

John Chapter 6 v 35 - 59

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Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] Thank you, Joel. Joel's just obviously decided I need an extra 15 minutes to preach, so that's about an hour, I think, at least. Thank you, Joel, for that. You can blame him, okay, completely, if I've gone too long.

We're going to come later, of course, to the Lord's Supper, and you can see that we've got that prepared. Again, as always, we do invite those who know and love the Lord Jesus as their Savior to come and share in the bread and the wine.

There's nothing special about this bread and wine. It doesn't change into the body of Jesus. It doesn't take on any of his nature. It is purely bread and grape juice. That's all it is.

There's nothing magical or special about it. This isn't an offering of Jesus or another sacrifice of Jesus. Simply as Jesus told us and commanded us, do this in remembrance of me.

And though we've read through John in chapter 6, which speaks of Jesus telling those that they are to eat of his body and drink of his blood, he was not referring to this, okay? Not at all.

[1 : 06] He's talking purely about us having faith in Christ, receiving from him the salvation that he has purchased by his body and his blood for us.

So if you're a Christian, if you know and believe and trust that Jesus is the one who took away your sins, and even though you know you're still a sinner and you get it wrong, we encourage you to come and share with us in this bread and wine.

But the Bible is very clear as well. If in our hearts we know that we are not trusting Jesus as our Savior, or we know that in our lives there is something severely wrong that we have not repented of, the Bible says not to take the bread and the wine.

In fact, it won't do us any good unless we come by faith and we come with obedience. And so I would encourage you to seriously, as we come to this a bit later, think through where you stand with Christ.

And hopefully, I trust that you'll be able to say he's my Savior. And though imperfectly, I long to live for him and follow him day by day. Let's briefly pray as we come to God's Word again.

[2 : 14] Father, we thank you that we stand upon the promises of your Word. They are our rock. They are our place of safety and refuge. We thank you that nothing else in this world is trustworthy, not the words of men, not the words of governments, not the words of women even, not the words of anybody.

Lord, we are all faulty and failing, but your Word is true and faithful. And, oh Lord, we build our lives upon it and pray that even now, as we come to your Word, that we might stand and be built up in our faith as we come to your Word.

Make it plain and clear to us. Give us ears to hear and minds to understand and hearts to believe and lives to obey. For we ask these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. So if you have, please open John and chapter 6 and that passage that Joel read for us a little earlier.

As he remarked, the beginning of our service today is the very first Sunday of Advent, and we thought about that briefly this morning. We're preparing ourselves for the coming of Christ into the world.

[3 : 26] We're preparing to celebrate his coming. And, of course, as you know, as believers, as Christians, it's not simply on Christmas or around Christmas we celebrate the coming of Christ.

His coming affects us 24-7, 365 days of the year, 366 days in a leap year. His coming is a daily reminder and a daily joy for us.

But, of course, as we are approaching Christmas and as we are those who are looking forward to remembering Christ's coming, we know that we're surrounded by a world that has forgotten completely, almost entirely, the purpose and meaning of Christ's coming, or at least of the season we call Christmas.

And for many people, they will probably be asking you, what are you going to do at Christmas? Meaning, are you going to go out for a Christmas dinner? Are you going to visit relatives at Christmas? And so on.

And perhaps we find ourselves caught up in that general sense of talking about the presents we'll buy and what we'll do. But, in fact, of course, what we really need to be able to say is, I'm going to remember Christ's coming.

[4 : 36] What are you doing at Christmas? I'm going to be celebrating the coming of the Son of God into the world. And that's not so easy to get in without sounding too arrogant or pompous or over the top.

But the great question surely must be then, for us and for the world, is why did Jesus come? Why was he born into this wicked world? Why do we celebrate Christmas?

Why is it so important? And as Christians and evangelical Christians, Bible-believing Christians, I'm sure we could give all sorts of answers why Jesus came into the world.

We might say, well, Jesus came to be the saviour of sinners. Or Jesus came, as John tells us, to destroy the works of the devil. Well, Jesus came to bring us life, etc., etc., etc.

But in the Gospel of John, and that's where I want us to look this evening, and I hope, possibly in a fortnight's time and even on the carol service night, to pick up on this theme that overwhelmingly comes out in the Gospel of John, that the reason that Jesus came was because the living Father sent me.

[5 : 47] And we have it just there in chapter 6. Sorry, we have it in chapter 6. Three or four times Jesus speaks about being sent.

The one who sent me, the Father who sent me. I've come from the one who sent me. But particularly it's chapter 9, actually, verse 57, where Jesus, no, it's not, it's definitely 6.57.

