

AM John 6:22-40 Seeking after Jesus?

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[0:00] In this part of the Bible called the New Testament, the Bible begins with four Gospels.

! You could see there are four accounts of the life and times of Jesus.! And if we are interested in trying to discover anything about Jesus, then that's where we would start, we would be reading those Gospels, right at the beginning of the second part of the Bible called the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

John is number four in terms of the listing in the Bible. And if we were doing any research, you know if you're doing any serious research, you need to try and find original documents.

And if you're doing any research about Jesus, you would really need to go to the Gospels. Because they're the main documents that tell us about the life and times of Jesus Christ.

Anyway, we're going to be reading from one of those Gospels, John's Gospel in chapter 6. And we're going to pick up the reading at verse 22.

[1:26] At the beginning of this chapter, Jesus performs a miracle through feeding 5,000 people.

And Jesus demonstrates this sign, this miracle.

And he provides enough bread for 5,000 people. And he then, Jesus retreats to the mountain.

And while he retreats to the mountain, this is before verse 22. The disciples get a boat because they're at the Sea of Tiberias.

And they get a boat back to Capernaum, which is where the home, Jesus' mum, if you like, and his brothers are certainly there in Capernaum.

[2:34] But they're rowing in this boat. And suddenly, they've been about four miles out in the sea, rowing in this boat.

And the sea gets very rough. And suddenly, they see Jesus walking on the water. And at verse 20 there, he says to them, It is I, do not be afraid.

Then they were glad to take him into the boat. And immediately, the boat was at the land to which they were going. So that's the immediate context of what we're about to read. And therefore, the reading begins, On the following day, the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there.

And that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that the disciples had gone away alone. That's just what I've been talking about. 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 boats and went to Capernaum seeking Jesus.

[3:57] When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, Rabbi, when did you come here? Jesus answered them. Notice he doesn't answer their question.

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 labor 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, this crowd, What must we do to be doing the works of God? Jesus answered them, This is the work of God that you believe in him whom he has sent.

So they said to him, Remember now, some of that crowd at least have witnessed the miracle of the feeding of 5,000.

[5:04] 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 ate 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 wasn't Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.

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

[6:10] 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 he has given me, but raise it up on 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 at the last day.

May the Lord bless this reading to each one of us. Now before... Let's just unite our hearts in prayer once again.

Heavenly Father, we come before you, and pray that your mercy might be upon us, that your Spirit would be among us, and that you would speak to each one of us.

Remember our needy world, Lord. So many in terrible conditions. Whether that's caused by famine, or corrupt governments, or wars.

[7:25] We know, Lord, that so many of our fellow human beings, are encountering things that we cannot barely imagine.

And we lift them up before you, Lord. And we pray that you will grant to them some of the blessings that we seem to have every single day.

Not because we are more deserving. And Lord, we just pray that they too, their needs might be met. Physically.

Socially. And of course, spiritually. And we pray that those that seek to give a cup of cold water in your name, might be blessed, and bring blessing in so doing.

So, Heavenly Father, we pray that you would be blessing your word to us now. And we ask these things in Jesus' name, with the forgiveness of all of our sins.

[8:35] Amen. So, we're going to be looking at verses 22 to 40.

Now, that's a wee bit ambitious, I realise. I have done a series on the I am sayings in John's Gospel.

There's seven of them, and we will encounter the very first of those I am sayings as we go through this passage. But it's not my intention to focus and unravel these I am sayings.

So, I'm really interested today in what's going on leading up to this first saying. Do we recognise each of us the absolute necessity of faith in the person of Jesus Christ?

Do we perhaps persist in thinking there is something that we need to do to merit or earn favour with God to earn salvation?

[9:52] Are we a true seeker this morning after Jesus Christ? These are some of the questions I think that we will touch on as we make our way through these verses this morning.

I'm going to try and revolve the message around three ideas. The first idea is seeking but not seeing.

And the second idea is saving revelation. And the third idea is security and comfort.

We learn from chapter 5 of John's Gospel in verse 16 to 18 that the Jews were persecuting Jesus because he was doing those healings on the Sabbath.

And not only that, it tells us in verse 18 of chapter 5 that they were seeking and they were seeking Jesus but to kill him.

[11:18] This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him. Because not only was he breaking the Sabbath but he was even calling God his own father, making himself equal with God.

That's in chapter 5 verse 18. So here we see even early in John's Gospel, they want rid of this Jesus.

