jesus. Here's the Son of God. Here's the greatest teacher who ever lived. And there's thousands of people in front of him. The majority of people who don't believe.

And yet he doesn't consider for a second that his mission is failing. And like Jesus, don't we often find ourselves sharing our faith when many resist and many don't believe?

Well, here's a reason for us to persevere. We can persevere knowing that God's mission established before we were even born. His plan to save his chosen people cannot and will not fail. And that gives us the freedom to present Jesus freely and boldly to anyone that we meet. Trusting that God will do his work. But I would also suggest as we think about this, this is also good news if

you're here today and you're not a Christian.

Because the message of Christianity is that you and I were not being called to do the impossible. If all that happened was Jesus made it possible that we be saved and we had to do the rest, then we would all of a sudden then find ourselves in a position where we would have to be good enough by ourselves to satisfy the demands of a perfectly holy God.

[4 : 57] We would find ourselves on that ladder having to try and earn our way into the kingdom. But rather, Jesus says it's something entirely different. There's one thing we need to do and one thing only, Jesus said, is to believe in him.

To trust in God's mercy and grace, which strikes me as good news and freedom. So as Jesus teaches us here about God's effective call, there's three things that we need to hear.

The first, and it's there in verse 35 and 36 probably, is the universal call of the gospel. Okay, so just to give ourselves a bit of context, what's been happening in John 6.

Jesus has performed one of those signs recorded in John's gospel. He's provided bread in the wilderness for some 5,000 plus people. Just as God in the Old Testament had provided that manna, that bread from heaven in the desert, so Jesus has come as God the provider.

And then after that, Jesus has come walking on the water to his disciples in the middle of the night during a storm. And so we're also being reminded that Jesus is none other than God who rules over creation.

[6 : 07] And it's now the next day, and the enthusiasm about the past miracle has been spreading. And Jesus knows it. So in verse 26, he says to them, Very truly I tell you, you're looking for me not because you saw the signs I performed, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.

So he knows that there's a crowd in front of him, and they're being drawn, not by his signs pointing to his glory, but because they want another meal. They're drawn by the bread, and maybe they're drawn by the miraculous power that Jesus has.

For them, Jesus is useful, not glorious. I think we see certain aspects of that in our own day. There are groups who will grab onto aspects of Jesus' teaching.

Perhaps it's his care for the poor. Perhaps it's recognizing the value of forgiveness. So they'll take the teaching, but they won't recognize Jesus as Lord. He is useful. Christianity is useful, but they don't see Jesus as glorious.

Well, into that context, how does Jesus share the gospel? How does he speak about himself and his work? Well, look at verse 35, and we hear Jesus declare one of those I am sayings.

[7 : 22] I am the bread of life. So here's one of these moments where Jesus takes a title of God, and he applies it to himself. I am.

And he says, I am the bread of life. In verse 27, he tells them to work for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. So he's talking about satisfying an eternal need. He is speaking about himself as the way to know life with God, to enjoy eternal life from God. How does he do it?

Verse 51 gives us a clue. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. So as Jesus talks about himself as the bread of life, he also anticipates that he is that bread that will be given, that will be broken for the world.

In other words, Jesus is saying that the way he gives true life is by going to the cross to die in our place for our sins before rising again. He can satisfy what we need because he comes as our substitute and as our sacrifice.

[8 : 41] And in that work, there is forgiveness and there is peace with God. Now notice his call to respond. Verse 35, whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

So notice, he gives that invitation without any barriers. He's not saying, okay, there's one type of people that this is for, and the rest of you close your ears. The call to believe goes far and wide. Now what does Jesus know at this point? Verse 36, as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. So he's offering the call to come to him and find life at the same time as he knows that there are many people who are saying no to Jesus.

And they're saying no to the call of the gospel. They're saying no to the invitation to life. And we know that's not a neutral thing. The Bible tells us that we're all held responsible for our response to Jesus.

