

The Father's gift and will

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Preacher: Aaron Reeves

[0 : 00] So we come to our teaching, we're going to pray before we hear what God has to say to us today.! And then we'll go through our sermon.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Thank you, Heavenly Father, for inspiring all Scripture by your Holy Spirit.

Lord, help us by that same Spirit, Lord, to hear what you have to say today, so that we might be equipped for every good work. Lord, this is a complicated text, but we know we can't really understand anything unless you teach us.

So we ask that you teach us, Lord. We ask that we know your presence and help. And in the same way, I ask, Lord, that you help me deliver everything you want to say, not what I want to say, Lord. And give me clarity and wisdom in the presentation. And give us ears to hear, Lord. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen. Amen.

[1 : 12] Amen. Amen. Okay. So today we're looking at this text, John 6, 25 to 59.

It's a long... Where are we? Okay. It's a long passage. And it doesn't appear to have the kind of natural divisions that will lend itself to one sermon.

Therefore, we are approaching it as a three-part series, as we said earlier. We heard from Steve last week, and he had the title, The Bread of Life. This week, I have part two, and I have the title, The Father's Gift and Will.

Next week, Phil will have part three, and he'll have the title, Eating Jesus' Flesh and Drinking His Blood. So that's where we are today, part two, The Father's Gift and Will.

I'm just going to take a quick drink. So this is a part of Scripture that provokes people to respond in all kinds of different ways.

[2 : 24] It's controversial. It offers us a gift of eternal life if we come to Jesus, but tells us we can't come to Jesus unless God draws us.

The subject of the passage is possibly one of the most debated topics in all of Christianity. More than that, it's possibly one of the most debated topics on the subject of human existence.

Do we really have free will? This question, to some, has been the difference not just between life-changing action or apathy, but life and death itself.

Philosophers, as some of the most brilliant minds in history, have broken themselves, weighing in on this subject, pouring all of their intellect and contemplating the very mysteries of God, His universe, existence.

So why God asked me to speak on this subject is frankly perplexing. I get my mind in a tangle just watching Snoopy cartoons. Now I've just admitted on live stream that I watch Snoopy cartoons.

[3 : 41] But God teaches and God helps us to understand. So whoever complex this is, we can approach this with a joy because we know God will teach us something if we listen. So you might remember last week, before Steve delivered his part, he did say that it would be up to me this week to make sure that it all makes sense.

So after blood, sweat, tears, and junk food, I've prepared this sermon, The Father's Gift and Will. And next week it will be all up to Phil to make sure that it all makes sense.

So that's the introduction to my introduction. Please open your Bibles, if you have them in front of you, to John chapter 6. So Jesus has fed 5,000 people with just five loaves and two fish.

And a massive crowd, stunned by what they had seen, the next day went in search of Jesus. When they catch up to Him, He's in the synagogue. That's verse 59.

And so we have this conversation between Jesus and the Jews, which centers all around food. I think I'm on the wrong slide. The Jews are a bit confused because they don't understand how Jesus got there.

[5 : 06] Because He hadn't gone by boat, we know that He walked across the water. So we're going to pick up from this point. I'm going to do things a little differently from my normal method. We'll just recall a couple of things that we heard from last week's sermon.

But mainly we're going to start by focusing in on this relationship between the Jews and Jesus. This will hopefully set the scene for us to go a bit deeper later on.

So the conversation, the Jews asked Jesus, Rabbi, when did you get here? Jesus said to them, verse 26, Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me not because you saw the signs I performed, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.

The Jews had missed the point of the signs. Do you remember we've learned from previous teachings that a sign is intended to point you towards something, right? Do you remember, I think it was Steve, the sign of Brighton.

He said, this isn't Brighton. It's just a sign pointing to Brighton. They missed the point. They missed the point of the signs. And they went looking for Jesus. And that's interesting, isn't it?

[6 : 18] Because that seems like the right response, doesn't it? Yeah? But they weren't looking for him because they wanted to know him. This is really important that we touched on this today.

In verse 15, they intended to make him king by force. So clearly they didn't care about him. They cared what he could do for them.

