

The Way and Words of Life

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Date: 10 May 2015

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[0 : 00] Let me add my welcome to Jordan's special welcome to the Sings. Fantastic to have you guys here. Wonderful. And if you're new here, I'd love to meet you afterwards, so come and say hi.

Right. We have been taking our time through this chapter in John because it's so rich. And it'll be really, really helpful if you have the passage in front of you because you've just heard it read out and you can hear it.

It's super, it's really dense, right? So helpful to have it in front of you. Now we're in the last leg of chapter 6 and it's a controversial one.

I mean, straight away you can tell it's controversial because at the end in verse 66 you see that after listening to it, many of the disciples just abandoned Christ. And they did that because the teachings were offensive.

So, we're going to go through the passage now and no doubt some of what will be taught this evening will be a bit prickly for you as well. So on that cheery note, let's get into it.

[1 : 04] Okay. It is dense, so it's probably helpful if I just kind of put out a bit of a structure for you. Have a look at verse 41 to 42. See that there? That's the grumbling, right?

The people are grumbling and unhappy about what Jesus has taught. And then straight afterwards you get this little paragraph of Jesus does some more teaching. So grumbling, teaching. In verse 52, more grumbling and accusations against Jesus.

And then Jesus does a little paragraph of more sort of quite offensive teaching to them. And then verse 60, the grumbling of the Jewish leaders spreads to the disciples.

And Jesus does some more teaching. And every time he's doubling down, he's doubling down on what he's saying. And then verse 66, the grumbling and the muttering climaxes as many of the disciples take off.

And then Jesus, to the remaining 12, tells them that one of them is a devil. So, that's the basic structure. And Jesus clearly is not, you know, he's not messing around here. So, what I want to do tonight is I want to look at the grumbings and the complaints and see how Jesus responds to them each time.

[2 : 13] So, grumble 1, verse 41 to 42. So, they're pushing back on Jesus. Because Jesus equates himself with God. That's the whole, I'm the bread that's come down from heaven.

But not just that. Not just that. I think the big one here is in verse 42. And it's this whole idea of like, isn't that Jesus? Isn't that Jesus? Isn't that Mary and Joseph's son?

Don't I know that guy? We know him. We know his parents. In all the gospels, they tend to highlight, they always actually highlight the sort of incongruity that people have with Jesus that, who's doing this amazing stuff, and Jesus who played soccer with their kids, or who built their table in their house or something, who was the carpenter who fixed their wall, or something like that.

And they cannot bring those two things together. They knew him growing up. How can that guy, how can that guy be doing this stuff? No, it's not right. It's not right.

I just, I can't believe it. I can't believe what he's saying. It doesn't gel with their reasoning, their perception. So, they reject him. I think they're just simply doing what a lot of us do. Probably what most of us do, really.

[3 : 25] And that's that we tend to see through the lens of our own experience, our own feelings on the matter. Despite what Jesus has done, they are very confident in their assessment.

Jesus does not, I knew him when he was little. I saw him growing up. He's that guy from the street. They're very confident in their own assessment. Jesus does not fit my framework.

So, I reject. It's not. Now, let me say this. It's like when people reject the Bible because of the miracles.

Now, I've read commentaries that have tried to explain things, and they've said, well, here's what the story says. But, of course, that couldn't happen. So, here's what probably happened.

Because, of course, miracles don't happen. So, it's like they go into it with a framework, right? They go into it with their own way of looking at reality. If it doesn't fit that way of reality, rejection.

[4 : 27] Do you know what it is? That's actually bad science. I mean, you don't formulate an idea and then reject all the evidence and contradiction to it.

No, you look at the evidence and then formulate an idea based on that. Anyway, how does Jesus respond to them going, you're the guy from up the road.

How does Jesus respond to that? Verse 44. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. That's his response. Repeated that line in verse 65 and the same idea in verse 70.

