

## Understanding God's One Requirement

John 6:26-59

The question from the crowd is a simple question and yet Jesus answers it differently than the way they had expected. The question they asked was “Rabbi, when did you get here?”

To me and you – that’s a simple question. To the crowd – it’s a simple question as well but it’s more of a two-pronged question. It’s not only *when* did you get here but *how* did you get here. They were with Jesus the other day, saw the miraculous things he did with feeding over 5,000 of them with a few barley loaves and couple of fish, and those same people then watched Jesus and his disciples leave. And when the disciples left *they* left in the boat...by themselves and no Jesus. So naturally the crowd is inquisitive about how in the world Jesus got to the other side of the lake when he didn’t get in the boat and there was only 1 boat there! “*Jesus...we know you’re a carpenter – did you build a boat over night? We never heard a helicopter (those hadn’t been invented yet) and unless you went out for a night swim and are really quick swimmer (and clothes dryer-offer-erer) – how and when did you get here? Unless... (hahaha) you can walk on water!*”

(“*Haha....funny you should say that...*”)

And what’s really interesting is that Jesus answers their question...in a roundabout way that really pushes them into even more confusion because his answer leads to more questions that speak to more of the same answer and yet more questions and confusion from them. So he answers THEIR INITIAL question with a statement that while doesn’t answer the question for THEM it speaks of the answer they were looking for and yet never were going to get and understand.

They are “looking” for Christ, they came here to find him so that they could continue to be fed. Not fed by the word, not fed by God – but fed by physical food – more barley loaves and fish. Food that would do something for them right now as it did last night. Food that would temporarily remove their hunger. Their question, and not only this first one but all the other ones they ask, speak of what I call “missing the **grace boat.**”

Before Christ, before the Son of God came, everything had to do with the relationship with God and was about what you do and what you do not do. If God gives a command to *do* something – you do it because that’s the law – that’s simply what God required. Literally. If God says that you can have a relationship with him by abstaining from eating specific meat, or making sure that your food was fully drained of its blood before consuming it – then that’s what you did. If God requires you to do specific works to earn his salvation, to earn his favor, to keep his anger at

bay – then you do it. And you do it time and time again. You don't have a day off and you certainly didn't have any reason to abstain from it.

And so here stands Christ, a Jewish man who clearly is knowledgeable in the ways of God, religion, culture, faith, law – everything, and their questions are legitimate for him. What do we need to do? Everything about them has been *doing* things to remain faithful and good Jewish men and women. So their questions are real. And his responses just don't mesh with their past, their present, their understandings of the workings of God, their history as a people and their view of themselves and everything in between.

But their questions are more than that too. There's a blindness that is happening here. The Israelites, as a people, were shown miracles time and time again and even when it smacked them upside the head they were still living in this desire of day-to-dayness. And not to say that those shouldn't be a concern – we're specifically told to only worry about today for tomorrow has its own worries (**Matthew 6:34**) but there's a difference between the temporal and the eternal. That's why Jesus makes this comment about eternal food that doesn't spoil, about bread from heaven that is of the everlasting kind as opposed to manna that God sent that gave them what they needed today and today only. Christ isn't concerned with the now that spoils – he's concerned and getting to the now that lasts for eternity.

There's a difference.

All of their questions, all of their responses TO Jesus' answers and comments were simply based on work. Something happening each and every day. Food coming daily so that you have your fill...each day. Work that is required by God that we must do...each day. Things specifically done that allowed the person to turn, themselves, to God. It was all based off of the person, the individual instead of the grace of God. It was all based off of actions by humans instead of action by God.

And that really struck me this week because I've had those same questions and conversations with not only others but internally as well too. Grace, to you and I is lived into each and every day and we say it, we proclaim it, and yet we can find ourselves completely outside of the "grace boat". Because I guarantee you that every single person here has some sort of messiness in their life that holds them back from fully drinking from the well of God and his grace. Be it guilt, be it confusion, be it something they are currently struggling with to understand and grasp – there simply are things in our lives that make fully understanding God and his grace that much more difficult – when it shouldn't be. I guarantee you that there isn't a single person here who has never thought that life would be *so* much easier in their relationship with God, if we simply knew we had to do this one thing for God every day. We tell ourselves that "faith and salvation **by works**" would be nicer and easier to have because we have this tangible \_\_\_\_\_ *thing* to

do that we would know worked for us. We could take out our “to do list” from God each day and simply check off the things we complete. If we could simply wake up and get an email from God that had his desires and goals and work for us to do each day. And when we completed it...that task would disappear.

