

Unbelief

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[0 : 00] John 6, verse 25. John 6, 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.

Do not labor for the food that perishes, but the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.

First thing I need to do this morning is to apologize to anybody who was at the Caber Fee last Tuesday, because this is the chapter we were talking about or discussing, and it did kind of present itself to me as the basis for a sermon this morning, principally because I've had rather a busy, as you know, rather a busy and a stressful week, so it was easy for me, having discussed it already on Tuesday, to go back to it for this morning.

In any case, there's no harm whatsoever in reiterating what we were discussing last Tuesday. And once again, I would recommend to those of you who would like to find out more about the Christian faith, or if you know someone, to encourage them to go to the Caber Fee on a Tuesday evening at eight o'clock, where that is what takes place.

[1 : 44] This chapter contains two things. The first thing we find in the chapter is the miracle where Jesus fed the 5,000 people who had come to hear him on the Lake of Galilee.

It also contains another miracle just shortly afterwards, when the disciples left that place, and Jesus came to them walking on the water. So I should say that the first part of the chapter has two miracles.

The second part of the chapter contains a conversation or a discussion between Jesus and those who had made a point of seeking him out after they had seen him feeding the 5,000.

That's the proper way of understanding this chapter. And the conversation in the second half of the chapter, it revolves around, or rather was instigated by, the feeding of the 5,000.

And it's a conversation in which Jesus gives an explanation, not just of the power by which he fed the 5,000, but on what the bread of God is.

[2 : 57] He takes what he did in feeding the 5,000, and he uses it as a text for a sermon, if you like, an interactive sermon in which he explains to the people who came to him with all these questions.

And he explains to them how the bread of God, the bread that they had seen him creating and distributing to the people, actually signified the greater eternal bread of God, which was himself having come down from heaven to give life to the world.

And that's the bread that we need this morning, and that's the bread that we share with you this morning. As we receive it from God, we share it with you in his word. That's where the whole, every time we come here, and every time we hear God's word, we are receiving the bread of God, the bread that nourishes us, and by which we are sustained and kept alive and healthy.

However, during the course of this conversation, if we had time to read the conversation, we would have seen that it resulted in a division between those who were prepared to stick with Jesus and truly believe in him, and those for whom they had heard enough, and they were now going to forsake him and walk away from him and say, this is too much for us.

We cannot accept it. And that's always the case. Wherever the gospel is preached today, whenever it always has been preached, then there are those who accept Jesus as their savior, and sadly, there are those who reject him.

[4 : 34] And all the way through the conversation, right from the very beginning, it was clear that there was unbelief amongst the people who had come seeking him. And I want us this morning just to examine very simply, very, very simply, the kind of unbelief, the types of unbelief that this chapter throws up for us, beginning with the kind of unbelief that arises because people don't know who Jesus is.

That's the first kind of unbelief that I want us to think about today. And can I just say that that is the only kind of unbelief that we can't do anything about.

There may be someone here today. Who knows? As I look around me today, I see familiar faces, but there's always faces, or there usually are, that are not familiar.

And who knows, maybe there's someone here today. And not only have you never been here before, perhaps you've never been to church before, and you've never even heard Jesus before. I would love that to be the case.

In a world of secularism and atheism and indifference to the gospel, the answer to that world remains the gospel. And it would be lovely, it would be great if every Sunday there were people coming to church who not only had never been to church before, but who had never heard the gospel before.

[5 : 59] I know that some of our older friends find that difficult to believe, that in this country, that once knew the gospel so well that there could be so many who are so ignorant of the Bible.

Well, that's just a fact. That's the world we live in. And there's no point throwing up your hands in horror. What we need to do is to share the gospel with that world and to start from square, from square one, from the very beginning, from a clean sheet, and ask these, and encourage people to get to know the very basics of the gospel.

And this is where I would start. If I was, and I've said this, of course, before, if I was talking to someone who knew nothing about the Bible, I wouldn't necessarily start at Isaiah or Jeremiah. I don't mean to believe that, I don't mean to say that these books are not part of the Bible.

Of course they are. But I would always start with the gospels. That's where you begin. You begin with Jesus and the facts about his life, the story of Jesus from his very birth at Bethlehem all the way through to his ministry, his teaching and his miracles.

And they are just as astonishing and intriguing today as we read them as they were for all those 5,000 people who had seen them. And I believe, Lord, I believe that the Lord shows us this morning that by way of his extraordinary power, Jesus reveals himself to us and he shows us who he really was.

[7 : 31] I would not ask you today to believe in someone who you knew nothing about. If you're going to believe today, you have to know who it is you're believing.

And the way to get to know is in the pages of the Bible. And we start off, for example, today with this extraordinary miracle in which Jesus was surrounded by more than 5,000 people.

