

St. John's Gospel

Session 10

Last time we looked at the feeding of the 5,000. Following this miracle and sign, in ch6:15 we realized that the Jews want to make Jesus their King. As we noted, the feeding of the 5,000 seemed to the Jews to be a fulfillment of the Messianic expectation, that when the Messiah came there would be bread enough to eat. As with the manna that God through Moses provided in the wilderness, Jesus feeding the 5,000 (not counting women and children), was verification of who he was.

In vs. 16-21 – Jesus walks on the water. John does not want to portray Jesus as a Messiah because he is providing food, it will be the cross that forever will define who Jesus truly is. And so John follows the story of the feeding of the 5,000 with the story of Jesus walking on the water to say in effect, Jesus is the master of creation and nature itself.

In vs. 22-24, the Jews are divided into two camps at this point in time:

1. Those who want to put Jesus to death for his healing on the Sabbath at the pool of Bethzatha, and then claiming to be God, which was to the Jews blasphemy.
2. Those who believe in the signs Jesus was doing and believe he might indeed be the long awaited Messiah. They want to forcibly make him their king, with the belief that Jesus would restore the Davidic Kingdom.

We ended last time with ch 6 Vs 25-35 – when Jesus and the Jews have a dialogue about “God’s Work”. Jesus proclaims what his work is in vs. 29 – “This is the work of God, that you **believe** in him whom he has sent. God’s work is to bring all people to belief, because salvation and eternal life comes to those who believe. Not belief **that** Jesus is the Messiah as an intellectual truth, but rather **belief in Jesus**. As in placing one’s trust in him. We ended with vs. 35 – Jesus making the claim, in one of his famous “I AM” statements, “I am the bread of life . He who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst”. Jesus claims to be the one who satisfies our inner needs.

This morning we turn to John 6:36-50 – Read

Vs. 35-36 – Jesus challenges the Jews. He makes his claim about being the bread of life, and follows it in vs 36 – “you have seen me and yet you do not believe”

Vs. 37-40 – Jesus proclaims that all who believe in him, will never be lost. Vs. 39 – This the will of the father who sent me – that Jesus should lose nothing. I will raise it up at the last day. Vs. 40 – God’s will is that everyone who sees the Son, and believes in him, will have eternal life, and be raised up on the last day. Resurrection to eternal life is God’s gift to all who believe.

One is reminded of the words of the prophet Amos in chapter 8: vs 11-12. Amos railed against the Hebrew people of his day for abandoning Yahweh, their God.

Amos said: “Behold the days are coming, says the Lord God, when I will send a famine on the land. Not a famine of bread, not a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. They shall wander from

sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the Lord, but they shall not find it.”

Jesus and John may have these words from Amos in mind as this dialogue between Jesus and the Jews ensues. In vs 41 – the Jews cannot accept Jesus claim to be the bread of life, and the savior of all who believe in him. In vs 42 the Jews murmur, “is not this the son of Joseph” we know this man, he is Joseph and Mary’s boy. How does he say he has come down from heaven?. Only God can descend from heaven.

Vs. 43-44 – Jesus says no one can come to me, unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.

These words are clearly words of “election”. No one can come to me unless God draws him.

So lets stop here for a minute and talk about a couple of theological doctrines and concepts that have arisen over the ages:

1. Prevenient grace – this doctrine postulates that God is constantly drawing us to Himself. Why are you and I here while others are home with no intention of worshipping today? Well those who believe in the doctrine of Prevenient grace would say, at some point in my life God was able to find me and I was able to find Him. There is mystery in this for many of us. But we believe that at some point in time we said “uncle” and God became something real and wonderful for us. It is a doctrine that basically says God is always searching for his people, always wooing his people. None of us would be here this morning unless God had somehow drawn us to himself.
2. Predestination – states that God determines and makes decisions about who will be saved. The danger in this doctrine is it seems to be saying that God is OK with some being saved while others are damned. For me, this destroys the concept of God as love. Jesus told the parables of leaving the 99 sheep behind to search for the one who is lost. Love always hopes for and honors the other in a relationship. That is why the “mail order bride” thing does not work. Marriage is a relationship between two people who love each other. If God loves all people equally regardless of race, economic status, etc., then He will never stop searching for every single person with the hope that his Prevenient grace will be blessed by a “yes” from those whom he is trying to woo. Predestination, taken to its extreme has resulted in a doctrine over the centuries known as “Double Predestination”. In this doctrine, God determines those to be saved and also chooses others to be damned. For me this destroys the idea of God being love. It would be a cruel God who says “you get in” “ you go to hell”.

It is my sincere belief that God’s desire is that all people will be drawn to Jesus love and say their “Amen” and “yes” to that gift and invitation. And I also believe that God is counting on us, the people of St. Bede’s, to bear witness to Him, and to share with other people we know how Jesus Christ has changed our life.

I have come to have a deep love for I Peter 3:15, which I now describe it as a “Nathanism” because I have heard Nathan use it with great devotion and effectiveness in his teaching.

I Peter 3:15 - “always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence”.

The point is, if God has really touched our lives, then our lives will be changed and people will see that in the way we live, the way we treat others, our generosity of spirit and finances, etc.

The N.T. always assumes that your life is different from those who have not yet discovered God’s love. People should see in us, God’s living presence. We are changed, transformed. Jesus said” “you are the light of the world” But our lives are light only if we allow Christ to rule in our hearts and change our behavior. We need a heart transplant, He is the only one who can surgically do that.

The best verse I know of that confirms the doctrine of Prevenient grace is I Corinthians 12:3 - “no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit”.

It is God the Holy Spirit, sent on Pentecost, 50 days after Easter Sunday, that leads us to see who Jesus really is. The work of the Holy Spirit is to lead us into all TRUTH about who Jesus is. In doing so the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sins.

If the Holy Spirit is the one who ultimately leads us to our profession of faith, but we must be the ones who say “yes”.

It is like the old adage - “You can lead a horse to water but you can’t make him drink” God can lead us to Himself, but ultimately the choice is ours. If God forces us to love him, it would no longer be love. Love always involves choice and consent.

Ch 6:48-51 – Jesus makes a distinction between the manna their ancestors ate in the wilderness and the bread that he is talking about. Vs. 48 Jesus repeats his claim that he is the bread of life. Vs. 49 – He says the bread your fathers ate did not prevent them from dying. It was physical bread. Vs 50 – Jesus says that he is the living bread – I came down from heaven (I am God) – If you eat my bread you will live forever. The bread I will give you is my flesh.

God in Bethlehem took on flesh in the Incarnation. God “enfleshed” Himself. “And the Word became flesh” – John’s Prologue – for the purpose of Jesus flesh being offered up on the cross, so that you an I can have eternal life. Jesus death on the cross will break the bonds and chains of death itself. “O death, where is the victory, O death where is thy sting”.

We will pick it up next time with vs 52