Yes. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. He speaks about the one who sent me, him who sent me, and so on.

In fact, that phrase, him, the Father, the one who sent me, occurs in John over 30 times from the lips of our Lord Jesus Christ, explaining his birth, explaining why he was here in this world.

The Father sent me. And then the question, of course, that leads to another question, well, why did the Father send Jesus? Why did God send Jesus into the world? And again, we can come out with wonderful descriptions.

[6 : 55] God sent him to rescue us from our sins. God sent him to lead us into everlasting life. God sent Jesus because he's the way, the truth, and the life. All sorts of reasons we can give.

But again, here particularly, and in other places too, we find the reason why the Father sent him, and it's there in verse 38. And this is particularly the verse we're going to think of in a moment.

For I have come down from heaven, not to do my will, but to do the will of him who sent me. So the purpose of Jesus' coming into the world was to do the will of him.

That's God, the Father, who sent him. And again, this phrase, to do the will of him who sent me, or to do the will of the Father, etc., etc., is spoken by the Lord Jesus over and over and over again in the Gospel of John.

In fact, of course, there's that amazing episode when he is by the well in Samaria, and the woman there comes to draw water. And after his disciples return from the village, they say to him, John, you want something to eat?

[7 : 59] And he says, no. He says, my food, my food is to do the will of him who sent me. And in response to those who criticized him when he healed people on the Sabbath day in the synagogue, he would say to them, I do not seek my own will, but the will of him who sent me.

And over and over again as well, Jesus reiterates that his life is all about pleasing God. He declares, I always do what pleases him.

And that's what I wanted to think about this evening. That's what I want to think about perhaps in the coming Sunday evening, when I'm here, is why Jesus came into the world, to do the will of him who sent me.

Do the will of the Father. And verse 38 particularly is a verse that leaps out. It leaps out to me, even though, of course, it's very much around the bread of life and Jesus coming as the bread of life and us having life through feeding on him by faith.

But this phrase, I have come down from heaven, not to do my will, but to the will of him who sent me. Now, as I've shown, Jesus is very careful to make this truth, this attitude of his heart and his life, very plain to his disciples and to, in fact, everybody else that he came into contact with.

[9 : 21] And therefore, it must be important to us as those who have put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ. And I want us just to go a few millimeters deeper, as it were.

We can never go fully into the depths of what this means, but to go just a few millimeters deeper into the meaning of Jesus's phrase here, I have come down from heaven, not to do my will, but do the will of him who sent me.

Because I think that this is a wonderful description of what we call the incarnation. This is the mission statement of Jesus wrapped up in just a small phrase.

This is the declaration of the gospel. This is what Jesus is all about in those words. And I want us to think about this for a moment, particularly this phrase, not to do my will, but the will of him who sent me.

What did Jesus mean by that? Not to do my will. I've come from heaven not to do my will, but the will of him who sent me. I'm sure that if you thought about that for a few moments, as I've had the privilege of being able to do this week, your mind will be drawn to Gethsemane.

[10 : 35] Hold on, this sounds familiar, Gethsemane. The night before Jesus's murder and execution, as he's praying in the garden, he prays, doesn't he? Father, not my will, but yours be done.

In one sense, that's an illustration, isn't it? That's an outworking, that's a reality. Jesus wasn't just saying here, oh, I've come to do not my will, but God's will, and then he lived a completely different way.

What Jesus says, he does. How he declared his way of living was seen in the way that he lived. Not my will, but yours be done, even as he faced the very horrors of the cross.

Now, at first glance, and for some people, there may be that thought, well, surely this doesn't seem to be right. Is Jesus's will different to the will of God the Father?

Are there two wills that are battling one another here, the will of Jesus and the will of God? And sadly and foolishly, some have gone on to think that somehow the will of Jesus is at odds with the will of the Father.

[11 : 43] Or at the very least, there are these two wills. And so for folk who will not accept that Jesus is truly the Son of God, they might point to someone like this and say, well, there you are.

See, it shows that really Jesus surely cannot be God if his will is different to the Father. But that's not what Jesus is saying. It's not what Jesus is saying.

Remember, dear friends, whenever we come to hard sayings in the Scriptures, and there are some, in fact, Peter confesses, doesn't he, when he writes his second letter about some of the things that Paul wrote, some things are hard to understand.

And it's foolish for us, dear friends, to come to the Word of God and just to say, oh, well, this is easy. We can understand this plainly and simply.