And if we reject the king, then we are held responsible for that. But Jesus knows there are those standing right in front of him. They've seen his power and his glory. They've heard his claims and his teaching.

[10:00] But still they're resisting his offer of life. It's a pattern we can still trace today. The call to repent and to believe goes out to all people.

Everybody should bow to Jesus as the creator king. It is a message of good news. It brings salvation and true life. It calls for a response. But many people still say no.

But still we need to hear the universal call of the gospel if we are to be saved. One or two things before we move on. We've been thinking a lot recently.

It's been really encouraging to hear about it, especially with Gen Z, that report of spiritual searching. Maybe some of you have read the reports. There's been this big spike in the sale of Bibles. And church attendance is on the up. And spiritual interest is growing. And all of that is really encouraging. And we give thanks. But you know, we have a responsibility to keep praying.

[11:03] And to keep proclaiming Jesus. Because we don't want people to fall short. Where they maybe only encounter him as useful.

We don't want people to stop short of encountering him as Lord and Savior. So we need to not rest on that. But we need to pray that all of those people who are seeking would be found by Jesus.

I also find myself reflecting on the fact that Jesus uses this imagery of bread. And bread speaks to us of food and of hunger and of appetite. Now I don't know about your house at the moment.

But our house, post Easter, is one that is still kind of bad news for good diet choices. And I can say that because I was preparing this where I should have gone downstairs and got a carrot.

But instead I found myself a bag of mini eggs. But you know that thing where you've got like a cupboard that's full of chocolate. And you've got a basket that's full of fruit. And you know what you should take.

[12:08] But at the same time you know what you're going to take. It's a struggle to change our appetite. Even when we know what is truly good for us.

We don't always choose wisely. And that's a spiritual issue as well. So if we've been around church for a while, perhaps for decades.

We know who Jesus is. That he is the Lord who gives life. That he is the one who can truly satisfy. That time with him and his word and his prayer, there is nothing like it.

But don't we know our hearts as well? How so often we satisfy ourselves with lesser things. How we fill our time with things that are less than Jesus and his word.

And so as we hear the invitation to come to Jesus and to eat and to live. As Christians we need that grace fueled discipline.

[13:11] To decide to choose what is really good and healthy for us. So that we would find ourselves picking up our Bibles instead of just picking up our device and scrolling aimlessly.

So that we would make time to be alone with God. Rather than just living in a life that's full of noise. That we make the effort to come to church or to gather with other Christians or to go and do some service.

Rather than sitting on our comfortable sofa. We need grace fueled discipline for those good habits. And the way Jesus speaks here also reminds us of what we are called to.

And what is central to our mission. What do we invite people into? We invite people to church. We invite people to Jesus. We're not inviting people to a set of spiritual practices.

Though many of those disciplines and habits are really good. We're not inviting people into church as a social club. Though community and fellowship is obviously good.

[14:24] We are inviting people to Jesus the Savior. To believe in Jesus as God. The one who alone can satisfy and give eternal life.

Our call and our mission is to invite others to taste and see. That Jesus is good. That they would come to him.

So there's the universal call of the gospel. But the second thing that we need to hear. Is the effective call of God. When we think about the good news of redemption.

That is the effective call of God. And we see that from verse 37 to 40. But again just to think about this principle in life. And you'll have had this experience I'm sure.

That the same message or the same story. Heard by a group of people. Can produce very different effects. On that group of people.

[15 : 24] South Africa and the cinema. Is an amazing place to go for entertainment. Because what happens among the movie goers.

Is always by my limited experience. Far better than whatever is showing on the screen. I have never been in a place where people get so into a movie.

We went to watch Shrek. Shrek's fairly funny. You felt like you were watching a different movie. People were falling off their seats with laughter. Tears rolling down their faces.

At what seemed an average moment. But maybe you've had that experience. You have a book that's really important to you. It moves you to tears every time you read it. You share it with a friend. And they shrug their shoulders. The same message. But different responses. It's the same pattern. When the good news of Jesus is proclaimed. Think about your personal experience.