Interesting, isn't it? Rather than defending his own providence, he talks about God's sovereignty. He doesn't defend himself. He says, you know what? My Father will convince you of who I am.

Do you don't believe me? Actually, no one can believe me. No one's going to believe me unless God does something in their heart. So, that's what he leaves with. That's his argument. That's his sermon.

[5 : 28] That's the guts of the sermon he preaches to them. And what Jesus is talking about here is the doctrine of election. Now, at the start, I said some of the parts of this teaching are going to be tough.

This might be one of them for you. Okay, what's this all about, this doctrine of election? In answer to the question, how does a non-believer make a decision about Jesus?

The answer is, they don't. It's Jesus. You don't choose. Jesus chooses you. And that's because our hearts are so turned in on ourselves that we mistake ourselves for the center of the universe.

So, how can an ego that is so large and so self-interested and so imprisoned give its life over to God? And the answer is, it can't. If you are, before you were a believer, before you were a Christian, given a hundred chances, a thousand chances, a million chances, to choose God or yourself, you would have chosen every time yourself.

Because we are very, we are trapped. We are trapped in sin, I guess. It's the harshest way of saying it. We will always choose to be our own God.

[6 : 42] We will always choose to be our own Savior. It's a great story. A guy called John Chapman is an Australian-Anglican minister. He's died a few years ago. He was an Anglican minister and an evangelist. And he tells a story in his book on his life called Chapo.

And he's talking about, so he's on campus. He's talking to a student about Jesus. And the student's plan, the student's not a believer, and the student's plan was this.

Live a fantastic life. Just debauchery. I'll do whatever I want. Live this amazing life. Just have tons of fun. And then, deathbed confession.

Which you think, it's not a bad plan, right? That sounds actually pretty good. And the young man said, and that's my plan, really. And I can do that because I can choose to be a Christian whenever I want.

And I choose to do it at the last minute. So Chapo says, well, give us a demo. Give us a demo.

[7 : 42] If you could do it at any time, if you could choose Jesus at any time, just give us a demo. Just show us. Do it now. Give your hearts to Jesus now. Just show me. I just want to see it.

I just want to see it. Just show me you can do it. Show me you can do it. The guy says, no. He goes, come on. Come on. Just, if you can do it at any time, and your plan is to do it at the last minute.

If you can do it, just do it now. Show us. Come on. Come on. And apparently it got a bit tense. And the guy eventually says, I don't want to. That's it, isn't it?

I just don't want to. The truth is, he couldn't. He couldn't become a Christian any time he wanted. None of us can. It happens when God chooses us. You might think this is so terribly unfair.

Why would God choose some and not others? You might think that is an absolute horror. In other words, using the words of the passage, that is a hard teaching.

[8 : 37] Who can listen to it? The 39 articles, if you're sort of new to the whole Anglican thing, there's a wine-colored book. It's kind of about this big in your pews.

That's called Book of Common Prayer. And in the back of that, there's something called the 39 articles, which is a summary of Anglican doctrine. And the doctrine, the article that deals with the doctrine of election, describes it as this.

It says this. It is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons. Here are the ways that this doctrine should affect you.

Here's the way it should impact you, and here's why it's good and not a horror. First of all, it's a very humbling doctrine, isn't it?

We did not provide the decisive impulse that brought us to Jesus. God did. If it weren't for his drawing, you'd be utterly lost. So it's a humbling doctrine.

[9 : 42] It's good to be humbled. It should fill us with thankfulness. It's the second thing. Everything I have, including my coming to Jesus, is a gift. I can attribute everything in my life to Jesus.

And I'm so thankful for that, including my salvation. As a teenager, I became a Christian at 17. I was not looking for God. I was not one of those really thoughtful, spiritual kids. I wasn't sitting on mountains and reading Eckhart Tolle or Kahil Gibran.

I wasn't doing it. I was reading magazines about muscle cars. I was just so lost. I was a silly little kid. No religious background.

