

Coming to Christ

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- [0:00] Let us now turn to the passage that we read, the Gospel according to John chapter 6, reading again at verse 44.
- John 6 and verse 44. No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day.
- As ever, Jesus in his teaching in this passage is giving sound advice, initially to the audience that was in front of him, and to us, the readership.
- He is stressing the need in the lives of his listeners and in our lives too, to work not for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.
- In other words, Christ is saying, don't be duped into seeking materialistic gain at the expense of the loss of your soul, but rather seek the bread of life, the food that endures, even Christ himself.
- [1:24] And when his listeners heard how he taught, rather than accept the teaching, they asked for another sign.
- What sign, verse 30, show us though then that we may see and believe thee? What does thou work? Our fathers, and they refer to their past history.
- Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness. As it is written, he gave them bread from heaven to eat. By this, they are demonstrating that the unbelieving heart never has enough reason to believe and accept the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- And although that is true, Christ reminds them and us that unbelief cannot thwart the purpose of God in bringing unbelieving men, women, boys and girls to faith in Christ.
- For he states, all that the Father gives me will come to me. And whoever comes to me, I will never cast out.
- [2:52] Now, perhaps some might see a pillow of comfort there. But what I see there is a statement of tremendous encouragement, irrespective of how unpromising, how unlikely in our eyes that a person might come.
- This is the reassurance of the word of God. All that the Father gives me will come to me. When were they given to him?
- They were given to him in the eternal councils. And you remember how he himself pleads as the great high priest, Father, I will that they also, or that that also, as it may be translated, which thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.
- It seems to me to be a humbling thought to be found amongst those whom the Father has given to the Son as a gift.
- And Christ states categorically, all that the Father gives me will come to me. And that is the primary reason why every person here this evening in Christ has come to Christ.
- [4:24] Because you have been gifted by the Father to the Son. It has nothing to do with you. And then he gives another reason as to why they should believe.

For he says, I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And it's as if they were unable to challenge the teaching further.

So they decided to have a go at the preacher. And that is often a tactic of unbelief to the present hour. When unable to challenge the veracity of the teaching, people will highlight the failings of Christians known to them.

It reminds me of when we were in Skye. And my counterpart in the Church of Scotland, he met a man who belonged to his congregation.

And he asked him on the Monday morning when he met him, why he wasn't in church on the Lord's Day. And the man replied, oh, he said, your church is full of hypocrites.

[5 : 33] And the minister promptly and quickly replied, there's always room for one more. So you see, he played him at his own game. Now, don't misunderstand me.

I'm not saying that Christians have no failings. They have many. And they themselves ought to recognize them. But the life of the Christian should reflect the profession that you make.

And this is the point. Are the failings of the Christians good reason to reject the revealed word of God? Now, many people make that excuse.

And I think if you read your Bible carefully, you will find you're on the wrong side of the divide. In making that assertion, the failings of the Christian are not a good reason to reject the word of God.

The Bible is not on your side. And let us remember that in this particular context, that the preacher, unlike every other preacher, he was sinless.

[6 : 42] He was the perfect son of God in human nature. There was nothing in his personality or in his conduct or in his character that was sinful. There was no flaw in the life or the thinking or the witness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And all those who did try to find fault were forced ultimately to acknowledge at his trial that they found no fault in him.

Not even those who were crucified on either side of him. So, here the audience tried to belittle him.

For they thought they were sure of his identity. 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?

We know this person. So, what he teaches cannot possibly be right when he says, I have come down from heaven. They were so sure of this. They were so confident of their assertion.

[7 : 48] And you know what? They were so wrong. That is why the older I become, the more important I believe it to be that we make a clear distinction between what we think the Bible teaches and what is actually taught in the Bible.

You see, what we think the Bible teaches is not always what is taught in the Bible. And it's important to make that distinction. We may make assertions about the Bible.

And sometimes when you challenge people and they tell you this is what the Bible teaches, there's nowhere found in the Bible. So, it's important to find out what is actually taught in the Word of God.

They were so wrong. And that is often how people reason. People will say, that's your view or it's the view of the church. It reminds me of an interview I heard.

Well, there's quite some time since now. When the son of Billy Grimm, Franklin Grimm, was being interviewed. And he was coming across to this country.

[9 : 07] And the interviewer was pushing him hard as to his views about the Muslims and about the LGBT lobby.

And Grimm was to be admired for the way he kept his cool in the interview. And he made it very clear.