[16 : 24] If you're a Christian. If you were converted by a particular message. Maybe even by a particular book. That was probably unique to you. The sermon that God used to convert me.

Didn't have the effect on the other people in the car. That I was traveling with. Jesus spoke about that. In the parable of the sower and the soils. He always said. That when the message is heard. There would be some. Where the message would be. In one ear and out the other. There will always be some. Who will give up. The idea of following Jesus. When life gets hard. There will always be some.

Who choose money. Or job. Or relationship over Jesus. But there will always be some. Who believe. And live. And bear fruit. That's because of the effective call of God.

It's interesting that Jesus himself. Experienced it. Those times when we get discouraged. Perhaps when we don't see much in the way of fruit. Remember Jesus knew that experience.

[17 : 27] And he knew. That God's saving plan was still effective. And he didn't lose any. Just a little bit further. From where we read verse 66.

As Jesus says some hard sayings. From this time. We're told many of his disciples. Turned back and no longer followed him. You do not want to leave too. Do you? Jesus asked the twelve. Simon Peter answered. Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words. Of eternal life. We have come to believe. And to know that you are the holy one of God. A whole crowd. Leaving Jesus. But there are some.

Who come to know. And to believe. That he is the holy one of God. How do we explain it? Jesus takes us there. Takes us to the heart of salvation. So as you listen carefully.

To Jesus teaching about salvation. We discover a few things. So first of all in verse. 37. We discover the source. Of salvation. All those the father gives me.

[18 : 30] Will come to me. Or again in verse 44. No one can come to me. Unless the father who sent me. Draws them. So the source.

Of salvation. Is God the father. His effective call. On a person's life. Perhaps we can think about. The call of God. In the life of Abraham.

Leave and go. To the land of promise. Or if you were here this morning. You would have heard it. In slightly different language. In Ephesians chapter 1. Verse 4.

God the father chose us. In Christ. Before the creation of the world. Chapter 1 verse 11. In Christ. We were also chosen. By the father.

Having been pre-tested. According to the plan of him. Who works out everything. In conformity. With the purpose of his will. So God's effective call. Works in such a way.

[19 : 24] That a group of people. Can hear the same gospel message. And God works powerfully. In the heart of. Of a boy or a girl. Or a man or a woman. That he has. Chosen to save.

And he calls them. And draws them. To the son. In the power of the Holy Spirit. And so Jesus reminds us. That the father of love and grace. He doesn't simply.

And this is a wonderful thing. He doesn't just. Plan our salvation. From before the world was ever made. No he has such a longing. To bring his adopted children home.

That he wills to save. And he acts to call. And so for those of us. Who are here tonight. As Christians. We need to know. That we are always loved.

And valued. By our father. He is the source. Of our salvation. But it's important too. That we think about this. Summons. That comes.

[20 : 23] And we're used to summonses. Children in a house. Will get summons. It's time to leave. Come and set the table. For dinner. We might get a court summons.

If we're lucky enough. To be called. For duty duty. There are words. Of authority. That call us. To do something. But those words.

Can be ignored. They shouldn't be. But they can be. When it comes. To God's call. When it comes. To God's summons. It's very different. Because with God's summons. He has the power. Both to offer life. And. To create life.

He doesn't just make salvation. Possible. He gives new life. To make it certain. See here in verse 40. For my father's will.

[21 : 22] Is that everyone. Who looks to the son. And believes in him. Shall have. Eternal life. Everyone who looks. Shall have. Or again. Verse 44.

No one can come. To me. Unless the father. Who sent me. Draws them. And I will raise them up. At the last day. There is cause. And effect. God calls. And there is new creation life.

Like when Jesus. Stands in front. Of the tomb. Of Lazarus. And calls to him. Lazarus. Come out. That summons. Both offers life.

And creates life. In Lazarus. And the father. Does the same. For us. Creating life. In spiritually. Dead. People. So the summons.