No one would have looked at me and said, yeah, he's headed to the Anglican ministry. Look at that guy with his muscle car magazine. But I'm here.

I'm incredibly thankful that God chose me. It was not my doing. You might say, well, how do you become a believer? Like, what about our part of it?

[10 : 47] Well, the impulse to come to Christ is only something that God can give you. But it is not fatalism.

You are not robots. Your hand is not forced. God does not force himself upon you. It is more like a wooing. See, the Bible actually also teaches that there is human activity.

The passage itself talks about learning and eating and drinking and feeding. There is a human response. You absolutely have free will. So, so the, so the Bible holds up free will.

Free will. Absolutely. You have free will. And it also holds up the fact that God chose you. And it doesn't say how those things mash together. It just holds up the two truths.

And if you thought about it, your experience is probably those two truths play out. Okay. The benefits of this doctrine. Why, why, why is it a good thing and not a horror?

[11 : 48] It gives us assurance, doesn't it? God drew us to him. He will hold onto us to the end. Your salvation is not in doubt because it's in God's hands. It's not in your hands.

So this doctrine, it's humbling, should make us incredibly thankful, should give us assurance that we are saved.

We're in God's hands. Also, it gives us great hope for, uh, our friends and family who are not Christians or the people that you meet who are just, you think are so far from Jesus. They could never come to Christ.

Well, neither could you. It's what God called you. God can call anyone. Moving on. Here we are. Where are we in the sermon? Okay. So the Jewish leaders are complaining and they're grumbling.

And God says, Jesus says, of course you don't get it. Of course you just think of me as the kid from up the road. You know, you're not going to get it because belief is a gift from God. And then it goes on.

[12 : 45] And then he goes on to reiterate his teaching from the previous week about being the bread of life. But then he adds something to that teaching and that completely throws them off again. Remember folks, we're already, they're already thinking that Jesus is, you know, they don't know what to think about him.

And now he throws a real spanner in the works. Verse 51, the bread that I will give for the life of the world. So already the bread of life, things are a problem for them, right? Then he goes, the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.

Cue the next big grumble. In verse 52, flesh, eat. What is he talking about? Eating my flesh? This doesn't make any sense. This is madness. Cue Jesus teaching about eating his flesh and blood.

Every time he doubles down, doubles down, doubles down, he's not backing down here. That's verses 53 to 49. So what is he talking about when he's talking about eating his flesh here? Okay. So, I mean, it's a very visceral picture, isn't it?

It's very invocative. It's not something they would have liked hearing about. This, that culture, ancient Near Eastern culture, like most cultures, eating people is discouraged.

[13 : 55] That's what I learned at Regen College. And so it's like, Jesus is saying it's, you know, eating well, and it's just unimaginable to them in their mind.

What is he talking about? What does he mean? Okay. Well, he's not talking, when it says, eat, eat my flesh, drink my blood, it's not talking about communion. And right there, I've settled 1,500 years of debate on the matter.

It's talking, not, it's not talking about communion directly, I don't believe. But it's talking about what communion is talking about. Because communion points to the sacrifice of Christ.

And so does the Old Testament, the picture of blood. That's, blood for us, we might think about it as life. It represents life. Oh, my life, blood. Back in the days, blood, always a picture of death. Always about death.

So he's talking about, he's talking about his death. So this doesn't make much sense to them until, until after the cross and the resurrection. But he's talking about his sacrifice at Calvary.

[14 : 56] Okay. Now, the reason I say I don't think it's about communion is because, let's say this pulpit here, represented the picture of what Jesus was doing. It's like, this is, he's using this metaphor of eating and drinking.

This is it. And let's say this is communion right here. And this is, this is, this incredible physical symbol. And it's, but it's pointing to, it's pointing to Christ's death, isn't it?

