

John 36 – The Bread of Life

11/10/2024

Scripture 1: (Jn. 6:32-59 ESV)

Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always."

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. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, 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."

So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread 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. 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."

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 have no life in you. 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.

Sermon:

At the start of this conversation, Jesus accused the people chasing Him around Galilee of only seeking Him because He gave them their fill of the loaves (6:26); because He had given them a free meal instead of seeking Him because of Who these Signs declare Him to be: the LORD God. His charge against them led us to ask ourselves, "Why do we seek Jesus?"

- Do we seek Him because of what we believe He can give us or do we seek Him because of Who He is so that we may glorify and honor Him?

As Jesus continues to teach, He will explain the core reason “Why” those who truly seek Him do so, but it will not be because of our personal motivation.

First, Jesus reminded them that “...*it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.*”. Reminding them that:

- Moses neither convinced nor commanded the LORD to give Israel their daily bread.
- Moses had no divine power or authority within himself, doing only what the LORD commanded him and enabled him to do.
- Although Moses possessed no divine authority within himself, he proclaimed the LORD's divine decrees as His mediator and messenger, relaying and conveying God's authoritative Word to Israel.
- Moses did not perform the miracle or provide the manna himself. Instead, it was the LORD God who fed Israel with the manna every day, as from His omnipotent hand.

Next, Jesus explained that the “*true bread from heaven*” is something more than just bread. It is something much more and far greater than what you get when you mix flour, oil, water, and salt together, “*For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.*”. However, based upon the Jews' response, I cannot help but think that they intentionally misunderstood everything that Jesus was saying, when “*They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always."*”, because a conservative and orthodox, First Century Jewish interpretation of “...*he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.*” could only have been the LORD, since only God can give life to the world. Yet asking Jesus to “...*give us this bread always.*” demonstrates that they were not thinking theologically or spiritually, but carnally and worldly.

- What they wanted; what they really, really wanted was the same thing that the Samaritan woman had believed that she wanted (4:15): a never ending, eternal supply for their daily provision.

The Jews were only thinking carnally, thinking with their “flesh” (both in their physical being and in their sinful, selfish nature) and that attitude is what caused them to grumble against and then abandon Jesus, because their hearts had not yet been transformed from dead stone to living flesh (Ezekiel 11:19-20).

Then Jesus said something explosive and shocking; something which they would be correct to understand as blasphemy, unless it were true: “*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.*”. He said, *ego eimi*; **I AM**; YHVH.

Finally, after having performed five miraculous signs demonstrating that He is the LORD God, Jesus makes His first, clear “I AM” statement; making an outright, clear, and undeniable claim to be YHVH, the LORD. Although He had declared Himself to be God's Son previously: a statement which the Jewish leaders interpreted as Him claiming “equality” with God (5:18); this declaration did not claim a Father/Son relationship with the LORD because, by His use of the Divine Name implied within *ego eimi*, Jesus plainly asserted Himself as the LORD. Not only did He claim the Name of God for Himself, but:

- by saying “*I am the bread of life*”, He plainly claimed to be the Creator and Sustainer; and,
- by saying “*whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.*”, He claims to be the great Provider; and,

- by saying “*the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven*” and by claiming to be the “bread”, He again claimed to be Daniel's “Son of Man” (Daniel 7:13-14; John 5:27), who possesses power and dominion over all peoples and nations, thereby claiming to be the Sovereign over all creation.

If untrue, these were outrageous and blasphemous claims. These claims would have been enough to warrant and justify Jesus being stoned by those who heard Him (Leviticus 24:10-16), unless they believed Him or believed the evidence of the Signs. However, their ultimate response at the conclusion of this teaching proves both their willful, self-deluding denial of the truth and their implicit recognition and affirmation of it.

Jesus further accused them, “*But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.*”; accusing them of disbelieving the observable evidence that testifies to the truth about Christ. They had either witnessed or knew about several signs, but, although many of those present had eaten and enjoyed the miraculous abundance of loaves and fish just the day before, but they still did not believe it.

- If “seeing is believing”, then we should expect that, even moreso, “eating is believing”. They had no reasonable excuse to not believe the truth about Jesus, except simply because they did not want to.
 - If they did not believe, then it was because they were choosing to not believe.
 - They were exercising their sin corrupted “free will” to disbelieve the truth and to deny the deity of Jesus Christ.
 - Choosing to disbelieve, provided they persist in their obstinate disbelief, proves a person's reprobation because they are like those of whom John elsewhere says, “*They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.*” (1 Jn. 2:19 ESV) and those of whom the author of Hebrews warns, “*For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?*” (Heb. 10:26-29 ESV).
 - These are those who have seen, experienced, and know the truth yet stubbornly refuse to believe it.
 - But also remember, this choice is the only decision a person enslaved to sin is able to make. They are bound by their sin and are therefore, restrained against making the choice for Jesus, being blinded to the light of truth in Christ by Satan.

