

John 6

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[0 : 0 0] What do you fear? One, I think, very common and potent fear that afflicts many is fear of rejection, and I suspect many more of us than might care to admit it. We might not be willing to recognize that that's true of us, but I think many of us know something of this fear, the fear of being rejected. I cast my mind back several years to when I was a student here in Aberdeen, and I came to Aberdeen as a student 30 years ago this year, and my memory is still able to dredge up some memories from that time, especially more potent memories, and one of them was that I had a crush on a girl who also attended Bon Accord, whose name I will not reveal. You can be assured of that, even if you tried to speculate. I think it's highly unlikely that you'd come up with the name. So, moving on. But I had a crush on this girl, and it lasted for several months, possibly over a year, and I did nothing. I would sit in the pew, as you are there in these pews, and on Sundays I would look around to see if she turned up or not. She usually did. I don't want to give too many clues, so I won't go down that road too much longer, but I did nothing. And why did I do nothing? Well, there's probably a few reasons, but probably the principal reason was fear of rejection, a fear that in due course proved well-founded, I might add. But this fear of rejection was very powerful. It really did paralyze me. I thought, no, I can't possibly do this for fear of being rejected. But more soberly, many of us fear rejection not only in the context of potential relationships, but within actual relationships. We fear being rejected by family members, by a mother, or father, or father, by our children. We fear being rejected by friends, by a boyfriend or a girlfriend, yes, even by a husband or a wife. And such fear is very potent and can rob us of that sense of security and belonging that we all yearn for. And such fears, those more substantial fears of rejection within relationships can also sadly prove well-founded. This morning, I want us to consider a beautiful promise given by Jesus that addresses this fear of rejection that can afflict us. I want you to just listen to what Jesus says in this passage that we have read in John chapter 6. We read there in verse 37, the words of Jesus, whoever comes to me, I will never drive away. Whoever comes to me,

I will never cast out. This is the statement of Jesus that constitutes a promise for us. Whoever comes to me, I will never reject. You will never experience rejection at my hands, declares and promises at Jesus.

Others may reject you. Others may cast you aside. Others may grow tired and bored of you. But Jesus assures you. But Jesus assures you that He will never drive away or cast aside those who come to Him. Now, the manner in which we want to consider this promise is to identify the three actors in the drama within which the promise is made. And the three actors are Jesus Himself, Jesus the Son, but also His Father is prominent in the passage as a participant in the making of this promise. So, Jesus is Father and you, because the promise is directed to those who would listen and hear.

But before we do look at each of these actors in this drama, if we want to call it a drama, we do need to just spend a little time getting a handle on the context in which this promise is made.

[4 : 4 1] The chapter begins, chapter 6 of John's gospel, begins with an account of Jesus feeding the 5,000. And this miracle, as with all of Jesus' miracles, served as a sign pointing to who Jesus was and why He had come. But as we've read, the people largely did not understand the meaning of the sign.

Though they didn't understand the meaning of the sign, it's interesting that they did recognize the importance of signs to attest one claiming to come from God, as Jesus did. And rather bizarrely, as we've read, they ask Him for a sign. He's just given them this sign. He's fed the 5,000, a very dramatic sign by any measure. And yet, those who have not understood, ask Him for a sign. We might say another sign. We notice that there in verses 30 and 31. So, they asked Him, what miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?

He's just given them a sign. But here they are, and they're asking for a sign. It would seem that the sign that Jesus had just given was not, in their estimation, on a par with the sign that Moses has delivered or had delivered. Notice what they go on to say there in verse 31, Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert. As it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

It's almost as if they're competing. Well, yes, you performed this great miracle, but it was just ordinary bread, a one-off. But the bread that our forefathers received, that was bread from heaven. [6 : 27] It was of another order, of another quality, and it was day after day. That's the kind of sign that we'd like to see, it would seem, lies behind their question. And Jesus, with admirable patience, spells out for them the significance of the sign that He has performed. The bread that He miraculously provided for their physical feeding, it was indeed just ordinary bread. But it pointed to the true bread from heaven, as Jesus Himself declares. This bread from heaven that is life-giving.

