

When He Came | Jesus Came To Do The Father's Will (John 6:22-40)

Faith Manhattan Church

Sunday, December 16, 2023

For the past few weeks we have been looking at some of the statements Jesus made about why He came to earth. What did Jesus say was the purpose of his life and ministry? What impact might a better understanding of his purpose have on our own commitment to follow him?

Today, we're going to unpack Jesus' statement from John 6:38-40, that he came "down from heaven" to "do the will of him who sent me" – that **Jesus came to do the Father's will**.

This is perhaps the most straightforward of the four statements we'll look at throughout Advent and on Christmas Eve. *Jesus, the Son of God, was sent by God, to carry out the will of God.*

This naturally leads us to the question, "So what is the Father's will? What is it that God wants?"

That answer, I think, is right there in v40..

40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day."

John 6 (NIV)

God wants us to have eternal life, so He calls us to believe in His son, Jesus Christ.

For those of us who have been Christians for a while, or who know a bit about Christianity already, this idea is probably pretty familiar. It is one of the most fundamental truths of our faith. We must believe in Christ, and thanks to that belief we receive the gift of eternal life.

But sometimes I wonder if familiarity with this fundamental truth leads us to treat it as something common, that no longer inspires the awe, wonder, or deep gratitude that it should.

If I were to say, "*the address of our church is 1921 Barnes Road in Manhattan, KS*", and that statement evoked the same level of emotional reaction, intellectual engagement, or even spiritual wonder as saying "***God wants us to have eternal life, so He calls us to believe in His son, Jesus Christ***"...then perhaps you, like me, need to spend some time reconnecting with the story of the Gospel.

In today's passage we see that it's possible to look for Jesus but not really find him. It's possible to find him, but never really know him. To get so caught up in what he can do that we fail to be stunned by the truth that the whole reason Jesus came to earth is that ***God the Father wants to save us***. He wants us to have eternal life. He wants us to believe in Jesus so that we might enjoy freedom from sin and a life everlasting in the presence of our Creator.

To fully grasp the truth, "***God wants us to have eternal life, so He calls us to believe in His son, Jesus Christ,***" we need to zoom out from 6:38-40, and see Jesus' words in their full context.

At the beginning of John 6, we're told that Jesus was spending some time around the Sea of Galilee. He was attracting a big crowd, because he was performing signs and wonders and healing the sick (6:2). The story goes on to tell how Jesus miraculously blesses a handful of bread and a basketful of fish, and feeds 5000 people, with leftovers to spare.

The crowd is, understandably, amazed. They begin to call him a Prophet. Jesus even suspects they are close to rallying together to try and make him a king. That's not the plan Jesus has in mind, so he slips away. (6:14-15).

The next day the crowd wakes up to realize that Jesus is no longer with them. He's somehow gotten away in the night, so they go looking for him. They jump in their boats and head for Capernaum, a city on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee. When they find Jesus there they ask, "*Rabbi, when did you get here?*"

26 Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. 27 Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."

John 6 (NIV)

Jesus calls the crowd out for seeking him only because of what he can do and what they can get out of it. They've seen him do amazing things. They like that when they hang out around Jesus, their diseases are healed and their bellies are filled. What Jesus can do is incredible, and it is only natural to want more of such a good thing.

But Jesus tells them that they are focused on the wrong good thing. They haven't yet caught the vision of the BEST thing that is available to them. There is food that will not spoil. There is a sustenance for their soul that will last forever. Someone has come, with the approval of God the Father, to freely give these people, and ALL people, what they really need.

The crowd follows up with another question: "*What must we do to do the works God requires?*" (v28) What does God want from us? The people are looking for what they need to do, what work they need to complete, in order to get what they want.

It's helpful to note that the Jewish culture at this time, especially in Capernaum, placed a high value on strict obedience to God. Today we might call it legalistic, but if we're honest "*what does God want us to do so that we can get what we want*" is a question we have probably asked before. I know at times I have been guilty of slipping into the idea that if I could just do all the right things, I'd stand a better chance of getting all the good things I want from God.

But Jesus wants us to understand that, when it comes to God's expectations of us, it isn't actually about the work we can contribute. Astonishingly, God expects something quite different from us:

29 Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

John 6 (NIV)

God wants us to have eternal life, so He calls us to believe in His son, Jesus Christ.

The will of God the Father is not for Jesus to come to earth and demand people work hard to earn eternal life.

The work God requires of us is this: Believe in Jesus. Trust in the work He has done on our behalf. The plan all along has not been for you to hope that, in the end, you did enough to earn what you need from God. The plan is for you to believe in Christ and receive a gift God deeply desires to give you: life, forever, with Him.

In v30, the crowds respond with a demand that Jesus give them a sign that validates his claim that they must believe in him. They recall the story of Israel receiving manna from heaven, from Exodus 16. They want Jesus to prove himself in a similar way. Yes, they had received the bread and fish in miraculous fashion the day before. But somehow, that was not enough. The crowd is basically saying, “*you gave us something we’ve already seen before...can you do better?*”

Which to me is...an audacious thing to demand. But Jesus, ever so patiently tells the crowd that he can offer them bread greater than they, or anyone else, has ever received before:

32 Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

John 6 (NIV)

The crowd likes the sound of this, and in v34, immediately jumps on the offer:

34 “Sir,” they said, “always give us this bread.”

John 6 (NIV)

And then Jesus says some of the most beautiful and powerful words in the whole Gospel of John:

35 Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

John 6 (NIV)

I said I wanted to reconnect us with how wondrous it is that ***God wants us to have eternal life, so He calls us to believe in His son, Jesus Christ.***

For me, right here, is where I reconnect with how much the Gospel message really, truly means.

