

Our Deepest Need Filled

Hi Everyone, the passage that we've just read from John 6 reveals that Jesus is able to fill our deepest need. It shows us that he alone can provide the one thing we so desperately require more than anything else in this world, that he can fix the real cause of our brokenness, that he can solve our most fundamental problem. And do you know what that is?

Well the crowds who were following him certainly did not. In verse 26 Jesus says, "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." They thought their deepest need was physical wellbeing and prosperity. They wanted Jesus because he could miraculously feed them with loaves and fishes. And that made them think that he could make their lives better, that he could make them richer, that he could heal their diseases, that he could free them from political oppression.

That means they were no different to many today who think that the answer lies in having more money or better education or improved health, that the most important thing is to end discrimination or halt global warming or whatever it may be. And they were no different to many today who come to Jesus, still thinking that in him they can find the answer to their physical problems and the source of worldly success.

But why did Jesus really come? What's our most fundamental problem? In verse 27 Jesus says "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."

You see our most fundamental problem is that we are disconnected, cut off, alienated from the God who made us. Through our own rebellious hearts we've found ourselves far away from the very one who brought us into being, and who rules this world, and who holds our future in his hands. As a result there's an enormous emptiness in our lives. We're like orphans with no one to turn to and nothing to look forward to. Even if we live with worldly abundance, if we're living without God then we'll have an underlying feeling of discontent and disconnection, of helplessness and hopelessness, of failure and futility. And we'll also have an underlying fear of what will happen when we die.

There's a well-known quote which says, "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ." Or as it says in Ecclesiastes 3, it is God himself who has set eternity in the human heart. Here in our text Jesus speaks of this emptiness in terms of hunger. He says "Do not work for **food** that spoils, but for **food** that endures to eternal life". Jesus speaks, not of a physical hunger and all that might represent, but of a spiritual hunger. We have a deep longing inside of us to be reconciled to our Maker, to experience true life on this earth the way he intended, and to have hope for a never-ending future in his presence.

And Jesus explains that he's the only one who can satisfy this hunger. For he's the Son of Man, he's the Messiah, the second person of the Trinity, and the very Son of the living God. He's the one whom God the Father has sent, appointed and approved to fill our deepest need. And how did he do that? He did it by leaving the glory of heaven and entering our world and giving himself to us. He did it by his life, his death, and his resurrection. For Jesus came and lived the perfect holy life that we could never achieve. And he came to die the atoning sacrificial death that we so

desperately need. And he rose again on the third day to prove that the ultimate victory is won over sin and death and hell.

That's why in verses 32-33 he says "it is my Father who gives you the true **bread** from heaven. For the **bread** of God is the **bread** that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." And verse 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**.'"

It's Christ himself who came in grace and love to fill our deepest need and solve our most fundamental problem. For **he is** the reconciliation between himself and us, between God and humanity. **He is** the abundant filling our emptiness, the meaning and purpose in our existence, and **he is** our assurance of eternal life. Jesus himself fills that vacuum in our heart and satisfies our spiritual hunger and thirst once and for all.

And how do we access his glorious salvation? Jesus says "Whoever **comes to me** will never go hungry". He calls us simply to come to him. And what does that mean? He says, "whoever **believes in me** will never be thirsty." To come to Jesus is to believe in him, it's to turn your soul toward him and lay hold of him in faith, it's to recognise his glory and place your full reliance upon him.

We could never do anything to deserve his favour. We could never earn his salvation or eternal life. In verse 28 the people asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" And in verse 29, "Jesus answered, 'The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.'" The only way to receive the Bread of life is by turning to him in faith. And I truly hope that's what you've done.

Maybe you're here today and you've only just heard about Jesus, or you're still not so sure about him? If that's your situation then I just want to urge you to think about him some more, to read about him in the Bible, to talk to Christian friends about him, and to ask God to open your eyes to see who he really is. Because trust me, Jesus is so wonderful, he's the one you've been looking for, he's the one who can fill that vacuum in your heart.

But in saying that, I'm sure many of us here have already put our hope in Jesus, and if that's you then you have so many reasons to rejoice and give thanks. What a blessing to have realised your own spiritual hunger. What a blessing to have found the bread of life who truly satisfies. What a blessing to enter into a relationship with Jesus and to discover peace with your God. And what a blessing to face every day, both the good days and the hard days, with the sure and certain hope of eternal life.