Verse 33, For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. Then, as the account continues, in response to a purported interest in tasting of this bread, that we find there in verse 34, Sir, they said, from now on give us this bread. Jesus makes the first of His profoundly revealing I am statements that are recorded for us in John's gospel.

I am the bread of life. Jesus declares as He explains the meaning of the sign that He had performed. He declares that He is not simply the purveyor of bread, be that material bread or even spiritual bread.

Not only the purveyor of bread, but that He Himself is that bread from heaven that satisfies man's deepest hunger. And what the people need to do is to come and to eat this bread. They need to come to Jesus and be satisfied. Then Jesus declared, verse 35, I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me will never go hungry, and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty. And it's in this context of declaring Himself to be the bread of life who can satisfy our deepest spiritual hunger that Jesus makes the promise that concerns us this morning. He says, whoever comes to Me, I will never drive away. Now, with this in mind, with this context in mind, let's, as I anticipated a few moments ago, let's consider the three actors who all really take center stage in the matter of this heartwarming promise. Jesus, the Son, His Father, and you.

And we'll consider each of them under the following headings. We're going to think, first of all, of the promise of the Son. That's what everything we say really revolves around. This statement that has implicit in it, a promise. Whoever comes to Me, I will never drive away. We want to think about that promise, calling it a promise.

[9 : 28] But we also want to think of what we're calling, or what will give us the heading, the giving of the Father. There are references to the Father in this account where He is involved in giving. So, there's the promise of the Son, the giving of the Father, and then finally and more briefly, but very importantly, the challenge for you, for all of us. But first of all, then, the promise of the Son. Whoever comes to Me, I will never drive away. Now, as I've already indicated, with a desire to be, at least in a measure, accurate, we're calling it a promise, but it's actually expressed in the form of a statement. Jesus is making a statement in verse 37. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me, I will never drive away. It's a statement that He makes, a statement of fact. But that statement can legitimately be seen as including in it, or providing for us a promise. So, I think we can legitimately speak of it as a promise. So, let's explore this promise, or this implied promise, with the help of three questions. This promise of the Son. First of all, very quickly, to respond to the question that could be posed, to whom is this promise directed? Well, Jesus is clear. Whoever comes to Me, I will never drive away. The promise is directed to whoever, and whoever is just that. It's whoever. Whoever comes. We don't need to dwell on this more than is necessary. Whoever includes you.

If you come, you will not be driven away. If you come, you will be received. If you take Jesus at His Word and respond to His invitation to come, you will be met with open arms, because the promise is, for whoever comes. I think that much is clear. But that leads us to a second question as we think of this promise. And the second question is, what does the promise require or contemplate? Well, again, the answer isn't that difficult. The answer is that it requires that we come. The veracity of the statement that Jesus makes, the genuineness of the promise can only be tested by actually coming. It is as we come that we will discover that it is true and faithful. But what does it mean to come to Jesus?

Now, answering that question, it's helpful for us to have just even very fleetingly identified the context in which Jesus makes the promise, this miracle of the feeding of the 5,000, this declaration

of Jesus that I am the bread of life. You see, as we understand that context, we can better understand what coming to Jesus involves. I think we can say this, that it involves two crucial elements. First of all, there needs to be a sense of spiritual hunger. And following on from that sense of spiritual hunger, a looking to Jesus to satisfy that hunger. Jesus is the bread of life, and we will come to Him as the bread of life only in the measure that we know what it is to hunger for Him, to hunger for the bread of life.

And as we sense and experience that hunger, so we go to Him to have that hunger as satisfying. Now, Jesus describes this coming, this sense of hunger that leads us to come to Him. He describes it as believing in Him. Notice in verse 35, Jesus declared, I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me will never go hungry, and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty. The coming to Me and the believing in Me really are parallel statements declaring the same thing. To come to Jesus is to believe in Jesus, to put one's trust in Jesus as the bread of life, as the one who can satisfy our deepest spiritual longings. So, the question that we have to wrestle with this morning is, are we hungry?