And we also see that they're missing something. They're criticizing him for healing and doing good and showing kindness and mercy to people.

But because it was done on the Sabbath day, they were unhappy about that. But you know, Jesus made a wonderful statement once. He said, man wasn't made for the Sabbath.

For the Sabbath to totally rule and imprison him. But the Sabbath was made for man. But the Sabbath was made for man. That's a wonderful principle that Jesus is stating.

[12:28] We've got to be very, very careful, I believe, that we do not unfold and work out our religion based on rules and details and minutiae that misses the pulse and the heartbeat of Christianity.

I want to also make an introductory comment. These are introductory comments on signs.

It's true that Jesus did once say something like, if you don't believe me in terms of my language and my words. Because you'll notice that they wanted to kill him because they thought his language was suggestive of him making himself equal with God.

He says, at least believe me for the works sake or the signs sake. But it's a double edged sword to signs. We might as Christians, as we go through John's Gospel, see those seven signs and it might bolster our faith and give us, you might say, almost evidence.

Remember what I said at the very beginning. Do we realize the absolute necessity of faith in the person Jesus? Because. But John actually tells us in chapter 12 that for all the signs Jesus gave out, they did not believe in him.

[14:02] So the signs don't have a magic bullet in them. In chapter 6 verse 1, after this Jesus went away to the other side of Galilee.

After what? After what? That he heard they were out to kill him. So, unsurprisingly, Jesus leaves Jerusalem and heads back to Galilee.

Remember, Galilee is a way up in the north and Capernaum is even a bit further. And, you know, the first disciples came from, I think it was Bethsaida or something like that.

That is even very north. And you're almost into Gentile, a country there. And that's where Jesus, if you like, began his ministry and got his following.

Next day the crowd that remained on the other side had been following Jesus. Anyway, as I say, we're going to try and look at these verses around those three ideas.

[15:20] First then, seeking and not seeing. Is it possible that there is a kind of seeking Jesus, which still does not see the deeper truths concerning his identity, and still does not see his status as Redeemer and Giver of eternal life?

Well, there it is then. I'm going to read the first five verses from verse 22. So, the following day the crowd that had remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat.

Jesus had not entered it. The disciples had gone away alone. So, they got a boat and they came. So, when the crowd saw in verse 24 that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum seeking Jesus.

So, here are people, looks quite good at first, doesn't it? Who are seeking Jesus. I wonder what Jesus thinks of their seeking.

And when they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, Rabbi, when did you come here? And Jesus just lets that go right over the top of the head and says, Truly, truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me not because, this is interesting, you saw signs, but because you had your fill of the loaves.

[17:07] What does Jesus possibly mean here? I think he means because you didn't understand the significance of the sign. You didn't understand what that sign was pointing to.

I will eventually tell you what it was pointing to when I say to you, I am the bread of life. But that's not what you saw.

And that's not why you're seeking me. You're seeking me because your stomach got filled. And in a sense, Jesus might ask each of us this question.

Why are you seeking me? Is it because you realize that without me, you're lost?

Is it because you realize without me, you cannot find being reconciled to God? Do not labor, says Jesus, for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life.

[18:23] These are wonderful words by Jesus. I don't know about you, but I definitely believe that there is a hunger in men and women today that's a spiritual hunger, ultimately.

And I believe that people today are questioning many things. And they're asking themselves questions.

And they're conscious that there's something amiss in their lives and in the depths of their being. That all that this world is offering them is not working. And Jesus is saying to people, don't hang your hopes on this consumer society that we're part of.

Don't hang your hopes on this consumer. Don't hang your hopes on, as Jesus put it another way once, A person's life consists not in the abundance of things that they possess.

[19:36] Thought may I could get that other car. A Porsche passed me as I made my way from me. It was a light blue, it was actually an unusual blue color.

And it passed me and it cut in very narrow. And I said to Mary, my wife, I would forgive him if he would give me a wee shot of it.

It looked quite a smart, cool car. And then Jesus says to these seekers who are not really seeing properly.

He says to them in verse 27, no sorry, in verse 28. They say, what must we do to be doing the works of God?

And that's a telling statement, isn't it? And there's something about us as human people that we have almost nearly got it written into our DNA that there's something we've got to do to make us right with God.

[20:54] Jesus answered and said to them, This is the work of God that you believe in him whom he has sent.

Amazing. There's a sense in which Jesus would just love us to believe in him. See when you strip everything away.