Since considering these people who sought Jesus only because “...[they] ate [their] fill of the loaves.” (Jn. 6:26 ESV) and who saw Him “...and yet [did] not believe.”, is what leads us to ask ourselves, “Why do we seek Jesus?”: if they did not believe because that was their only possible choice then, What hope do we have of being any different from them? Why do I believe Jesus, when they did not?

Asking ourselves that question makes what Jesus says next the best news that we could hear. He declares:

- His Promise, “*All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.*”

- First, Jesus promises that everyone who comes to Him has already been given to Him by our Father in heaven. Since they are given to Him as a possession to be treasured, as they are treasured by the Father, Jesus promises that no one who comes to Him will be rejected or cast aside. We are His, therefore He loves us because the Father, whom He loves, also loves us and has given us to Christ for the Father's divine purpose.
- His Purpose, *For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.*”
 - Second, Jesus confidently declares the purpose of Him descending from heaven (John 3:13); the definite purpose of God the Son's, the *Logos* who is *Theos* and *Andros*'s, Incarnation. He has descended and come as the LORD's authoritative representative, His perfect Image (Genesis 1:26-30). He has come to do “...*the will of him who sent [Him]*.”. God the Son did not come to satisfy His own will and good pleasure as a man, but to do what the LORD has commanded; to obey all that God the Father wills God the Son to do (John 5:19-25).
- His Power, *“And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, 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.”*
- Third, Jesus plainly explains what the will of God the Father is:
 - that the Son will lose nothing and no one from all those whom the Father gives to Him; everyone whom the Father has transferred His ownership of to the Son; all whom the LORD has predestined unto salvation; and,
 - that all those whom the Father has given to the Son shall therefore “[*look*] on the Son and [*believe*] in him” so that they “*should have eternal life*”.

Jesus is primarily speaking here about our spiritual resurrection: our spiritual rebirth, our being “born from above”, *anóthen*; saying that, once believing in the Son and possessing eternal life, God the Son, Jesus Christ, will “*raise [them] up on the last day.*”, raising them up to “*the resurrection of life*” (Jn. 5:29 ESV) and therefore, deliver them from “*the resurrection of judgment*” (Jn. 5:29 ESV) because, through their faith in Him, they have been “*passed from death to life.*” (Jn. 5:24 ESV). But, He is also speaking about our physical, bodily resurrection and the promise of our living in the restored and renewed creation. Although these resurrections are treated separately, both are necessary and inexorably connected.

This *evangel*, this Good News that Jesus plainly declares here, is the doctrine of predestination and a Scriptural refutation of the false assumption that sinful man has an inherent capacity to choose God {according to the semi-Pelagian doctrine of “prevenient grace”¹} by an exercise of their “free will”.

Jesus here describes the LORD's sovereign and monergistic disposition of His possessions: where some are chosen to be redeemed and preserved by the God Son, while the rest, according to logic and reason, are not chosen. This is called “double predestination”, in reference to the two destinations which result from the LORD's binary choice: because since some are predestined to eternal life with the Son, the rest are all therefore predestined to eternal condemnation and damnation.

¹ <https://www.monergism.com/prevenient-grace;>

This declaration by Jesus about our election is good news for us because it affirms that the LORD will override our incapacity and inability to choose Him on account of our bondage to sin, and give us the ability and desire to come to Christ through our regeneration instead, when we are “born again” (*anōthen*).

So, to rightly answer the question of, “Why do we seek Jesus?”:

- Now, since God has given us to Jesus first, we are drawn to Him and therefore, come to Him freely.
- Now, we choose to come to Him because our “blindness of sin” have been removed by the Holy Spirit, opening the eyes of our heart to the light of His truth and giving us a desire for Him greater than for all the temptations of the world.
- Now, we seek Jesus because the LORD wills us to do so, so that we may enjoy eternal life with Christ in the Kingdom to come.

This is really good news for us and every Christian should be glad of it, rather than wrongly seeing it as an infringement upon our personal “rights” or our “free will”, as some do. We should see this as a glorious opportunity and the best alternative to any choice that we could otherwise make, instead of taking offense. We may know that our salvation is secure since the ultimate decision is resting in the hand of God, who is faithful and will not change His sovereign and omnipotent mind because He has already declared that you are His.

Unfortunately, hearing all of this caused the Jews to grumble “...about him, *because* he said, “I am the bread 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?’”.