Are you satisfied with the bread that the world provides? Does the bread that this world offers satisfy you? You see, if it does satisfy you, then you're unlikely to come to Jesus. But if you long for something more, if you know something of that hunger that stuff cannot satisfy, then listen to Jesus as He promises to provide satisfaction, to feed your soul. Are you hungry? I was commenting to the children that we were in Edinburgh on Friday, and we were with my parents, and they were telling us of how they'd gone last week to a Thai restaurant in Edinburgh. My brother had been visiting, and he'd invited them out to this very nice Thai restaurant in Edinburgh. It was very much, what shall we say, in the upper end of the restaurant scale. We also took my parents out for a meal, but it was at another end of the scale in the area of restaurants. But anyway, life circumstances are different. But my brother took them to this very upmarket Thai restaurant just last week in Edinburgh. And everything, as you would expect and hope for, in a restaurant of that kind, everything was just so. The food was of the highest quality. The presentation was pleasing to the eye. The service was impeccable. But at the end of the meal, my brother said something along the lines of, I wasn't there, this is something that was told to me, but something along the lines of, well, that was nice, but I'm still hungry. It's one of these places where the presentation is wonderful, but the quantities really leave a lot to be desired. I don't know if you frequent such establishments. It was very nice, but I'm still hungry. And I wonder if that experience serves in a way as a kind of parable describing many of our lives and the lives of those that we live with and around. We would eat the very best that the world offers. It's pleasing to the eye. It's pleasant to our taste buds. It looks good. It smells good. It tastes good. And it really does taste good. But at the end of the day, we're still hungry. And Jesus invites us to come to Him to satisfy that hunger. And if we do, He promises He will receive us. How are we to come? Well, we can use the language of Jesus in verse 40 in our passage. We must look to the Son and believe in Him. And all who come, look to Him and believe in Him, will, we are assured, receive eternal life.

[17:00] Well, that leads us to one further question. We're thinking about the promise of the Son. We've thought about who it's directed to. We've thought about what it contemplates, what it requires. But what is the promise? Well, the language is language that we've repeated and read a number of times already. Whoever comes to Me, I will never drive away. Jesus promises that all who come will be received. No one will be rejected. You won't be rejected. Do you believe that? Do you believe that if you put your trust in Jesus, He will receive you? It's true. And it seems simple enough, and it is a simple promise in many ways, but the language used by Jesus has a richness that we need to explore a little further to appreciate.

This language of not driving away, whoever comes to Me, I will never drive away. The verb that we have translated in our Bible here as drive away is a verb that can also be translated, and the connection is very clear, cast out. Some of you are more familiar with the older versions will remember that language. Whoever comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out. And the verb has these connected meanings. We can see the connection, drive away, to cast out. But when we notice these two alternatives, very connected and similar, and yet a slight difference in emphasis, noticing these two alternatives allows us and helps us to identify what we might call two complementary and intertwined promises that Jesus is making. We're thinking about what the promise is. What does it mean that Jesus says, I will never, ever drive away? I will never cast out? Well, these two ways of translating the verb, as I say, helps us to see two aspects of this promise.

The promise to receive and the promise to guard. I think normally when we think of this promise or this statement of Jesus, what is most in our mind, what most comes to our attention, certainly it's true of me, is the idea of the promise to receive. Whoever comes to Me, I will not drive away. And the promise is, I will receive. I won't reject anybody who comes. And that is at the heart of this promise. But it's more than that.

Jesus is saying, whoever comes to Me, I will guard. You see, this idea of not casting out has implicit in it the idea that the one who has been referred to is already inside. And the way in which this verb is generally used in the New Testament is indeed of circumstances when something that is already inside is cast out.

[19:50] Often it's used in terms of Jesus casting out demons. And you can't cast out a demon who isn't already inside. What Jesus is saying is that when you come to Me and I embrace you and you're in the family, you've been brought into the family of God, I promise that I'll never cast you out.

I'll never let you go. It's not just that He's saying, when you come, I'll receive you. But having received you, I will guard you. I will keep you. I will hold you tight forever. This is at the heart of what Jesus is declaring and promising to us. This then is a promise for any who would come to Jesus for the first time. You will not be driven away. He will receive you. But it is also a promise for those who have already been enabled to come. Jesus promises to keep hold of His own. He promises to keep hold of you forever. But some might ask a reasonable question that some might ask, how can I be sure? How can I be sure that Jesus will keep me firmly and eternally in His embrace?