That the father. Gives. It brings. With that. A heart transplant. You know the way. Jeremiah talks about it.

[22 : 19] Turning our heart of stone. To a heart of flesh. So that we can receive. God. And his salvation. God. But that summons. Also affects. As it were.

A hostage rescue. So that while previously. We were slaves to sin. Held in bondage. So that we're unable. To choose for God. And unable to choose. What is good.

Now with this call. That. That stranglehold. Is broken. And we can choose. And we do. Come. To believe. And all of this.

Is connected. To God's. Sovereign grace. Because God is king. Because he is the authority. His call. Will be answered.

It will be effective. Just hear. How certain. Jesus speaks. Verse 37. All those.

[23 : 14] The father gives me. Will come to me. And whoever comes to me. I will never. Drive away. Or verse 39. And this.

Is the will. Of him. Who sent me. That I shall lose. None. Of all those. He has given me. But. Raise them up. At the last. Day.

So we have God. The father. He's an active agent. And we have God. The son. And he's an active agent. And when they are working. No one can resist. The father draws.

And the father calls. And the father gives a people. To the son. And the son works. To save. And the son then. Keeps. And protects. And the son.

Will raise them up. On the last day. So the call. From the king of grace. Is what transforms a life. Romans chapter 1.

[24 : 10] Verse 7. That's why Paul. Will talk about. People called. Called. Called by God. To be saints. In the call of God. That is that transforming work.

And power. Now the effective call of God. Is a sticking point. For many. Because it raises the question. Well what about our free will. Or the question.

Is this fair? Why does God choose one. And not choose another. It can be a challenge. For the religious mind. That says. Well surely I must earn. Surely I must participate.

Yes. God must do his bit. But surely I must do my bit. If you've ever read James Hogg. He captures. I think some of the mental knots. That perhaps Scottish Presbyterians.

In particular. Have gotten ourselves into. Am I one of the elect? Should I just sit back? Because what will be. Will be. Now what did Jesus' words say.

[25 : 06] To these kind of questions. Well on one hand. Jesus is very clear. That there is. Without his work. Without the work of God.

A total. Inability. We can go to verse. 44 again. No one. Can come to me.

Unless the father who sent me. Draws them. Without God's grace. Intervening. Without God's grace. Saving. We would be blind.

To the glory of Jesus. We would be blind. To our human need. To have our sin dealt with. We'd be living lives. Where we would consistently. Miss the target. Failing to reach.

God's glory. Spiritually dead. Total inability. Jesus says that. At the same time. He makes clear.

[26 : 03] That when we think about salvation. We have to understand. There must be. Total dependence. On God's grace. This is entirely.

Of gift. That we have had the chance. To hear the gospel. That's a gift. If you're a Christian. And your heart has been changed. That's God's grace. For God.

To work. And our will. To make it willing. To trust Jesus. And to live for him. That's God. Doing for us. What we cannot. And would not. Do for ourselves. So salvation. Is entirely dependent.

On God's grace. And because of that. There is total security. In Christ. And I think that's something. That's so important.

And sometimes. We can lose that. In all the mental knots. That the whole doctrine. Here is reminding us. That because salvation. Belongs to God. From beginning. To end. Because the father's call.

[26 : 59] Is powerful. And effective. Because the son. Carries out. The will of the father. And it's his will. To save his people. That is security. From beginning. To end. It's the effective call.

Of God. But then verse 40. And we'll finish here. Here's a third thing. That we need to hear. And it's the call.

To believe. Now just to recognize. That what Jesus is teaching us here. Is God sized theology.

And God sized theology. Will always contain with it. Aspects of mystery. And of course. Whenever we're confronted with that. In our human curiosity. Our human desire.

To know things. We like the idea. That there must be a system. Where we can organize it. Where we can think. Ah yes. I've got it. I've got it. But there's always going to be. An element of mystery.

Because this is God sized theology.

[27 : 57] You think about it. We are dealing with a God. Who is three in one. We're dealing with a God. Who foresees everything. We're talking about the reality.