In this case, provide them with another free meal. That's why Jesus said, you're looking for me only because you ate the loaves and had your fill. So as Christians, if you've come across this, people who seem to only really be interested when they can get something out of you, it's not a nice feeling, is it?

And sometimes we'd be persuaded to just carry on letting it happen because it's a way of showing love to people. But what does Jesus do?

He doesn't ignore it. He doesn't be so kind that he'll say very, very subtle things and hope that they get the hint.

[7 : 22] What does he do? He calls them out. In fact, it's the very first thing he says in this passage. The Jews ask him, when did you get here?

He actually bypasses that question. And he says, you're only looking for me because you've had your fill. It's a very strong comment. I thought it was worth looking at.

And perhaps an objection to this, a third person may be looking upon this outside of the situation with no idea of the context that's happened before might say, well, Jesus is a bit mean.

No, he's not. His response is proportional to the situation. He's getting straight to the uncomfortable truth for the Jews.

We saw the same thing with the woman at the well in chapter 4. Do you remember? The woman told Jesus, I have no husband. Jesus didn't hesitate in getting straight to the truth. Actually, there's a lot of similarities.

[8 : 23] If you go back and read that story and read this one, there's a lot of similarities. I don't have time to draw it all out today. Maybe we can discuss it a bit later. So we have Jesus getting straight to the uncomfortable truth with the Jews.

But it's equally important to note that at the same time, Jesus doesn't send anybody away either, does he? He sticks with the Jews. Verse 27, he says, So the Jews are looking for Jesus.

But they're looking for all the wrong reasons. Jesus is telling them this. What they should be looking for is spiritual food.

Food that leads to eternal life. Now notice, again, like the woman at the well, Jesus doesn't open a conversation by saying, Here, I'm the bread of life.

Help yourself. That's it. That's all I've got to say. He works up to it. Explaining it. Giving the Jews an opportunity to respond to what he's telling them.

[9 : 31] He's the giver of life. Verse 28, the Jews ask. They say, what can we do to please God, to earn this bread? Jesus answered.

Steve said last week, it's two things we don't usually see together. The work of God is this. To believe in the one he has sent. Referring to himself as the Messiah sent by God.

But the response of the Jews is still unbelief. They still just want more physical evidence. Greater signs.

Something better than the manner that God provided for their ancestors, which was abundant and big and amazing. Their minds and their hearts still are not on Jesus, who Jesus is.

They still just want their fill. They want the gift. They don't want the giver of the gift. So we get to verse 35.

[10:35] This is where Jesus tells them plainly. He says, I am the bread of life. Now, most commentators, preachers will point out that this I am statement is Jesus stating his deity.

I am being the recognized name of God from Exodus 3.14. It's the first of seven I am statements in the book of John.

We'll see them further on down the series. I won't go into them today. Jesus tells the Jews that he is the bread of life. And he makes a statement about being the bread.

He says, whoever comes to me will never go hungry. And whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. It's interesting.

There's two parallel statements there. There's two different statements saying the same thing. Notice that coming to Jesus and believing in Jesus have essentially the same effect.

[11:41] Those who come will not die of hunger. Those who believe will not die of thirst. It's the same thought said in two different ways. If you're hungry and you refuse to eat, what happens?

You die. If you're thirsty and you refuse to drink, what happens? You die. Eventually you die. So when Jesus says, I'm the bread of life, is he talking literally?

Is he saying, eat my flesh? No, he's not. He's talking metaphorically. What he's saying is in both of these statements, he is sufficient to sustain us spiritually.

So that when we eat the bread, meaning when we believe in Jesus, when we come to Jesus, we will not die. Physically and spiritually.

We're not literally eating Jesus or some magic bread to gain our salvation. It's not what the text is saying. Point and case is the thief on the cross.

[12:48] You remember from Luke 23. They'd hung Jesus on the cross and either side of him were two criminals also on crosses. One of the criminals who hung there, I'm reading from verse 39 onwards, Luke 23.

One of the criminals who hung there heaped abuse on him, Jesus. Are you not the Christ? He said, save yourself and us. But the other one rebuked him saying, do you not even fear God?

Since you are under the same judgment, we are punished justly. We are receiving what our actions deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.