Now, there are two things to note about their “grumbling”:

1. The word that John uses is *gogguzo* {*gonguzo*}, the same word used in the Greek Old Testament {Septuagint, LXX} to describe the Israelite's grumbling and murmuring against Moses (Exodus 17:3; Numbers 16:41) and against the LORD (Numbers 11:1, 14:27-29, 17:20), thereby marking their attitude turning towards discontent and dissatisfaction.
2. They grumbled because Jesus claimed a heavenly origin, claiming that He “...came down from heaven.”. This prompted them to argue by reminding Jesus that they know where He really comes from, since they know (or knew) His parents {Side Note: This remark is a little unclear because we ordinarily assume that Joseph had died by the time of Jesus' public ministry, since he does not factor into any later narrative while Mary, His mother, does, but the use of the present plural active form of the verb *oida* here, suggests that Joseph may have still been living at this time. Regardless, that detail has little impact on the Gospel message here.}. Thus, from their perspective, Jesus could not have “descended” from heaven since they knew who birthed Him. However, what they could not have known, as Paul Harvey used to say, was the “rest of the story” concerning Jesus' birth or the spiritual work involved in the Son's incarnation.

They took offense at the apparently impossible, unreasonable, and insane claim that Jesus had personally descended from heaven, but not His claim of divinity or His assertion concerning God predestining some for salvation and all the rest for condemnation.

If these Jews were more upset over a less important, carnal interpretation that they could not comprehend: Jesus' origin; than they were over His alleged blasphemy or His assertion about the LORD's sovereignty, then why do

some believing Christian's take such offense at the doctrine of predestination today? {The reason is pride and sinful, self righteousness.}

Why do some Christians fight with one another over whether “God chose us” or “We chose God”? Does the distinction really matter? Is it really that important?

Yes, it does and yes, it is. Even the First Century Jews knew, remembered, and understood the necessity for God's sovereignty in both election and salvation.

- If God had not first chosen and called Abraham from Ur of the Chaldeans and from Haran, then he would not have had the opportunity to believe the LORD and be accounted righteous (Genesis 15:6).
- If God had not first chosen and delivered the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt, then they never would have come to the Promised Land.
- If God had not first turned and inclined Cyrus, the Medo-Persian king's heart, then Israel would not have been restored to the land following seventy years of exile.

They understood that Israel is God's “chosen people”, something which the Jews continue to believe today, and that because of His special favor, given at His gracious initiation, the LORD will always preserve and save Israel by His sovereign grace. Whenever they won, they believed that it was because the LORD had given them the victory and, even whenever they lost, they continued to have hope because they still believed that the LORD will restore them, eventually.

So, if that is what Christians believe Jesus does and will do for the Church, which is the fullness of Israel, then reasonably how can any Christian say that, “God saves me because I have decided to follow Jesus.”?

Since God does not change His mind (Numbers 23:19), He does not waver and waffle, He is steadfast and sure, and He is immovable and unchangeable, therefore, He will not change either the order or means of salvation.

That is why the doctrine of predestination can give us assurance of His grace, the forgiveness of our sins, and our justification by the righteousness of Christ. Predestination is how we know that we have been saved. Otherwise, our *pisteuo* in Jesus Christ would be in vain, because God might suddenly revoke our salvation, like Lucy pulling the football away from Charlie Brown. But, if the only Sovereign God has declared that you are His and that He has forgiven you of your sins, then you cannot deny it and you cannot thwart it because you are not God and you are not greater than He.

That is why this doctrine matters, because people are notoriously fickle. We are pliable; changing our mind at the slightest whim. We are inconstant and undependable. We are not steadfast or steady. The most reliable thing about humanity is the fact that we are so unreliable. We could never choose Christ and commit ourselves wholeheartedly and unreservedly to Him as our LORD and Master, by our own power, because our sinful nature would rebel at the first opportunity.

But Jesus responded to their grumbling by saying, “*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.*”, because we are only able to positively, earnestly, truly, and completely respond to Jesus and the free grace He offers on account of the Holy Spirit's effectual call (WCF Chapter 10). Nobody can ever come to Jesus except that God moves them to; except that first, God “draws” them, drags them, and brings them to Christ. The salvation of individuals: any and every individual; literally requires an “Act of God”.

Now, those of us who tend to feel most strongly about the question of “Whether God chose us, or whether we choose God” do so because we view the opposite position as an attack upon either the sovereignty of God or the alleged sovereignty of Man's free will.