It's not my view, he said. Or the view of the church. But the view of God as expressed in the infallible Word of God. And despite every effort by the interviewer, he couldn't dislodge him from this point.

That he was sticking to what was taught in the Word of God. And that is where we have to stand to.

Knowing this first of all. That no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man.

[10:09] But men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. And it's important to remember that. These people were making these assertions.

They were saying this man grew up among us. Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know. We know his family history. How can he possibly claim to have come from heaven?

How does he now say, I have come down from heaven? He is part of the community. We know very well who he is. You remember how you would hear a disparaging comment, perhaps in Gaelic.

We knew him when he was little. That's the kind of assertion that they're making here about the Lord Jesus Christ.

We know who he is. And as far as they were concerned, they refused to test the evidence. He was just the son of the carpenter and could not possibly be the eternal son of God.

[11:11] That was ludicrous. Totally beyond their understanding and reasoning. And the Bible makes it very plain that the eternal son of God took to himself true human nature.

That he came into this world virtually unrecognized. That he suffered and died. And all of that, a shining example of his immeasurable love for lost sinners and a demonstration of his amazing grace.

And so he commands them, do not grumble among yourselves. Rather grumble about, rather than grumble about the scriptures and its demands. We should submit in our minds and hearts to the revealed word of God.

And so that brings us a background. That brings me to our text. No one can come to the Father, lest the Father who sent me draw him and I will raise him up on the last day.

Four thoughts. First of all, the powerlessness of man. No one can come to the Father. Secondly, the power of God.

[12:22] No one can come to me except the Father who just sent me draw him. Thirdly, the perfect assurance of the resurrection.

Thirdly, the perfect assurance of the resurrection. Thirdly, the perfect assurance of the resurrection. Fourthly, the practical application of our text, which I believe is also very important.

First of all, then, the powerlessness of man. Jesus responded with a spiritual assessment of those who were grumbling.

What could account for their obstinate unbelief? And this is the explanation that Jesus gives. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

In other words, their persistent unbelief results from man's spiritual inability. Jesus says that man in his sinful condition not only does not come or will not come to him, but he cannot come.

[13:29] Notice how strongly that is emphasized in the verse. He does not say some may come or even one or two may come, but he says no one, without exception, no one can come.

Not a single instance of an exception here. No man can come to me. And so Jesus is saying, why do you not understand what I am saying to you about me being from heaven?

He's asking this question to his original hearers, and then he's giving the answer. He's saying, the reason why you can't understand what I am saying is because no one can come to me.

No one can believe in me. No one can accept this teaching unless the Father who sent me draws him to me. There is no circumstance in which we, by our own free will, decide to start drawing near to God.

Now, our Lord's teaching here has massive implications for how we look at ourselves. He says in the first place that everyone by nature turns away from God.

[14:40] Everyone by nature, born by ordinary generation, are born into the world as members of the fallen family of Adam. Everyone by nature runs away from God.

There's really, in one sense, no seekers in that sense. If you're seeking God, it's because he first sought you.

That's the truth of Scripture. No one seeks God of their own volition. If you are seeking God, it's because you have first of all been sought by God and persuaded to seek him.

That's the scriptural order. So everyone turns away. And in the second place, no one will get to God by his or her own reasoning or their own resources.

That's maybe hard and difficult for us to swallow. We like to think that we are equipped to meet with any problems, whatever they might be.

[15:47] We can cope with any problem that confront us. Whatever they might be, we'll work it out. At a national level, the problems that confront our politicians, the answer always seems to be throw more money at it.

If it is a military problem, strengthen our military presence. Or have more sophisticated technology.

And Jesus says here, it doesn't work like that. It doesn't work with you and I working up our best argument and reasoning. It's not by using our best resources and figuring it out.

It only happens if the Father who sent me draws. And that leads on to reflect on the will of man.

Remember how the short archaicism poses the question, Did our first parents continue in the estate wherein they were created? And you remember the response that the reformers gave?

[16:54] Our first parents being left to the freedom of their own will. Fell from the estate wherein they were created by sinning against God.

They had the freedom of their own will in the state of innocence in Eden. But the moment that they yielded to sin, their wills were no longer free.

That is sadly the case. They were enslaved. Our wills are enslaved to something. They're either enslaved to Christ or they're enslaved to whatever idol we choose.

Whether it's pleasure or money or fame or power. Whatever it might be. Our wills, here's the point, are not unfettered and free.