He said to Jesus, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. And Jesus said to him, truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise. How much eating was going on there?

It's all metaphorical, isn't it? This man came to Jesus. He believed in Jesus. He was granted eternal life. There's no physical eating taking place there.

[13:55] And yet, he was granted that gift. The Jews, however, haven't truly come to Jesus. This is the point I'm getting at. Because they don't believe in him.

They don't trust in who he is. They're looking for their fill. Okay, so hopefully we're caught up on the relationship here between the Jews who do not believe who Jesus is.

And Jesus being the bread of life. So let's just check if everybody's still awake. Who is the bread that gives eternal life? Jesus.

How do we eat the bread of life? We believe. What was the Jews' response to Jesus? They didn't believe.

Aha, good, we're still awake. So, I don't usually, I don't often do this, but I put my sermon into three points.

[14:56] It's a traditional three-point sermon. I didn't even see this one coming. So, these three points.

Sorry, my notes are a bit confusing. Okay, so we've got these three points. My first point is going to be the purpose of Jesus. So we're going to deal with where he came from and why he came.

My second point is given to Jesus. Who is given and when does this happen?

And my third point is the greatest mystery of all time that no human will ever be able to explain. That was my third point, but it was too long. So I've shortened it to the mystery of Jesus.

That way you can all remember for tonight. We'll think about how we can fathom all of this information. Okay. Given to Jesus.

[16:03] So the text before us, I don't know if you notice, it features a lot of repetition. Now, when I repeat myself, as most of you who know me very well can testify to, it's probably because I can barely remember what I've said from one minute to another.

But when we see repetition in Scripture, it usually means there's something we should be paying particular attention to. Over and over again in this passage, we read not just that Jesus is the bread, but that he came down from heaven and he came from the Father.

Just make my point here. Verse 29. Jesus answered the work of God is this, to believe in the one he has sent. Verse 32. It is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.

Verse 33. For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven. Verse 38. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my will, but the will of him who sent me.

Verse 44. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them. Verse 50. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die.

[17:14] 57. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. It's all through the text.

In the same way God provided food for our bodies, he's provided spiritual food for his people, leading to eternal life, which is Jesus himself sent down from heaven.

Are we agreed on that? Yeah, that makes sense. Good. Good. This was the thought that the Jews couldn't process, right? How can Jesus be from heaven?

Verse 41 and 42. At this, the Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, I am the bread that comes down from heaven. 42. They said, is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?

How can he now say, I came down from heaven? Knowing that Jesus was physically born was a hindrance to them. It was a stumbling block for them. Even though they saw the signs, they refused to believe him.

[18:17] The book of John opens by telling us the very nature of Jesus, that he always existed, that he always was. In the beginning, this is from John 1, verse 1.

In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him, all things were made. Without him, nothing was made that has been made.

In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. Jesus, the life giver, was in heaven long before the universe even existed.

But the Jews just couldn't see that. So why does Jesus keep telling us this? What is with all this repetition? We see it over and over and over again.

He's got to be saying something, right? Well, he expresses that God has a purpose and a plan. God's plan to bring salvation to his people through his son. This is the father's will.

[19:18] Jesus talks about that in this scripture very specifically. So Jesus' purpose. Verse 38 tells us, Jesus tells us, For I have come down from heaven, not to do my will, but to do the will of him who sent me.

Jesus has been sent with a purpose to do the father's will. Then he goes on to tell us what that will is in verses 39 and 40. Now both of those verses talk, both of those verses, Jesus is talking about raising people up on the last day.

So we're talking about a resurrection. Part of the father's will is that people be raised to eternal life. Something's gone on with my slides here.

What's going on? Huh. Huh. I assume some of my slides are missing. Excuse me for a second. Excuse me for a second. See if we can catch up.

[20:53] Maybe not. I don't know what's going on. Let's carry on anyway. Okay. Well, I do apologize.

It seems half of my slides are missing. I don't know why that is. It is what it is. Let's just carry on in any way. Okay.