And after a while, they began to get hungry. Jesus was concerned for their well-being and he provided, in a word, in summary, he converted, if you like, or rather he created out of five loaves and took five rolls and two fishes enough food for everyone to eat and be satisfied.

Now, that draws our attention, surely, to the question, how could a man have that kind of power? It's not just the power, but that kind of power to be able to feed 5,000 people.

Well, the chapter goes on to talk about his extraordinary sovereign power over the water, the Sea of Galilee. And again, it asks, as the disciples ask, what kind of man is this?

[8 : 42] That's where we begin. That's where we begin. And the only solution to that first element in unbelief is to examine the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus.

I would ask you today, I would challenge you today, if you're not a believer in Jesus, are you seeking him? Do you want to be a believer in Jesus? Do you want to know? The only way is to get to know him, and we get to know him by reading the Bible.

Please make time in your busy routine to read the Bible, to put it in first, because you could spend your whole life trying to get what you can out of this world, trying to make the best out of this life, and end up with emptiness, and end up not being right with God.

And that is the worst possible place to be. So I would ask you to find out who Jesus is, and to grow in your knowledge of him.

The second form of unbelief arises out of this chapter. When we take what we want out of Jesus, and fail to take him on his terms.

[9 : 55] You see, it's one thing to be genuinely ignorant about Jesus. It's quite another, when we hear his voice, when we hear the message of the gospel, and instead of accepting it in its own terms, we make what we want of it.

I'll tell you, I'll show you how this arises in this chapter. When the crowd of people saw Jesus' extraordinary power in feeding the 5,000, instead of coming to him and asking him, why did you come into this world?

What did you come into this world to do? How can we be right with God? Instead of all these things, we read in verse 15, perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

When all these people saw, they believed, they came to the conclusion that he truly was the prophet who would come into the world. Now you think on the surface that that was a good thing, but in actual fact it wasn't because they came to the wrong conclusion about who that prophet was.

And they saw, all of a sudden, they began to construct this perfect world that they believed would be created if this man, if a man like this, was king over them.

[11 : 13] After all, if he has the kind of power to feed the people, 5,000 people miraculously, then there's nothing he can't do. He can drive out our enemies. He can drive out the Romans who are occupying our land, the land that God promised to us.

He can provide for us. He can do anything we want. And if ever we're going to be a happy nation, then surely it would be under this, the control and the rulership of this man.

And so they were constructing all, they were dreaming. And all because they refused to listen to the words of Jesus.

They made what they want out of the words of Jesus and the life of Jesus. And it's something that we can very easily do.

we can come to our own twisted, perverse conclusions and try to get what we want out of the gospel and change God and the Bible into something that suits us rather than what it is, which is God's message to us.

[12 : 19] And rather than stop and listen to what God has to say to us. And I think we should all be asking the Lord that if we have twisted his word in any way, in our own understanding, that God will stop that right away.

And that God will bring us to the right conclusion and give us a genuine, hearing, submissive, surrendering heart. That's what we need to do today. We need to surrender to God on his own terms.

And the way these men and women were thinking, having seen Jesus creating or rather feeding the 5,000 miraculously, they were thinking horizontal.

That's where their ambitions were. Their thoughts weren't vertical towards God at all. They were thinking horizontal. This world, what I can get out of this Jesus, what he can do to improve my life here in this world.

And there's something in us, isn't there, that naturally wants to better our own lives and improve our own lives. And if religion, if I can use it that way, if following Jesus amounted to living a better life or getting a better life from this world, I think we would all be doing it.

[13 : 44] If our lives were improved, if our quality of our lives were improved, if we were richer, if it was easier. And I'll illustrate the way they were thinking. In verse 25, they found him on the other side of the sea.

Now this was a day later. And they said to him, Rabbi, when did you come here? Now you would think that's a fairly innocuous, harmless question.

After all, all they're asking is, when did you get here? And Jesus seems to give them a kind of sharp, blunt reply. This is the way he said, Jesus answered them, truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.

And you end up wondering, well, what did they say? What wrong thing did they say? Surely all they asked him was, when did you get here? And Jesus appears to give them what appears to be a kind of sharp reply, which leads you to ask the question, well, there must have been something wrong with their question.

What was, what was motivating them to ask that particular question? There must have been something inside their hearts that Jesus perceived because he was able to do that.

[15 : 06] He was able to perceive by a person's question. You know, you can tell a lot about a person by the questions he asks. And Jesus was able to tell a lot about these men and women by the question that they asked.

When did you get here? This was not just an innocent question. This was a loaded question. And the question did not arise out of just curiosity.

They got to him the day after they had witnessed him feeding the 5,000, and they followed him to where he was. And when they got there, they found Jesus surrounded by another group of people.

And they said, when did you get here? But it's not, that's not a curious question. It's like, have we missed it? Have we missed the food?

