

**INTRO:**

Hey Friends, come-on back/take your seats...and make sure you have a Bible or Bible App...In the last couple weeks/as I'm sure many of you have been, Abby and I've been navigating all the questions that come along with new seasons. Our girls are back to in-person school for the first time in over a year; after-school activities are back in full swing and so we've been working hard/mostly Abby's been working hard figuring out all the scheduling, so that the 2 of us, with 1 car, can get 3 kids, to different places, at the same time. And ya know, one of the things we've found ourselves doing before committing to a new activity is asking, "*why are we doing this?*" And I don't mean, "*why are we doing this? It's ridiculous!*" I mean, "*Since we're gonna invest time in this, do we know WHY we're actually doing it?*" Cuz I think we all know it to be true: When you don't know the "why" of things, stepping into the "what" and "how" is able to be joyful!...As a church, we're obviously entering into a new season together, which means, too, we need to ask ourselves, "*Why?*"... "*Why are we here?*" "*Why are you here?*" And I don't just mean, cuz this is the space in which we're gathering, or this is just what we do. I mean, "*What is this time each week supposed to be about?*" "*Why has God called you to be here?*" That's question I want us to answer this evening, BECAUSE IN answering it, I believe, we'll more joyfully be able step into whatever may come this season!...So, let's follow-along as we hear the reading of God's word from **John 6:22-36/John 6:22-36**, which you'll find on **pp.615-16** of your table Bibles if you'd like to use those...**Ed Reads...**

**TEXT:**

Thanks **Ed**...So we're taking a breaking from our "*True Myth*" series today and looking at THIS passage because, as you can see, it's one of these classic encounters between Jesus and a crowd of people who THINK they understand WHY they're doing something until Jesus shows em they don't/I feel like that's basically 3 days of the week for me, but it's just a great text for helping US understand WHY we're here and what these Dinner Church gatherings are to be about...Cuz ya notice...in **vv.22-24**, this crowd is in search of Jesus. If you were to go back right before our text, you'd see that the reason they were searching for Him is because they'd just been a part of His feeding of the 5000, where you might know, Jesus took a mere 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish and miraculously multiplied it into a lunch large enough to feed something like 10-12,000 people if you take women and children into account. So needless to say, this crowd is lovin' them some Jesus. Cuz, quite frankly, to be around Him at this point, is to be getting lots a goodies. Like a cosmic vending machine where ya pull the lever of following Him and out come snacks...BUT being that Jesus is never interested in being your genie, or life-coach, but only your Lord, we're told that He retreats from the crowd/the crowd loses Him, only to find Him in the nearby town of Capernum. So catch the scene here: A large crowd/numbering in the thousands, looking to be NEAR Jesus, presumably to keep getting FROM Jesus; finding Him; and upon finding Him, flattering Him, saying **v.25**, "*Rabbi, when did you come here?*"... "*Great teacher! We've been looking for you!*" ...But of course, Jesus, not at all flattered by the attention and ever-so-good at speaking to the heart of issues and issues of our heart...says, "*Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me NOT because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves!*" Now, little interpretive key for ya: Anytime Jesus says, "*Truly truly,*" He's about to drop somethin' important. Cuz "*Truly truly*" was like the Hebrew way of saying, "*Listen up!*" So Jesus is saying

to the crowds, *“Listen! I know the reason WHY you’re following me isn’t cuz you actually believe I’m the Messiah. No! You’re following me cuz you’re gettin’ stuff FROM me.” ...Here’s a question for you: Do you find God PRIMARILY useful or beautiful?* Cuz useful, right, means He’s a way to...get blessing; have a good family; advance your career; overcome your hurts, or just avoid hell. But beautiful means you spend time with Him just for the pleasure of knowing him...And of course there’s a difference, right? Say you have a business partner who you don’t really like BUT you guys make a ton of money together. So when you talk with that partner, it’s all business. Now, compare that to someone you love. With someone you love you get together with no agenda right, no talking points, no set of things to accomplish. You just love being with that person. Before Abby, I dated a girl in college and I remember having to think up activities we could do together otherwise we’d just kinda stare in silence at each other. Contrast that with Abby, who I just found myself wanting to be around to the point that I’d pretty much do anything. I remember one of the first times we hung out, she was about to go on a run around our college campus. And so she says to me, *“You wanna come?”* And I’m thinking, *“No! I hate running! If theres no ball or team involved, running is...the worst.”* And I know, some of you are runners. But admit it. Running is always a great idea...until you do it...So Abby asks me, *“You wanna come?”* to which I say, *“Absolutely, I love running.”* Because when you love someone you just wanna be in their presence.<sup>1</sup> ***Jesus isn’t interested in you getting FROM Him or even doing FOR Him. He’s concerned about you getting HIM!***

