

John 6:35-59 Those Who Come to Jesus (part 1)

The Big Picture of John 6 and John 10 is the good shepherd. As Moses was God's shepherd in the Old Covenant to provide for, and bring God's people to safety, so Jesus is the Good Shepherd of the New Covenant. We saw this last week; and we continue this theme this week. Jesus IS the Good Shepherd (provides, protects). In our text Jesus has a conversation with the Jews about his identity. As God gave manna through Moses in the first exodus, God now gives his Son as the TRUE manna that comes down from heaven for the world. And they can't believe Jesus' claims because they see him as merely the son of normal folks from Nazareth, people they know. How can He claim to be greater than Moses and even claim to be the TRUE bread from heaven. And ONLY those who "eat" HIS flesh and "drink" his blood will have life. Look over at v. 60. Some of his disciples says, "**this is a hard saying, who can listen to this.**" And then, many people turn away from him. But not all! Some of those who hear . . . LISTEN with understanding . . . and they come to him . . . they believe in him . . . as God's TRUE shepherd. And they will be led through a NEW EXODUS, one that will not merely provide for their physical needs, but for their spiritual needs and lead them to eternal life.

In our text today Jesus will use the feeding of the five thousand to teach truths about those who come to him (and those who do not). With this in mind I have 6 truths from this text about "*those who come to him*," those who "*believe*" in him. Here they are: Those who come to Jesus are: 1. Chosen by God, 2. Drawn by God, 3. Hear his voice, 4. Are taught by God, 5. Persevere to the end, and 6. Will be raised on the last day. (I will only tackle number one today).

1. Those who come to him are chosen by God. Here, in a very clear way, Jesus teaches the sovereignty of God in election. We do not see the word "chosen." Nor do we see the word "elect" in this text. But, we do see that the Father gives a people to the Son. And this is part of Jesus' explanation to the Jews for the reason they DON'T believe in him. Look at vv. 36-37: "**But as I told you, you've seen me, and yet you do not believe.**" And in v. 37: "**Everyone the Father gives me will come to me . . .**" In other words, there is a reason we come to Jesus; the Father gives a people to the Son. So, the Jews are offended. In v. 41, they realize he is speaking about them and they begin to "grumble." So, in v. 44 Jesus says again, "**No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him . . .**" The clear implication is that God does not draw all people. Look also over at v. 65 as Jesus has a private conversation with his disciples. "**He said, 'This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted to him by the Father.'**" From these verses alone we must conclude that God chooses a people and gives them to the Son, in who they believe and have eternal life.

Let me ask, "*Is this a hard teaching?*" "*Is the sovereignty of God in election a hard teaching?*" It is interesting that in v. 60 his disciples say, "**this teaching is hard, who can accept it?**" I think many people associate this "hard" teaching with the doctrine of election. And, it is hard! But, those Jews had absolutely no problem with election! They were Jews. And out of all the peoples of the earth God chose Israel, who then would bless the world; Election was not hard for them. In

fact, the OT is often more clear about the doctrine of election than the NT. What they found “hard” was that this common Jewish carpenter from Nazareth claimed to be the Son of God, even putting himself above Moses, calling himself the “TRUE” manna, the “TRUE” bread from heaven. Today, as Christians, we have no problem that He is the TRUE bread from heaven; it is not hard for us to believe He is the Son of God. It is my experience that we find the doctrine of sovereign election to be more difficult. I do not deny this. In fact, it goes against the core of our sinful being to think that WE are not “sovereign” in some way, that GOD is the One who chooses us, that GOD is the One who must work if we are to believe in Jesus. If there is one thing this teaching says, it is this: “God is sovereign! I am not!” This is why many Christians throughout history have come to love this doctrine; it has become the applicable mountain peak of their belief system (including myself).

And, let me say that I believe the doctrine of election because I really believe this is what the Bible teaches. And, what we see here in John 6 comes from the ONE who has always been . . . *“in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”* (John 1:1). And he was there with God from eternity, and in His sovereign existence we find what many call the “covenant of redemption.” What is this? Simply put, before the foundations of the world the Father gives a people to the Son. And from this perspective, this is why he came (this is why we are meeting here today!). From eternity, the Father sends the Son to gather a people given to him. (What an amazing truth!) As we consider the doctrine of election, let’s think about this truth for a few minutes. I think of John 10:14-16 : **“I am the good shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father. I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 But, I have have other sheep that are not from this sheep pen; I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice.”** I think of John 17:6 as Jesus speaks of what he came to do, saying, **“I have revealed your name to the people you gave me from the world. They were yours, you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.”** (See all of cp. 17).