Have we missed the dinner? All they wanted was to fill their own stomachs.

[16 : 15] And all they saw in Jesus was the means of a free lunch. That's as far as their minds traveled. Their ambitions and their objectives and their dreams were horizontal.

All they wanted was a better life in this world. They thought in terms of if he could do it one day, he could do it every day. And of course, you put yourself in the shoes of people who were essentially much poorer than we are and who have to work every day to eke out a living.

And when they see Jesus being able to just instantly feed 5,000 people miraculously, then that means that he could do it every day and our lives could be made so much easier.

They were looking for an easy life. All they were thinking about was this life and how my life can be made easier and richer and more prosperous and how my stomach can be filled without me having to do anything.

And Jesus has to tell them. He has to challenge them and say, look, man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God and that's something that we even today need to hear.

[17 : 34] We need to listen. It is only by when we listen to God and his voice and his message and his son telling us how to be saved and how to come to know him that we can be saved from our own self-centeredness and our own ambition to better our lives here in this world.

And that's why Jesus said, he said, you are seeking me because you ate your fill of the loaves and then he said, do not labor for the food that perishes and if ever, if ever in our Western self-centered, self-aggrandizing world, if ever we needed to hear something, we need to hear this, do not labor for the food that perishes but the food that endures to everlasting life.

unbelief. The third form of unbelief was that they were asking the wrong questions. They were trying to solve the wrong problem and if they're trying to solve the wrong problem, they won't solve the right problem.

what must we do to do the works of God? What must we do, they said.

That was the wrong question and Jesus corrected them in that. But the answer to the wrong question is going to the right source.

[19 : 03] when we don't know what the problem is, there's only one thing you can do. You go to the manufacturer.

You have to go to the person who knows. There's nobody who knows a piece of equipment like the manufacturer and there is nobody who knows us like the manufacturer.

And just like there are times that you have to go when you have a deep-seated problem with a piece of equipment, you have to admit, I don't know what the answer to this problem is. You go to the manufacturer.

Let me give you an illustration. I gave this on Tuesday at the Caber Fae. It's something that came to me some months ago when I had the old Passat. And we were away in the mainland. And I began to hear a noise from the engine.

You'll forgive me for all these illustrations about cars, but sometimes a car can be a very interesting illustration about the gospel. I hope this one is as well. And I heard a noise when I was on the mainland in the engine.

[20 : 03] It appeared to be a rather nasty noise. It was a bit alarming. So I took it to a garage where I knew the mechanic. And I took it in and he opened the bonnet and he listened to the noise.

And he scratched his head and he looked here, he looked there, he looked under the car and spent a lot of time on it. And he said, well, he said, I'm not sure.

Now this is a good mechanic. I'd gone to him loads of times before. But he said, I'm not sure. He says, this is what I think it is. And he says, and I said to him, well, if what you think it is, that's good enough for me because you're an experienced mechanic, it's better than what I think it is because I don't know what it is.

But if you, in your considered opinion, I said, how much is it going to cost? He said, it's going to cost you £400. And I thought, well, okay, if it's what it is, if the problem is.

But I said to him, what happens if you change this part and it cost me £400 and it actually is not the problem? Ah, he says, well, that's the chance you take. So then he said to me, you know what I would do?

[21 : 16] I would take it to the Volkswagen garage. They'll know for sure. So I did.

Took it to the Volkswagen garage in Inverness. I went in and I said, do you have a service manager? A service manager comes out and I said, could you listen to this? He listened to it. He knew what it was before he even lifted the bonnet.

And he said to me, it cost you £200 to get it fixed. And it was different from what the first man had said. Now, I'm not trying to cast aspersions on people who are mechanics in any way.

But for me, as soon as I heard that, you know what Jesus says? He says, on me, God the Father has set his seal. What is the seal? The seal of approval.

The seal of the manufacturer's approval. approval. And when there are our basic deep-seated problems, we need to go to the manufacturer.

[22 : 23] God himself is the manufacturer. And he has placed his seal of approval on Jesus Christ.

He's the only one who has God's seal of approval. And that means that when I go to him, I know he's not going to say to me, well, this is what I think.

He's going to say to me, this is what I know. This is what your problem is. I'll tell you in a moment's time, and I'll tell you how to fix it. There is no dubiety with the gospel.

There's no uncertainty with the gospel. Have you ever noticed how absolutely certain the Lord always is? He never causes confusion.

I'm not saying that we understand everything in the Bible, but when it comes to whether we know God or not, there is a crystal clear answer given, and there's none so crystal clear as the words that you find in this chapter.

[23 : 30] He says, this is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent. That's what we have to do this morning. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

See, the way that these people who are following Jesus at this time, the way that they thought was, we have to work to be right with God. In fact, they kind of assumed that they were right with God anyway.

