

Our King's Cross-Shaped Ministry (part 1)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 January 2023

Preacher: J.D. Edwards

[0 : 00] John chapter 6 verses 41 through 59. And as you hear God's word read, remember this is God's inspired, inerrant, infallible, clear and sufficient word.

For this is the will of my father, Jesus says, 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. Verse 41. So the Jews grumbled about him because he said, I am the bread of life 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.

[1 : 07] 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.

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.

So the Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, 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 do not have life in you.

[2 : 16] Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life. And I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink.

Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him. 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. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate and died.

Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever. Jesus said these things in the synagogue as he taught at Capernaum. This is the word of the Lord.

Amen. You may be seated. Let's pray. O bread of life. Feed us today.

[3 : 20] Our souls are starving until we feast on you. You came for this very purpose that we would feast on Christ and have life.

We trust that you will do this today. Once again, through your word. Amen. Well, beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ. What I want to show you today is how our king's entire ministry was cross shaped.

Think about this. We saw last week how Jesus looked out over the crowd as they followed him around. And he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

So the ministry of Jesus, that was his heart toward them. They are like sheep without a shepherd.

And he wants to feed them on his green pastures. Now, if you fast forward to the very end of Christ's earthly ministry, right before he ascends to the right hand of God, the father in heaven.

He turns to Peter, who's going to be the leader of the church in Jerusalem. And he says, Peter, do you love me? Peter says, yes, I do. Three times. Then feed my sheep.

[4 : 37] So the beginning of his ministry, the heart of the shepherd for these crowds, these multitudes who need a shepherd. The end of his ministry, that same heart. But he's going to feed them through Peter, through the church, through the ministry of his word.

What was in between these two points, the beginning of his ministry, the very end on earth, this first coming of Christ. At the very center of his ministry is his work on the cross.

So what I want to try to show you is that the ministry of Christ, his entire earthly ministry in his first coming, his ministry took the shape of his mission.

And his mission is his work on the cross. So I want to show you 10 observations of our Lord Jesus Christ's cross-shaped ministry. 10 observations.

We're going to party like it's 1689, Puritan style. But I've actually divided it into two parts. So the first five today, the next five will be next week as we get into the beginning of chapter 7.

[5 : 39] That's what we're looking for. You ready? And before we actually march through the verses, I just want to make sure it's clear to everyone why this is relevant to you. Because if you are a Christian, Jesus calls you his ambassador.

And an ambassador serves in a foreign land as a minister, as a representative of the kingdom. So you are a minister of the heavenly kingdom if you're a Christian. And as a Christian that's part of a congregation, you are part of the ministry of this church.

How do you do that? Well, you minister, first of all, to your family, to your loved ones, and then to anyone else God brings into your family and into your life. And then for us as a congregation, you minister when you're a part of discipleship.

You minister when we're with one another. We are showing such a ministry to each other. As you're teaching Sunday school, as you're serving the kids, as we're part of discipleship, once a month together, we are ministers together of Christ.

So Christ's ministry, it should shape our ministry. And if there's anything our church needs to be known for, it's that we are seeking to be patterned after Christ himself. So our ministry also should take the shape of the cross.

[6 : 48] All right, well, let's march through these verses. The first observation is this. Number one, the ministry of Jesus is cross-shaped because he was opposed.

When Jesus marched up the hill of skulls with that heavy cross over his shoulder, the cultural religious leaders and the crowds they had worked up, they were yelling and chanting, crucify him. That's his mission on the cross. But his ministry as well, when Jesus marched across Galilee, as we see here in the northern region, he was ministering in such a way as well.

And the cultural religious, these elite up in Galilee and Capernaum, they grumbled, they opposed him. So his ministry was marked by his mission.

He was always opposed by the establishment. Let me give a little context. Who are these Jews in this area? We read at the very end of our text in verse 59 that he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

[7 : 50] And maybe you're wondering, what's a synagogue? Is that the same as the temple? So the synagogues were really places not in Jerusalem. They're scattered throughout the land of Israel. And they were like a house for the people of God to come together in where they would open up the scrolls.

