

The Basics and Blessing of Salvation

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Preacher: Pastor Kenoyer

[0 : 00] We are making a little bit of adjustments on the stage, and so you saw me stumble going up. I'm wondering if some of them will stumble going down. We're making some changes so that in the future many of our fellowship can join in kind of the, what would you call it, ad hoc choir?

A round-town choir. Okay, we want many of you to participate from week to week so that our singing, and by the way, one of the very best places to be when our congregation is singing is up here.

Because you get to enjoy seeing the hearts and the affection of people coming this way for the Lord Jesus Christ. And as we sing together, our hearts are lifted up, and man, it is a blessing to be up here front and hear what God is doing in your hearts.

I want you to turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 6 and put your finger there on verse 51. I'm going to read just a little bit to kind of frame the text that we're going to be studying together. How many of you know, everybody look up and smile at me just for a moment. I know that smiling is a stretch for some, but go ahead, just force it. How many of you know that pastors are facial readers?

[1 : 26] You know what I'm saying? You remember when in Nehemiah, Nehemiah came into the presence of the king, and the king said, What's the deal with you, bud? Your face is really downcast.

Evidently, Nehemiah had been, for most of the time, a pretty joyful, confident, happy person. And the fact that his countenance was fallen was so out of the ordinary that the king was really concerned. Okay. Was Nehemiah a Christian? What's the answer?

Yes. Did Nehemiah have reason to be happy in God as a general rule? The answer is yes. So, if Nehemiah is an illustration of what generally happy and contented Christians are like, you should understand why a pastor would be concerned if Sunday morning he comes to the pulpit, and he looks out and he sees people who are professing believers who are profoundly downcast.

It makes me wonder, what's the burden of your heart? That's what I should care about. Isn't that right? All right. Nod your heads.

[2 : 49] Nod your heads. Just do it whether you feel it or not. Yes. I should care about you. And I do. And by the way, I got to tell you that this morning we get to look at a passage that reminds us of somebody that cares far more about us than Tim Kenoyer ever will.

That's the Lord Jesus Christ. And in John chapter 6, we find Jesus just stepping right forward into this issue of making his purposes in our life clear.

John 6, verse 51. 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, You know, that's not in the text. But just to give you a, they're irritated, okay? How can this man give us his flesh to eat?

So Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

[4 : 10] Let's pray. Our Father God, prayer for us is not a habit, a routine, an obligation, a means of starting a sermon in a formal way, but it is a happy declaration of our absolute dependence upon you to work in us and through us.

And so we come to ask your enabling. We come to ask that you would use your word and that your spirit would draw attention to areas in our life where we have lessons yet to learn or we have sins to care for, to confess and to forsake.

Where we have matters in our behavior and our attitudes towards you and towards one another that deeply grieve the spirit and compromise the effectiveness of our testimony and the brief journey that you have for each of us here before we go home to be with you.

And so we pray, and we pray with expectation that your spirit would work to lift up the Lord Jesus Christ and having not seen him, we may grow to love him more as a result of his work in us this morning.

And we're going to give you glory in advance for what you will do. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, as you look at this passage in John chapter 6, verse 51 through 61, what we are looking at is a larger portion of text beginning actually in chapter 6 where Jesus, remember, he fed the multitude, provided food for probably about 20,000 people.

[5 : 51] And on the heels of that, there was a large group of people that wanted him to do a follow-up, an encore, another meal. And he resisted that. Instead of accommodating their desire, by the way, you'll remember, he also wanted to take or they wanted to take him and make him king.

They didn't like what they were enduring under the Roman government, and they particularly liked the fact that here was free food, reasonable stuff. And they thought, well, hey, if we can force him to accommodate us, we're just in a good space.

And Jesus dealt with their very, very shallow and very self-centered materialistic thinking, and he really drove home the point that their need was not material and superficial or physical, but their need was spiritual.

And he made a very stunning statement. They had said, hey, listen, our fathers ate bread in the wilderness. You know, they had that big thing with Moses going on, manna every day.

