

Sermon on John 6:22-59 prepared by Jonathan Shradar

Jesus will never cast out those the Father gives him and life will never be the same.

John 6:22-59

For some of us we can't fully understand any kind of photography other than the digital expression we have today. In fact our phones are more camera than a device to call people!

But once upon a time, you took pictures with a camera and film. Once you were done with a roll of film (12 or 24 pictures!) you took it to be developed and then waited days for the pictures to come back hoping you got a good one!

Ever needing convenience, someone came up with disposable cameras. Plastic cameras pre-loaded with film that you used for just that amount of film and turned in the whole thing to be developed. Once you were finished with the purpose of the camera you could dispose of it, discard it and move on to another.

Ever in the disposable culture we find ourselves, there are many things that act this way. Even our faith... We see the gospel, the good news of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection for us, as an initial fix to a problem, a gateway. But once it is believed or embraced, we can dispose of it and move on to "meatier" things.

Or we could have the view that we are the disposable camera. That God will claim us to use us for some purpose. To get a good 12 pictures out of us, or if we have high capacity maybe 24, then he will neglect us and move on to other devices.

Our text today dispels the disposable mentalities that can creep into faith in Jesus. And what we discover is radically different than we might expect, and exceedingly good to hear and live from.

Jesus will never cast out those the Father gives him and life will never be the same.

So let's set it up. Where do we find ourselves in the story?

Jesus has kicked off his third year of ministry by claiming authority given to him by the Father (God) and there have been signs confirming his preaching of the coming kingdom of heaven (healings, casting out of demons, and here the miraculous meal that fed thousands).

With Jesus still by himself on the mountain since he wouldn't let the people make him king by force, the disciples get into their boat and head for Capernaum which must have been the plan. Then Jesus walks on water and joins them.

The crowd from the feast of barley bread and fish went looking for the famous food vendor and eventually tracked him down as he teaches in a synagogue.

From the interaction it seems like the people wanted more bread which is totally understandable. What a gift it was, maybe it seemed like more than a meal, it was special and they want more. Maybe today he would be convinced to be king!

And Jesus says to them, "do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you." (27)

Jesus changes the context of their experience beyond just satiated tummies, he says there is a food that brings eternal life. The lens things are now seen through is eternity.

He mentioned work, so of course the inquisitive crowd presses him to find out what the work is so they can get this amazing food.

John 6:29 "Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." (ESV)

The food that endures comes through belief - that's been his point for the last couple of chapters, that they would not just follow him for the fancy miracles, but they would believe he was sent by the Father in Heaven to unleash a new way of life, a new kingdom.

"The gospel sabotages any notion of legalism or performance-based acceptability with God."

Sounds easy enough! But the people want a sign to prove it! And there is this historical comparison to the bread given to their ancestors in the wilderness, the manna, “Moses gave our fathers bread, what’s your offer!”

John 6:32–33 “Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. [33] For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” (ESV)

This is the bread they need, it's the bread they want.

Jesus changes everything, he goes deeper here and unpacks how it works, how he is the bread they need and united to him they will live forever. Who it is that believes, that gets the bread, and eternal life.

The Father gives, Jesus keeps, We live.

The Father Gives

Here is where Jesus shapes Christian theology, from these words the tenets of our faith are formed. And these truths are joy for us!

Jesus tells the crowd that he is actually the bread of life, they now longer need to look for manna (the image of him in the wilderness) but they now simply come to him (believe in him) and will no longer hunger nor thirst.

And it is the Father that gives you the true bread from heaven.

The Son, Jesus, doesn’t come to earth and live in obedience then die in innocence for us because it was his side hustle. It was not a plan to subvert the angry God that is far off. But it is God’s plan all along.

We can have a tendency, in reformed churches, to emphasize the wrath of God, judgement for sin, to the extent that we begin to view God as the grumpy dictator ruling with an iron fist. Then we see Jesus as the gracious bridge that he is, the nice one.

I suppose it would be like the way we can sometimes view our parents. Dad is the curmudgeon or disciplinarian, and mom is the generous and kind one (or vice versa!) But when Dad and Mom determine to do something exceedingly good for you as a child you might think it was only from Mom because you expect her to do such things, but actually they were in it together, and they both share the same heart for you.

Jesus gives us huge clues into the heart of God here. This is the God that is love. And it is the Father's will that Jesus would come, that freedom would be proclaimed, that sins would be forgiven, and many would become children of God.

The Son and the Father share the same will to save human beings.

John 6:37–40 “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. [38] For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. [39] And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. [40] For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” (ESV)

Everyone the Father gives the Son will believe in him. God knows who is being saved and they are as a gift to Jesus. Some hearing these words might be dumbfounded. How can it work this way?! Should we be the ones that make the decision? Yes! But we make that decision because God the Father has given us to God the Son. A beautiful mystery of how God's will and ours go together in salvation.

It is his plan to save, Jesus has come by the will of the Father. The Father's will, his strategy, his plan, his decree is that everyone who looks on the Son (who believe in him, lift our eyes to him) would have eternal life.

So this means, if you believe in Jesus, you are a gift! You have been, from eternity, given to Jesus by the Father. Some of us wonder if God gives good gifts after this thought! But Jesus is exceedingly happy about it, for the joy set before him he takes it all on to the cross, for you his gift.

He never looks to exchange the gift or upgrade! You are his by the will of the Father.

It unsettles the crowd a bit - after all this is Jesus from the block, they know his family and yet he comes from heaven?!

John 6:44–45 “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. [45] It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me—” (ESV)

This word hasn’t stopped unsettling crowds to this day, but this is the way, The Father gives, those that believe in the Son are drawn and come because of the will of God. He uses us to make his appeal to the world, and the Spirit renews hearts to believe.