You know when I was a young Christian, I've been a Christian, what, about 54 years now? And when I was really young Christian, I used to get the Josh McDowell things that were evidence for Christianity and so on.

I'll tell you where I am today. I've staked everything on a historical figure called Jesus of Nazareth. And I believe what he said about himself. Do you? Do you? And then in verse 30 to 34, notice what they say after Jesus makes it pretty plain to them.

[22:12] Here's what God wants you to do. Believe in the one he has sent. Notice how they change now. Then they said, What sign do you do?

And ironically, they've maybe seen that astonishing sign. What sign do you do? What sign do you do? Our fathers ate manna in the wilderness as it is written.

He gave them bread from heaven to eat. And they start quoting the Old Testament and they start quoting the Exodus.

And they start quoting, by the way, an awful lot of scholars believe that John sees the very coming of Jesus, his incarnation, his crucifixion and his resurrection as an Exodus.

And it's interesting, right enough, that he uses lots of words that are, you know, in chapter, verse 4 of chapter 6, John puts a wee parenthesis in and he says, Now the Passover feast of the Jews was at hand.

[23:29] John uses the idea of Passover nine times. And he certainly uses it on the eve of Christ's crucifixion. And of course, Paul could say in Corinthians, Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed.

And John the Baptist at the beginning of John's Gospel in chapters 1 and 2 said, Behold the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

So there's all those associations of mountain, of Passover, of the need for food. And even the boat that Jesus came in during the night to reassure the disciples was almost like a, almost could be seen as a symbol of the liberation of the new people of God.

Anyway, so they start talking about Moses. By the way, this first comment is going to be the main comment.

The other two are going to be, not so long, I want to focus on this seeking but not seeing. And then Jesus says to them that a greater than Moses is here.

[24:43] And that his bread, the bread that Moses and his people got sustained their natural life but was nothing to do with eternal life. And truly, truly, truly I say to you in verse 32, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven but my father gives you the true bread from heaven.

And I just love these next words, the next words in the next verse. They're electrifying. And if you can imagine this conversation, if you can imagine these people talking about the manna and Moses and what happened back then.

And then Jesus utters this incredible statement. For the bread of God. They were always thinking of something that had some sort of similarity to the manna.

Into natural bread. And that's all that they can think of. And then Jesus makes this statement. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.

What a revelation that is, is it not? That's actually slid me into my second point. This saving revelation. Jesus is questioning, is he not, the authenticity of their seeking.

[26 : 14] And Jesus follows that incredible statement by God's bread is a person.

And God's bread is his son. And God's bread is that word that John was talking about in chapter 1 verse 1. That had been with the father eternally.

And God's bread is the word that John gave in verse 14 of chapter 1. That was made flesh and dwelt among us. And we beheld his glory.

And then Jesus puts it more explicitly. You know, explicitly. And no more explicitly could it be put. Jesus said to them in verse 35.

I am the bread of life. I'm not just a bread of life. I am the bread of life.

[27 : 19] I am the bread of life. I am the bread. I am the bread. I am the bread. I am the bread. I am the bread. I am the bread. I am the bread. I am the bread. I am the bread.

I am the bread. I am the bread. I am the bread. I am the bread. I am the bread. I am the bread. I am the bread. I am the bread. I am the bread.

Jesus discloses what this true bread is. Which the Father gives. And he discloses the locus of it. Where it is.

It's in the person Jesus. And he reveals what it does for people. It gives life.

Now. People might say today. I've got life. I'm alive. I live a great life.

[28 : 19] There's many things in my life that make it great. Jesus once said. He that loves his life shall lose it. And he that loses his life for my sake shall find it.

What's he talking about? Bonhoeffer the German theologian once said. When Christ calls someone he bids them come and die. Certainly true. Because Jesus said every time he spoke about his coming crucifixion.

He actually added. And you must come and die as well and take up your cross. Is that the Christ that we're seeking? This word that Jesus uses for life and eternal life is Zoe.

I'm smiling because I remember being in this home and one of the kids was called Zoe. And I said do you know what your name means?

It's not bios life. It's Zoe life. It's the life of God.

[29 : 34] It's eternal life. Not simply or even mainly in a quantitative way. But in a qualitative way. It's the life that God meant and does mean and continues to mean for every human being.

That we might get connected with that life. Jesus is the source and fountain of this life.

He's the only supplier of it. If I could put it that crude way. Our bios life is a life the moment we're born the clock starts ticking for death.