It's not magic. It's pointing to Christ's death. This is pointing to Christ's death. It doesn't make sense to me that this is going to point to this, which is going to point to that. Anyway, it's probably not a huge issue. So eat, drink, eat, eat my flesh, drink my blood.

What, what is this about? What is this about? So it's saying, it's, we're talking about pointing to Christ's sacrifice, but what, why it's eating, drinking language. Like, I think it means laying a hold of it, laying a hold of the sacrifice, laying a hold of the cross, taking it in you, getting that truth in you, right in your gut, constantly coming back to it, letting it shape every aspect of your life.

That's what it means by eating it, getting it right in there. Now these last few weeks, these are what the passages have been about. And this has made me think a lot about where my, where I look for my sustenance, for my approval.

[16 : 12] What am I feeding on? What am I finding my joy in? Where do I look for my spiritual provision? It's made me think a lot about that these last few weeks. Folks, can I just say to you, can I just do the hard work of examining your heart, and your heart and discerning where it looks for sustenance?

We'll come back to that. Now let's jump to, let's just skip a section and jump down to the last section. Verses 66 to 71. This is the final grumbling. This is the big grumble, because it actually results in people voting with their feet and taking off and, and, and, uh, disciples leaving.

The Jesus for King campaign has dwindled to 12 people. Do you want to go as well?

Jesus says. Every tender moment. Lord, where shall we go? This is my favorite verse in the Bible, I think. Lord, where shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

And then Jesus reminds them, in case there was any sort of pride in their hearts about kind of being the ones that stuck around. He says, and just a reminder, um, I chose you. And just a reminder, one of you is a devil.

[17 : 31] So what is that all about? What's going on in these last passages here? I mean, this is wild. Isn't this, don't you think this is wild? Like, he does this amazing stuff, just this amazing stuff, and then everyone just takes off.

What is this trying to teach us, this last little section, this last little grumble here? I think there are a number of small applications and a reiteration of a really big one. Okay, let me go for some minor applications here.

One, it's a reminder that unbelief can't stay hidden forever. Most of these guys didn't really believe in Jesus. They just kind of wanted some food and wanted him to be their king and stuff. I mean, the mass of the, the mass of the disciples just took off because it started to become clear what Jesus was really calling them to.

And what he was calling them to was him. Whereas they actually wanted Jesus to rally to their cause. And when that's your strategy, oh, I mean, you're not going to stick around, are you?

You're not going to stick around. You know, one of the saddest things for me in my job is seeing people fall away from faith, walk away from Jesus. One of the saddest, saddest things. And I can bring to mind now, like, I don't know, three or four people in the last couple of years who were with us and are now not.

[18 : 55] And what's really interesting about it is it's never, it's never the apologetic stuff. It's never like, dinosaurs aren't in the Bible. I'm out of here. I'm gone. This doesn't make any sense.

It's generally not reliability of scripture. It's not that kind of stuff generally. You know what it is? It's mostly sex or power or autonomy. Those are the things that take people's hearts. Yeah, I can't think of an example outside of those ones.

It's always, I want to feed my heart with something other than Jesus. Unbelief doesn't stay hidden forever, folks. Minor application too.

It's an encouragement to remain true to Christ, even when most people don't. I mean, we live in a society that is, not friendly towards Christianity.

I don't know what the stats are here, Jordan, if anyone knows. It's only a few percent, isn't it, in Canada. But I don't know what it is in India. What's the, how many Christians in India percentage-wise, you know?

[20 : 03] Three percent. Yeah. This is an encouragement to remain true to Christ, even when most people do not do that. Third minor application. I think it's an encouragement to remain true, even when you find out there is evil within the congregation.

Folks, people around you will disappoint you. To remain true, even when you know people's real life is a betrayal of faith. I mean, that can be so disheartening, but don't let that get between you and Jesus.

I became a Christian under the teaching of a guy who, a year after I became a Christian, was jailed for indecent assault, about 25 charges against minors. It would have been easy for me to throw in the towel, young Christian, right?

