

John 6:22-40

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Preacher: Rev. Jacob Vandiver

[0 : 0 0] Pray with me as we stand. Father God, we pray that by your Holy Spirit you would open our eyes to see Jesus clearly tonight.

! Soften our hearts that we may put aside our false expectations of him and receive our Savior for who he truly is.

That we may believe and live. Amen. Grab a seat everybody. If I've not had a chance to meet you, my name is Jacob. I'm one of the ministers here at St. John's. I'd love to meet you after the service.

If you have closed your Bible, open it back up to page 891. That will be very helpful for you as we look through this passage together.

So page 891, John chapter 6. We're in a sermon series in John's Gospel where we're hearing stories about different people's encounters with Jesus.

[1 : 0 4] And in each story, what we hear and what we see is a revelation of our Lord Jesus more and more clearly.

Like an image that's slowly coming into focus. In our story tonight, Jesus is speaking not to an individual like we've seen in the past couple of weeks, but to a massive crowd.

And to this crowd, he reveals who he is. If you turn over to page 892, we see this in verse 35.

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

That's who Jesus is. And this crowd, they're seeking him, but they're seeking him for all the wrong reasons.

[2 : 0 6] And we see here that Jesus confronts their false conception about him so that he can reveal to them who he truly is. That's what he's doing.

Now, this is very, very good for us. Especially if you're a new Christian, or if you're just here trying to wrap your head around what Christians believe, this is for you.

There are all sorts of weird and wacky and wrong conceptions of Jesus that get built up in our culture. And so we need to hear from Scripture about who Jesus really is.

But even if you've been a Christian for a long time, this is for you. Even in the Christian life, we pick up all kinds of strange beliefs and misunderstandings about who Jesus is.

And these need to be corrected along the way. So we allow the word to deconstruct our false conceptions and remind us who Jesus truly is.

[3 : 0 9] And that's what's happening in this passage. So that's what we're going to talk about tonight. So this passage is doing two things. It's deconstructing the false Jesus, and it's revealing the true Jesus.

So that's what the sermon's going to be. That's going to be the structure. So the first point, deconstructing the false Jesus. Okay, before we talk about that, we really need some context, don't we?

Because we need to know who this crowd is, and we sort of get plopped down right in the middle of a story that's developing in chapter 6. So who is this crowd? Let's look together.

If you look at the beginning of chapter 6, verse 1, we see that Jesus is now at the Sea of Galilee. Last week when we left Jesus, he was in Jerusalem. So this is about 150 kilometers north of Jerusalem.

And he's in Galilee. And there's a big crowd following him, it says in verse 2, because he was healing the sick. And we find out in the story that it's 5,000 men.

[4 : 14] 5,000 men. That's a lot of men. And commentators are pretty sure that that's really just the men. Folks suspect it's 20,000 probably, maybe as many as 30,000, if you count men, women, children, and minors.

This is an enormous crowd that's following Jesus. So for perspective, that's a crowd that would fill Rogers Stadium, Rogers Arena.

This is the crowd that is following after Jesus. And Jesus fed all of these people in chapter 6 with five barley loaves and two fish.

We didn't read that story. That's the feeding of the 5,000, which you may have heard of. It's a massive crowd, and it's a massive miracle. And it really has an effect.

But we'll get to that. Jesus leaves the crowd, and he goes to Capernaum on the north side of the Sea of Galilee. But we see in verses 22 to 24 that the crowd sort of scrambles to find him.

[5 : 31] They get into their boats, and they sort of chase him down. And that's what you see in those verses. But they finally find him in verse 25. So let's read together.

Verse 25. When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, Rabbi, when did you come here? Jesus answered them, Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.

What is he saying to them? He's saying, you're following after me. You're chasing me down. You're impressed with me. But you, crowd, do not care about heavenly things.

You only care about earthly things. You saw the sign of me feeding this massive crowd, but you didn't see what the sign pointed to.

So this massive crowd, they weren't really seeking after Jesus. They were seeking after a false image of Jesus. A false image that they had constructed that was based on their materialistic and earthly expectations about what kind of Savior they wanted.

[6 : 50] You following me? I know that's a bit complex, but we're going to see this in the text. So let's look together. Our text shows us that this crowd and this false image that they have of Jesus, it's really made up of four false images.

So that's what we're going to look at. Because Jesus rejects each one of these false conceptions about himself. And the first one, it's in our context.

And it's the political revolutionary Jesus. Look with me at the bottom of page 891. This is in verse 14. So when the people saw the sign that Jesus had done, it's the feeding of all the people, they said, this indeed is a prophet who has come into the world.

And Jesus, perceiving that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

their response is telling. They see this sign of the feeding of the 5,000 and they don't respond, thank you, Lord, for your provision.

[8 : 05] Praise be to God. This is amazing. No. They say, this is a prophet. That means the kind of person who's going to come into a situation, into their context, and bring about social and political change.

They wanted to make him the king by force, it says. So the people are hungry, but they're hungry for a political savior.