We just have to be simplistic about it. No, dear friends, we have to recognize that we are dealing with the very nature of eternity and of the universe, of the mind of God being revealed.

[12 : 40] This is God's Word. However, where there are hard sayings in Scripture, we take hold of that truth. That Scripture interprets Scripture.

In other words, if you want to know what the Bible says, look somewhere else in the Bible. It's one theme, one book, one author, one message, one story. There's no contradiction in what we read here concerning Jesus and what he has to say here, what he has to say elsewhere.

And elsewhere, of course, as we've already mentioned, Jesus declares his oneness with the Father. He says in John chapter 10 and verse 30, I and the Father are one.

And by that, Jesus is not only speaking about his divine nature, that he is God, as God the Father is God, but he's talking about the whole, in one sense, there's the Trinity condensed.

I and the Father are one. This mystery of God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit, three persons, one Godhead, which nobody has ever been able to comprehend because nobody is God except God himself.

[13 : 53] And he has sought to reveal it to us. And so this verse is important, I think, well, I believe very much so because if we fail to understand the relationship between God the Father and God the Son, then the whole message of Christmas is lost.

And the whole gospel is lost. And that is why, dear friends, we have cults around about us who would not accept or acknowledge this Godhead, this Trinity, and that's why they lose the whole message of the gospel.

They may have lots of other things which are admirable in one sense, but as soon as you get the relationship between the Father and the Son wrong, then immediately you've lost the whole of the gospel.

And therefore we've lost the whole of Christmas and the birth of Christ. And for me, verse 38 is at the very heart of the incarnation. It's the very heart of our salvation. So I want us just to break it up slowly and look at it in three little parts.

And those three little parts reveal to us essential truths, essential beliefs concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. And the first of them is in that very first line.

[15 : 08] For I have come down from heaven. I've come down from heaven. And in that phrase, of course, we have revealed to us the very substance of Jesus.

the very nub of who he is. The very center of his nature. I have come down from heaven. Who can come down from heaven except one who already is in heaven?

If I put it that way. You can't come down unless you're up. You know, the Duke of York, he was neither up nor down. Well, Jesus was the Son of God in heaven with the Father in a perfect and eternal relationship and he came down.

Explain that to Nicodemus. Remember Nicodemus, the religious leader who came to Jesus at night and had some questions for him. In fact, he declared himself, no one can do what you've done unless God has sent you.

But Jesus said to him this, no one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven, the Son of Man. Jesus' description of himself.

[16 : 14] And so the substance of Jesus or the beginnings of Jesus or the source of Jesus Christ is this, that his beginning was from before his birth.

His beginning was from before his birth. Now you and I, dear friends, and you need to get out of your mind some of the very false ideas that do tend to float around in our society.

You and I did not exist before conception. Okay? We existed in one sense in the very mind of God. He knew us and about us but we did not exist. We were not some disembodied sort of spirit or thing or soul stored up in heaven to be brought down and placed in a body.

We had no existence until that moment of conception. But Jesus existed prior to conception, prior to the Son of God entering the womb of the Virgin Mary.

Christ, the Son of God, existed. He had no beginning and he has no end. He has always been from eternity past in the very perfect relationship of the Godhead, the Trinity.

[17 : 28] And when the early church were putting together this teaching of Scripture and trying to explain it in a way that somehow could express these truths, they had to make up, not make up words but find words to explain what couldn't be explained.

And so in the Nicene Creed or the Apostles Creed as we know it, it says, we believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father.

So this word begotten, and again, it's not a word that we can describe. It doesn't mean that God the Father gave life to the Son. It doesn't mean that there was a time when the Son did not exist but the Father did.

There is this incredible mystery but this glorious wonder that the Son of God is and was and always has been God.

And so when Jesus says, I've come down from heaven, he's declaring what his enemies only recognized too clearly and that's why they picked up stones to stone him on more than one occasion and throw him off a cliff on one occasion.

[18 : 46] The reason it was because they saw, these enemies saw clearly what it seems, sadly, people who study the Bible today don't see is that Jesus was declaring himself to be one with God.

And it's foolishness for us to think otherwise. Jesus was plain. I am the Father, O one. I have come down from heaven. Begotten, not made.

The essential meaning of Christmas is this. The Son of God, the everlasting God, has come into our world. This child that's born to Mary is God's Son, the second person of the Trinity, the representative on earth of the Godhead.

He has come from heaven to this earth. He has come from eternity into time and space. You see, ultimately, if we remove from Jesus, as many people do, his divine nature, if we say that Jesus is not the Son of God, as he declared himself to be and as Christians have declared for centuries, then he is just another man.