The bread of life metaphor is drawn from the story of Israel’s escape from Egypt in the desert. They are tired, thirsty, and hungry. They are desperate. They are in a wasteland with no hope of finding what they need to survive. And in this moment of their weakness and their fear, God sends them plenty. Bread miraculously arrives from heaven, each and every day. All they have to do is go gather their gift. They are saved by the gracious and wondrous provision of God.

Jesus Christ comes to address a weariness, desperation, thirst, and hunger that is even greater than that of the Israelites in the desert. He comes to save us from the wasteland of sin and death. All we have to do is go gather his gift through our belief in him. This is what God wants for us. This is what God literally moved from heaven to earth to accomplish. ***The will of the Father is for us to receive the bread of eternal life by belief in the saving grace of Jesus Christ, His Son.***

God wants us to have eternal life, so He calls us to believe in His son, Jesus Christ.

However, along with this gift comes a warning. Jesus again tells the crowds that although they've seen his signs, seen his miracles, seen his power...there is still problem:

36 But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe.

John 6 (NIV)

We are not passive recipients of a gift that will be given to us, no matter what we think, how we live, or the choices we make. We are called to believe. And to believe, we have to come to terms with a few things about ourselves.

- We have to confess that we are sinful.
- We have to admit that we need the forgiveness that Jesus offers.
- To believe in Jesus is to hear what he teaches about love and sacrifice and obedience and through faith realize, *"I want that bread. I confess my need for Jesus. I believe in Jesus, and I want that belief to impact everything about the way I live my life."*

If you can confess that, if you can commit to following Jesus – *then the next step is to rejoice*, because right alongside the warning of v36 is the promise of v37: **The Father gives all who believe to Christ, and Christ never, ever turns away a single one who comes to him.**

37 All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. 38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. 40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day."

John 6 (NIV)

If you come to the Son and believe in Jesus, you will be given eternal life. This is the will of God the Father. This is why Jesus Christ came from heaven to earth, and why we celebrate his birth on Christmas Day.

God wants us to have eternal life, so He calls us to believe in His son, Jesus Christ.

So what do we do with this? *How can you capture the deep wonder of this incredible truth in a meaningful way this Christmas?*

I'm going to suggest two things you might think about, pray about, talk with others about, and challenge yourselves to act on in the final weeks of 2023.

First, examine your understanding of who God is and what He is like. When you think about God, do you think about a loving Father whose deepest desire is for you to share eternal life with Him?

The world we live in is such a hard, cold, frightening place that sometimes I think we project its realities onto our perception of God. We look at the world and assume that God must be distant, unhappy, only interested in wrath and punishment and making a list of our sins.

But in John 6:22-40, Jesus very clearly and specifically tells us that it is God's will, it is God's desire, it is God's very heart for people to believe in Jesus and be saved, forever.

Do you believe that what God wants for you is salvation, is freedom, is eternal life with Him? Do you believe that God wants you to share in the saving faith of Jesus? If you don't, I have to be honest with you...I don't think you've been properly introduced to the God of the Bible.

The God we see in John 6:22-40 – who wants you to have eternal life – is the same God in every book of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation (beginning to end). He really and truly is the God who so loves the world that he sent his one and only Son to save all who believe.

We need to get to know God for who He says He is. Not who the world says he is. Not who the media says he is. Get to know him through His own words, through His own Son, and through your own experience with Him.

My second suggestion is this: spend some time reflecting on how great your need for Jesus really is. God wants you to believe in Jesus, because that belief will satisfy your deepest longings and meet your greatest needs.

If you are a Christian, do you seek Christ with a sense of great need each and every day? Do you think of Him as the first thing you need to survive, and wonder what you would ever do without him?

- If you do, then praise God and don't let go of that kind of love.
- But if you don't, please do not hear this as a condemnation, or a diagnosis that means you need to be worried about your faith. I think you'll find a lot of Christians struggle to really seek and find and depend on Jesus every day.
 - We must remember, just as the passage promises, Jesus fiercely and decisively keeps all who come to him.
 - Even when we struggle, even when we doubt, even when we don't do a great job of depending on him.
- Sill, challenge yourself to seek Jesus not as just part of your life, but as the foundation your life depends on.
 - Start small if you need to. A few minutes of prayer, a song of praise, or even just saying "thank you, Jesus" when you are reminded of him in some way.
 - Sometimes, in order for us to hunger and thirst for Jesus we first have to get a little taste of what following Him is like so we can realize how good he really is.

- The next time you see a beautiful sunrise, or receive kindness from someone, or seek and find God's forgiveness...be sure to intentionally and reverently trace your gratefulness back to Christ.

If you're listening today but do not believe in Christ, my challenge to you is to simply get to know the story of Jesus.

- In the Bible, there are what we call four Gospels titled Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. You could read any of them, Bible apps can make them available on your phone today.
 - Or, if you prefer a hardcopy, we have Bibles to give away in our library, just underneath the table to the right of the door as you walk in.
- Read some of the stories in those Gospels.
 - See how Jesus loves others.
 - See how he teaches peace, demands sacrificial love, and very little patience for things like oppression and injustice.
 - If something about Jesus' story makes your heart stir, then keep reading. Keep learning.
 - And by all means, please let any of us at Faith join you on that journey. We have people who would LOVE to read the Gospels with you.

Jesus, the Son of God, was sent by God, to carry out the will of God. And what is it that God wants?

God wants us to have eternal life, so He calls us to believe in His son, Jesus Christ.