

Unless the Father Draws Them

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- [0 : 0 0] Bible with you this morning. Please open it up to John chapter 6. John chapter 6. We've been working through this chapter for some time now.
- We're really digging into the details. There's a long conversation here between Jesus and a crowd. We've looked at almost everything that Jesus has said here.
- This morning is our last morning in the chapter. We want to consider a few final statements that Jesus made, which we've kind of skipped over until now. Let me just say a word of prayer.
- Father in heaven, please help us now in these moments as we read your words, which you've preserved for us. Give us insight. Give us wisdom. Give us understanding. Help us to hear what Jesus said and to know exactly how it applies to us.
- We ask this in his name. Amen. All right. So let's get our bearings in this conversation one last time. And we want to keep this whole conversation with the crowd and with Jesus' disciples and with Peter in mind as much as we can, because this is the context of the statements that Jesus made that we're going to consider this morning.
- [1 : 3 0] We need to look at what Jesus said, but also when and why he said what he said. And this is the picture that we've seen so far here. There's Jesus who's speaking to this crowd in the synagogue in Capernaum.
- And in Jesus' own words, he is speaking to them words which are spirit and life, words of truth that have been given to him by his father to say. And then there's this crowd who is listening.
- And on the whole, they do not believe what Jesus is saying, even though some of them have tasted for themselves the bread that he made just the day before on the other side of the lake.
- And many have seen signs that he has performed. They have seen, and yet they do not believe, says Jesus. And Jesus has been very patient, it seems, to take time to speak with them more, to tell them more truth.
- And yet the crowd, it seems, from bad to worse. They go from holding their unbelief on the inside to openly and blatantly challenging Jesus and grumbling at him and arguing with him.
- [2 : 4 6] And then, after this conversation with the crowd is over, there's a conversation between Jesus and his disciples in verse 60 and down.
- And they too are grumbling, some of them, about the things that Jesus has been saying. Jesus points out to them that he knows that some of them do not believe.
- And then we come to this moment in verse 66 where many of them walk out the door on Jesus and no longer follow him.
- And in the midst of all of this, we saw last Sunday a guy named Peter, one of the twelve, declare that he has no intentions of walking away from Jesus because he believes and knows that Jesus is the Holy One of God.

These are his words. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God. So what is going on here? How is it that Peter sees and believes and knows the truth about Jesus, but all these others do not?

[4 : 04] What is going on here? Why is the crowd not persuaded by Jesus' words? Peter was persuaded at some point.

Why him and not the rest? Is it because Peter is smarter than the others? Is it because Peter is more gullible than the others?

Is it because Peter doesn't actually know, but that he's just made up his mind that this is what he believes? Or is there something else going on here?

Well, we already heard from Jesus that there is something else going on here, something much bigger. We heard it for the first time when Jesus said this in John 6, verse 36.

He said, So the people in the crowd, they're not coming to Jesus because they don't believe in him.

[5 : 11] And Jesus tells them that despite the fact that they're not coming, some will come, some will come, and not just some, but all of those who the Father gives to him will come to him.

There's this unseen story that we talked about unfolding here between Father and Son. A story in which God the Father is giving people to his Son.

And Jesus seems to be expressing unshakable confidence that not a single one of those whom the Father intends to give to him will fail to recognize Jesus and believe in him and come to him.

And from there, Jesus goes on in the conversation. But then it comes up again. Jesus says something and it further exposes their unbelief. And they start grumbling about what he said.

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

[6 : 26] How can he now say, I came down from heaven? Stop grumbling among yourselves. Jesus answered, No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them.

So first it's the statement that all who the Father gives to Jesus will come to him. And now it's this statement that no one can come to Jesus unless the Father who sent him draws them.

So there's more involved with coming to Jesus. And that more that's involved is what the Father must first do to make it possible. And then the conversation goes on from there.