And if he's just another man, then he's a sinful man, as we are, and a fallen man, an imperfect man. He's just one in a long line of people who thought that they could change the world and failed.

[20 : 16] This is the center of the Christian and Christmas message, isn't it? God has come. Emmanuel, God with us. But then there's the second part, isn't it?

And this is perhaps one of the more difficult bits. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will. Not to do my will. And I believe that what we see here, dear friends, in this declaration of the Lord Jesus Christ is what I've called the servanthood of Christ.

The servanthood of the Son of God. And it's, of course, most beautifully described and illustrated in those words in Philippians chapter 2. Perhaps you'd like to turn there just for a moment.

You'll know them very well. Philippians chapter 2 and verses 6 to 11, we have this, what is often thought of by many Bible scholars as one of the early Christian songs, an early Christian hymn of praise to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I'm just going to read the first nine verses, the first three or four verses of it. So from verse 5, verse 5 of Philippians 2. In your relationship with one another, have the same mindset as Jesus Christ, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.

[21 : 42] Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself.

So this, not my will, not to do my will, is Jesus' declaration to us of his servanthood, of his acceptance and acknowledgement and reality that he is God, the Son, that he is God in nature, he is God by way of authority as well, but that he willingly gave up his will so that he might fulfill his mission as the saviour of men and women.

And as I said before, when we start to dig into this incredible, what we might call the condescension of Jesus or the submission of Jesus, we are dealing with things which are way above our pay grade, way above our intellect, way above our understanding.

We're dealing with the very nature of God. God's, but, dear friends, that doesn't mean that we should ignore it and say that we can learn nothing from it. We see so much here which is absolutely astonishing.

Jesus, the Son of God, his will is not something which is contrary to the Father's will, but rather his will is, if we can put it in that way, wonderfully absorbed into the Father's will, is one with the Father's will, is united with the Father's will.

[23 : 17] And there's Jesus not saying, I've come to do my own separate will which is separate from the Father, rather I've come to do my will which is the same as the Father's will. It's not as if the will of Jesus was crushed under the will of the Father or that one person's will was superior to another person's will and overcame their will.

We're severely limited in our ability to understand Jesus' words because whenever we think about will and my will then immediately we think about that which is sinful.

Each and every single person of us here has their own will and in one sense what is it that drives us in our lives is that we might have our will done.

That's why when the Lord Jesus teaches us to pray one of the very first things he teaches us is to pray our Father out in heaven hallowed be your name your kingdom come your will be done your will be done not my will be done and of course why is it that we have arguments with people why is it we fall out with one another why is it that those things lead to war and oppression etc. etc.

It's because ultimately what's happening is that one person's will is being opposed upon another person it's almost impossible well it is impossible let's be honest it's impossible for two people to share one will even in the even in the most blessed marriages and I'm sure that there are many blessed marriages have existed in this fellowship at times and I am very blessed in my marriage but my will and Angie's will are not one very often occasionally once in a blue moon no no one in the world shares one will but God the Father and the Son share one will yet still remaining two persons because we cannot imagine the perfect it's hard for us to accept it to be so but we can't see God can we yet we know he's there we weren't there when Christ was crucified and suffered upon the cross for us and even then we would not have been able to see what took place in the spiritual realm when Jesus bore the punishment for all our sin and the judgment and justice of God was poured out upon him but we believe it to be so and so when we come to the words of Jesus we take them as he says them not my will be done not my will be done and so the second part of course is this which we've already delved into a certain degree is this

[26 : 06] I have come from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me and so we talked about the source of Christ or rather the substance of Christ we talked about the servanthood of Jesus but we see here the submission and this is a very powerful word the submission of Christ the will of him who sent me yes the will of Jesus the son of God is the will of the father yet so that the son could be the savior of the world he willingly submitted himself to be the servant of the Lord to be the servant of the Lord that comes out over and over again in the Old Testament where God promises and speaks about his servant who will come particularly Isaiah which is a wonderful place often speaking of the Lord's servant Isaiah 42 verse 1 here is my servant who I uphold my chosen one in whom I delight

I'll put my spirit in him and he will bring justice to the nations this is Christ we know it is because that very passage of Isaiah was read by Jesus and said and appointed to him ascribed to him rather and then also in Isaiah in chapter 52 and verse 13 see look at my servant my servant will act wisely he'll be raised and lifted up and highly exalted just as there were many who were appalled at him his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and it goes on to speak very plainly about Christ and his sufferings for us upon the cross my servant my servant Jesus himself didn't he when he when he spoke to his disciples and those around him would say things like this I have not come into this world to be served but to serve his life was one of ultimate service but again we need to just temper that to a certain degree