“Show John love by serving him? Did that!” (check)

But grace doesn't work that way. GOD doesn't work that way. And he actually never has! Even back in the day in early Israelite history with God when they had all those requirements – God always gave a scapegoat. God always gave another option. God always gave a “plan B” in case “plan A” didn't work out for you – because truthfully...plan “A” never worked for anyone. There was always that proverbial “break this in case of emergency” action that could be done. You murdered someone? You can run away to another town and find safety. Your ox got loose and killed someone – here's what you need to do to make amends. Don't sin...oh, you sinned? Here is how you make atonement. Here's all the “plan B's” from God.

God – please...tell us that one thing we must do. We are doers – what must we do to get that seal of approval you speak of from God? (vs 28)

But here's the thing...we *are* actually explicitly told that “1 thing” that we must do! And it's the 1 thing Christ is driving home in this text over and over again – just in different forms. Simply put we are to **believe in Jesus Christ**. THAT'S IT. It's not wearing a special hat, or growing an awesome beard. It's not praying a special way or doing that one thing each and every day that showed how dedicated and action-oriented towards God you are. There *are* things that we are *supposed* to do...but salvation is simply not based on you completing that checklist of daily God-chores.

We make it way more complicated than it really needs to be – than it really is. Jesus says that HE is the bread of life. That his body and blood are what saves and GIVES life. It's not what we do, it's not what we say, it's not what we think ELSE NEEDS TO HAPPEN to us before we can *be* in this relationship with God. That's just you and I confusing things. And I'm pretty certain that Jesus could have used the simplest words here, the most divine actions, and yet the confusion and the misunderstandings of what was going on would have still taken place. You me...we make things vastly more complicated than they really are.

- We institute requirements in the relationship with God,
- We put caveats on just what God can and will do when it comes to our being saved and redeemed – just how full of grace is God's grace?
- We're not good enough, we're not ready yet, there's something “I” need to do first –
- We need God to do *this* one thing for me before I can believe, or show my commitment to him...

All these things that go against what John says in his Gospel – all these things reflect that you and I still miss the grace boat at times, all the things that speak differently of what the whole Bible is about...in that Jesus Christ came to earth to redeem and save the lost (**Ephesians 2:8-9**). Christ came to redeem.

Did we catch that? Christ came to redeem. Which means our work *doesn't* redeem, our actions *don't* redeem, our promises *don't* redeem. Only Christ does. And not because we deserved it, not because we can earn it, not because we all the sudden became slightly better than before, not as a booster or encourager to help us get that one step closer to God...He redeemed, he died and paid for our sins (**1 John 4:10**), Why? Because he did.

Because God loves (**John 3:16**).

Because that's simply what grace is. The unmerited, undeserved love and salvation of God..

And here stands before these people – before you and me... is literally grace himself. Grace in the flesh. Love in flesh and blood and bone – and the only thing standing before you and love, you and eternity, you and grace, you and redemption, you and a relationship with God, you and truly living...is YOU. Is me! What stands before fully taking in the Bread from Heaven is our own connotations on what we must “do.”

Because all of this...is about believing who Christ was and is. All of this was understanding that the only requirement God had for them, and they asked Jesus what that requirement was, the only requirement was not in *doing*...but *believing*. And not a believing that the work I do is what will save me – but that believing in Christ is what does. The drawing from God of you to Christ – is what saves.

Which means it's not you that saves...but God. That's the whole point of this text. It's all on God's shoulders.

You, me, we have an opportunity to take in that manna, take in that bread, take in that life, fully drink the cup of salvation and grace of Jesus Christ because that is the only thing that saves. Don't let your notions, your ideas, your misconceptions, OUR CONFUSIONS of who and what God asks of you to get in the way of the truth.

Believe that he came to save and redeem you (**1 John 3:23-24**). Believe that he came because not only the Father requested it, not only because he knew this was the only way, not only because it LITREALLY IS THAT SIMPLE...but believe *because of* love. A love he has for you. A love that is so simple and beautiful and sacrificial and amazing...and yet complex and intricate and strong and timeless.

A love and action that only God can do and lies solely UPON his shoulders. Christ says believe in me. The bread of true life.

The true living manna from heaven. The true life and living.

In a world that desires actions...this is the only one that matters. Belief. Active belief.

Let's pray