

John 6:22-29

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 January 2020

Preacher: Donald Smith

[0 : 0 0] Do we have a seat? And if you just turn with me, if you haven't already got open to that passage we read in John, John chapter 6, and as I said a little earlier, we're going to be focusing on verses 22 to 29, John 6, 22 to 29. And we're looking really this evening at what Jesus says to the opportunist. The quote of the Christmas period, in the Smith household, came without doubt from mum, who's not going to thank me for telling this story one bit. There were five of us playing a board game, or just starting a board game, when dad started talking about how easy it would be to cheat at the beginning of the game, just given the nature of it. All eyes descended upon mum, who promptly announced, I have never cheated in that way. Questions followed. It's a short answer, which told a far bigger story. Mum likes winning. And apparently, if she sees an opportunity to win, regardless of the rules, she's going to take it. But we all take opportunities in life, if we think it's going to get us the things that we want. If we think it will achieve the things that we want to achieve. Some of us try to do that within the laws of this country. Others, like mum, won't let minor legislation get in their way.

Whether it's money, or power, or fame, or comfort, or just beating your poor family, people will take opportunities to get the things they want. Whatever it is, if we have a goal in mind, or a standard in mind, we're going to take a chance to get it. You might think, what's wrong with that?

Is there anything wrong with that? And I want us to look this evening at what Jesus says into that context. And in this, I hope we'll see that there is a problem, or certainly there can be a problem. But the good news is Jesus also gives us the solution. So, firstly, what's the problem?

Verses 22 to 26. And to understand this, I think it's first important to look at who the opportunists are in this passage. Right? Who are they, and what is it that makes them opportunists?

So, the passage we read a little earlier, right, picks up the story, verse 22, from the day after the feeding of the 5,000. It's an event I'm sure many of you will know well, you'll be familiar with it. And the people who come to see Jesus, the opportunists that we have in verse 22 through 26, that they're a group of people who have enjoyed the previous day's feast. Right? So, they would have come from the surrounding areas around the Sea of Galilee. And it's important, I think, that we appreciate what life was like for them. Because those who lived in this area around the Sea of Galilee were not wealthy. They certainly weren't wealthy by today's standards, and they weren't wealthy by standards back then either. The average Galilean would have worked for their daily measure of food, and very little else. That this was a population that was at best working class, most likely well below the poverty line. And yet they, at the start of the chapter, they take a day off from their labors to come and hear Jesus. Now, Jesus himself, he'd gone off into the hillside with his disciples for a bit of respite. But then comes the crowd. And when Jesus sees this crowd approaching him, he has compassion on them. He sees a people in need, and so he wants to help them. And he takes it upon himself and his disciples to feed them. The slight problem is there's no food. Well, not quite no food, because one disciple manages to source five rolls and a couple of fish, which isn't much for any of us to be getting on with, but it's more than enough for Jesus, right? So Jesus, he gets the crowd to sit down, he gives thanks and starts feeding the crowds, and keeps on feeding the crowds, and keeps on feeding the crowds. That the supply is seemingly endless. That there was more leftovers than there had been food to begin with. And the crowd recognized the miracle, and they're ready to take Jesus and make him king.

[5 : 12] But Jesus sees this in verse 15. He recognizes what's happening, and so withdraws himself. Because Jesus knows the king that they want is not the king that they need. And so the story that we're focusing on, starting in verse 22, it picks up the action the next day.

The crowd awake, they're probably still digesting yesterday's feast, and they find themselves with a choice to make. And remember what we said about the people of Galilee, right? What life was like for them. They were not a well-off people. Bread really did mean everything to them.

It was the staple of their diet, right? Without it, they weren't going to last. And so they get up the next day, and they can either, right, they've got two options.

They can either go off to work, and try and salvage some bread for the day, try and earn a day's portion, or they can go after Jesus again.

And the last time they went to find Jesus, they went because they heard the signs that he was doing. But they ended up getting more food than they could possibly imagine.

[6 : 26] Why go to work if there's someone there who can offer you a bumper paycheck for no work at all? So this is the choice the Galileans are faced with, the people who were there the day before.

Go to work for some food, or go to Jesus for potentially much more food. And the opportunists among them, that they see an opportunity and they take it.

They go looking for Jesus. And just notice that at the end of verse 24. Right? Went to Capernaum in search of Jesus. They are genuinely looking for Jesus.

There's no sign of him anywhere, but a boat has disappeared. So they grab a few more boats and head across a sea to look for him. Right? They sail across a sea to look for Jesus. They really do want to find him.