That God chooses to save people. Before. There were any people. There must be mystery to that. And there's also a sense of mystery.

Or even a sense of tension. In what Jesus teaches us here. He has made it abundantly clear. God is sovereign in salvation. I hope we've heard that clearly. God is sovereign in salvation.

But we. Are responsible. For responding to the gospel call. So Jesus can say. For my father's will. This is verse 40. My father's will. Is that everyone who looks to the son. And believes in him. Shall have eternal life. And I will raise them up. At the last day.

[28 : 53] So salvation is a matter of the father's will. And it's a matter of us. Coming. And looking. And believing. If you're here today.

And you're not a Christian. And maybe you've been wrestling with this. It's important. That we ask the right question. At the right time. If you're not a Christian here today.

The question that you need to wrestle with. Is not. Am I one of the elect? The question to ask is. Will I come. To the Lord Jesus Christ.

To be saved. Will I trust in his grace? Will I come with faith? Will I trust his work? Will I trust his word? Just to think a little bit more.

About the kind of. The tension. And the mystery. Our salvation is. God centered. As it should be. God does the work.

[29 : 52] God deserves all the glory. God's call is effective. His saving purpose is never frustrated. Jesus is utterly confident. That he's not simply creating. The potential.

For people to be saved. By climbing the moral ladder. But he will certainly save. All those who are called. And verse 39. Says it so powerfully. This is the will of him who sent me.

That I shall lose none. Of all those that he has given me. But raise them up at the last day. If Jesus lost even one. Of those who are called. It would be to his eternal shame.

He would have failed. In his mission. But we know that he won't. So our salvation is absolutely God centered.

And yet. It doesn't exclude us. Exercising faith. We must look. We must come. We must believe.

[30 : 51] Jesus has effected. A great rescue. By his work on the cross. His mission is accomplished. But you and I by faith. We need to reach out to get in the boat.

Jesus has extended the invitation. To a feast. He has provided everything. For that feast. But we need to RSVP. And come.

To the feast. Jesus is God. So it figures that his theology is both. God sized. And God centered.

And so he teaches. The much more complex thing. That's both and. Yes. Salvation belongs to God. And yes. We have a responsibility.

To believe. Or to use the language that Jesus uses. We are called to look. And to live. It's a great image.

[31 : 52] Look and live. Might remind you of an Old Testament story. Jesus has already spoken about it in this gospel. In the book of Exodus. There was one of the many times. Where God's people rebelled in the wilderness.

And judgment came into the camp. In the form of poisonous serpents. So there was judgment. But in that judgment. There was also grace. Because God instructed Moses.

To fashion a bronze serpent. And to put it up on a pole. And the message came. If you look to the serpent. You would live. Jesus used that picture.

To anticipate the fact. That he too. Would be raised up. He would be raised up on the cross. And the cross too. Is a place of judgment. And a place of grace.

And we are called to look. And to live. To see there the Savior. Atone for sin. To see him accomplish.

[32 : 51] That mission of securing forgiveness. Of bringing eternal life with God. Through the victory. Of his resurrection. And when we look.

And when we believe. Jesus promises. Certain salvation. Look at verse 47.

Very truly. I tell you. The one who believes. Has eternal life. Life. That's not possibility.

That is certainty. Look. And live. That's why the Christian life. Is about humble. Grateful worship.

We are those who contribute.

Nothing. But receive everything. That's why we have such a wonderful message. To embrace. And to love. And to grow our appetite. For the gospel. But also we have a great message.

[33 : 47] To share. As we are reminded. About God's sovereign grace. God's powerful summons. That draws us to Jesus.

And that draws us to life. There is an invitation. To rest secure. In the Father's call. And the Son's saving work. To praise God.

For his will. As Jesus reminds us. My Father's will. Is that everyone who looks to the Son. And believes in him. Shall have eternal life.

And I will. Raise them up at the last. Thank you.