But Will Jesus Ever Drive Us Away?

But you know, that then brings us to an incredibly important question. And that question is, will Jesus ever let us go? We may well have known the wonder of his love, we may well have come to him in faith, we may well have felt so close to the Lord. But are there circumstances in which he might reject us? Is it possible that by our own foolish actions we might lose this salvation?

Well as we consider this we're going to focus in more closely on verse 37 of our text. And we're going to do that, not only because it speaks to our question, but also because it reveals to us the deepest heart of our Lord Jesus Christ. You see the first half of the verse says, "All those the Father gives me will come to me". And what a rich statement that is.

First of all, this speaks of the Father, God the Father, our heavenly Father. Sometimes we can be tempted to think salvation is just the work of Jesus. And we can be tempted to think that the Father is just an angry God, set only on judgement, who doesn't really want us and only accepts

Jesus' sacrifice begrudgingly. But nothing could be further from the truth. It's our Father who planned our rescue from the beginning, who sent his Son into the world, and who works in our hearts to bring us to faith.

For the verse also says that the Father gives us to Jesus. This is no unwilling act, he decided before creation that we would be his children, and he delights to entrust us to the gracious care of his Son. And it says that the Father gives all of us. There's not one person he's chosen who'll ever miss out. So it says that as a result, we will come to Jesus. Salvation is not in the first place about coming to a church, or to a set of doctrines or rules, or to a changed life and new direction, but it's about coming to a person, it's about coming to Jesus and entering a personal and intimate relationship with him.

And it's as we think about this that we need to seriously consider, would our Lord Jesus ever let us go? Should we be afraid that we've gone too far, and fallen out of his favour? And that's an extremely relevant question.

I mean, my dear Lord Jesus:

- I used to feel so close to you, and so assured, but now you seem so far away
- I may've been on fire for you once, but my faith has cooled and I'm filled with doubts
- I was so committed to serving you, nothing was too much, but now my motivation is gone
- I look at my life and there's so little fruit, how can I even call myself a Christian?
- And then there's my sin, my horrible, insidious, relentless, depressing sin
- I've messed up so badly, made such huge mistakes, let you down so often
- I have sin that's been with me for years, decades, and I still can't overcome it
- I have sin no one knows about, if they did they'd write me off, and surely you have too
- I feel so hard-hearted, so guilty, ashamed, like I'm in the Devil's grip, sinking ever deeper
- And I look back and see so much failure, failure to live up to my calling, to be your witness
- And what about all these awful troubles in my life, it seems everything's just going wrong
- Surely that means you've withdrawn your blessing, turned away and rejected me
- I feel like such a hypocrite, I feel so weak, so depraved, so hopeless, so cold

My friends, can you relate to feelings like these? Do you ever wonder whether you're really on the right track? Or maybe you're totally overcome by these kinds of fears, they overwhelm you every day? You know I don't think there's a Christian alive who doesn't battle with these thoughts.

To be perfectly honest I'd be far more concerned about someone who doesn't ever question these things than someone who does. For that could mean that they've never really done an honest self-analysis before the Lord. Every true believer has times when they look at themselves in the mirror and think, how on earth could a holy God accept a miserable wretch like me. Why on earth would Jesus Christ give his life for someone so pathetic, so unfaithful, so flawed.

But do you know what Jesus says? Do you know how he responds? **He says "whoever comes to me I will never drive away."** In verse 37, with love in his heart and perhaps even tears in his eyes he says, "whoever comes to me I will never drive away."

In the book *Gentle and Lowly*, Dane Ortlund describes this conversation with Jesus, “No wait’ – we say, cautiously approaching Jesus – ‘you don’t understand. I’ve *really* messed up, in all kinds of ways.’ ***I know***, he responds. ‘You know most of it, sure. Certainly more than what others see. But there’s a perversity down inside me that is hidden from everyone.’ ***I know it all***. ‘Well – the thing is, it isn’t just my past. It’s my present too.’ ***I understand***. ‘But I don’t know if I can break free of this any time soon.’ ***That’s the only kind of person I’m here to help***. ‘The burden is heavy – and heavier all the time.’ ***Then let me carry it***. ‘It’s too much to bear.’ ***Not for me***. ‘You don’t get it. My offenses aren’t directed toward others. They’re against you.’ ***Then I am the most suited to forgive them***. ‘But the more of the ugliness in me you discover, the sooner you’ll get fed up with me.’ ***Whoever comes to me I will never cast out. (Whoever comes to me I will never drive away.)***

You know this isn’t the only place where Jesus provides this amazing reassurance in our text. Listen to verse 27, he says he can provide “food that **endures** to eternal life” And verse 35, “Whoever comes to me will **never** go hungry, and whoever believes in me will **never** be thirsty. And listen to verses 38-40, “For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. 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. 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.”

