

John 6

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[0 : 00] We turn to God in prayer and bow our heads. Heavenly Father, as we turn to your word this evening, may we know the truths that lie therein.

May you reveal yourself to us. May we see your face in the words of Scripture and may we be blessed through it. Lord, we pray that your word, which is a word of life, may be the food to our very souls.

Lord, we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Every day we are confronted with making decisions.

Many are trivial and have only limited significance. If this morning you chose to wear black shoes with a navy dress, then forgiveness is possible, but it's not necessary.

Other decisions can have far-reaching consequences, whether to get involved with this particular group or go down that particular path when you know it's against your own conscience and against the advice of others.

[1 : 35] On what basis do we make decisions? The decision-making process has been the subject of many studies and academic papers.

It is important to governments and to the law courts. A wrong decision by a jury could send an innocent person to prison or have a criminal walk free.

A wrong decision by a government could send our troops into an unnecessary war with our soldiers paying the ultimate price.

In respect of group decision-making, sometimes an individual will vote not on the merits of the case, but on how the other members voted.

They want to be on the winning side. There is, however, one decision. There is one decision that has eternal significance. A decision that can be made on the basis of the evidence before us.

[2 : 39] It is a decision that we all have to make as individuals. Not looking to how the other person voted. Not looking to what the other person has done.

That decision. The decision I'm speaking of is to follow Jesus. To follow Jesus. So the subject of our meditation this evening is the passage in John chapter 6.

It will be a fairly broad brush approach to the passage because it's a very long passage. I'm only taking some ideas out of it. But as a means, as a peg to hang my headings on and my thoughts, I've used the words of a well-known chorus.

That chorus, as we progress through what I have to say, will become clear. The first line of the refrain of that chorus is this. Follow him. Follow him.

If we look at verse 1 of the chapter, we find that sometime after this, Jesus crossed to the far side of the Sea of Galilee and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick.

[4 : 00] Why did they follow him? Because they saw the miraculous signs he had cured people. This passage, following that reading, we find the feeding of the 5,000, another miraculous sign.

Some followed Jesus because, as we read in verse 15, some followed Jesus because they wanted to make him king by force.

This caused Jesus to retreat to the mountain to pray to his heavenly Father. In the evening, it says in verse 16, this was after the feeding of the 5,000, in the evening, the disciples went down to the lake.

They set across the lake, the Lake of Galilee or the Sea of Tiberias. They set across the lake in a boat and went across towards Capernaum.

And the story is quite familiar to us. The storm got up and Jesus walked across to them. There are many details in the other Gospels. But my interest is not in the complete, that particular aspect of

the passage.

[5 : 23] I want to get a broad brush impression of what was taking place. So Jesus walked across in the boat to them. He climbed into the boat and the storm was calmed.

And the disciples were understandably afraid. It says in Mark 6, 52 that even the disciples hadn't understood what took place at the feeding of the 5,000.

And it says in that same verse that their hearts were hardened. The boat crossed, with Jesus in the boat now, crossed to the other side of the lake or the Sea of Galilee.

They were heading towards Capernaum. The following day, those people who had been left behind, those people who had been fed in that miraculous feeding of the 5,000, they were somewhat perplexed.

One boat had crossed. The disciples were on the boat, but Jesus remained behind. Jesus was nowhere to be seen.

[6 : 37] So once they realized Jesus and the disciples had gone, they went in search of him. They followed Jesus. They followed to where he had gone. They looked for him. They crossed to Capernaum thinking that's where he would be.

Of course, that's where he had gone. In verse 24, we find that they crossed to Capernaum in search of Jesus. But a little earlier, when Jesus and the disciples did get out of the boat, it obviously was dark when the boat crossed the Sea of Galilee, as soon as they got across the other side, people started to recognize Jesus, recognize him for who he was, at least in terms of what he did.

People ran throughout the region and they carried their sick on mats to him. Whatever he heard, whatever they heard he was, they followed. They even went to the marketplaces and set out the people who were sick, laid them out before Jesus came, so that when Jesus came, there were the sick, ready to be healed.

They begged for him to touch them, even if you just touched the edge of their cloak even, then they would be cured. many follow Jesus.

Do you follow Jesus? The next heading, the next line of that chorus, yield your life to him, yield your life to Jesus.

[8 : 14] If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me, for whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.

we need to yield our lives to Jesus. Many people follow Jesus, even in the passage that we read, but many for the wrong reason.

Some were simply interested in short-term fixes. There were obviously those who are curious. What miracles will Jesus perform? There are many places in the world even today where you'll get street magicians who will conjure up snakes or animals or various things.

They were curious. There were the curious who followed Jesus. There were the religious zealots who would follow Jesus. They were looking for self-justification. There were those who were interested in miraculous signs.

There were clearly those in need, those who needed a doctor, those who were sick. Nothing wrong in being sick, nothing wrong in going to a doctor, nothing wrong in going to Jesus.

[9 : 28] But there were some people who followed Jesus only to be cured of their physical ailment. But there were those who had political ambitions.

They wanted to make Jesus king. They wanted to shake off the yoke of the Roman government. to some of those who had been at the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus said, I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs, but because you ate the loaves and fishes and had your fill.