I believe the entire Bible is unpacking this truth for us. As I come home from a trip and eventually unpack all my suitcases and make sense of it all again, so the Bible unpacks this truth: God is sovereign. He does as He pleases. He chooses a people and gives them to the son. AND, I believe THIS TRUTH drives the words of Jesus who says in v. 38: **“For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him sent me . . .”** I think back to Isaiah 53:10: **“Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.”** This is why Jesus came . . . to save a people. And bound up with this truth is the doctrine of election (which I will unpack throughout this passage next week). But, just for a moment, I want to read just a few verses regarding the truth of election.

In Deut. 7:6-7, God says to Israel of Moses’ time: **“The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his**

love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples . . .” And in Is. 41:8-9: “**But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, “You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off . . .”** (There are so many in the OT, we can hardly count them).

In the NT, Paul begins his letter to the Ephesians by saying, “**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world . . .**” (1:3-4). He does the same with the Thessalonians saying, “**For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you . . .**” (1 Thess. 1:4). In his first letter, Peter says, “**To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia . . .**” (1 Pet. 1) A little later he says, “**But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession . . .**” (1 Pet. 2:9). Jesus himself says in John 15:16: “**You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.**” And in 15:19: “**If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.**”

Brothers and sisters, the Bible FULL of this truth: The Father has chosen a people and given them to the Son. So, if you have come to Jesus, you have been chosen by the Father. (We will dive deeper next week, but let’s spend a few minutes with some applications.)

Application. More than anything, no matter your understanding, no matter your thoughts and emotions on this journey, you must know that this is what the Scriptures teach. This is why I believe it. This is why you believe it. There are often emotional difficulties that come with the doctrine of election. And these may (or may not) remain. But, we/you don’t have to understand everything (Job still did not get an answer for his suffering, except that God is sovereign – God gives and God takes away). I think there will always be tension. But, you are not God. And, you don’t have to understand the depths of the covenant of redemption and the doctrine of election to see it in Scripture and believe it.

Application. What kind of response should this doctrine excite in us? Consider our own confession (I will make comments as we go). “*Of God's Purpose of Grace We believe that Election is the eternal purpose of God, according to which he graciously regenerates, sanctifies, and saves sinners; that being perfectly consistent with the free agency of man, it comprehends all the means in connection with the end; that it is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, being infinitely free, wise, holy, and unchangeable; that it utterly excludes boasting, and promotes humility, love, prayer, praise, trust in God, and active imitation of his free mercy; that it encourages the use of means in the highest degree; that it may be ascertained by its effects in all who truly believe the gospel; that it is the foundation of Christian assurance; and that to ascertain it with regard to ourselves demands and deserves the utmost diligence.*”

Application: Our afflictions and our sufferings in this life are for the sake of the elect. Have you ever thought that the doctrine of election is the motivation for your endurance in this world.

Look over at 2 Tim. 2:1-13: **“You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, 2 and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. 3 Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. 5 An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. 6 It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. 7 Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. 8 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, 9 for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! 10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. 11 The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; 12 if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; 13 if we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.”** It seems to me that as Paul shares the Gospel with people and develops faithful men in the church or preaches to the unreached, EVERYTHING he does in this regard is for the sake of the “elect.” For us, at the least, this means our labors as “soldiers” in the gospel or as “athletes” running the race of life, or as a farmer looking forward to his crops, so we are to always have before us those whom Father has given to the Son, the “elect.” This is the church, and those who will come into the church. This is not a selfish ministry . . . is it? May God have mercy on us, even this morning as we consider our motives.

Application: At the end of the day, how can you have assurance that you are chosen by God? I will unpack the answer to this question in the second part of this sermon. But, in short, we hear the voice of the Son who calls us. This is what He came to do. And then what do we do? We believe in the Son of God. And, this belief comes with repentance. Brothers and sisters, there is no “remnant” in the Church of Jesus Christ. All of his sheep are “taught by God.” If you are one of the elect, you believe in the Son. You believe what the Bible says about Him. You believe that the Word became flesh and dwelt on this earth. You believe in his humanity. You believe in his sinlessness. You believe in his death on the cross and his resurrection. You believe He ascended to the right hand of God. You believe He is praying for you now. And, one day, he will come again with great judgment upon this evil world. And, in your heart, you love the Son. You love his words. You love to be with him. You love his commands. Look at your life brothers and sisters! You will know a tree by its fruit!

(to be continued next week)