How can I be sure that He won't grow tired of my disobedience? How can I be sure that He will always embrace me and love me? I've known rejection from so many. How can I be sure that Jesus will be different?

Well, Jesus gives us an answer to that question, to that concern that we might have. Because Jesus goes on in the verse that follows to ground His statement or His promise, whoever comes to me, I will never drive away. Notice in the following verse that very significant word with which it begins, for. Well, Jesus is saying, look, I'm declaring this. I'm declaring that whoever comes to me, I will not drive away. I will not cast out. And now I want to explain to you why. I want to explain to you why this is so. And He does so in the verse that follows, or the verses that follow.

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 that 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.

[22:19] On what grounds does Jesus make this statement, does Jesus make this promise that He will not drive away or cast out any who come to Him? He grounds His promise in His unwavering commitment to the will of the Father. He's saying, of course I won't cast you out. Why? Because it is the Father's will that I keep you. It is the Father's will that I keep you and indeed raise you up at the last day.

I can't contemplate casting you out because the Father's will is that you be kept. And if we know one thing about Jesus is that He was the one who did His Father's will. Not my will, but your will be done.

And so Jesus says you can be sure that this is so because this is the Father's will that you be kept. It is the Father's will that none who come to Jesus be lost. And Jesus both shares the will of the Father.

There is this unity of purpose in the Godhead. What the Father wills, the Son wills also. But in parallel with this, we know that Jesus is the one who submits to the will of the Father.

There is ever in Jesus a willing obedience and submission to the Father's authority. And so for this reason, Jesus is able to declare with such firmness that He will not cast out any who come to Him.

[23:46] Why? Because that is the Father's will. Your place in the embrace of the Savior is not dependent on your feeble hold on Christ, but on His iron yet gentle grip on you.

But we can say more. His grip on you is guaranteed by His, by Jesus' eternal commitment to do the Father's will.

We can express this same truth in more shocking terms by contemplating the unthinkable. If anyone who comes to Jesus, if anyone who comes to the Son were to be ultimately lost or cast out or rejected, it would be to the Son's everlasting shame, as it would be chilling evidence of either His incapacity or unwillingness to do the Father's will.

And that is not going to happen. That is not going to happen. Your eternal security as a believer, as one who has come to Jesus and been received by Jesus, your eternal security rests on the firm foundation of the Son's loyalty to the Father and to the doing of His Father's will.

So, the promise of the Son. Let's move on and more briefly to what we discover here of the Father, the giving of the Father.

[25 : 35] Now, in speaking of the promise of the Son, we have of necessity, and especially just in the past few moments, already introduced something of the participation of the Father, especially in this matter of the Son fulfilling the Father's will.

But let me, having already identified that aspect, allow me to also identify three aspects of the Father's involvement in the promise made by Jesus. Whoever comes to me, I will never drive away. And we can make these comments concerning the Father around the word or the verb to give.

What are we told? Well, first of all, we're told that the Father gives the Son.

There in verse 32, Jesus said to them, I tell you the truth, 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. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.

The Father gives the Son. We can only come and eat of the bread of life and discover the promise of Jesus to be true because the Father first has lovingly sent or given His Son as bread from heaven.

[26 : 47] He is the one who gives the Son to us and for us. But in this matter of giving, we can say something further. We can say this, that the Father gives to the Son.

In the verse that we've been considering, and we've not really mentioned the first part of it, all that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

Very clearly, Jesus recognizes that the Father not only gives the Son, He not only gives His Son as the bread of life, but He gives to the Son. And what does He give to the Son?

Well, He gives to the Son all those who come, all those who believe in Him. We as believers are the Father's gift to His Son.

We are, as the Father's gift, the guarantee that the mission of the Son will not be in vain. Those the Father has determined to give to His Son will be given.

[27 : 45] They will be received. It is the Father's gift. He gives the Son, but He also gives to the Son. And what necessarily follows from this truth that the Father gives to the Son is that the Father draws those who are so given to the Son.