We do what we do because we love what we love. And you may be saying, Ah, but Minister, hold on, I make choices. I agree.

[18:00] But I say that every choice that you make is never free from the influence and the power of sin. The Bible does not teach that we are weak or sick, but that we are under the power of sin.

We are dead. You were dead, says the apostle Paul in the trespasses and sins. And he goes on to expand on his theme by describing the kind of life that they then lived.

Which you once walked, following the course of this world. Following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons or the children of disobedience.

Right into the Romans he says, For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, does not submit to God's law. Indeed it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

The apostle John, truly, truly I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. So you see, wherever you go, to whoever you might be, whatever the upbringing you enjoyed, however Christian it may have been, how much you have been surrounded by the word of God, as long as you are out of Christ, you are enslaved to the power of sin.

[19:17] Augustine used to say that free will without grace has the power to do nothing but sin. The will is enslaved to sin.

So that tells you something of the powerlessness of man as he is by nature. Secondly, the power of God.

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And that word draw is significant in the context here. And it's worth pursuing this word.

It's the word that is used in chapter 21 of this gospel of drawing fish to shore in a net. Simon Peter went aboard and hauled or drew the net ashore full of large fish, 153 of them.

Strange number, isn't it? Same word is used in Acts 16 and verse 19. When Paul and Silas were brought before the magistrates, when their owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them or drew them into the marketplace before the rulers or the magistrates.

[20:35] The same word is used of Peter when he drew his sword and struck the high priest's servant. And in all of these examples, there is the use of force implied.

The implication of resistance overcome by a superior force. Now, by nature, as I have said already, we resist God.

We are opposed to God. And unless we are overcome by a power that is mightier and stronger from within, then we cannot come and will not come to Christ.

That proves to us, if we need proof, that the quickening of a spiritually dead man to life is the sole action of the free grace of God under the power of the Holy Spirit.

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. Perhaps I can illustrate from the Old Testament. Do you remember when Elijah was on the top of Mount Carmel?

[21:46] And he wanted to demonstrate who was the true and the living God. And you will remember what he requested when he was there.

Fill, he said, four jars with water. Pour it on the burnt dothing and on the wood. And then he said to them, do it a second time. And they did.

Do it a third time. And they did it a third time. And the water ran round the altar and filled the trench also with water. Everything was absolutely saturated with water.

And the only rational conclusion that you could come to was that no fire could possibly burn there. But then we read in the Bible. When fire from heaven came down, it consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, the dust, licked up the water that was in the trench.

And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, the Lord, he is God. The Lord, he is God. Now, in a similar way, God glorifies himself by drawing up people to him who were drowned in sin, who were saturated by sin.

[23 : 02] And he brings them to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, you might be saying, ah, minister, hold on. I thought that God makes a willing people in a day of his power.

And yet every example you have given us here this evening is of those who were drawn or dragged, as it were, against their will.

Does that mean that God uses violent means at his disposal to break man's will and to bring him into submission? Is God, as it were, almost as if it were placing in handcuffs and hauling them off to prison?

Oh, no. That's not how God operates. What I understand this to mean is that he constrains sinners by the power of free grace in such a way that a person comes voluntarily to view the beauty of Christ as attractive and desirable.

There is implied in this drawing the wooing of a lover. That's how God draws men and women to himself.

[24 : 15] It's the expulsive power of a new affection at work in the lives of men and women and boys and girls. Perhaps I can illustrate it from a natural example.

A man that I came across during my ministry, he had a lot of issues. His wife died from cancer and he had a drink problem for quite a while and quite a severe drink problem.

But I met him some years later and I just couldn't believe the transformation in this man. He was clear-eyed.

There was no evidence of an alcohol problem anymore. And I met a sister-in-law who belonged to the congregation I was then in.

And I remarked to her how pleased I was to see her brother-in-law looking so well. And there was a little smile on her face. And she said to me in a quiet voice, He has a new lady friend.

[25 : 24] He's a widower. He has a new lady friend. And I thought to myself, That's just how the gospel works. When the love of Christ comes into the life of a man or a woman or a boy and a girl, it transforms your life.

There's a new love at work in your life and in your heart. And however your life may have been before, with all the ugliness that sin produces in the heart of man, it's transformed by the infusion of the love of Christ into your life.