They're hungry for a political revolutionary Jesus. But Jesus withdraws. He wants nothing to do with it. Now listen, you don't have to be like totally politically plugged in for this to hit home, I don't think.

It seems like politics is invading all of our lives constantly. You know, and for us in the church, this is really relevant, I think. You may know this, but loads of young people across the Western world are being drawn back to the Christian faith right now, especially in the UK, especially in North America.

And books and articles are being written about this all the time, it seems. I read one in the New York Times the other day. There's more spiritual openness among the latest generation.

[9 : 35] There's a loss of confidence in atheism, and young men especially are flooding into really traditional churches. But even Christians who've been Christians for a long time, right now in the midst of political turmoil, are turning back to faith to seek answers, to try to find how do we face these things that we're faced with.

These things are complex, and people are returning to faith to find answers. And I think this is good on the whole, genuinely. And friends, God cares deeply about politics.

Political convictions flow from spiritual and religious convictions, no doubt. But I think what this text is telling us is that we should seriously consider what is our society hungry for for?

What are we hungry for? Are we seeking after the genuine Jesus of John's gospel, or are we seeking a political revolutionary Jesus?

Someone who can enter into the here and now and change our political circumstances? It's worth considering. Because John tells us that Jesus won't have anything to do with it.

[11 : 05] That's the first image. It's the political revolutionary Jesus, and Jesus says no. The second false image in the crowd is what I'm calling the social worker Jesus.

Look with me at verse 26. This is where Jesus answers them, says, truly, truly, I say to you, you're seeking after me, not because you saw the sign, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.

Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. Now, these people who are following after Jesus, they lived on what's called a subsistence economy, which really basically means that they did work on a day, and they got paid at the end of the day, and they bought their food for the next day, right?

Subsistence, daily, one day after the next. And so, what they thought, as they're following Jesus, is that, well, he fed us yesterday, we can follow this prophet, and he can feed us again.

He's going to be our political revolutionary after all, we'll just keep following him, he'll keep feeding us, we won't need to go to work. This is what a real Savior is like.

[12 : 28] in their mind. The prophet who can save us from the toil of daily work. Now, listen, the heart of God is near to those who are suffering from hunger, no doubt.

And Jesus cares deeply about people who are starving. That's why he fed them the day before. But here's the problem. the crowd wanted the benefits of the miracle without a relationship with the Savior.

And so Jesus rebukes them, and he corrects them. He says to the crowd, don't be so caught up with the food that perishes, as important as it is to eat.

Rather, concern yourself with the food that endures to eternal life. Don't be materialistic in your thinking. Don't think that I'm a social services Savior.

So we have to ask ourselves, are we hungry to actually know Jesus? Do we actually feel the need for a relationship with him?

[13 : 46] Or are we merely just seeking Jesus for the good things that we think he can give us? it's worth considering. Jesus says, work for the food that endures to eternal life.

Now the crowd, let's stay with them, they perceived at this point that he's talking about divine things. So they ask a very natural, but a very wrong question.

Look at verse 28 with me. Then they said to him, okay, what must we do to be doing the works of God?

And it's literally in the Greek, working the works of God. They're basically saying, okay, Jesus, we hear you, we'll pursue godly things, how do we earn it?

What do we got to do? Because the works of God here means the works that God requires. requires. That's what it means. The works that God requires of us.

[14 : 57] They say, okay, I'm not going to be materialistic in my thinking, I'm not worldly, I want to get to heaven, so give me the checklist. Give me the religious works that I got to do to earn my way.

That's the response. And so this is the false, the third false image. it's the religious zealot Jesus. The religious zealot. The religious man who endorses our religiosity.

That's what they're looking for. They wanted a savior to give them a set of laws and rules so that they could do what was required to get into God's good graces.

But what's Jesus' response? Look at verse 29. Jesus answered them, this is the work of God, the work that God requires, that you believe in him whom he has sent.

Once again, Jesus rejects the false image. This image of him as a religious lawgiver. And he says there's only one thing that's necessary, faith.

[16 : 11] And of course, friends, this is at the heart of the gospel. Ephesians chapter 2 verses 8 and 9. By grace you have been saved through faith and this is not your own doing.

It is the gift of God, not the result of works so that no one can boast. Jesus says the only work necessary is to rest and to receive the gift which God has given.

And so we ask ourselves, do we want that Jesus? Or do we want a Jesus who will give us the works to do ourselves? And that leads us to our final false image.

Verses 30 and 31. So they said to him, okay, then what sign do you do that we may see and believe you?

What work do you perform? Our fathers ate manna in the wilderness. As it is written, he gave them bread from heaven to eat. God they say, okay, what are you going to do to impress us so that we will believe in you?

[17 : 22] This is another false image. It's the image of Jesus as a miracle worker, a religious strong man who performs impressive miracles.

And they even quote scripture to him. They say, we want a spiritual strong man, a religious miracle worker, like Moses they think, to come and do miraculous things to impress and wow the crowd.

And Jesus' response, verse 32, he says, truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven, but my father who gives you the true bread from heaven.