And when they brought that up, you'll remember what Jesus said to them. He said, by the way, Moses was not the one who did that. Who did it? God. And then he walks on beyond that.

[7 : 01] He says, let's get this clear. I'm the bread of life. I'm the bread of life. And whosoever believes in me is going to have life. And he made it undeniably clear that he was the center of the hope and the desire and the need of every living person.

Now, that was a little unsettling. And so you would imagine that in the face of people kind of getting a little wiggled out and irritated by his straightforward comment on their spiritual needs, they'd back away from it.

That's not the way Jesus was. He was not a politician who kind of was putting his finger to the wind to try to figure out what people were interested in and talking about that at the given moment. He was right on point helping people understand that at the heart of their need was their spiritual condition and the darkness of their soul.

And as this matter of bread rolls out and plays out, you find that instead of softening the gospel, Jesus doubled down on it and made it even clearer. And that's what we're looking at here in verse 51.

He says, 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.

[8 : 21] So as we take up the text here this morning, I want you to recognize for one thing, Jesus in this passage is actually letting those who were listening to him know that he was going to die for them.

The statement actually ended up being something that went quite top over top of the heads of the thinking of the Jewish listeners. And they ended up actually grumbling among themselves.

Instead of backing away from the tension of these people who misunderstood, we find that Jesus even takes it further. Not only does he say at the beginning of verse 51, I'm the living bread that came down from heaven, but towards the end he says, And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.

My flesh. He makes it undeniably clear that his life would be given for them. That he was going to die. And serve as a sacrifice for them.

And I want you to understand that when he spoke about this matter of being the bread of life, he was using an imagery that people very well understood.

[9 : 29] In the ancient world, food was not something that was kind of taken for granted. It was something that people depended upon as much as we do.

But the truth of the matter is, is that we think in terms of, so what am I going to have for dinner? It's not a question of, will I have dinner? It's a question of what? Well, am I going to have fried chicken?

Or am I going to have pork chops that are covered in almonds or whatever else it is? Or am I going to have, you know, roast beef and potatoes? We're all thinking about the dinner, not as if, Oh, maybe I'm going to eat and maybe I'm not.

It's just like, what's the menu? In the ancient world, the issue of food was much more tenuous. And it was something that people thought a lot about.

And when Jesus said, I am the bread of life, You're the one who I am absolutely dependent on. And without you, I'm not going to survive. And here he is making that statement.

[10:33] He says, and the bread that I'm going to give for you is my flesh. I am going to die. And that's what he was saying. I'm going to die. And my death is going to meet your need.

You see, when he spoke about bread, they were thinking about Moses and the manna. He made it clear that the bread that he was referring to was something more significant, more necessary, and of eternal significance, namely dealing with their spiritual condition and their need for eternal salvation.

You see, what he was saying is that his death was going to give life-giving power to those who received by faith the bread that he had to offer. And what his point was is this, is that his crucifixion and faith in his finished work is really the only thing that brings eternal life.

Now, I want you to have that fixed in your mind. His crucifixion, his death on the cross, that was what he was predicting was going to happen. His death on the cross and his finished work.

Now, what does finished work mean? What does it mean when work is finished? How many of you have left? This is one of the things I'm very good at.

[11:45] I'm good at doing a project but not finishing it. Do you know what finishing a project means? It means actually picking up the tools that you used to do the project with. Are there any wives out here that identify with unfinished projects?

I see those hands in the crowd. Put them down. Okay? Judith, you didn't put your hand up. Thank you very, very much. Okay, I appreciate that. See, finished work means it's all done.

It's completely done. And his crucifixion, his faith, his finished work on the cross was the only thing that is going to bring eternal life.

And how is it that a person goes to heaven when they die? Why? It certainly was not by eating manna because one of the things that Jesus had spoken about earlier, look there in verse 49, just back up a little bit.

He says, your fathers ate manna in the wilderness and guess what? They're dead. Manna didn't do the trick. And here's Jesus talking about, I am the bread of life.

