

AM John 6:22-52, 66-69 Come and Welcome

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[0 : 00] Well, let's turn now to the Word of God, and our reading is from John chapter 6.

And as I said to the children, this is just after the feeding of the 5,000. John chapter 6, and we're reading from verse 22 down to 52.

And then just a short postscript from verse 66 to 69. John 6, 22.

On the next day, the crowd that remained on the other side of the lake saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone.

Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. So, when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum seeking Jesus.

[1 : 24] When they found him on the other side of the lake, they said to him, Rabbi, when did you come here? Jesus answered them, Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.

Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.

For on him God the Father has set his seal. Then they said to him, What must we do to be doing the works of God?

Jesus answered them, This is the work of God, that you believe on him, whom he has sent. So they said to him, Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you?

What work do you perform? Our fathers at the manna in the wilderness, as it is written, he gave them bread from heaven to eat. Jesus then said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.

[2 : 55] For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. They said to him, Sir, give us this bread always.

Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

But I said to you that you have seen me, and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up at the last day.

For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

[4 : 10] So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, I am the bread that came down from heaven. They said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?

How does he now say, I have come down from heaven? Jesus answered them, Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day.

It is written in the prophets, and they will all be taught by God. Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.

Not that anyone has seen the Father, except he who is from God. He has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.

I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.

[5 : 27] I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever, and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, how can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then in verse 66, after this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

So Jesus said to the twelve, do you want to go away as well? Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God. Lord, let's bow together now in prayer.

Turn now to John chapter 6, and I will read again verse 37. all that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me, I will never cast out.

[6 : 57] I have a recurring nightmare in which I'm preaching a sermon, and gradually, all the congregation are walking out.

It's never actually happened to me, though once, many years ago, a family did walk out in the middle of the sermon, without any explanation. I hope it won't happen today, apart from parents taking children out, perhaps.

But it did happen to our Lord Jesus Christ, the greatest of all preachers. Throughout this passage, you see the crowd getting more and more restless.

And then at the end, verse 66, many of his disciples turned back, and no longer walked with him. Only the twelve were left.

Why did people react so strongly to this sermon? Well, one reason was perhaps that they didn't understand it.

[8 : 17] Christ, the bread of life, is a familiar picture to us, simple lesson for the children. But to those who first heard it, it was anything but simple. Christ was speaking in mysteries.

And all this talk about eating his flesh, well, what is that all about? He's also making some extravagant claims for himself, claiming that he's come down from heaven, and that one day he's going to raise his disciples from the dead.

Who exactly is this man claiming to be? I think perhaps also they were offended because what he said hurt their pride.

These people had always been brought up to believe that they got into heaven by their own good works, and they were proud of the good things they'd done. But Jesus is saying repeatedly here, no.

it doesn't depend on you, it depends on God. Salvation is the gift of God. God. And yet, if they'd only listened, they would have realized that Jesus was giving them here the most wonderful promise.

[9 : 53] Come to me, and I will give you eternal life. life. That was what captivated the twelve.

You have the words of eternal life. I want us to look today at the portion of this chapter that we've read, focusing on the word come.

Some of you will know that when I've been preaching in the evenings here, I've been preaching on various texts containing the word come. And you could view this as a kind of postscript to that series.

I've given it the title, Come and Welcome. That isn't my title. I've borrowed it from John Bunyan, the author of Pilgrim's Progress.

Our Lord speaks here of us coming to him five times. In verse 35, whoever comes to me shall not hunger.

[11 : 04] In verse 37, twice, all that the father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me, I will never cast out. Verse 44, no one can come to me unless the father who sent me draws him.

And then verse 45, everyone who has heard and learned from the father comes to me. And all this is interwoven with the fact that he has come down from heaven.

He has come to us, and we must come to him. These five sayings are all very comprehensive.

Whoever, all, no one, everyone. There are no exceptions. Christians. They're also all very definite.

They shall not hunger. They will come to me. No ifs or buts, it will definitely happen. I want us to look at these five sayings under five headings.