And that involves the effectual call of the gospel. Shorter catechism again. It's always useful to use your shorter catechism. What is the effectual calling? Factual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby convincing us of our sin and misery, lighten our minds in the knowledge of Christ, renewing our wills.

He doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel. Your heart is opened. Your will is won.

The power of the Holy Spirit overcomes you. Your sinful, self-righteous nature, convincing you of your sin and misery. Your proud nature is broken, so that you come to Christ as an empty-handed, impoverished beggar, seeking to be fed by the bread of life.

[26 : 58] And you remember, the encouragement that is given to those who come and their destitution to him, he does not disregard the cry of the destitute.

I think that is very wonderful, because there is a very real sense in which every sinner who comes to him, you come empty-handed, you come in the poverty of your destitution towards the Lord.

And you remember, in the book of Psalms, it speaks of when God in his glory appears, when Zion he builds and repairs, shall regard and lend his ear, unto the needy's humble prayers, the afflicted's prayer, he will not scorn, or the prayer of the destitute.

And that word in Hebrew is only used there in the whole of the Bible. And its root meaning is a bush, a shriveled bush, in the desert, in an isolated place.

Nothing attractive about it. And there's nothing attractive about the destitute. And you see, that's the life of faith. It's a hand-to-mouth existence.

[28:33] You come empty-handed to the Lord. You don't come with full hands. You don't come in your fullness to God. If you do, he soon empties you in order that you might be filled.

It's a hand-to-mouth existence that the believer has in this life. So, he has awoken in your soul when that happens, a hunger for this once despised source of food, the bread of life.

Oh, how you disregarded the bread of life at one time. Huh? Just think back. If you're tonight in Christ to your pre-conversion days, and how you despised that food.

And oh, my friend, if you're here tonight out of Christ, oh, will you not come to look at this source of food that alone can satiate the needs of your soul?

No one can come to me unless the Father has sent me dross. There is no other way of coming to know God but through Christ. because it is Christ who reveals the Father.

[29:53] No one has seen the Father but the one who dwells face to face or in the bosom of the Father. And as it is written in the prophets, they will all be taught by God.

The Word of God, it soaks or floods into your mind and heart. Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. That's the power of God.

The powerlessness of man. Thirdly, the perfect assurance of the resurrection. No one can come to me unless the Father has sent me dross. and I will raise and I will raise them up on the last day.

Why does he connect these two? The drawing, pulling, gracious, compelling power of grace to come to Christ.

When did he go right to the resurrection? Well, it seems to me he is saying to us that if the Father draws, then the Son will most certainly raise up.

[31:02] It's the assurance of your salvation. If no one can come unless the Father draws, the first question that many of us are going to ask, how can I know I've been drawn?

And Christ says, you can know you've been drawn because I will raise you up on the last day. If the Father brings them to me, I will raise them up.

It's the greatest assurance possible, I believe. Here's the question that's going to inevitably come up in all of us who follow Jesus. Perhaps you'll say, but what about all my sin?

What about all these sins to my shame that I keep returning to that I can't seem to shake off? Won't God eventually give up on me?

Won't he eventually have enough of me with all my struggles and my shame? And Jesus says, it's not what you do that either brings you to me or keeps you with me, it's all of grace.

[32:07] And that grace terminates, culminates, has its apex, reaches its senate in the resurrection from the dead at the last day when Jesus will raise them up.

Now, why can he say this? Why can Jesus say this with such confidence? I will raise them up. And do you see what lies underneath the whole of this discourse?

If you read it through in just a few verses, we've read how Jesus has this self-awareness that he is not simply a mere man.

He is God and man. Because mere men don't say, I have the power to raise people from the dead. No one can come.

When that person comes by God's grace and God's grace alone, I will raise him up. Why can he say that? Because the one who promises resurrection will first be crucified in your place.

- [33 : 08] And then he'll be the resurrected one. And that brings us right to the center of New Testament theology where the resurrection, as I said this morning, is a foundational pillar. I am, says Christ, the resurrection and the life. And he's going to prove that when he walks out of the grave on the Easter morning. And this idea of resurrection, this beating heart, as it were, of the Apostle Paul's theology, of New Testament theology, is that Jesus' resurrection.

And the resurrection, he promises here, our resurrection on the last day are not two separate events. They are two episodes, I believe, of the same event.

Why does that matter? Well, when Jesus burst out of the tomb more than 2,000 years ago, it's not just an isolated event that happened.

And although it happened a long time ago, there is a spiritual resurrection in the life of every person who is drawn to God.