So it's one central regional area where everybody could travel to to have the reading of God's word, the reading of the law. Synagogues were ruled by elders. So there would always be a plurality of elders ruling over a synagogue.

And that was their job. It was to feed the people the word of God, preparing for them to be able to come back to Jerusalem at least once a year for the big day of atonement and have their sins pardoned.

And so the rest of the year, they would be in these synagogues. So it was most likely because he's up in Capernaum in the region of Galilee. He's not yet traveled back down to Jerusalem. He will go there in chapter seven next week.

But for now, he's up north. So it's most likely these elders in the synagogue. They're speaking in low tones and they're disputing among themselves. They're trying to figure out what is this man's message.

[8 : 51] Look at verse 42. Here's their concern. How does he say, I have come down from heaven? We know this guy. We know he used to be Joseph, the carpenter.

Now he's the carpenter. We get this insight in Mark 6, 3. Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon?

And are not these his sisters here with us? And they took offense at him. We know this guy. He's a local boy and he's claiming to be from heaven. So that's why they're grumbling about.

Now pay attention. The ministry of Christ is opposed in his own region, his own hometown. But these politically savvy elite that are tied in with the establishment in Jerusalem, notice how they're not opposed.

They've got it made. Those who lobbied at Herod Agrippa's court and those who had access to Pontius Pilate, they were not opposed. Even today, Satan has no interest opposing the worship of Buddhists or Muslims, does he?

[9 : 54] How about a little closer to home, perhaps? Self-promoting ear ticklers today. They're not opposed. But Jesus was opposed.

And he makes it very clear. If you follow me, be ready to be opposed. You're going to face opposition in your service for my kingdom. Be ready. Be warned.

I've got this email just today. And I'm going to use some coded language just like his email does for his own protection because this audio will go on our website. Someone could dig it up. I don't want to trace any lines.

You probably know. I have a good guess where this is and who this is. Listen to what he wrote asking for prayer just a couple days ago. Quote, opposition to the good news and followers here in this undisclosed country continues.

As we recently heard of two local brothers who were put in prison. Apparently, they were doing some sharing of the good news and were in a training program at their fellowship for studying the word.

[11 : 00] Ask for them and their families and friends for continued boldness, perseverance, wisdom, and hope. Can you read between the lines what happened?

Let's just pause right now in the middle of the sermon and pray for our dear brothers and sisters in that country. Lord, you know this country. You know these brothers in prison.

You know their families and their fellowship. We pray that your spirit will be near to them. Lord Jesus, they have faced opposition following the cross-shaped ministry that you laid for the church. Please comfort them. We pray for exactly these things that you will continue to give all of our brothers and sisters in this part of the world. Boldness, perseverance.

Give them wisdom. And especially, Lord, give them hope. Even as they gather in their fellowship this morning as we are here. Amen. While our king's cross-shaped ministry was opposed, it was also a ministry that exalts God.

[12 : 14] From the cross, Jesus exalted his father, who he trusted to bring him into glory. In the eyes of man, at his lowest point, the shame and scorn of the crowds.

Exalting his father. He said, to you, I commit my spirit. And just in the same way, the ministry of Jesus was to exalt God by preaching that it is God's sovereign grace alone that brings many sons to glory.

We just read this in Ephesians 1, didn't we? His ministry was shaped by his mission. Look at verse 44. Jesus says, and I pray right now especially, that these words of Christ himself from the word of God alone strip every other system away.

Let these words shape your theology, your view of how God saves sinners. Look at verse 44. No one can come to me unless the father who sent me draws him.

Do you get what he's saying? There's nothing here to debate or discuss. He's clear. His salvation is effectual.

[13 : 35] It is limited. And it is definite. It's the will of the father accomplished by the son applied by the Holy Spirit.

That's how God saves sinners. Now, let's let the grammar, these Greek words, these words that are breathed out by the Holy Spirit through the apostles, let them kind of paint that picture in your mind what this is like for God to save a sinner.

Look at the verb. No one come. No one can come to me unless the father who sent me. What's the verb there? Draws him. Unless the father draws him.