[12 : 22] The promise itself, who will come, the welcome that awaits those who do come, why some don't come, and why others do.

Taken together, what you have here is virtually a theology of coming to Christ. But please don't think this is going to be dry doctrinal stuff.

This is all very practical and very important for us all. So first, the promise itself.

In verse 35, Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

The background is, of course, the feeding of the 5,000. Previous day, Jesus had fed that vast crowd with just five loaves of bread and two small fish.

[13 : 27] fish. During the night, the disciples had crossed over the Sea of Galilee by boat. Jesus had seen them struggling against the wind, and he'd actually come walking to them over the water and joined them on the other side.

The next day, the crowds had come seeking Jesus, crossing over by boat themselves, and they're amazed to find that he's already there.

He doesn't explain how he got there, but instead he challenges them that they're seeking him for the wrong reasons. In verse 26, you seek me not because you saw the signs, but because you ate the bread.

they hadn't understood the feeding of the 5,000. Miracles are called signs in John's Gospel, and signs usually point to something, and this sign pointed to the Lord Jesus himself, himself.

But they hadn't seen that. All they had seen was the bread. Jesus warns them, do not work for the bread, the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life.

[15 : 11] What a message that is for our materialistic age. And they then ask him, well, what do we do then to work for this bread? What does God require of us?

And Jesus says simply, believe in him whom he has sent. In other words, we're saved by faith and not by works.

Faith in Christ. Why should we believe in you, they say? What sign do you perform? As if feeding the 5,000 were not enough.

They remind him of Moses feeding the Israelites in the wilderness with the manna. Jesus replies that the Father is giving them something better than manna.

The true bread from heaven. Sir, give us this bread always, they say, probably sarcastically. And it's at this point that he says plainly, I am the bread of life.

[16 : 22] This is the first of the seven I am's in John's gospel. I am the bread of life, I am the light of the world, I am the door, I am the good shepherd, I am the resurrection and the life, I am the way, the truth and the life, I am the vine.

That repeated phrase, I am, hinting at his divinity, I am, being the very name of God that was given to Moses. The focus is entirely on him.

I am everything you need. That's what he's saying to them. As we just sang, he is our living bread.

He personally is our bread. food. If you want true spiritual food, then you must come to Christ.

You won't find it anywhere else. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger. Implication, whoever doesn't come to me will starve.

[17 : 33] Whoever believes in me shall never thirst. Coming and believing are evidently the same. just as the manna had kept Israel physically alive in the wilderness, so Christ will keep us spiritually alive forever.

Now this is truly a wonderful promise. This living bread is freely available to everyone who comes. It is completely free.

It's the gift of God. God. And it is available to all whoever comes. Just like the manna in fact.

The manna came down from heaven, a gift from God, and anyone could eat it. And just like the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus passed out the bread and the fish to everyone, and everyone could eat of it.

It was a free gift. No one paid a penny for it. Whoever you are, you can come to Christ and receive this living bread.

[18 : 53] Pharisee, your tax collector, equally welcome. Rich or poor, come to Jesus, you're welcome. University graduate, school dropout, doesn't matter, come to Christ.

whatever your background, whoever you are, this promise is for you. But there's no immediate rush to come.

Which leads us to our second saying. Who will come? In verse 37, all that the Father gives me will come to me.

Faced with an unbelieving crowd, Jesus rests on the sovereignty of God. He trusts in his Father.

He describes his disciples here as those who are given to him. What an extraordinary description. He doesn't say all who are truly religious will come to me, or all who really know their Bible will come to me, or everyone who is sensible will come to me.

[20 : 20] But everyone who is given to me will come to me. Taking it completely out of our hands, and putting it in the hands of God.

He uses this same expression repeatedly in his prayer in John 17. John 17, 6, I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world.

Yours they were and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Verse 9, I am not praying for the world, but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.

Verse 12, I have kept them in your name, which you have given me. Verse 24, Father, I desire that they also whom you have given me may be with me where I am to see my glory.