- Calvinists see it as an attack on God's sovereignty because requiring or allowing a person to choose Jesus before God can or may “save them”, makes God's work of salvation contingent upon Man's will, thereby elevating Man's will and preference above God's.
- Arminians see it as an attack on Man's freedom of will because they presume that the LORD is such a respecter of our “freedom to choose” that He would not “force” any single person to do anything (I wonder what Jonah would have to say about that?), and that God loves the whole world so much that He would not choose to condemn anyone to Hell no matter how much we deserve it. They disagree with the Calvinist {the more orthodox Christian} view because this lack of autonomy and personal choice is offensive to our sinful nature. The idea of losing our self-governing authority terrifies us. Scripture, by asserting that we are not in absolute control of either our own lives or our eternal destination, offends us and makes us mad.
- However, many Arminians will try to explain this debate away, hoping to have their cake and eat it too, by offering a halfway measure and compromise. They suggest that since God must first give sinful Man grace (Ephesians 2:8), He gives everyone what they call “prevenient grace”, but this grace is not “saving grace”. Instead it is a special kind of grace that enables a person to choose Christ or not; grace enough to be allowed to use their will and choose Jesus, if they want. Under this flawed view, although God moves first by giving this grace to everyone, He still leaves the final decision to us.

However, if, as Jesus said, “*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.*”, then **no one** can come to Christ except that first the LORD draws them, and also, that **no one** can successfully resist the omnipotent LORD's drawing because Man is not more powerful than God. If God has chosen to save someone by giving them to Christ, then no man, and certainly not Satan, can prevent God, no matter what they may will.

Beyond this being a concern over sovereignty, this is also a concern about God's glory. Who gets the glory for our salvation? Scripture teaches us that all of the glory rightly belongs to God, but when confronted with the choice offered by the two sides of this debate, saying either: “I have accepted Jesus. Therefore, I am saved by Him.” or “Jesus accepted me. Therefore, He has saved me .”; the difference between those two statements becomes, “Who receives the glory?”.

- The first suggests that “I” am the active do-er in salvation by accepting Christ, making Jesus our servant.
- Whereas, the second declares that Jesus is the sole, active do-er in salvation, while “I” am merely the beneficiary.
- The first wrongly tries to steal God's glory, while the second rightly gives God all of the glory.
- The second rightly holds a higher view of God, while the first wrongly and idolatrously holds a higher view of Man.

Therefore, the doctrine of predestination which Jesus so plainly teaches, should be encouraging to us and fill us with newfound confidence and assurance of our salvation because we know that before regeneration, we all loved our sin so much that we were never going to give it up; we were never going to let it go. If we examine ourselves and are honest about who we really are, and who we really were during our reprobation, then we must admit that we loved our sin more than life itself.

- If you pause to think, as I do, about all the stupid things that you have done in your life, some and many of which likely had a high probability of resulting in your death or disability, then you must agree with me.
- Just consider how many bad decisions you have made in your life and realize that, apart from the power of Christ and the Providence of God, you have never made a good decision. You are incapable of doing so on your own, because your remaining fleshly, sinful nature always makes bad and self destructive choices because sin is at war with godliness. If you understand that, then would you really want to trust yourself with making the ultimate decision concerning your eternal and final disposition?

Knowing and understanding the grave danger our immortal souls were in, of suffering eternally in the fires of hell, we should be filled with such a depth of relief at the LORD's mercy: knowing that the King of the Universe loves you so much that He saved you from yourself, when you were unable to save yourself.

The doctrine of predestination gives the Christian such assurance because we know what God has saved us from, and because we know what God has done for us, and because we know what doing so cost God: the death of Jesus Christ on a Roman cross as the atoning sacrifice for all of our sins. This doctrine demonstrates the depth of God's mercy: by choosing to save **some**, when He is obligated to save **none**. But, what does this doctrine also say about those whom the LORD does not mercifully predestine unto the "*resurrection of life*" and, what does that say about God?

It does not suggest that the LORD loves them any less, only that He loves them differently because to the one: to the Elect, He gives the fullness of His grace and mercy by our adoption and redemption, and a measure of His justice and discipline in this life; while to the other: the Reprobate, He gives a measure of grace and mercy in this life, and the fullness of justice in His judgment and wrath. The LORD is Merciful and the LORD is Just. But also, God is *agape*. Although some people, the Elect, will receive His mercy while all the rest, the Reprobate, receive His justice; both are sovereignly given out of the fullness of His love. Therefore, knowing and believing this, filled with assurance and the confidence of our faith, prompts our gratitude with thanksgiving and our obedience with gladness.

Therefore and finally, knowing that the Elect Christian will seek Jesus because God our Father is drawing them to Him, we may know that we are numbered among the Elect and enjoy the assurance of our predestination by "how" we seek Jesus.

- If you seek Him for His sake and His glory, then know that you are Elect.
- If you seek Him with thanksgiving and praise for what He has done for you, then know that you are Elect.
- If you seek Him by following Him and obeying His commandments with gladness, then know that you are Elect.

So again, why are you seeking Jesus? Is it because you have seen His Signs and are being drawn by the Father to Him, or would you simply prefer to only continue receiving His blessings in this life?

AMEN