And eventually we come to the conversation that he has with his disciples. And Jesus says almost the same thing again. Right before a bunch of them leave, they're grumbling about his words.

And Jesus says this. He says, There are some of you who do not believe. For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him.

[7 : 39] He went on to say, This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father enables them to.

That's the NIV translation. The more literal translation that most Bible translations have is unless it has been granted to him by the Father or given to him by the Father.

So a third time we see that Jesus points out the unbelief of some who are there. And then he gives an explanation for it. He says, There are some among you who do not believe.

This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted to him by the Father. So here it seems Jesus is making a parallel statement to the one he made earlier in verse 44 about how no one can come to him unless the Father draws them.

It's the same kind of statement. And it seems to be given an explanation for why some don't believe. Only here, the word used is granted or given instead of drawn.

[8 : 54] What the Father must first do for his part is grant that a person may come to Jesus. So a little bit different wording but a similar meaning.

So three times in this conversation, in this chapter, Jesus speaks about something that the Father does which is deeply connected to people believing in Jesus and coming to him.

All those the Father gives me will come to me. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them.

And no one can come to me unless it is granted to him by the Father. So what do these statements mean? Let's try to bring them together.

What do they mean? Well, these particular statements of Jesus have been the subject of much debate amongst Christians. And unfortunately, it's a very ugly debate.

[10 : 00] There are brothers and sisters on all sides of it and many of them are denouncing one another as heretics or as false teachers. In fact, this debate is not unlike the coronavirus debate that's swirling around us today.

You've got people over here saying one thing. This is how we should read it. You've got other people over here saying, no, you guys are wrong. You should read it this way. You've got this third group saying, you're both wrong.

I've got it figured out. This is how it is. And then you've got a whole bunch more of us throwing our hands up in the air in the middle kind of wondering, well, who do I trust? We've got scholars over here that say this.

We've got scholars over here. We've got Greek experts over here and Greek experts over here. Who do I trust? Who do I believe? Which one is right? And many of them are pointing their fingers at the others and saying, well, those guys are taking this out of context or those guys are imposing their view or their tradition upon this passage or we know what the Greek words really mean here.

And at the end of the day, much like with the coronavirus, you can almost just decide for yourself whatever you want them to mean and then go on Google and you'll be able to find a whole host of people who agree with you and are saying the same thing.

[11 : 20] It's a little bit frustrating. Even this week, I'll be honest, as I was studying into this, there were a couple moments where I just thought, I just want to skip this verse.

there are elements of all sides that sound reasonable. But as I worked through all of this, it came clear to me that there are really two questions here.

The central question here is, what did Jesus mean by these statements? The secondary question here is, who do these statements apply to?

Who does the Father draw or who does the Father grant to come to Jesus? And it's mostly that question which sparks all the debate. For this morning, we really only have time to look at the central question.

And so we're going to kind of skirt the edges of the debate as much as possible. And if you want to talk about the second question later, I invite you to come have that conversation later after the service.

[12 : 25] So what did Jesus mean by these two similar statements that he made? No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

And no one can come to me unless it is granted to him by the Father. Perhaps the first thing that we notice is that word unless. There's a condition, there's a requirement in both of these statements.

A person cannot come to Jesus unless Jesus says that person is first drawn by the Father. A person cannot come to Jesus unless that person is first granted to come by the Father.

In both cases, something is required of the Father to do so that a person may come to Jesus. A second thing that we see here is the word can.

Now in English, this is a pretty small word, just three letters, but in the original language, it's a full-blown verb, and it basically means to have the ability to do something.

[13 : 41] Can, to be able to, we might paraphrase it as no one is able to come to me. unless the Father does his part.

So it seems, at least to me, that Jesus is talking about an inability that everyone has. No one can come unless.

No one is able to come unless the Father does his part. Drawing and granting us to come. We have an inability.

Let's make it personal and really press these words into our hearts this morning. Do you realize, according to Jesus, even to come to him, even to come to him, as he's been calling people to do, you are at the mercy of God.