[12:48] And the point he makes is, let me tell you something, the ones that eat of the bread that I give, in verse 50, will not die. They're not going to die. And what Jesus was saying is this, is that salvation is through what he had done for them and he has done.

And it's not through what man can do. Now stop just for a moment. Because I want you to understand that when Jesus was speaking to the Jews, the thing that the Jews found profoundly irritating was not just that he said, I am the bread of life, I am the son of God.

The thing that they found profoundly irritating was that he was telling them they had no part to play in bringing about their own salvation. What do you mean? You mean all the good that I am doing in and of itself does not secure me eternal life?

We bump into people on a regular basis. You and I, when we talk to them about their salvation, we say, why is it that God should let you into heaven? Their standard answer is what? Well, I've been a pretty good person.

I'm doing the best I can. I'm sure that God grades on the curve and I'm just above the bump. You know how it is? We bump into all kinds of people who think that the basis for getting to heaven is on the basis or on the frame of their own merit and their own effort.

[14:11] And Jesus said, hey, listen, I'm the living bread. I'm the one that has to do this for you. And I love the gospel that Jesus shared that day. He made it clear that he was the way to God.

He was the only one that men could depend upon to save them from their sins. And listen to what he says in verse 53. He said, truly, truly. And by the way, the word truly, truly is really knocking it to him, right?

It's like, I'll try the English, the King James, verily, verily. How many of you like verily, verily? Verily, verily are kind of like shaking your finger in a person's face and saying, get this, right?

Verily, verily. Truly, truly. Jesus says, I want you to be sure you understand, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you will have no life in you.

Boom. Now, what was the takeaway from that? Follow with me here, if you will, just for a moment, at the attitude that the Jews had towards that.

[15:15] They already find this in verse 52. The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, how can this man give us his flesh to eat? They were arguing.

Can you imagine what the argument was? There was a group of people who were saying, hold it, hold it. When he said that, he was speaking metaphorically. How many of you know what a metaphor is? Raise your hand.

Jared, where are you? Jared, wave your hand. He's in the nursery. Tell him to wave his hand.

Okay. What is a metaphor? A metaphor is a set of words that are not to be taken literally because they are communicating something else.

I'm as serious as a heart attack. Now, that's a picture that tells you I'm really what? Serious. There are many metaphors in the Bible.

And so you had one side who were saying, hold it, hold it. Jesus is really telling us that he's going to walk up a piece of his arm and make us eat that. I'm gag.

[16:21] No. There's another part that we're saying, what he is saying, he's using a figure of speech. He's using a metaphor. Don't take him literally. He's trying to tell us something. And they were arguing back and forth between themselves, kind of on the side.

And Jesus says, let me step into that and let you understand, you better get it. You have to eat my flesh. You have to drink my blood. Without that, you're not going to have life. Now, let's step into this just a little bit further because there's a very interesting argument that plays out in our culture today in relationship to that.

It's a fruitless argument. There are some who actually believe that when Jesus spoke these words of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, he actually meant them literally.

The thought is that when people take communion in churches, not the pastor. The pastor doesn't have the ability to do this, but a priest has the ability of actually turning the bread that is on the table and the juice that is in the cup into the literal.

Now, what do I mean by literal? The real, the actual, into the actual bread and blood, the body and blood of Jesus.

[17:38] They believe in something called transubstantiation. That's a fancy word for changing substance. Chains from bread and juice to flesh and blood.

And they say, well, how come you believe that? Well, look at this passage. Jesus said, verse 53, unless you eat the flesh and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

Now, I want to make two points in relationship to that to help you understand that when Jesus said this in this passage that we're looking at, he was speaking metaphorically.

He was using a figure of speech to communicate an idea that we all need to understand, and he was not speaking about actually eating his flesh and drinking his blood.

Number one, when he said this, who did he say it to? Who did he say it to? He said it to a vast majority of unbelievers. And he was speaking to unbelievers not about communion.

[18:47] He hadn't died yet. The Last Supper had not been instituted. He was speaking to them about the matter of their faith at the moment in him as the Savior of the world, not about actual flesh and blood.