Here's what this means. It means that it's ironic. They've actually misunderstood who Moses was. As we heard when John read Exodus 16 earlier, it was not Moses in the wilderness who fed the Israelites.

It was God. The manna literally fell from heaven day by day. The quail came from the heavens for the Israelites to eat day by day.

[18 : 41] You see, this crowd were thinking back to their history and thinking, we need somebody like Moses, a spiritual strong man to lead us. But they missed it.

The point was that God was providing for them. But they were looking at the miracles. Friends, and we make the same mistake, I think.

Miracles are intended to point beyond themselves. They're intended to draw us into deeper understanding and love for God. The manna in the wilderness was the daily sign of God as our provider.

And yet, we often look at the miracles in our lives, and they do happen. But we tend to look at them for their own sake. We focus in on them. And we even qualify our faith in Jesus.

we say, if you will do this, Jesus, then I'll believe. If you'll just enter into this situation, if you'll get me that job, if you'll get me this promotion, if you'll help me find a spouse, if you'll give me a family, if you'll save my brother from cancer, then I'll believe in you.

[20 : 05] And God cares deeply about the troubles in our lives, no doubt. But what this tells us is that if we focus on the miracles, we're missing the whole point.

Okay, let's take stock. Jesus is deconstructing this false image of himself. He's not a political revolutionary. He's not a social worker.

he's not a religious law giver. He's not an on-demand miracle worker. So what is he? Who is the true Jesus?

Well, it's verse 35. He says, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

Jesus' point here is that God is giving them and giving us something much better than any of these other things.

[21 : 11] Much better than political change. Much better than physical provision. Much better than religion. Much better than miracles.

God is giving us himself. Jesus says, I am. I am the bread of life.

This is ego a me in Greek. And it's a callback to Exodus chapter 3. When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush and told him his personal name.

I am who I am. So when Jesus says this, it's the first of seven times in the gospel of John, that Jesus says, I am. I am God.

You might remember from last week, the Jewish leaders were trying to kill Jesus because he was making himself equal with God. This is what they're talking about. Jesus is saying, I'm not a merely human prophet.

[22 : 17] I am God before you in the flesh. He says, I'm the bread of life. And bread in the Bible is often a metaphor for spiritual sustenance.

Spiritual sustenance. Just like physical bread feeds our physical bodies, the presence of God through his word feeds our souls.

And this is the meaning of the sign of the manna in the wilderness. In Deuteronomy chapter 8, Moses told the people, this is why God allowed you to be hungry in the wilderness.

So that you would know that God is the one who feeds you. But more than that, so that you would know that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

That's the point. So Jesus here is saying that our greatest need is not earthly, it's not physical, it's spiritual.

[23 : 31] That's true for me, and that's true for you, that's true for this crowd. The physical needs that we have are imminent, and life threatening sometimes, and God is aware of it.

But Jesus is saying that's not the most important thing. Our most important need is spiritual. It's the need to be put back into right relationship with God, our Creator.

That's the biggest need. And so Jesus says, I am the bread of life. I am the spiritual sustenance that will bring you to life.

life. He brings life to anyone who comes and believes in him. Because, friends, we are all dead in our trespasses.

When we still have the guilt of sin resting on our shoulders, the Bible says that we are spiritually dead, because we are still under the judgment of God because of our sin, and the wages of sin is death.

[24 : 42] life. But Jesus is the bread of life. If we only come to him, and believe in him, and receive him, he takes the guilt of sin off our shoulders, he nails it to the cross, and pays for it, and he revives us spiritually.

He's the bread of life, and he will bring us to life, and he will satisfy our heart's greatest need. And that's to be in a peaceful relationship with God, our creator.

That's who Jesus really is. And Jesus says that the Father, the Father has given this to us.

This is the gratuitous grace of God, that when we were yet spiritually blind, and dead in our sin, like this crowd, when we're unable to do anything to gain God's grace, God sends Jesus.

And he says, this is the bread of life. You don't have to work for it, you don't have to earn it, you can only receive it as a gift.

[26 : 01] So Jesus is the bread of life, given to you for eternal life. But there's one last thing. It's verse 37.

Jesus says, all that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. And verse 40, for this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

So do you hear all the language about God giving Jesus to us? Well, Jesus is saying that even as God is giving Jesus to us, it is God who is giving us to Jesus.

And what this means is that if you feel drawn to believe in Jesus Christ, not the false image of Jesus that we build up in our own minds, but if you feel drawn to believe in Jesus as he really is, this means that it is God that wills it to be so.

And God wills that you shall be saved. And what this means is that God has decided it from eternity past that he was going to call you in the here and the now, in this world, to give you to his son.

[27 : 40] He has set his mind on you before time and space were created. And God has called you into relationship with himself.

And now he's drawing you to his son, even as he's giving his son to you, so that you can live forever and enjoy a relationship with your creator forever.

That's who Jesus really is. He's the bread of life. He's given to us for our eternal life. He's the sustainer and the perfecter of our salvation.

And if we simply behold him and believe in him, we will never suffer death. And he will raise us up on the last day. Amen.

Amen.