But this life has a wonderful dimension. Jesus could say to them.

The bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. They said sir give us this bread always. Still only thinking of natural bread and not Jesus.

[30 : 53] And that's why Jesus said. And notice in verse 6. I'm not making this up. This is the words of Jesus again. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.

There is this great necessity of faith. There is this hunger and thirst.

I've mentioned it already among human beings. A spiritual hunger. A thirst for identity. The age old question. Who am I?

A thirst for acceptance. A thirst that. In our conscious life we feel we matter. A thirst to be valued. In this frenetic consumer world. That we live in. A thirst to be loved.

[32 : 10] A thirst. A thirst to have hope. Now I'm not making any political statement here. Believe me. But Andy Burnham.

Who is likely to replace Starmer. As our Prime Minister. After he won his by-election or whatever it was.

He gave a speech. And towards the end of that speech. He said. And above all. What this country needs today. Is hope.

He said it. But hope in whom. And hope in what.

And what hope. The word hope. Is a cousin of faith. We are saved by hope.

[33 : 11] But this hope. Is rock solid. This hope is not. If. Or conditional. It is utterly guaranteed.

In the last few minutes. I want to move from. We have looked at. Seeking. But not seeing. I have been really exploring. Jesus. Revelation. Because. You must remember. That all the words of Jesus. Are revelatory.

Jesus is not only. Redeemer. He is revealer. And the two. Are in. Absolutely. Together. But finally. Here is this big crowd.

And it seems that not many of them. Are believing. And they might raise some eyebrows. Among the disciples. And so on. And so.

[34:11] Jesus then. Starts offering. Security. And comfort. In verse. 37.

He says this. He had also said. In verse 5. He said. Whoever. Believes in me. Shall never thirst. But I want to focus on that. Whoever. There is no exceptions. No exceptions. No exceptions of race. No exceptions of class. If there is such a thing. And certainly. UK. Maybe even Western Europe.

Probably is. No exception of race. No exception. No exception. No exception. No exception. No exception. No exception. No exception.

[35:12] Whoever believes in me. Shall never thirst. This is a gilt-edged. Golden promise. And then he says.

In verse 7. All that the father. Oh sorry. But before I go away from that. I omitted the first part of that. Because that's important.

Verse 35. Whoever comes to me. And whoever believes in me. Here. Jesus is showing. He's saying.

The one explains the other. That's what he's saying. Because. He's got these two things in parallel. In juxtaposition. Beside each other. And he's saying.

If you really believe in me. You come to me. And if you've come to me. You've believed in me. Oh Lamb of God.

[36:11] I come. Just as I am. Have you come. Have you believed. So he has already said.

Whoever comes. And whoever believes. I want you to note that. He's already. Put that universal offer. Of the gospel out. And only after he has said that.

Does he say. All that the father gives me. Will come. To me. And these are. Encouraging words. He's saying. Look. The things that are revealed. Belong to us. And the things that are not revealed. Belong to God. And you know. The father. Is going to ensure.

That all those. That are going to come. Indeed. Will come. And even when he's talking about. The father's. Side of things.

[37:16] Looking at. The roots of salvation. If you like. He adds. And whoever comes to me. I will not cast out. In other words. Jesus is not.

Putting forward. What grammarians. Or something. Would call a. What is it again. Not antithesis. Antinomy. Yeah. He's really saying.

These two things. Are two. Essential truths. And they are running. Along. Beside each other. And actually. They're for your comfort. And the church's.

Impetus. To go. And evangelize. Far from them being. A damper. On evangelism. They're the opposite. And.

Also. I want you. To notice. In verse 38. I have come down. From heaven. Not to do my own will. But the will of him. Who sent me. And in verse 39. And this is the will.

[38:17] Of him. Who sent me. That I should lose. Nothing. And in verse 40. For this is the will. Of my father. Do you notice. Those three statements. About the will of God.

Yes indeed. The roots. Of our redemption. The roots. Of our redemption. Go very very deep. They do indeed.

Go deeper. In the moment. We come to him. But come we must. They're in the depths. Of the eternal love.

Of the father. And son. And the spirit. And the will of God. God. It's conceivable. Theoretically. That he may not have willed. Our redemption.

And salvation. Thank God he did. May the Lord then. Bless these things. To each one of us. For his glory.

[39:13] And for our eternal good. Amen. Amen. Well, we're going to...