Now, furthermore, if you will turn in your Bible over to 1 Corinthians chapter 11, we're here in John. Keep your finger because we're coming back. But let's see it in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 where the apostle corrects a misunderstanding that was in the church regarding the matter of the Lord's table. What's the purpose for which we take communion? 24 and 25, it says this, when he'd given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body which is for you, do this in, what's the next word?

Remembrance. In other words, hey, I want you to remember. I want you to remember. The purpose of the Lord's table is a reminder to us. How many of you need reminders?

How many of you need reminders? Hey, just try this out. How many of you on occasion get into your car and don't put the buckle on, the seat belt? All right? What happens when you don't put the buckle on, the seat belt?

[19:57] What happens? I mean, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding. And you think, eventually, in the old days, how many of you remember when that didn't go off all the time?

And you could just eventually, you could connect it behind you. How many of you ever did that? Connect it behind you and just got in the car anyway? You know, it's like, but now they have it so it's idiot proof. You know, well, I shouldn't say that, but I mean, okay.

Okay? Okay? It just reminds you forever, you better suck it up and buckle up. We need reminders. We need reminders. And so we find out in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 that the Lord's table is not actually eating the real flesh and drinking the real blood of Jesus.

It is reminding ourselves of what He did for us. Now, there's another little part that I want you to understand. Go back to John chapter 6, verse 56. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood, if you take those two words literally, it just follows logically that you at least ought to take the rest of the verse literally.

Okay? Let me read it for you again. Whoever feeds my flesh, chomp, chomp, chomp, drinks my blood, sip, sip, sip, abides where? Abides where? Yeah.

[21 : 19] How can you be in Jesus? Have you ever had to explain to little kids what it means to have Jesus in your heart? Have you ever done that? Mommy, how can I have Jesus in my heart? I mean, you know, how can He be in me?

And by the way, let me tell you something. This issue of Christ in us, the hope of glory, is huge in the Scriptures. It is at the core of the Christian life.

But most of us, by the time we're this age, understand that that phrase, Christ in you, is not talking about a physical abiding.

It's talking about a relationship that we have with Him, and He is at work in us. So, I do want you to understand, and my apology for this lingering cough.

I am very thankful for Zithromax. But here we are. This is a fruitless argument to get caught up in, well, we're actually talking about the real flesh, and we're really talking about the blood.

[22 : 28] What Jesus was saying when people were struggling with this issue of salvation, He said, listen, you don't have life apart from Me. You cannot live apart from Me.

Well, on the basis of that, having made that statement that salvation is in this relationship that we have by faith in Christ alone, Christ then takes the remainder of the passage that we're going to study, and He deals out four blessings that come to us in salvation.

And I love the fact that Jesus, in this context, gives us an indication of what are the blessings that we have in our relationship with Him. We need to be reminded occasionally.

We need to be reminded. And so, let's look, first of all, at verse 54. Put your finger on it there.

Whoever feeds on My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life.

Eternal life. How many of you, every now and then, make purchases, and you decide you're really looking for a 90-day warranty? You know, who needs anything beyond 90 days?

[23 : 40] Right? Most of us, when we make a purchase, we would like to have a longer warranty than 90 days. The other day, I was in Home Depot and bought whatever it was, a particular tool, something essential to my well-being.

And as I was walking through the checkout lane, the lady said to me, Would you like an extended warranty? Tongue-in-cheek, I said, Yeah. She says, Well, that'll be, you know, it's like almost double the cost of the tool.

I said, No, thank you. And the truth of the matter is, is that when you get an extended warranty, how many of you understand that lifetime is about seven years, give or take? In most cases, it's not as long as you think.

Most warranties, you understand the legalese is this, the large print adds, and the small print takes away. Well, when Jesus used the terms eternal life, he wasn't talking about, Well, you know what? I'm making this promise that you're going to have salvation, and it's just going to be for as long as you're really a nice person. That's not what it is. Eternal life means this.

[24 : 48] Those who come to faith in Jesus will enjoy heaven forever, and we will never lose that blessing and that confidence. Settle it in your heart.