Now, this is essentially the doctrine of election, which so many people find so difficult to accept.

[21 : 27] it's there in the scripture, Paul says, we are chosen in him before the foundation of the world.

Chosen in him and given to him. A secret transaction has taken place in heaven.

A private gift, as it were, from the father to the son. You weren't even there when it happened. But you, if you're a believer, you are God's gift to his son.

Notice the order here. All who are given to me will come to me. it's in that order. First we are given to Christ and that ultimately results in us coming to Christ.

Why do people struggle with this? Well, partly because it touches our pride, doesn't it? To be just given by God to Christ without us having anything to do with it.

[22 : 41] but that is what Jesus says. And he's quite content with it. Whether a thousand people come or whether one person comes, that is in God's hands.

You know, in the Old Testament, God promised Noah that the animals would come to him. It's a picture of Noah's ark downstairs.

And when the evening before the meeting started, I was looking at it and reflecting on that, that the animals came to Noah. The same is true in the Gospel.

Those who are given will come to Christ. And Jesus is confident of that. And we should be confident of it today.

But he doesn't want anyone to be discouraged by this. And he certainly doesn't want anyone to use it as an excuse, questioning whether they're elect or not.

[23 : 53] And so we have our third saying. The welcome that awaits everyone who does come. Verse 37 again, whoever comes to me, I will never cast out.

No need to worry about whether you're elect or not. There is no risk of rejection if you come to Christ.

There are exclusive clubs in this world that might reject you. I used to work for a while in Pall Mall in London and along the road were various gentlemen's clubs.

You couldn't just walk along and knock on the door and go into one of those clubs. You had to be accepted first. And there was every likelihood that someone like me would be rejected.

Either they would say I wasn't wealthy enough or they would say I didn't have the right qualifications. Ladies here, you certainly wouldn't get in because many of those clubs even to this day will not accept women.

[25 : 06] There's nothing of that with Christ. The church is not a gentleman's club. Entry is open to all. Whoever you are, if you have genuinely come to Christ in faith, he will accept you.

Indeed, he will welcome you with open arms. One glance at the disciples should show us how everyone is welcome. Just look at them.

You've got the four fishermen there, Peter and Andrew and James and John. You've got Matthew, a hated tax collector. You've got Simon the Zealot, possibly a converted terrorist.

We're told that the poor people heard Jesus gladly, but we also know of rich people who were disciples like Joseph of Arimathea. And of course there were women like Mary Magdalene.

Later on in the Acts, many of the priests believed. And even at least one Pharisee, Paul. Christ welcomes everyone who comes to him.

[26 : 19] And so must we. Christ will. But there's something more here. Not only will we not be cast out when we come to Christ, we will never be cast out.

Christ has come to do his Father's will, and his Father's will is, verse 39, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up at the last day.

everyone who comes to Christ will be raised up in glory. Now that implies that Christ will not only save us, but he will keep us to the end.

Theologians call this the perseverance of the saints. All these great theological doctrines you will find right here in John 6. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

We have eternal life. We have eternal security. We are his forever. So, okay, Jesus has opened his arms wide, as it were, and said, you're all welcome.

[27 : 37] So, what response did he get? You'd expect there to be a queue, wouldn't you? everyone saying, Lord, we come to you, give us this life.

But no, verse 41, the Jews grumbled about him because he said, I am the bread that came down from heaven. We know this man, they say, he didn't come down from heaven, he comes from Nazareth.

We know his father and his mother. Why can't they see it? Why can't people see it today? Well, Jesus tells us why they can't see it in our fourth saying.

Why some won't come. In verse 44, no one can come to me unless the father who sent me draws him. Now, we may ask, why should that be?

surely it's a simple thing to come to Christ? Well, yes, it is simple. But there is a huge obstacle in the way. Our sin.

[28 : 53] Our sinful hearts resist the gospel and we will not come. It isn't God who makes it impossible for us.

It's ourselves. we harden our hearts against Christ. Even for those who do eventually become Christians, there's a tug of war going on.