That same verb is used to describe when the disciples drag in a big load of fish into their net.

They're drawing in the nets.

You could say they're dragging these fish. It's the same verb in the original language in the Greek used to describe when the apostles were drawn or dragged into prison.

[14 : 36] That's the word that Jesus uses. John, who's so close to him, captures what Jesus preached. That's what Christ preached. That's how his father saves sinners.

Hold on to this truth. Here's a very helpful commentary. I looked at maybe six different ones on this verse. John Calvin, verse 44. He says, quote, sinners cannot believe until they have been drawn by God.

He's just restating what Jesus himself preached. As to the kind of drawing, after doing this grammatical analysis, he explains it's not violent as to compel men by external force.

It's not that. But still it is a powerful impulse of the Holy Spirit, which makes men willing. See, God makes you willing.

Who formerly were unwilling and reluctant. God must first reform the sinner's heart before the soul that is enslaved to sin will ever willfully go to Christ.

[15 : 44] Isn't that true? Wasn't that true for you? Isn't that how God saved you? He changed your will. It's been true for me as well. And he keeps you in that same way.

That same Holy Spirit impulse. I need Christ yet again today. Ephesians 2, 8. Paul preaches it this way. For by grace, you have been saved through faith.

And this, even this faith, is not your own doing. It is the gift of God. Glory be to God. To clarify one step further, Catechism of 1660 by Benjamin Keech.

Question 34. How does the Holy Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ? Answer. By working faith in us, God persuades and enables you to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to you in the gospel as your Savior and your Lord.

Saving faith is also preserving faith. Look at what he says at the end of verse 44. Jesus says, Do you see how those same souls that the Father draws, that the Son saves, it's those same souls that he promises to hold and raise up on the last day.

[17 : 15] Saving faith is preserving faith. So fair question now. What is the last day? What is Christ talking about when he says, on the last day, I will raise them up with me?

The last day is when the second coming. It's when Christ will come again. He promises, I will come again. And the final words in the New Testament is, come quickly, Lord Jesus.

Maranatha. Come quickly, Lord Jesus. We're in agony in this world. Please bring your rule of heaven to earth. We long for his second coming. In our confessions, in our creeds, the ancient creeds from the very earliest days of the church, they look forward to this day.

The last day is when Christ will come with the host of heaven's angels. What will he do? He will judge the living and the dead. We've seen this in the Gospel of John. He will establish heaven on earth, the eternal state.

And he will rule over all. We long for that day. Well, this is relevant. You need to know this. Will you be raised with Christ to life, life everlasting in this eternal state on the last day when he comes again?

[18 : 30] Now, listen to Christ's logic. Here's what he says. You can only know with assurance that God will raise you up on the last day when God brings you to confess that you came to Christ only because God himself drew you, dragged you, effectually called, irresistibly persuaded you of your need for Christ.

If you can confess that, you can have assurance that that same God will raise you up on the last day. Isn't that such a comforting promise? I want to illustrate a cross-shaped ministry, how it's God exalting with the final moments of Stephen, the first martyr of the church in the new covenant. Stephen was taught by the Holy Spirit this cross-shaped ministry. In Acts 7, Stephen was described as being full of the Holy Spirit. And even as he had been drug out of the city and stones were hurled at him, hitting his body and his head, before he lost consciousness, Luke records that he gazed into heaven.

And he declared to everyone, preaching, exalting God, even as he was being pounded unconscious, what he saw. He said, I see the glory of God.

And there is Jesus Christ standing at the right hand of God. Standing at the right hand of God.

[20 : 03] The very thing they're stoning him for is the thing he goes down declaring. How could he not declare what he beholds? And he beholds God exalted in Christ.

Jesus exalts his father. God gets all the glory in our salvation. Our king's cross-shaped ministry we've seen was opposed.

It was God exalting. Number three, it opens scripture. Think about how Christ used scripture throughout his whole ministry. From this temptation in the wilderness until his finished work on the cross, Jesus battled Satan directly with the word of God.