God, Jesus wants you to know that it's something you cannot do on your own without God's help.

[14 : 55] Unless the Father draws you, unless he grants it to you to come, you cannot. God. These are pretty sobering words, aren't they?

I mean, it's through Jesus that we get to the Father. No one comes to the Father but by me. It's through Jesus that we get this eternal life and are raised up at the last day, as Jesus has been talking about.

It's through him that we are spared God's judgment at the end. These are all good things that Jesus has been talking about and he's told us that in order to receive them, we must believe in him.

We must come to him. And now he tells us that we cannot come to him unless God acts first to draw us and grants us to come to Jesus.

What Jesus is saying is that we are totally at the mercy of God. Not only for the way of salvation, but also to be able to get to the way of salvation.

[16 : 15] Do you hear that in these words? Do you see that in these words? Does your heart feel the weight of that in these words of Jesus? Jesus, these words speak of how lost I am.

And it's worse than it maybe feels or perhaps than I originally thought. I have an inability, according to Jesus, to grab a hold of the lifeline that is Jesus apart from the drawing and granting of God the Father.

What this means to me is that I am saved from start to finish by God's grace as an unearned gift of God.

And not simply because I managed in my own ability to get to Jesus, to figure out who he was, who's the Messiah, to see what others could not see.

Now I'm not sure at this point if Peter understands what Jesus is saying. Let's pull Peter into focus here.

[17 : 29] He's the one who we looked at last Sunday. I wonder if Peter perhaps isn't somewhat congratulating himself on having found Jesus, the Messiah.

He said, we have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God. And he says this right after many, probably the majority of Jesus' disciples just walked out the door on him.

We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God. But I think if we're listening to Jesus in these words, what he wants Peter to know is that he hasn't figured this out all by himself without God's help.

Peter makes his declaration of faith. Somehow, we talked last Sunday, he sees the truth about Jesus that many do not. And we might be tempted, perhaps Peter was tempted to think, at least I have made the right choice.

He makes his declaration. we've come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God. And maybe we might be expecting Jesus to say, well done, Peter.

[18 : 57] You have chosen well. But instead, Jesus says somewhat an unexpected response. He says, have I not chosen you?

maybe not what we were expecting to hear. And this kind of a moment happens again, another time for Peter. As Matthew records in his gospel, Matthew chapter 16, you're probably familiar with it.

Jesus says to his disciples, who do people say the Son of Man is? And there's a conversation about, you know, who is Jesus? They give some of the answers.

Then Jesus narrows it down and he says, what about you to his disciples? Who do you say that I am? And this is Peter's response.

You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Again, we might be expecting Jesus to congratulate Peter.

[20 : 04] Well done. You figured it out. And again, Jesus says this, similar kind of a thing. He says, blessed are you, Simon, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.

Jesus gives his Father the credit for Peter's understanding the truth of who Jesus is. God is. It's kind of a deflating moment.

It takes away from Peter the opportunity to brag or to boast about the fact that I have figured it out, while everybody else seems to have missed it.

It's as though Jesus is saying, yes, you have come to me. Yes, you have figured out the truth about me, but not on your own, not without the blessing and the revealing, the granting and the drawing of my Father.

Without that, you'd be in the same spot as the rest. There is more going on here than just the people and Jesus.

[21 : 27] The Father is at work in unseen ways, blessing and revealing, granting and drawing people.

And what he is doing factors in hugely to what's going on here. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

No one can come to me unless it is granted to him by the Father. We might imagine that we are drowning in the ocean and that God throws out one of those life rings to us.

That's Jesus. And the life ring is there in the water, right in front of us. Jesus has come into our world, but we're unable to get to it.

For some reason, it's just out of reach. we have this inability that Jesus speaks of. And there's all kind of debate as to what's the reason for this inability.