And this is where the danger lies. Right? Sounds great, doesn't it? Seek and you will find.

[7 : 35] So it seems to tick all the right boxes. If someone came and said to me they were seeking Jesus, I think that's great news. Right? Just keep on seeking. You've not got far to go.

That's wonderful. The instinct is that if someone else or if I do anything that involves seeking Jesus, it must be a good thing.

Right? But the problem is that for these guys, and so often for us as well, Jesus has become a means to an end. Jesus is a way to get something else.

Jesus is not the ultimate goal for these people. He's just a way to get some food. It's kind of like my bag, which isn't here.

I don't know why I bring it up. I do know why I bring it up. I take it pretty much everywhere I go. And in a sense, it's a fairly good illustration of my life. Because if you look inside it, it's utter chaos. Right?

[8 : 35] There's, I mean, there's all sorts in there. I don't want to go into too much detail because it will reveal more than I want to about myself. But quite often, when I get to the door of my house or my apartment down in Edinburgh, right, and I open my bag and I think, I've got to find my keys in here.

And they're somewhere in there, I know, but there's a lot of other things in there. And so I have to go searching for my keys and it'll be raining and it's windy because it always is. And I'm standing there desperate to find my keys.

Right? So I'm pushing aside all sorts of things. There's receipts in there. There's hundreds of bits of paper. There's bits of chewing gum that got slightly moist and sort of seeped into the bottom of the bag. There's old pound coins.

It's like a museum. And I'm digging through it and I'm desperate to find my keys. I want to get inside the flat. I want my keys. But what happens if someone else comes along and opens the door for me?

Right? If someone else lives in the apartment and opens the door from the inside, I don't care about looking for my keys anymore. All of a sudden, I have no interest in searching for my keys.

[9 : 51] Because my keys aren't what I really wanted. What I wanted was to get inside. And that's a lot like the crowd here. They see Jesus not as the end goal.

They see Jesus as the way of getting inside. And if someone comes and fulfills that desire, if someone comes and opens the door, if someone else comes and gives them food, they have no need for Jesus anymore.

Just look down there at verse 26. Jesus answered, 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.

But when we go seeking Jesus, we've got to ask ourselves what it is we're really looking for. What is the bread of our lives?

I mean, for the Galileans, it was quite literally bread. But what is it that dominates our mindset? But when we look to Jesus, when we seek Him, what is it that we are truly seeking?

[11 : 01] But when we come along to church, what is it that we're really looking for? Are we really looking for Jesus? Or are we just looking for friends and a sense of community?

When we sing songs, are we singing to Jesus? Or are we just singing along with the tune? When we pray, are we seeking Jesus and Jesus' will in that prayer? Or do we just think that Jesus is probably the best way to fulfill our own agendas?

Do we think Jesus is just the best way to another goal? There's a problem there, isn't there? And it's something we're all guilty of falling into from time to time.

And it's made all the more dangerous, I think, by the fact that from the outside, it looks good. You see someone going to church.

You see someone looking for Jesus and you think that's a great thing to do. Good for them. How wonderful that they're here. You might think the very same thing about yourself. I spent all that time praying this morning.

[12 : 17] Mustn't I be doing well? I've not missed a church meeting all year. It's a good time to say that. But the question here in John 6 is not, are you going to the right place?

All these people were running to Jesus. They're going to the right place. But there's more. The question here Jesus asks is, are you going for the right reason? It's not just about going to Jesus.

It's about going to Jesus for Jesus. And Jesus knows, right? We just read that there in verse 26. Jesus knows fine well why the crowd have followed him.

Jesus knows that they haven't come for him. Jesus knows they've come for food. And Jesus knows why we do what we do. Jesus knows why we come to church.

He knows why we pray, why we sing, why we go to Bible studies, why we get up in the morning. God knows all of our motivations. You can fool other people into thinking you're doing all right.

[13 : 24] We can even fool ourselves. But there's no fooling God. He knows what we're up to. He knows why we do what we do.

He knows better than us what our ambitions truly are. The question there is, do we see Jesus as an opportunity to get something else from life?

Or do we see Jesus as the point of life itself? There's a problem, and we can't rely on hiding it. But there is a solution.

And Jesus gives it to them right there. Right? Jesus doesn't just respond to them by rebuking these guys for seeking another meal. He tells them, verse 27, exactly what they need to do.

Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.

[14 : 20] For on him, God the Father has placed his seal of approval. You've come to me, Jesus is saying, for more bread. You want more food. There's nothing wrong with wanting more food.