But God will win and he will win by sending his spirit to draw us to Christ. Theologians call this the irresistible grace of God.

Once again, it touches our pride. We would like to think that we came entirely of our own free will, unaided by God or anyone else. Well, yes, we did make a choice and we had to make a choice.

God doesn't force anyone to believe. But behind that choice lies a lot of spiritual persuasion. Those of us who have come to Christ all have our own personal experiences of this.

[30 : 09] That insistent thought that we just cannot get rid of. The people that God sends into our lives. The Bible verse that unexpectedly speaks to us.

This is God at work drawing us to Christ. Usually the spirit is very gentle in this. So gentle we hardly notice him.

But just occasionally he may give us a jolt. Some setback in our lives to awaken us and make us suddenly realize we need salvation.

This is God at work too. not only giving us to Christ but drawing us to him as well. And how thankful we should be for that.

That he takes the initiative in this way. That he takes this total responsibility. Because otherwise I don't know about you.

[31 : 20] But I don't think I would ever have come. And having come we find eternal blessing. Jesus reminds us again at this point.

I will raise him up at the last day. These people however who were grumbling about Christ they were still in their sins still imprisoned.

They needed God to change their hearts and set them free. our fifth and final saying is the flip side of this.

Why others will come. In verse 45 it is written in the prophets and they will all be taught of God. Everyone who has heard and learned from the father comes to me.

The quotation is from Isaiah 54 verse 13 all your children shall be taught of the Lord. Though it is also contained in the new covenant they shall all know me.

[32 : 30] People will come to Christ when God himself reveals the truth to them. We can speak to them for the rest of our lives and we should.

But until God takes up our words and works in their heart we will still get a blank response. But when God opens their minds and they understand then they will come.

Think of Peter's great confession you are the Christ the son of the living God. Jesus said to Peter didn't he well done Peter you're very clever to have worked that out.

No he didn't did he? He said you are blessed Peter my father who is in heaven has revealed this to you. He was taught of God.

This is of course also a barbed comment on those who rejected him that they were not taught of God. Many of these people prided themselves in being religious and knowing their Bibles but they knew nothing.

[33 : 45] And there are many people like that sadly today. There are bishops and there are theologians who are taught by men but not by God.

But everyone who is taught by God will come to Christ. Jesus ends by repeating the promise yet again in verse 47.

truly truly I say to you whoever believes has eternal life and he repeats and reinforces what he said I am the bread of life your fathers ate manna in the wilderness and they died I am the living bread that came down from heaven if anyone eats of this bread he will live forever and the bread of life the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh but that leads to another dispute which we won't go into today and then people start leaving the majority of people that day did not come to Christ how extraordinary is that these wonderful sayings and the majority of people that day rejected them only the disciples remained how about you for anyone here who has not yet come to

Christ the message is obvious come to him come confidently come knowing that Christ will accept you he said he will and he will keep his word maybe that God is speaking to you for some while don't resist his voice come and eat of that living bread but if you have come rejoice in the grace that God has shown to you treasure the thought that you are God's gift to his son because you are God's gift to his son he will treasure you sure you have things in your house that you treasure simply because of who gave them to you some ornament perhaps not very valuable in itself but it was given by someone you love well Christ treasures us for that very reason look back with gratitude on the way that the

Lord drew you to Christ and look forward with anticipation to what he will yet do how one day he will raise you from the dead and remember that what he did for you he can do for others all that the father gives to his son will come to him how many of your friends and loved ones might be included in that and this should give us confidence too in the church there are times in church history when multitudes are coming to Christ there are places around the world where multitudes are coming but there are also times when people are turning away and perhaps we feel like that in Scotland today well there's no need for us to compromise the gospel God will save his people as he has promised that's not an excuse for us to do nothing of course

[37 : 33] Christ reached out to the lost and so must we we must encourage people to come to Christ and we must put nothing in their way but remember always God is in control above all hold fast to Christ yourself he has the words of eternal life may his words be spirit and life to us today amen