Verse 26. Their motives are questioned. Our motives are questioned. Why do we follow Jesus? On what basis do we follow Jesus?

Do not work, Jesus replied in verse 27, do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.

The work of God is this, to believe in the one he has sent, I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never go thirsty.

[10 : 44] If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. Do you follow Jesus? Have you yielded your life to him? But why would you?

Why would you? My next heading, the next line of that chorus. He has conquered death, he is king of kings. Why would we follow Jesus?

He has conquered death. In verse 51, he likens himself to the manna that came down from heaven. When the Israelites were escaping the slavery in Egypt, they were heading towards the promised land, and the manna came down from heaven from God.

Jesus likened himself to the manna. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, they will live forever.

If they ate the manna, yes, they were going to die anyway. They would eat the manna, they would live, they would survive for a while, and in due time they would die. But eat this food, this bread that came from Jesus himself.

[11 : 55] Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. It was only a couple of weeks, I think, since we had the communion here in Bonacord.

We are reminded of the words do this in remembrance of me, for whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. This idea of eating someone's flesh and drinking their blood is quite grotesque.

It's grotesque for us. It is grotesque for the hearer as Jesus was saying these words at the time that this was recorded. little wonder that those listening to Jesus remarked, how can this man give us his flesh to eat?

Verse 52. This, however, this was not some sort of cannibalistic ritual. No.

We draw our strength and our sustenance from Jesus and we have to remember why he died. We have to remember his sacrificial death.

[13 : 13] At the time people experienced Jesus' words, they weren't to know that ahead Jesus would be sacrificed on the cross.

But by that death he has conquered death. Why do we follow Jesus? Because he has conquered death. And our response, we are not, we do not receive salvation because we take communion. No. The work of God is this, to believe in the one he has sent. Salvation is through faith and faith in Jesus. Everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day.

In verse 40, he has conquered death. And all that the Father gives me will come to me and whoever comes to me I will never drive away, he says in verse 37.

Follow him, follow him, yield your life to him, he has conquered death, but he is king of kings. My next heading, he is king of kings.

[14 : 30] Why would we follow Jesus? This year is the diamond jubilee of our majesty the queen, and it is fitting that she attended a worship service in recognition of our long and dedicated service to the country.

But it also symbolizes the reality that she is also a person under authority. Jesus, the king of kings and the lord of lords.

We all have to give allegiance to Jesus as the king of kings and lord of lords. Those who were following Jesus wanted to make him king, verse 15, yet they did not recognize his true kingship.

When Jesus was before Pilate, he said, my kingdom was not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews, but my kingdom is from another place.

That's John 18 36. Jesus' very coming was an inauguration of the kingdom of God, or as Matthew would refer to it, the kingdom of heaven.

[15 : 42] Yes, he is king of kings, but he's more than king of kings. Even from the very passage that we read, and it's only a small portion of scripture, Jesus calmed the storm when out in a boat with the disciples.

Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him. He healed the sick. He fed the 5,000. We read from elsewhere, he forgives sins.

He raised Lazarus from the dead. And at the beginning of John, the chapter of John, the epistle of John, through him all things were made.

Without him nothing was made that has been made. He is king of kings. And Thomas remarked that seeing the risen Lord, seeing the risen Christ, he said, my Lord and my God, will you follow him?

Will you follow him? Will you yield your life to him? for he has conquered death and he is king of kings. My last heading, the last line of that chorus, at least the refrain.

[16:52] Will you accept the joy which he gives to those who yield their lives to him? Will you accept the joy? Perhaps you are following Jesus. He doesn't want you to follow him at a distance, but he wants you to draw near to him.

Draw near with a sincere heart, full of assurance of faith, and full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Draw near to Jesus. Now, there's something about the following of Jesus or following a person. The imagery is not quite right, for it gives the impression of someone walking behind another. Not so with Jesus. With Jesus, his face is towards us, his arms are outstretched. Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

[18:04] following Jesus sometimes means that we are being carried by him. In those times of trouble or times of trial, Jesus carries us, looking at the verses of that well-known hymn, ask the Savior to help you, comfort, strengthen, and keep you.

He is willing to aid you. He will carry you through. There were those, there were those who met Jesus and they did follow at a distance.

Those who would not accept Jesus' teaching, in verse 60 we find it, find written, this is hard, this is hard teaching, who can accept it? In verse 61 there were those who were offended, who were offended by what Jesus was saying and they would not believe.

for these people, the final straw was when Jesus said, unless the Spirit draw them, they will not come to Jesus.

It was the last straw for them. Verse 65, this is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them. from this time, many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

[19:31] The problem, they were not prepared to yield their lives to Jesus. But for those who truly follow Jesus, if you obey my commandments, you will remain in my love just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. Do you know that joy of being with Christ, of having Christ in your life?

It is one of the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Do you know that joy of being with Christ? Very briefly in conclusion, will you decide to follow Jesus?

The decision has eternal consequences. The decision is not a corporate one. It does not depend on what the crowd are doing. It is for each individual to make.

Peter has said, Lord, what about him? And if I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?

[20:50] You must follow me. You must follow me. Accept the joy that he gives to all those who yield our lives to him.

Follow him. Follow him. Follow Jesus. Amen. May God add his blessing on these few thoughts. Jesus.