And his entire ministry was to wield the sword of the spirit, the word of God, the Bible. Jesus preached using God's word. He opened it up. He expounded it.

He simply showcased and exposed and put on display what the Bible said. What the true meaning of all of God's revelation is. That's what Christ did with his ministry.

[21 : 11] And his ministry was shaped by his mission. Look at verse 45. Jesus standing in the synagogue. He's read, we're told, from the prophets.

And in verse 45, he says, you've heard this read to you. And I'm going to tell you what it means. It is written in the prophets, quote, And they will all be taught by God, close quote.

Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. So he doesn't start by simply declaring his word, even though he could have.

He is God. It's his word all along. He starts his exposition with the scriptures, the prophets, which they've acknowledged as being given of God. And then he applies it to salvation in him alone.

He applies it to the gospel. So this is Christ's expository sermon, in this case, to the men and women gathered at the synagogue. And he has read from Isaiah. And now he tells them, this has been fulfilled.

[22 : 13] I am the one fulfilling these promises that you've heard about and you've been looking forward to of the coming Messiah. Luke 4.21 describes this such a ministry of expository preaching by Christ himself this way.

Today, Jesus said, the scripture is fulfilled, even as you hear it read to you from the Bible, from the scripture. God's son, he says. You've heard this in Isaiah. The suffering servant.

I am the servant. I am the one who will be cut to cut the new covenant with God's people. Our Lord Jesus Christ showed how all of the scriptures point to him.

And if we're reading and teaching from his Bible correctly, we'll do the same. What was he most likely referring to when he says, this is what is written in the prophets?

Most likely, this is Isaiah 54. And also, there's a parallel passage, which is Jeremiah 31.31. So, this is what Jeremiah 31.31 says, which they would have been familiar with, he would have had in mind.

[23 : 17] It's the promise of the coming Messiah and what it will be like when he arrives. Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant. I will be their God and they shall be my people.

Now, listen to this. They shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more. Now, here's the part he alludes to.

I will write my law on their minds. I will put it in their hearts. See how in verse 45 he said, they will all be taught by God.

And then he says, whoever has been drawn to me by the Father, has learned this teaching of the Father, I'm fulfilling this in your midst.

I am teaching your soul to trust. I am the Messiah. The new covenant he's declaring is inaugurated and all those that God draws are taught by God.

[24 : 14] If God has drawn you to him, if you're able, as you hear a sermon, as you read in his word, as you memorize part of Ephesians 1, you're able to understand this points to Christ.

And this shows me my need for Christ. That's the Holy Spirit teaching you. That means that he's given you a new heart and he's drawn you into his new covenant.

That same grace which God uses to draw you to him, it's efficacious so that those who he draws, they do believe the teaching of God.

It's really that. It's the inward illumination of the Holy Spirit speaking to you, teaching you through the word. And here's what Isaiah 54 says. He says, the prophets declare this.

Get the context of what Christ was preaching. Scripture says, the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer. Remember, the God of the whole earth has called you with great compassion.

[25 : 11] That's the same emotion that Christ, according to his human nature, felt toward them.

Even as he preached, I will gather you with everlasting love, says the Lord. For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love.

Remember from Ruth, that's my hesed. My covenant love shall not depart from you. My covenant of peace shall not be removed. And here's the phrase that he's referring to in verse 45.

All your children shall be taught by the Lord. Great shall be the peace of your children. In righteousness, you shall be established.

He's telling these people as they've gathered at the synagogue, you and your fathers and your grandfathers, you have wondered for generations how God would show his covenant faithfulness. How would he keep his steadfast love? Here we are under the rule of Rome. We're paying so many taxes. We're in survival mode here. How is God faithful to us? Jesus says to them simply, I am your redeemer.

[26 : 20] I am gathering God's people. I have cut this new covenant in my body. My blood gives you peace with God. All who believe in me are my children. God will teach each one of my children by my word.

I will establish you in my righteousness. All those that God draws have heard God. They will come to me. They belong to me by my covenant of grace.

And I will teach them. There was a pastor, a younger pastor, thought he was very smart, trained to be creative. And he got, quote, burnt out of the ministry.