Then in verse 37, all that the Father gives me will come to me. They will come to me. The Father's gift will be given. It will be received. In verse 44, it's more explicit.

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. This drawing of the Father to the Son, this action of the Father in drawing those who He has determined to give to the Son, to the Son.

This drawing of the Father implicit in verse 37, but as we've noted, very explicit in verse 44.

Therefore, the Father is committed to personally presenting His gift to His Son.

And this He does by drawing us to Jesus. And of course, it could be no other way. It could be no other way as of ourselves. We have neither the desire nor the capacity to come.

[29 : 04] God's elect, for this is unmistakably the language of election, are irresistibly drawn to the Son. We are enabled by the Spirit of God to both look on the Son and to believe on Him.

The giving of the Father. And we finish with the third aspect, the third actor, if you wish, in this drama that revolves around this wonderful promise, and that is the challenge for you.

If the promise of Jesus is clear, whoever comes to me, I will never drive away, then the challenge is equally clear. Come to Jesus.

Come to Jesus. Come to Jesus for the very first time. Come, holding on to this promise. Whoever comes, whoever comes, I will in no way drive away.

I will not reject whoever comes, whoever hungers for me, whoever hungers for eternal life, whoever hungers for forgiveness of sin, and reconciliation for the Father, whoever hungers for these things.

[30 : 19] Come to Jesus, and He will satisfy you. He will receive you. Discover the promise to be true. But as we've, I hope, made clear, the challenge is that we would come to Jesus again and again.

He is the bread of life. And just as surely as you eat every day, so come to Jesus every day, that He might feed you. Come and be fed. Come and be satisfied.

Come and feast on the Savior. So the challenge is to come. And how must you come in the light of this promise? Well, we can say this.

Come confidently. You will be both received and kept. Both received and kept. Both welcomed and guarded.

Others may well reject you or grow tired of you, but Jesus never will. You can share the confidence of the psalmist who declared, even though my father and mother forsake me, heaven forbid, we might add, but even if that were to be so, the Lord will receive me.

[31 : 34] The Lord will receive me. Come confidently. But don't only come confidently, but come expectantly. You will be satisfied.

You will be satisfied. You will receive food for your soul. You will taste of the bread of God, the bread of life, both now and forever.

And so come. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we come to You. We come to the One who generously has given to us the bread of life, the One who has given His only Son, that as the bread of life, He might feed us, feed us, and satisfy our deepest longings.

We thank You also for this wonderful gift that You have given to Your Son, and that we are that gift. What an honor, what a sense of dignity comes with appreciating that we are Your gift to Your Son. We thank You that You make it your personal commitment and responsibility to ensure that the gift is given and that the gift is received. We thank You for the great promise that Jesus gives us in Your Word this morning, that whoever comes to Him will not be driven away, will never be cast out.

[33 : 04] We thank You that our eternal security and our confidence lies not in how good we are, how well behaved we are, how faithful we are, how fruitful we are, how grateful we are, but our confidence rests in the Son's unwavering commitment to do Your will.

And we thank You that in that we can rest secure. And for all of these things, we give You thanks. In Jesus' name. Amen. We'll close our service this morning by singing in Psalm 65.

In the Scottish Psalter, you'll find that on page 297. On page 297, Psalm 65, verses 1 to 5. Praise waits for Thee and Zion, Lord. To Thee vows paid shall be. O Thou that heed her art of prayer, all flesh shall come to Thee. Psalm 65, verses 1 to 5.

And we'll stand to sing. Amen. H Vowals All flesh shall come to thee.

[34 : 38] In equities I must confess, We will against thee do, But as for our transgressions, Tempered shall we shout thou.

Blessed is the man who thou dost choose, And this approach to thee, That he within thy works, O Lord, May still not ever be.

We surely shall be satisfied With thy abundant grace, And with the goodness of thy hands, Here of thy holy place.

O God of our salvation, Thou in thy righteousness, Thy fearful place unto our prayers, Thine answer dost express.

There for the ends of all the earth, And those of far-lad be, Upon the sea their confidence, O Lord, we'll place in thee.

[37 : 27] Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, The love of God, And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, Be with us all now and always. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Absolutely.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.