What a hypocrite. This thing doesn't work, it's nonsense. Folks, don't let Christians, don't let hypocrites stand between you and Jesus. Don't let that kind of betrayal get in the way of your relationship with Jesus.

Fourth minor application, it's an encouragement to remain true to Jesus even when God's teaching is really tough. Even when you don't actually like it because it doesn't fit your framework.

[21 : 13] And we've already had probably one or two examples of that tonight. Those are the minor things. Now, the major bit, and we'll finish up on this, the major push of this passage, the thing that Jesus comes back to here and has been in chapter 6 is this.

We don't have the power to sustain ourselves in the Christian life. You don't have that power. You can't do it. What I mean is you can't do that by just an act of your own volition.

You can't sustain the Christian life just by toughing it out. We must let Jesus sustain us. We must let Jesus sustain us.

And the way the passage says that that happens is by feeding on his word. A number of times it talks about that. Verse 63, the words I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

The words I've spoken to you are spirit and life. Peter says, you have the words of life. So folks, feed on the words of Christ. Feed on his words. That's the way the life of Christ continues to come to us by the Holy Spirit through his word.

[22 : 21] If you have fallen out of the habit of regular Bible reading, get back into it and let Christ sustain you. Because I'll tell you something you probably already realize, right?

If Christ does not sustain you, it's going to be something else and it's going to be something fragile. It's something that's not really feeding your heart. There are lots of options out there.

Tons of stuff. You think it's sustaining you but it's actually not. And they all pale in comparison to what Christ offers. I'll mention one. Kind of quite a specific example that came to me when I was sort of studying this.

One thing that I think feeds this particular generation are the millennials. So demographers, right?

They're people that kind of study generational traits and they'll say generation X is like this and generation Y is like this and the boomers are like this. Here's what they say is a real modern trend against a younger adults.

[23 : 18] And I think it bleeds out to most of us probably but specifically it seems to be an issue with younger adults and millennials. And this is this. There is this enormous desire for experiences, adventures, extreme adventures, right?

Place a huge value on that and it's quite driven by technology I think. You know, you see it right? Facebook and Instagram. People post the exciting things they do. Here's me eating, you know, emu or something.

Or like, here's me and some great, look at me, I'm in, you know, crazy land and I'm standing on a cliff and there's a waterfall and you know what I mean, I've got my bandana and it's doing some stuff and here's me freaking out, look, there's Justin Bieber behind me.

You know, like, this is crazy. I've had this great experience. It's summed up in the, you know, hashtag YOLO. You Only Live Once or FOMO, fear of missing out.

I just, you know, I honestly thought about this a lot and I think you can really easily weld your heart to this idea, to these values that my life really matters if I've visited every continent or I've had some crazy adventure or done some dangerous thing or done some really sketchy thing.

[24 : 32] It can become an idol. Folks, if your identity is in YOLO, that's going to take you away from Jesus. It'll take you from Jesus. I've had really cool adventures in my life.

I've been to a Radiohead concert in Michelangelo's Piazza in Florence and at the time I thought, I'm pretty much the coolest guy in the world. Like, there's about 200 of us here, you know.

This is incredible. It's like, it was dusk, it was amazing, you know. It's really, really cool. But you know what?

That experience, that really cool, fun experience, it doesn't help me with my anxiety about money. It doesn't stop me yelling at my kids.

It doesn't help me sacrificially love my wife. It doesn't stop me being unkind to her. It doesn't give me peace in my heart. It doesn't make me think that I'll live forever with God.

[25 : 39] It's just a cool experience. And a life of, that is only made up of really crazy adventures is a barren life compared to the life, a shared life with Christ.

Christ. So, folks, have all the adventures you want if you can, but don't ever think they validate you. Don't ever think that they make you more important or that your life is better.

just fun things. Jesus is the bread of life. You know, sustain yourself with Him.

Make sure you're feeding on Him. Amen.