Salvation that is of the Lord is not conditional. I want you to hammer that point home in your life.

Salvation that is of the Lord is not conditional. We're not saved by our own works.

We're not kept by our own effort. And the fact of the matter is, is when Jesus announced this truth, he was making it undeniably true that those who come to faith in him have everlasting life.

It will never stop. When Jesus said, It is finished on the cross, he was announcing that the work of salvation and the blessing that you and I enjoy as a result of our relationship with Christ is

unchangeable.

I vacillate. There are days that I am not very confident or secure in my relationship with Jesus, even at 67.

[25 : 50] 67. Okay? And I don't think I'm atypical. The truth of the matter is, is every now and then I look at the ugliness of my life and the burden of reality, and I say, Man, Jesus, I can't figure out how you love me.

And he says, Hold it. My love for you is not based on your love for me or your behavior. It is an unconditional relationship that he has secured with his blood, and it's settled in the heavens.

Secondly, salvation there in verse 54 is a guarantee of my eternal resurrection and my physical resurrection and eternity. The last part says, And I will raise him up the last day.

Our spirits, when we die, do you know where we go? Believers? It says in the Bible, Absent in the body, present with the Lord.

What happens to the body? It takes a temporary parking space here, and do you know what it's waiting for? How many of you know what it's waiting for? It's waiting for a resurrection when my body, my spirit, linked back together again in eternity and glorified body present with the Lord forever.

[27 : 01] Now, how do I know that the resurrection is going to take place and Tim Knoyer, who is someday going to be worm food, is going to rise again? How do I know that? I know that because Jesus rose from the dead.

And here's what he says. He says, Look there, verse 54, I will raise him up the last day. I will raise him up the last day. I will raise him up the last day. Last week, I had a contractor coming over to the house to look at something, and he walked up to me and said, How you doing?

Now, you know what I'd say when a person says, How you doing? What do I say? I said this. I did. Standing right out there in the grass, I said, Any better than I'd be dead? The guy looked at me. He got this really concerned look on his face. I'm smiling. I'm smiling. He wasn't paying attention. I'm smiling. Any better than I'd be dead? He's looking at me and says, Are you okay? I said, I said, I'm fine.

He said, What's the deal? I said, Listen, I like this life, but when I die, I'm going to heaven, and it's better there. Oh.

[28 : 12] Ponder that. What do you mean? Okay. So, salvation guarantees our physical resurrection. The story doesn't end for the believer in a messy, unhappy predicament.

Third, I want you to mark what we notice here, and the scriptures just hammer this. Jesus makes the point that we have a personal relationship with him.

Look at verse 56. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him.

Salvation grants me personal and intimate relationship with Jesus.

Salvation grants me personal and intimate relationship with Jesus. Now, let me stop just for a minute. Some of us are born frowners.

Do you understand what I'm saying? But when we pick up on the reality of our relationship with Christ, what should it do to our countenance?

[29 : 23] A quiz question. Help me out. What should it do to our countenance? Help me. Judith left. She walked out. I don't know where she went. It's okay.

She'll be back. She said to me, I'm a moody person. Did anybody know I'm a moody person? Have I ever told you that before? I'm a little moody sometimes. I can be depressed without even practice. I don't have to stretch, warm up.

I'm there. The other day, she said to me, you've been a little moody lately. You know, it's really not becoming of a person who knows Jesus as long as you do. I really didn't like that, but, you know, it was like, yeah, I get the memo.

Let's stop. And the next day, you know, having devotions, praying about this. Lord, please help me stop being so moody and self-focused. It's about being self-focused. How many of you understand that? Moodyness and self-focus go together.

Nod your heads. Nod your heads. When you're unhappy, you can't blame Jesus. Can we say that too? When we got that one, you know, it's like, just blame yourself. So the next day, I'm praying.

[30 : 21] I started out thanking the Lord for how wonderful his salvation is and just for the incredible fact that he loves me despite me. And towards the end of the day, I said, so how did I do?