So he was grumbling to an older, more veteran, Reformed pastor. Decades of ministry who practiced expository preaching as we've seen Christ demonstrate.

And this younger pastor asked the Reformed pastor, don't you worry that you're going to run out of things to say? I love the answer that this expository veteran pastor gave.

[27 : 27] He said, I gave up trying to preach my own words a long time ago. But God's word, we know, is inexhaustible.

A lifetime is too short to plumb the depths of the truth of God in Christ. That is how Christ promises to feed me and you. We are his sheep. He is our good shepherd.

And he keeps his true sheep on the green pastures of a word-based ministry. Christ's cross-shaped ministry opens up the word of God. Number four, his ministry is personal.

There's nothing more personal than the cross of Jesus Christ. Christ paid for the sin of his church personally. He offered up his body on the tree.

And his ministry requires your personal response. Only if you repent and believe do you receive his blessing.

[28 : 35] His ministry is shaped by his mission. Look at verse 51. Jesus says, I am. That's God's name. That's how God revealed himself to Moses.

This is the covenant Lord Jehovah himself. I am, Jesus says, 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. Do you hear how personal this is? I will give my flesh, my very body, my very blood.

And you must eat. He creates a contrast here using the analogy with manna. So God fed your ancestors' bodies with manna in the wilderness, he tells them.

I have been sent by God to feed your soul. See, when they ate manna, their bodies still died. They perished. But I'm coming to give your soul eternal life. You see what a great contrast?

[29 : 43] He's arguing from the lesser to the greater. Manna was a type. It was a shadow. It was a sign pointing to Christ. But it was the lesser. The greater now is here. It's Christ himself.

See, the manna only sustained life for the Jews while their bodies were breathing. But Jesus gives life to believers forever. And it's not just for Jews.

It's for all the nations. God gave the gift of manna as a sign. But when Jesus came, God gave himself, the one to whom the sign pointed all along.

Really, the manna cost the creator of the world nothing. Just as he makes the dew fall on the grass every morning, the manna would show up, the sweet bread from heaven.

But he gave his son to ransom sinners at the greatest cost. And Jesus says, see my body offered up for your sin.

[30 : 40] Take me by faith as your starving soul's only nourishment on which to live. You must trust me more and more each day. He says, commune with me and you will have life forever.

There's nothing more personal than the cross of Jesus Christ. There's an old African-American spiritual song. The chorus and the title is, were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there? You get none of Christ's blessings until you see that it was your sin who suspended Christ in midair.

And you see yourself yelling by your sin, crucify him. Were you there when they crucified my Lord? You need to be able to say, I was there. I crucified Jesus. It was for my sin that he died.

[31 : 50] I died. If you were there, that means you're eating of his body and you're drinking his blood.

It means he is your savior and your Lord. It means his spirit has caused you to repent, turn away and forsake your sin, turning to Christ as your Lord.

And it means that he is calling you to a cross shaped ministry, to take up your cross daily, to kill the sin that fights within your flesh.

And to do as he did, which was to proclaim his message in an unbending way. And that's my fifth point. Our king's cross shaped ministry is unbending.

See, Christ did not bend his mission on the cross. He could have. He could have made it lighter for himself. They were telling him, well, if you say who you are, if you are, you say you are, call down the angels.

[32 : 52] Make this lighter. Make it easy. He didn't make it lighter by one ounce. And in his ministry, our Lord Jesus did not bend his message of the gospel by one inch.

We've seen in chapter five, verse 18, how the elite were already trying to kill him early in his ministry. Most likely those are the established in Jerusalem.

And his public breaking of the Sabbath by healing the man, it undermined their whole system of religion. Plus, we've seen how Jesus has already called himself equal with God.

Now they're really coming after him. And what we see next, if you skip ahead to chapter seven, verse one, Jesus is not going to go down to Judea right away because he knows they will kill him already.

There's 21 chapters in the gospel of John. He's got more work to do. Chapter seven is too soon. But that's the intensity. That's that's the amount of pressure during his ministry, not just on the cross, even now as he ministered to compromise his message.