They just didn't really know if they were doing enough to please him. But they weren't right with God. They were on the wrong road. They were trusting in all the wrong things.

They were trusting in themselves and their own goodness and their own efforts and their own obedience. And when you do that, you will never, ever get there.

And that's why Jesus' answer to them was completely different. It was obnoxious to them. They couldn't cope with it, many of them, because the answer to their problem was not found in themselves and how well they kept God's commands.

[24 : 35] The answer was in coming to Jesus so that he would forgive them for all their failures and for their sinfulness and for their wrongdoing.

God's forgiveness and the first thing we need to do in relation to God is ask him to show us how much we need him, how much we need his forgiveness and his mercy in our hearts.

And only he can do that. I wonder if you've ever prayed that prayer this morning. You've ever gone to God and said, God, I don't really realize how much I need you, do I?

I need you to show me how much I need you. Now, you know, that's a risk. You know why? Because he'll do it. And you have to be prepared for a shock.

Because maybe up until now you've been thinking well of yourself. You're not too bad. There are always people in the world worse than you. And in the grand scheme of things, well, surely the good things outweigh the bad things.

[25 : 46] God shows us we don't have any good things. We've never done any good things, as far as he is concerned. Because everything that we have done has been stained and polluted by our own sinfulness and selfishness and corruption.

And that is why we need only one thing this morning, and that is to come to Jesus and believe in him. What does it mean to believe in Jesus?

That's what he said. He said, this is the work of God that you believe in him whom he has sent. What does it mean that you believe in him?

Well, it means, of course, first of all, that we believe in the reality of Jesus as the Son of God. It means that we believe in the reason, that the reason he came into the world was to save us from our sins by dying on the cross as our sacrifice.

It means believing that he rose again, that he truly is the Son of God, God himself, that he went up to be with the Father once again, that he is God ruling and reigning over us.

[26 : 55] But that's not all. We need to believe that we, our greatest need in all the world, is him and the forgiveness that we can have in his death and resurrection.

And we need to come personally to him and we need to ask him to surrender our hearts, ourselves, our lives, everything that we are.

We need to surrender to his lordship, to his mercy, and to his grace. You see, believing in Jesus is on the one hand the simplest thing in all the world.

But on the other hand, it confronts us with what we really are in ourselves. And some people simply can't cope with that.

There were people there who were asking all these questions on this occasion, and they said, they grumbled, verse 41, because he said, I am the bread that came down from heaven.

[28 : 06] And they said, is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know, how does he now say, I have come down from heaven? You see, for one thing, they weren't really thinking heaven, they were still thinking about how this man Jesus could use his power to make life better for themselves.

But they were also thinking, who is he? Who does he think he is? That he's better than us? You see, their pride got the better of him. And the greatest obstacle that you're ever going to face when it comes to your relationship with God is your pride.

Because God is asking us now to recognize that when it comes to him, we have nothing. We have nothing to bring. We have nothing to deserve.

We've done nothing to deserve his goodness and his favor. And what he's asking us to do this morning is to come and to lay hold alone by faith on Jesus Christ.

Christ. And as we do that, God promises us that he will renew our lives, that he will recreate our lives, that he will raise us to newness of life once again.

[29 : 18] He will place a new heart within us. That's when a person becomes born again, when that person begins to grasp and lay hold upon Jesus Christ as his Savior and as his Lord.

I don't know when I became a Christian. I can't put a day or an hour, but I remember a conversation with someone once when I asked that person, what is a Christian?

How do you become a Christian? And that person said to me, I was only about 11 at the time. That person said to me, she was actually my own mother. She said to me, you simply ask the Lord to be your Savior.

And I did. Whether that was the moment I became a Christian, I don't know. But I can remember that so clearly, so clearly.

It was that simple. And yet, there is nothing greater that you can ever discover in your life. Whatever age you're at, young, old, middle-aged, you're not too old to ask the Lord to be your Savior.

[30 : 39] You're not too young to ask him to take your life and to create a new heart within you, a heart that will love him and follow him and obey him.

And he promises, that's his promise, that he will be your Savior and he will give you everlasting life and forgiveness.

I leave you with that challenge because it's the challenge that Jesus himself left with all those who came to him on that occasion and who heard his words.

Let's pray together. Our Father in heaven, we pray that as we listen once again to the gospel, to the simplicity of the gospel, we know that there are many questions and there are many complexities in life.

And perhaps there are those who are with us this morning who are afraid of what it may be like to live as a Christian and who are unsure as to what kind of life the Christian life is.

[31 : 51] We ask, Lord, that you will overcome every fear that they will have and give them to know that by trusting in you, that whatever question we may have, that it is the only thing that we can do is to come to the one who knows us and who knows what we need more than anyone else.

Lord, we pray that you will bless our time together in Jesus' name. Amen.