Right? We need food. But it cannot be the ultimate goal. Nothing other than Jesus can. If all you ever have is food that perishes, in the comparison of eternity, it's not going to make much of a difference, is it?

You're still not going to last very long. But the food these people worked for, the thing they were coming to Jesus for, it's just delaying the inevitable. And Jesus says, quite plainly, don't work for food that perishes.

Don't work for anything that perishes. Work for the food that endures to eternal life. Makes perfect sense. Why work for something that will only keep you going today, when there's something in offer that will keep you going today, and tomorrow, and the day after, and to the end of time.

Surely that's a more worthwhile work. And the question is, what is the bread? Right? What is this bread that will never perish?

[15 : 44] And the guys, the opportunists, they ask that very question in verse 28. What is this work that we must do? And again, Jesus answers it very plainly.

Verse 29, The work of God is this, to believe in the one he sent. That's it. That's the gospel. It's the point of John's whole book.

These things are written so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. And by believing in him, you may have life in his name. If you need convincing of that, go and read John's gospel, right?

Only takes a couple of hours, but it might save your soul for eternity. That's the whole reason he wrote it. To convince people that Jesus is indeed the Christ, and that he is the Son of God.

But here in John 6, we see that by believing in him, you have life. Believing in Jesus is eating the bread that never perishes.

[16 : 48] And Jesus goes on to say, as we read in verse 35, he says, I am the bread of life. Jesus is the only thing we really, truly need.

Because even if you die tomorrow, if you believe in Jesus, you will live forever with him in glory. Jesus isn't a way to get something we want.

Jesus himself is what we need. If you see Jesus as a means to an end, you'll never truly see Jesus for who he is.

And that will often require a massive shift in our philosophy, right? In how we see the world. It's not just stop seeing Jesus as a means to an end.

What Jesus is saying is that you've got to drop all of your other goals and make him the center of all. Right? I mean, it's a huge ask, and it's a serious thing to take on.

[17 : 52] And it's important that we understand what it is that Jesus is asking of his disciples here. Because Jesus demands your whole life.

Jesus demands everything you are and everything you have. He says in Luke 9, famous words, if anyone would follow me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

For whoever wants to save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for me will save it. The gospel, Jesus demands everything.

Everything. And that is what Jesus is saying in John 6. He's saying, stop living for yourself and this world. Drop it all and start living for me.

And the crowd listening understand full well just how drastic this message is. And that is why so many of them react the way they do.

[19 : 02] We have to skip over a few verses, but just look at verse 66 with me. This is how the discussion ends. Jesus makes clear, I am the bread of life. You have to give up everything for me.

And so, verse 66, from this time, many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. They saw the cost of following Jesus.

They understood what Jesus was demanding from them. And a lot of them decided it was too much. Or they were so focused on their own goals that as soon as they realized Jesus wasn't going to give them what they want, they thought, I don't want to have anything to do with this.

I'm not saying you're never allowed to want anything else. Ever. But if the ambitions of your heart are not Christ-centered, then that's a problem.

If what we want to achieve in this life, whether it's wealth or comfort, I mean, I think we... Comfort, I think, is my massive idol for all of us, isn't it?

[20 : 15] We're all guilty of putting that above everything else. But if what we want is incompatible or hinders our ability to give everything to Jesus, then we have a choice to make.

Jesus is the one thing we need. The one thing we actually really desperately need. And we can have it.

And He will give us life. By believing in Jesus and giving our lives and all that we have to Him.

That is the call. But by doing that, we can live with Him forever. Eternity with Jesus. Is that not a pretty good opportunity?

It's the greatest opportunity in the history of opportunity. If you want to seize an opportunity, there's no better time than this. But in all of it, we've got to make sure we're working towards the right thing.

[21 : 30] It's not just about seeking Jesus. It's about seeking Jesus for Jesus. Don't work for anything that won't last. Work for the bread of eternal life.

Do the work of God. Believe in His Son. And you will have life in His name. Let's pray together. Father, we thank You so much for Jesus.

Lord, we thank You that He is the bread of life. Lord, we thank You that by believing in Him, we can have life in His name. And Lord, we pray that for each and every one of us here.

That we would not work for things that perish. Lord, that we would not work for the things of this world, but that we would work for Jesus in all that we do. Lord, I pray for any here tonight who do not yet know You and the work of Your Son.

Lord, that You would do a work in their hearts. Draw the lost to You. Lord, that Your name be glorified through them. Pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.