But there is more.

Jesus Keeps

Did you notice?

John 6:37–40 “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and **whoever comes to me I will never cast out.** [38] For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. [39] And this is the will of him who sent me, **that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me,** but raise it up on the last day. [40] For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and **I will raise him up on the last day.**” (ESV)

Those that believe are a gift and they will never be lost. Jesus keeps those that are his.

This is the news we need as we live. Tired, sinful, anxious, and still he won’t discard us, he holds us, he carries us.

His work on the cross is unassailable and permanent. We are as secure as Jesus is. The atoning work of the Son, decreed by the Father and applied by the Spirit, ensures we are safe eternally. What a powerful truth!

It is the Father's delight to freely entrust rebels into the gracious care of his Son and the Son shepherds and keeps those that are his, rebels and all! He is never frustrated in saving us.

Whoever comes I will never cast out. This promise is provided to answer all objections to the finished work of Jesus, and it does.

John Bunyan, author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, penned a poem of invitation to remember the strength of this promise.

“But I am a great sinner, say you. “I will never cast out,” says Christ.
But I am an old sinner, say you. “I will never cast out,” says Christ.
But I am a hard-hearted sinner, say you. “I will never cast out,” says Christ.
But I am a backsliding sinner, say you. “I will never cast out,” says Christ.
But I have served Satan all my days, say you. “I will never cast out,” says Christ.
But I have sinned against light, say you. “I will never cast out,” says Christ.
But I have sinned against mercy, say you. “I will never cast out,” says Christ.
But I have no good thing to bring with me, say you. “I will never cast out,” says Christ.”

Christ's heart for you keeps you. You will be raised up with him on the last day!

“In order for you to fall short of the loving embrace into the heart of Christ both now and into eternity, Christ himself would have to be pulled down out of heaven and put back in the grave.” Dane Ortlund

Do you hear this Saints?

Romans 8:34–39 “Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. [35] Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? [36] As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

[37] No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. [38] For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, [39] nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (ESV)

You are kept for Jesus Christ by Jesus Christ for eternity. The gift you are from the Father can never be stolen or ruined, you are kept. Huzzah!

He is the bread of life. He is what satisfies. He is what we need. He is the sign. He is who we run to.

We Live

This is one we have to go on unpacking in our life together.

John 6:50–51 “This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. [51] I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he **will live forever**. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” (ESV)

Given, kept, and made alive. This is eternal life. The promise of existence forever with our King. Jesus as the radiance, the very light of our days, flourishing, rejoicing in him and creation.

But it is also for now, to experience the resurrection life today.

"The eternal life that is promised to believers is a life they enjoy by faith even in the present life before the resurrection of the dead."

We can meet the purpose of God for us as we live enthused by the Spirit, strengthened for the work of belief and loving our neighbors, the least, being the image of the kingdom of heaven in our neighborhoods!

There is a large drainage tunnel that goes from Kit Carson park under the mall, and we have occasionally ventured into it, for some distance. Very dark and scary. My kids would walk to the end of the tunnel if their dad would hold their hands and keep walking.

This is Jesus with us. We know we are kept, that he holds us, that we are secure. So we can walk through the tunnels as they come. We can live with hope and joy. The abundant life he gives us. The untold adventure, the depth of peace and provision that are ours.

As the living bread sent down from heaven Christ gives life to the bodies and souls of those who eat him by uniting themselves to him through faith.

John 6:53–56 “So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. [54] Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. [55] For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. [56] Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.” (ESV)

Belief in him. Relying on him. Clinging to his flesh, his blood. When we receive the gift of Christ for us, we abide in him, remain in him forever. We will live because of him. This bread is not like the bread in the wilderness, whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.

The grace for life now, and the irrevocable life of eternity.

This is our life, the gift of the Father to the Son. Kept by the work of Jesus and his heart for us. And off to the races empowered by him for all of life.

This teaching unsettles the people in the crowd. Is it just too much? Christianity rightly understood is radical. Jesus changes everything. All our ways of thinking are upended, this kingdom is different. And our lives will never be the same, but they will be good.

Resist the grumbling. Trust in Jesus. Rejoice that you are his.

“From this gospel let us learn that all these things are found in Christ, the way, the life and righteousness. In order to live blamelessly and righteously in this age let us deny ourselves, let us die to sin, and let us walk in newness of life.”

Huldrych Zwingli

Jesus will never cast out those the Father gives him and life will never be the same.

The age of disposable Christians is over (it never existed!) His purpose in you goes on. His claim over you is forever.

Come to Jesus - We don't know who is given by the Father so we compel all to come in. Meet Jesus, the gracious and loving king. Who gave himself up to secure forgiveness and life for you. Turn from the bread of this world and find the end of your hunger in him.

Keep Going - What a time to be alive. The tides are rising, the troubles are mounting, but we belong to Jesus. We are kept and his Spirit empowers us. Lift thine eyes to him! You are promised life. We might need to carry each other for a ways, but Jesus is carrying us. Keep pressing in. Keep asking. Keep trusting.

The Bread of Life has come. Now we can come to him. The Father Gives. Jesus Keeps. And We live.

May it be so with us!

Now to him, who is the great giver, who desires for all to come to repentance and pours out his loving kindness as an invitation. To our Lord, Jesus Christ, who to keep us faced the worst of humanity and the arrows of the devil but was raised victorious. May we experience more of his resurrection life by the Spirit, living as the gift of the Father, kept secure by the Son for the glory of God, now and forevermore. Amen.