She says, you get better points. I need someone to help me with those things. You know, it's like, okay. So here's the deal. Get it. salvation grants me personal and intimate relationship with Jesus. He knows me. He loves me. He will never change his mind about who I am and what his relationship with me is. I love what you find over there in Ephesians chapter 3, verse 14 through 19 where Paul says this.

He says, the thing that I really want you to get your arms around is just how incredible the love of Christ is. Get your hands around that. And I got to tell you something. Listen to me and I want you to mark this down.

It should not be an occasional discipline of pondering how much Christ loves you. It should be the daily thought process of the believer.

[31 : 29] Finally, salvation grants me the power for effective living. Put your finger on verse 57. As the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me.

I like that. The world we live in is a profoundly messy, scarred, broken, disappointing world. And is there any hope for improvement and growth? And the answer is what? Not if you're counting on yourself or anybody else that is of human makeup, flesh, apart from Christ.

There is no justification for the dishonest suggestion that we can make a difference in our life on our own.

But do you know what the Bible tells me? Because of my salvation and because of Christ living in me and the work of Christ in me, I don't have to stay the way I am.

[32 : 45] This morning, we had a knockout Sunday school time. We had a number of our people that have been members of our fellowship for many years. All of them had been believers for quite some time.

And as I listened to them, they were sharing the blessing of being part of the same congregation for a long time. One of the things that they did not mention was this.

Being part of the same congregation for many, many years allows you to see God at work in other people's lives in time, over time.

You know, it's entirely theory that God changes people in one sense unless you can actually see it happen.

Do you understand that point? And when you are in lasting relationship in the same place and you watch people change over life, I'm going to say this, Ken. Hi, Ken.

[33 : 50] Good to have Ken Laurel and Eileen with us. I remember when, I'm going to just launch off here, so bear with me. I remember when I used to be a little critical of Ken being very expressive when he would sing.

Do you remember that, Ken? Do you remember that? Did you see me over here? You probably didn't see me. You did? I raised my hand. I hope nobody else noticed it. Huh? I'm going to make you smile.

Yeah. One of the benefits of having a pastor in the same place you put up me for 29 years is you actually get to see me change.

Do you understand that? Progressive sanctification means people don't stay the way they are and it's the Spirit of God that helps people change. The blessing of salvation is that when the Spirit of God brings a person to faith, he doesn't have to stay that moody, grumpy, unhappy, surly, negative, highly offendable.

Do I need to add any others that haven't missed you yet? Okay? You don't have to be that way. And the reason I can tell you you don't have to be that way is because Christ Jesus came into the world not only to save sinners but to change sinners.

[35 : 03] And the gospel hope is that the work of glorification, progressive sanctification, begins from the moment of your conversion until the day he takes you home into his presence.

Is that good news? Yeah. Do you know the good news at work in your life? Huh? Ah! Ah! Yeah. I'm not sure, but yeah.

Hey, if he's at work, I don't have to talk to you about smiling. You're doing it! And let me tell you something. You go out into an unbelieving world whose lives are absolutely wrecks.

Their lives are broken. Their lives are absolutely ruined by sin. And all you have to do is have the joy of your salvation as a rich patina on the life that you live and people ask you, what's the deal?

What's the deal? I can tell you this. Christ Jesus came into my life, delivered me from all of my sins, given me complete forgiveness, granted me eternity in heaven with him, and he is actively at work changing me from being who I am to who I will be.

[36 : 34] I'm not the man I will be, but I'm not the man I was. And it's because Christ Jesus died on the cross and rose again and delivered me from the pit and saved me, and he's done that for many of you here.

And you know what? When you read the story of what he says here, you get your hands around this thing and you think, man, that's my Jesus, and I've got confidence in him. Let's close in prayer. Our Father God, as we think about Jesus this morning, we rejoice in the glory of the cross. We rejoice in the fact that Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and he saved me, and he saved many of us here today.

And we are here today to worship him and lift up his name. There are some here that do not know Christ, and my prayer is that today their hearts would be drawn to the cross by your Spirit. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.