So what does all this mean? Well it means that in these verses we have found out something very special about the heart of Jesus toward his people, about the heart of Jesus toward you and me. For we all know that we can be so sinful, so unreliable, so unfaithful. If Jesus were a mere human friend, we would’ve reached the limit of his patience long ago, we would’ve ruined the relationship and forfeited his love.

But he is no mere human friend, for he is the divine Son. And he loves us so deeply, so unconditionally, so absolutely, that nothing can separate us from him. The only thing he asks of us is to come to him in faith, and we will enjoy his love forever. He doesn’t say come to me once you’ve reached a certain standard. He doesn’t say come to me but only if you can maintain a certain level of performance. What he says is come to me and I will never drive you away.

You know this word ‘never’ in the Greek language is a very strong term, it’s what we call an emphatic negative. Jesus says I will never, ever, not under any circumstances, not in a billion years, there is simply no way that I will ever lose you, no way that I will ever, ever drive you away.

As we think about this, you may be realising that it relates to a certain doctrine that is very dear to us as Reformed believers. But you know I love what Dane Ortlund says about this. He says, “We are talking about something deeper than the doctrine of eternal security, or ‘once saved, always saved’ – a glorious doctrine, a true doctrine – sometimes called the perseverance of the saints. We have come, more deeply, to the doctrine of the perseverance of the heart of Christ.” And a bit later he says, “The atoning work of the Son, decreed by the Father and applied by the Spirit, ensures that we are safe eternally. But a text such as John 6:37 reassures us that this is not only a matter of divine decree but divine desire. This is heaven’s delight. Come to me, says Christ. I will embrace you into my deepest being and never let you go.”

You may be aware that I’ve got a 6-month-old grandson named Murray. And when Murray’s on my lap or on a chair or table he likes to hold onto my hands with his pudgy little fingers and stand up on his shaky little legs. And as he does so, he thinks in his 6-month-old brain that he’s holding onto me. And I guess he is, to a certain extent. But yet I know full well that if I left it up to him that he’d soon fall down in a crying heap. And so in reality it’s actually me that’s holding onto him. And

because he's so incredibly precious to me, because I love him so much and don't want him to come to any harm, I can assure you that I hold him tight, and there is just no way that I will let him go.

Well if I'm that determined to hold onto my little grandson, then how much more determined is Jesus to hold onto you? We can trust him with all our hearts, and he will never ever let us fall.

Conclusion

My friends, we've been reminded today of the absolutely glorious salvation that we have in our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the solution to our biggest problem and the fulfilment of our deepest need. He truly is the Bread of life who can satisfy the emptiness and the hunger in our souls. And so when we humbly come to him in faith, we can find forgiveness for our sin, reconciliation with our God, and the hope of life everlasting.

But this morning we've also discovered the heart, the persevering heart of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have so many reasons to doubt his ongoing grace and love. We so quickly forget him, we so often fail him, we so severely sin against him. I mean if we were in his shoes we'd have written ourselves off long ago.

But thank God that he's not like us. For he says whoever comes to me, no matter who you are, no matter what you've done, no matter what your history or how far you've fallen, no matter how many times you get it wrong or how badly you mess up, there is simply no limit to my grace for repentant sinners. He says whoever comes to me I will never, ever drive away.

This is his heart, it's his desire and his delight. And so we do not need to fear. For in Jesus we have the most treasured friend, a saving friend, a reliable friend, a persevering friend. And as a result we can live today with peace and assurance in our hearts, we can look to the future with calmness and confidence, and we can trust that one day our loving Saviour will come, and he will take us to our eternal home.

For his love and his mercy know no limits, and so he will never ever let us down, and he will never ever lose us, he will never ever drive us away. That's the true heart of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.