Jesus' purpose. So what do you think of when you think of eternal life? So often people think of disembodied spirits, right? Ghosts floating around with little purpose like Casper being mischievous. Half of you probably don't know who Casper is, but that's my reference and I'm going to stick with it. Younger people, you can Google it. But in fact, this idea doesn't really make much sense, does it? Because if God's creation here is so rich with beauty and diversity, why would eternal life look like it's so lacking in imagination? The answer is, it's because it's a human idea.

[21:56] So Jesus is using this language of resurrection here. A very physical resurrection on the last day. Back in chapter 5, we learned about this. That was my last sermon, actually.

We learned that eternal life is something that can be taken hold of now when we believe in Jesus. That's John 5, 24. So the moment we believe, we cross over from death to life.

We take hold of that gift. It's also something which is to come on the last day.

So John 5, 28 to 29. The dead will be called out their graves. Physical resurrection bodies and those who believe will escape condemnation and go into heaven.

And those who don't believe will be put outside of God's kingdom into the darkness. That's the very real reality of the resurrection. The eternal life we're talking about here then is a day of physical resurrection and judgment.

[22 : 59] A day where Jesus comes to raise up his people and take them into his kingdom. An eternal life that through faith in Jesus we can grasp now and comes later.

Does that make sense? I hope that makes sense. Yeah. Good. Good. Good. Good. So this is the great free gift of eternal life.

So we look at verse 40. Who is this free gift available to? Who is the free gift available to?

Everyone. Right. Good. Everyone. Everyone. No exceptions. You look, believe, get eternal life. That's God's will and promise.

Free gift of salvation. And I think we've caught up with my slides now. This is the working gospel message. We can have every confidence in this promise.

[23 : 59] We can go and tell people, believe in Jesus and have eternal life, can't we? That's the Father's will. So if you are here today and you believe in Jesus, you have eternal life.

Jesus also in this passage tells us about the mechanisms of this promise. The things that God is doing behind the scenes. It brings us to a second point.

Those that are given. Verse 37. All those the Father gives me will come to me. Everybody that comes to Jesus and believes is also given to Jesus by the Father.

Okay. So if you're here today and you believe in Jesus, you've also been given to Jesus by the Father personally. So if God has chosen to give you to Jesus, we can ask the question, when did that happen?

Didn't we just say we came to Jesus and we believed in Jesus? When Paul was writing to the Ephesians, he opened the letter by stating the letter was to God's holy people.

[25 : 13] And he said this. Praise be to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

So here we learn that we're not just given to Jesus by the Father. But it was always his intention for that to happen.

I'm going to give up on the slides. So if you feel a headache coming on here, that's perfectly normal. Two things seem at odds with each other, don't they? So this is amazing enough that we're given to Jesus by the Father before the creation of the world.

But then Jesus takes us a step further to show us a couple of things that God is doing behind the scenes to make that happen. So the first thing to say is that... He draws us.

[26 : 24] 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. So there's a drawing. God draws you towards Jesus.

Let me ask you, of all the Christians here, who remembers when they were first drawn to Jesus? Yeah. Yeah, most of us will remember, don't we?

For some of us, this happening was completely beyond explanation. So if you're not a Christian, I'll just suggest perhaps you're hearing this message because God is drawing you.

Maybe there's a reason that you're hearing this message. Secondly, he teaches us. Verse 45. It is written in the prophets, they will be taught by God.

Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me. Jesus was referencing Isaiah 54.13. All your children will be taught by God, and great will be their peace.

[27 : 26] So there's a responsibility here for people to hear, to listen and learn. And we do that by his word. So Romans 10.17 says this.

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ. Okay, so are you with me right now? So he predestines us, he draws us, and he teaches us so that we might believe.

This is the work of God. This is the will of God. So no one can come unless the Father draws them. How many people can come to Jesus if they're not given or drawn by God?

Zero. Nobody. This has to happen. If you're given to Jesus by God, there's some very good news. Because it's not God's will to let you go. All those, verse 37, all those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me, I will never drive away.

Verse 39, this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me. You have complete security in Jesus.

[28 : 44] Isn't that good news? It's mind-blowing, isn't it? It really is. I don't understand it. But it's good news.

Christians, let's just recap this. This is amazing. God purposed for you specifically to be saved through his Son.

He had you specifically in mind before the creation of the world. He has drawn you specifically to Jesus by his Spirit. He has taught you specifically with his Word.