[22 : 35] What is this inability? Perhaps it's like the people of the crowd, even some of the disciples who left that day, like a blindness, where we're just unable to see Jesus as the special provision of God that he is.

or perhaps it's a stubborn heartedness, a deeply rooted unwillingness to acknowledge that Jesus is the life ring that God has provided.

Whatever it is, it seems clear from Jesus' words that we need more than just the life ring to be saved. We need help from God, the Father, to come to the life ring so we can grab a hold of it.

God must work first with his power in us, or else we will remain unable to come to Jesus.

And so we truly are at the mercy of God. We need the Father to draw us. We need the Father to grant it to us that we come to Jesus, or else we can't.

[23 : 48] God to pray. Now this is perhaps a surprising and unexpected thing to many of us. Not for all of us. Some of us may remember a time before we became a follower of Jesus where we felt drawn by God.

You hear that in testimonies from time to time, this unexplainable pull that a person feels to go to church or to an evangelistic meeting or simply to open their Bible and read it, or to pray, when for years before that they didn't want to do any of that.

They thought it was a waste of time. But for others of us, maybe we don't remember feeling drawn. Maybe it felt more like a careful investigation or a long-thought-out decision to follow Jesus.

Or maybe it was something that we just remember believing ever since we were a kid. Every person has a different story and different feelings that went along with that story of how they first came to be a follower of Jesus.

But however it happened for you that you came to confess, like Peter does, that Jesus is the Holy One of God, Jesus wants you to know that you didn't come to that all by yourself.

[25 : 10] Whether you realized it or felt it or not, you had help, God the Father was acting, granting, blessing, revealing, and drawing you.

And so trusting these words of Jesus as the truth, we ought to thank God that he has drawn us, that he has granted it to us to come to Jesus and have life.

Perhaps we've taken this for granted. Maybe we've even been guilty of thinking that God is obligated to draw us, to grant us to come.

Maybe even that he owes it to us. But the very fact that Jesus says it like this, that he brings it up, should make it clear that God doesn't owe it to us at all.

It's a gift of grace. Maybe you're here this morning and you're not sure where you stand with Jesus. Maybe you're worried about whether God has drawn you or is drawing you or whether he has granted you to come to Jesus or whether he will grant you to come.

[26 : 34] If that's you this morning, I want to encourage you. Jesus himself seemed quite content to leave what God the Father does in the Father's capable hands.

And so should we. Try as we may, we may not be able to detect or to feel the unseen work of God inside of us or inside of other people.

But we can rest assured, as Jesus did, that he is at work in the hearts of people. Granting, revealing, blessing, drawing.

And we can have confidence from many of the other scriptures, we're not going to look at them this morning, that God is merciful, he is gracious, he is compassionate, and he is loving, and he desires to save people.

And so at the end of it all, we need only concern ourselves with this. Do I believe that Jesus is the Holy One of God?

[27 : 44] Do I believe it? Will I follow him and accept him as my Messiah? God God God will do I know?

There's a beautiful promise of assurance that Jesus gives in the midst of all this. Down in verse 37, he says, whoever comes to me, I will never drive away.

God and so if you have not come to Jesus, come to him. Believe in him. Whoever does, if you do, he will never drive you away or cast you out.

That's the promise of the Lord Jesus. Let's pray. Amen. Father in heaven, we thank you for these words and we ask that you would press them into our hearts.

We say thank you to you for drawing us and for granting to us who have come to you that we have come, that we do see, as Peter saw, what many did not and do not today.

[29 : 05] We pray and ask that you would help us to keep this in mind as we think of others around us who don't know you and who do not believe.

Help us to understand how we ought to reach out to them and speak to them in light of these words. Give us wisdom and help us to be salt and light, as we've talked about earlier this morning in Sunday school, to our world, to our community, to our neighbors.

We thank you that you are a gracious and merciful and loving God. And we say this in Jesus' name. Amen.