Jesus was not a slave in the sense that he had no choice he wasn't a slave in the sense that he was put under and oppressed by the father's will but he was a joyful servant one who delighted to do the father's will his life was one of complete and constant obedience in Hebrews in chapter 2 we're told this about Jesus in bringing many sons and daughters to glory it was fitting that God for whom and through whom everything exists should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered that's verse 10 it was verse 9 I was meant to read that's why it didn't quite make sense to what I was going to say verse 9 we see Jesus who is made lower than the angels for a little while isn't that amazing it's a lovely picture is that we see Jesus made lower than the angels for a little while it wasn't that he was less God wasn't that he had less power or less authority we see that all the way through the miracles that Jesus accomplished and performed but he humbled himself he submitted himself and again for us of course that's very difficult because when we think of obedience our view of obedience is always negative isn't it obedience is something that we do not like because of course within us is a very rebellious sinful nature as we've often remarked children don't learn to become rebellious they're born with it from the very moment that they can utter any cry from their mouths or any action it's an action of rebellion do not throw your food on the floor do not chuck away your dummy it's rebellion against their parents and that continues all through our hearts and lives so obedience to us is negative it's also of course negative to us because most of us all of us probably at some time have had a very negative experience of obedience in the school perhaps or in some other situation where we've been commanded to do something against our will and we've hated it but we've had to do it so there's been that fight within us but obedience in the Bible is always positive obedience in the Bible is always positive obedience is always a positive experience in relationship to God because his commands to us are never negative they are never pointless they are never without meaning they are always for our good and in the Bible we find that obedience is the way to honor obedience is the way to glory obedience is the way to blessing and so when we talk about the obedience of Jesus we recognize again that he did this because he was glad and willing to obey the Father's will he wasn't fighting against it and from his obedience there came forth blessing so that very verse that I read in verse 9 of Hebrews 2 we do see

Jesus who was made lower than the angels for a little while now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ was part of his submission to the Father's will as we read in Philippians in chapter 2 he became obedient even to death on a cross he had all authority over death all power over death he raised Lazarus from the dead Jairus' daughter from the dead the widow of Nairn's son from the dead death had no authority over him but he gladly and willingly submitted himself to death and said death you can have me and there's a sense of that isn't there when we read the Good Friday episode of Jesus when he's on the cross after he's cried out and is finished we're told he bowed his head and gave up his spirit he gave up his spirit death didn't take it from him nobody took his life from him he said

I have power to lay it down I have power to take it up again it was a free willing submission to death you and I dear friends we cannot do that with death death will come one day for each one of us and we will have to submit to it we will not be able to give up our spirit and say okay I'll let you have my life death it will take our life whether we want to or not Jesus willingly and gladly submitted to the Father I have come down from heaven not to do my will but the will of him who sent me and as we come to the Lord's supper as we will do in a few moments of course we are reminding ourselves again that it is only possible for us to share in this bread and wine because the Lord Jesus came from heaven not to do his will but the will of his father in heaven we come to remember the obedience of Jesus the one who laid aside as one of our songs put it his majesty we sang didn't we who emptied himself of all but love that's not very theologically correct but it's a lovely picture in that sense of him laying aside giving up willingly for us his life that he might accomplish for us salvation and so for us dear friends surely as we gather as we do around this table once a month isn't it the perfect time for us to renew our commitment to do God's will as we see the example of Christ the one who's our pioneer the one who's our leader he's the one who began he's the one who set the example for us surely as we see that this is because of his submission and obedience to the father's will surely for us again it is an opportunity for us to say

[34 : 42] Lord Jesus just as you submitted yourself gladly to the father's will so I gladly submit myself to your will I acknowledge you again to be the lord of my life I acknowledge again my desire I say Lord even though it's hard for me I want to do your will oh Lord in all of my life surely it's the time for us to set aside our imperfect and sinful will so that we might live for his perfect and holy will the apostle Paul says something very similar in Romans 12 I urge you brothers and sisters in view of God's mercy in other words what he's done for us in Christ to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and pleasing to God this is your true and proper worship do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is his good pleasing and perfect well we're going to sing just one verse of a song just one verse and then we're going to come and share in communion together so as we sing this verse if those who are going to serve would like to come to the front please stand and sing a song to the Lord and to the Lord and to the Lord and to the Lord and to the Lord

Amen.