And if you're trusting in him, he will not let you go. He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Philippians 1.6.

So forget the headache. Your mind should be blown at this point. There we go. That takes us to our next point, our last point.

[29 : 53] The mystery of Jesus. So we've learned, without God choosing us, choosing to give us to Jesus, no one can come to Jesus.

But the message Jesus also gives is, everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life. And we'll raise him up at the last day. So let's ask the question, how many of those people who look to Jesus and believe shall have eternal life?

Everyone. Everyone. And herein lies the mystery. Our simple human brain see this apparent paradox, and it makes us ask the obvious question.

Why does God tell us to come to Jesus if he's already decided who will come? I've heard this argument many times as former atheists.

So if her friends say to me, what's the point? Why even bother coming to Jesus? This is the difficult question. There's actually a lot of questions that people don't approach. They're scared to approach it. Well, the point is to not try and know the unknowable.

[31 : 10] The answer is unknowable. That's the truth of it. That's the point of this sermon. You can't answer this question. The point is not to try and know the unknowable.

Take it by force and get our fill and fill our minds and say, yes, we've got this. How clever are we? Because in doing so, we miss the point of who God is.

God's word is sufficient. So instead of trying to grasp this, we can come to him and we can just marvel at the complexity of his creation.

Of who he is. Of what he has done. Why does God tell us to come to Jesus? I say, look at who it is that's telling you to come.

It's not the guy on the corner with the flyer. Or the guy on the book table trying to put a book in your hand.

[32 : 15] Or even the guy standing in a shirt at the front of a church. We're just relaying a message. The person telling you to come is God.

And it's the same God that created the heavens and the earth just by speaking. You know there are things, even in God's creation right now, that some of the most brilliant minds on earth have no understanding about.

You know that they discovered it's possible. I'm going to bore you again here. It's possible for two particles. I love science. Two particles to be entangled. They call this quantum entanglement.

And these particles, they can be a universe away from each other. And when one changes, when one is measured, the other one reacts instantly. Isn't that incredible?

Even the speed of light doesn't affect it. And people are baffled. Some of the greatest minds are baffled. How does this happen? How can two things communicate absolutely instantly and be completely connected in this way?

[33 : 17] No one understands it. Even Einstein referred to this as spooky. Isn't that amazing? And think about it. This is just the tiniest, tiniest, tiniest building block of God's universe.

The point I'm making is that if we can't begin to explain the tiniest part of the mechanics of God's creation, how can we possibly fathom the depths of his spiritual existence and his plans?

We can't. We're not meant to. Steve said it's part of our nature to search for truth. But, you know, it doesn't mean we have to understand it all. In the end, the answer to this conundrum, the answer to

this question is to trust in God and read his word.

Look at the evidence. Come to Jesus and believe. That's the message. That's God's will. That's the answer. Everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life and I will raise them up at the last day.

So my encouragement to you Christians hearing this message would be today, praise God.

Because he is so wondrous in his grace.

[34 : 36] What other response could there be? You may not understand all the depths of all the mechanics of your salvation or why you're a Christian, why you're here today.

But you can see what he's done for you. You can see where you're going, right? And you can marvel. And keep trusting in Jesus. Keep eating the bread. My encouragement to non-Christians hearing this message, this would be a lot more trickier for you.

We've all been there. Would be, maybe this is the uncomfortable truth for you. The Jews had an uncomfortable truth and they didn't believe. You have to trust in God for your salvation and maybe you don't want to.

Maybe you don't feel you need to. I say this as a former atheist. What a relief it is that God doesn't depend on us to save ourselves. Because if we're being honest and we put our egos down, we say we'd fail.

We would. There's no two ways about it. Your salvation will never depend on how much good you can do. The work is to believe. And thankfully, it will never depend on how much evil you do either.

[35 : 54] Because Jesus paid the price for that on the cross. Your salvation will only ever depend on God. That's the truth.

But there is something you can do, those who don't believe. You can look to Jesus and believe.

Because God, the creator of the heavens and the earth, tells you that you can. And Jesus never, ever fails. So trust in him now. Get eternal life now.

And that is the will of the Father. Amen.