[33 : 56] Because at this point, they're saying they're grumbling, they're disputing. Hold on. You're saying we got to eat your flesh, drink your blood. This is a hard teaching. Hold on. Who is this guy? We're all really confused now.

The temptation, I'm sure, was there to bend the message, soften the gospel just a bit. Hold on.

You're saying no one can come unless the father draws them. Well, Charles Spurgeon illustrates, I think, what we see in chapter in verse 55.

Jesus doesn't back down from my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. He doesn't back it down. And that's what Spurgeon was under that same conviction. Spurgeon, Baptist pastor in London, 1800s.

I would not utter what I believe to be a falsehood concerning the Lord, even though the evil one offered me as the bait.

The saving of all mankind thereby. Christ was unbending in how he preached the message of the gospel.

[34 : 55] And if we are truly saved, we will do the same. We will proclaim Christ and him crucified, shameful, confusing as it is to those who the Holy Spirit has not yet regenerated.

We will do that. Jesus doesn't back down. Look at verse 56 and 57. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him.

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. See what Jesus is saying?

Yes, you need to eat my flesh. You need to drink my blood. Just as you take food and drink with your body and it becomes part of you. You must take the reality of my sacrificed, bloody body.

The price God requires and paid for your sin. You must take this truth personally within the innermost being in order to be redeemed from eternal death and to enjoy life in my everlasting kingdom.

[35 : 59] That's the gospel that Christ will not back down on. May we be unbending in the same message. To be clear, I want to draw out three doctrines that I believe we need to practice and hold to.

This is how we proclaim this message in an unbending way. I see Christ here and you'll see this next week as well, maybe even more so. Christ, he gives what's called the free offer of the gospel. See, he says, if anyone eats this bread. And by anyone, Christ means anyone. It's offered freely to the world. He says that I will give for the life of the world.

You need to offer this gospel. Offer Christ to all the nations. Let God draw who he will. So we need to do the same. We need to proclaim the gospel to all creation.

Trusting God will draw his own. The whole world will not be raised to eternal life in Christ. That's what they preach at a false church called the universal church.

[37 : 04] That no one is going to receive judgment. That's not what Christ preaches. He will judge those who refuse him, he says. Justification does have one condition.

That's faith. And it's a faith that God gives by grace. It's a gift of God. Ephesians 2.8. But his grace is definite. It's effectual.

It's limited. And it's conditional. Those who have faith. And it's only those whom God draws that can come to Christ, he says. Only those who come to me can eat.

Let's close the loop. Who is it that will eat of Christ? All of those whom God unconditionally elects. They will eat of Christ.

Those who eat of Christ will abide with him. They will commune with him. They will enjoy life with him. And he will raise them on the last day.

[38 : 05] These are the doctrines that he makes very clear that need to define how we minister as well. You know, the main message here is the gospel. And he brings richness to the gospel by drawing even further comparisons.

We saw some contrast with manna. I want to draw some similarities. Jesus is causing them to reflect on this very known truth from their own heritage. How God provided for their forefathers. So, how is manna a picture of Jesus Christ? Here's five observations that commentators have helped me to see. Number one, manna means, what is it?

Exodus 16, 15 in the Hebrew, that's exactly what manna is. Manna simply means, what is it? They didn't know what this was that was showing up. They eat it. It tastes like delicious honey bread that God provides every single day.

So, manna was a mystery to those who saw it on the ground, that God had brought it down from heaven. And that's exactly the question for these people here. What is Christ?

[39 : 11] Who is this man? And that's exactly what Jesus gets to with Peter. We'll see this next week. Who do you say I am, Peter? What is it? Number two, God sent manna in the dark of night so that those without a home in the wilderness would be fed and nourished.

And God sent his son to those dwelling in spiritual darkness in this present evil age. They don't belong here. They're sojourners waiting for the life of the age to come.

Number three, manna sustained God's people until they did reach that promised land. And Christ sustains his church until we reach heaven.