- [34 : 23] But there's also a physical resurrection. That's why Christ is called Christ, the firstfruits. It's the beginning, you see, of resurrection life sweeping through creation.

And if you're a Christian this evening, you're a Christian because you've been drawn by God and you'll experience the second episode of that event, you'll experience it in the life to come.

It's as if when Christ rolls, that God will say to be continued with every person who is drawn. resurrection power.

And it is to be on the last. Did you notice when we were reading how often there is a reference to that at the last day? Verse 39, I should lose nothing but should raise it up again at the last day.

Verse 40, I will raise them up at the last day. And then verse 44, I will raise them up at the last day.

- [35 : 33] You know, there is so much reference there to the resurrection. So, that the believer has no reason to fear the grave, the power of sin, the power of temptation or the power of the devil because you are made free because he is alive.

On the last day, you know, if you are here this evening and you don't believe in a last day, take note of what Jesus says.

Jesus believed in a last day. He didn't think that the world was to continue ad finitum, that it was to continue forever.

He believed in the reality of a last day. And oh, just think of the conversation when the glorified soul meets the newly resurrected body that has lain in the grave.

And the soul says to the body, I've been in glory. I've been in perfect fellowship with the Lamb. I've been amongst those who are around the throne and the body responding.

- [37 : 01] I've lain sleeping in the grave. I've just been awoken and the soul says, oh, how I missed you around the throne.

I was not complete. And the body responding, I have no longer a perishable body, but an imperishable body.

No longer a body of dishonor, but one of glory. No longer one of weakness, but one of power. No longer a natural body, but a spiritual. The perishable has put on the imperishable and the mortal has put on immortality, because death is swallowed up in victory.

Or who knows what else might be said between the soul and the body as they are joined together in an inseparable bond and union that can never be broken again because there will never be separation.

Now will you have to complain of this body as being the body of death? Never again experiencing the tearing apart of the body from the soul eternally united.

- [38 : 22] The perfect assurance of the resurrection, the power of God, the powerlessness of man. Finally, the practical application. If no one can come without being drawn, you might be asking, what then is the point of proclaiming the gospel?

gospel. Well, let me just raise an example from the Old Testament. Do you remember in the book of Ezekiel, maybe a book that you don't read too often, God promises there, I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you.

And the next chapter, chapter 37, shows how that happens. The prophet, you remember, is taken to a valley that is full of bones, very many, and they were very dry.

They were bleached by the sun. It wasn't a pleasant sight. And God commands the prophets to preach, prophesy over these bones and say to them, oh, dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.

How could they hear it? Impossible. Impossible. Who are the dry bones? We are the dry bones, as sinners in the world.

- [39 : 40] And do you remember what happened? Ezekiel implicitly obeyed the word of God and he began to preach. And as he preached, what happened? There was a sound and behold, a rattling and the bones came together, bone to its bone.

And I looked, says Ezekiel, and behold, there were sinews on them and flesh had come on them and skin had covered them. And as he continued preaching, the breath came into them and they lived and stood on their feet an exceedingly great army.

What amazing evidence of the power of God through the word. And you see, God does not promise to bless anything else or to use anything else, but by his word and spirit to quicken men and women and boys and girls to new life.

Now, yes, we need the aid of the Holy Spirit for the word to be effective. We can reason with people and we can reason sincerely and lovingly and all of these things, but without the aid of the Holy Spirit to illuminate and lift the scales of the eyes.

Yet, all reasoning will be ineffective. And just as Christ was surrounded by an unbelieving audience, he knew that the law the Father was going to draw out of that audience some who may have looked as unlikely candidates in the eyes of men to be his followers.

- [41 : 35] You see, his power is able to transform the blackest life, the greatest sinner, and Paul used to speak of himself as the chief of sinners.

There was a theologian once, I forget his name at the moment, but he used to say he had a quarrel with Paul and his quarrel was this, I'm the chief of sinners, not the apostle.

Ah, but you see, that may be how you view yourself. This is what Christ is able to do. And so, we are commanded to go out with the truth and to proclaim it.

God is the one who brings fruit. God is the one who draws the soul and who blesses his word. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.

The powerlessness of man unable to come. The power of God make the unwilling willing, bringing the dead to life.

- [42 : 50] The perfect assurance of the resurrection, I will raise them up. The practical application, go out and witness to the dead in the community, in our homes and in our families.

God's power is able to do the rest. Let us pray.