Number four, manna was given to a grumbling, rebellious people as a gift of God's grace to those who deserve his judgment instead.

As you're reading about the Jews, as they travel through the wilderness, they grumble. They drive Moses nuts. You wish sometimes God would just strike them all down. That's what they deserve.

[40 : 13] They knew that. Moses knew that. Well, think about Christ for us. God sent his son to those of us who deserve his judgment.

We are grumblers. We're worse than them, aren't we? We have his entire revelation, the entire plan of redemption. And yet we grumble. Think about how they had to take the manna.

They had to bend down, reach for it, and then eat it. That's what Christ requires for justification.

You must bend your knee to him. You must bow down. You must take of Christ, just as you will in a moment with the Lord's Supper. And he must abide in you.

He must fill you from the inside out. And in the desert, the sojourning pilgrim people were on the move. So any manna that they did not take up and eat, they would be marching on top of as they left that area to their next spot where they would camp.

[41 : 17] And that same is true for us. If you do not take Christ and eat Christ, today you trample upon Christ. You reject him and you stomp all over his crucified body and his shed blood with your feet.

Do you see how our king's ministry was cross-shaped? Well, if you're like the apostles or the church in every generation or like me, you're feeling this is a ministry for angels, not for men.

Who is worthy of such a task to follow in the steps of Christ with a cross-shaped ministry? I feel that way every day. But this is God's design.

Think about how God saved and prepared Paul. After giving Paul a new heart and causing him to behold Christ as the Lord, he could have sent Paul off to the wilderness to spend maybe three years of solitude doing nothing but praying and learning directly from God.

Or he could have sent Paul to a three-day seminar crash course with the angels. The angels himself are just going to download it all to you. That wasn't God's design. God's design was for Paul to go to be part of a church and to be disciplined within that church by a saved sinner, just like him.

[42 : 41] Probably for 13 years, Paul was disciplined by the elder of his church, Barnabas. That's God's method. And look at the result in 1 Corinthians 2, chapter 2, verse 2.

Paul says, I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. That's the result of discipleship. We take on the shape of Christ's ministry.

That's how he feeds his church and his sheep. I want to invite you to reflect on a few points of application. First of all, let's praise God together for Christ's cross-shaped ministry.

If you're convicted like me, confess your shortcomings. I have not ministered to my wife and my children, to you, the church, in a cross-shaped way consistently at all, not even close.

I need to confess this, but we also at the same time thank God for all the ways in which we have failed. Christ has ministered God's truth on our behalf.

[43 : 49] He's done it perfectly, personally, and perpetually for us. There is no condemnation, even for those of us who fail in Christ Jesus.

And ask him to teach you more and more how you can be part of a cross-shaped ministry like Christ was. Our king loves to watch us together learn how to do this better, how to be more like him.

He loves to watch it. Thank God also. Thank him for ministers he's used in your life. I promise none of them have done it very well. I know I never have. But thank God for them.

And also, this afternoon, take out your phone. Shoot him at least a note, a text, or an email. And say, I saw in John 6 today the cross-shaped ministry of Christ.

Because the reality is none of us would be here if God hadn't used some minister, some family member, and a cross-shaped ministry to you. Even imperfectly, there's enough of Christ coming through that he used that for your salvation.

[44 : 49] Take time to just write them that encouragement. I promise you this will be a joy because their desire is to follow Christ. And finally, let's also, as a church, let's ask God to raise up from among us, from this congregation, elders, deacons, teachers, evangelists, servants of his church.

That will practice a cross-shaped ministry like our Lord Jesus Christ. Let's pray. Lord, you have called us and drawn us to follow you.

Your way is lowly. It's humbling. Your way is narrow and hard and few go through it. Your way is the way of the cross.

And you call your true disciples to take up their cross daily. Your cross is not heavy, Lord. You've carried it for us already.

We simply follow in your footsteps now. And we do this with your strength, with the joy of your presence. You are the king who ministers among us.

[45 : 59] We thank you for the mission of Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross to draw us into your kingdom. And we pray, Lord, that you will be glorified and that your kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven.

Amen.