But the crowds, you see, they didn’t understand that. So when Jesus tells em to, as it says, *“(Stop) working for food that perishes, (and instead) for the food that endures to eternal life,”* meaning stop trying to get things FROM me or outside of me you think’ll make you happy, and just RECEIVE me/the source of life and happiness...when He says that they’re confused! They say, *“what must we do, to be doing the works of God?”* In other words, *“Ok Jesus. If we’re not doing it right then tell us what we SHOULD do and we’ll get on with it”*...Now be honest: Isn’t that always our response? It’s like we always think that if something didn’t work, we just need to try something different, change circumstances, get a new strategy, find a new tip, trick, technique, or just work harder! Performance, Performance, and more Performance!...Never realizing that MAYBE all of your “doing” is actually keeping you from receiving what’s already yours. As the great hymn says, *“to Jesus’ work you cling by a simple faith, ‘Doing’ is a deadly thing. ‘Doing’ ends in death. Cast your deadly ‘doing’ down. Down at Jesus’ feet; Stand in Him, in Him alone, Gloriously complete.” ...The crowds didn’t get that it wasn’t about what THEY did, but about what Jesus would DO!*...And so Jesus says, **v.29**, *“THIS is the work of God, that you BELIEVE in him whom He has sent.”*...What’s the “work of God” class?/The thing God’s both WORKING into and out of your life?/The thing He’s most concerned about?/His will and definition for success for you?...That you BELIEVE Jesus!...NOT that do for Jesus, or achieve for Jesus, or get ahead, grow, progress, change, or advance with Jesus. ***But that you simply learn to trust and rest IN Jesus!***...Which incidentally is why in **vv.31-36** Jesus gives the metaphor of manna or bread; going so far as to call Himself the *“bread of life”* and *“the one who when we come to him quenches our spiritual hunger and thirst.”* He’s showing us that just as eating or

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<sup>1</sup> Illustration adapted from J. D. Greear, *“Prayer to God, Your Sovereign Father: Matthew 6:5–10,”* in *J. D. Greear Sermon Archive* (Durham, NC: The Summit Church, 2017).

receiving bread is synonymous with being full and satisfied, so trusting and receiving Him is synonymous with satisfaction. Cuz think about it: For bread to satisfy, what's the only thing you gotta do?... Take and eat it right? Like, when was the last time you were hungry and thought to yourself, *"Ya know, I can't eat. Before I eat, I gotta go read my Bible and pray. Confess some sin, hit up my Missional Family Meeting, invite a neighbor over, go to church, give, and THEN, I'll be able to eat."*... And yet, isn't that so often how we often treat Jesus' call here to trust and rest in Him; as a kind of thing we can do only after we've DONE everything else?

***Can I just speak to some of you directly for a second?*** Some of you/tonight, are in the middle of season in which you feel like you need some "bread." - *"God, why am I single? Why don't I have more money? Certain skills and talents? Why do people keep hurting me? Why won't life just ease up for a bit? Why do I feel exposed? Why God?"* And you're asking Him, *"What do I need to do? Just tell me and I'll get on with it!"*... Can I just tell you: God only wants you to do 1 thing tonight: ***Learn to trust and rest IN Him for everything*** - trust that His presence and promises are better than anything: better than physical food, being married, having money, knowing how things are gonna play out, better than anything... AND then rest, knowing that if Jesus was both willing and able to care for your most pressing needs; namely, your need for God's forgiveness, acceptance, and eternal life, then He's more than willing and able to care for your daily needs... so you can rest.<sup>2</sup> *"THIS is the work of God, that you believe in HIM!"* Learning to trust and rest in Christ in every area of life, you could say, is God's picture of success/His will for you/THE thing He's after. And subsequently the reason we're to gather like this every week.

And here's why: 2 Reasons/write these down: ***One***, because learning to trust & rest in Christ is **the ONLY thing that truly HELPS people**. You see in **vv.27 and 35**, Jesus says, *"Don't work for the food that perishes, but for food that endures to eternal life...(and then) whoever comes to me shall neither hunger, nor thirst."* You know what He's saying? He's saying, *"we're all laboring. We're all working. Why work/give your life something that'll ultimately perish."* I don't have a background in finance or anything, but I know enough to know that pouring resources into things that don't last... is a bad investment. That's why Jesus makes the distinction between *"perishable food"* and *"eternal life."* He's saying, *"those who labor for things of this world/no matter how good those things might be, your path will just get darker and darker because what you're pursuing will continue to perish and fade."* Recently, I was talking to a neighbor for whom this has become a real struggle. He's about 10 years older than me and just wildly successful. Has more money than you can image, a beautiful home/vacation homes, family, health, hobbies all of it... BUT is really wrestling as he sees that for almost 50 years he's given his life to these things that at any moment could be taken away/could *"perish."*... So we're walking around Castle Island together one evening and he tells me, *"Ya know, I'm not really religious. I don't do the whole church/God thing, but I'll tell ya, I just have this sense that nothing I have/nothing I've worked for is gonna last. And it's kinda eatin' me up."* And then he looks at me and says, *"so what do you think about that?"* And so I said, *"Well, I think you can work for things that perish OR things that endure to eternal life."* And without missin' a beat, he

<sup>2</sup> Explanation adapted from J. D. Greear, ["Inauguration: Luke 3:21-4:13,"](#) in *J. D. Greear Sermon Archive* (Durham, NC: The Summit Church, 2017), Lk 3:21-4:13.

says, “*Bro, that’s some deep wisdom!*” And I’m like, “*Yeah, I can’t really take credit for it*”... And we just went on to talk about how for those who trust in people and things of this world, they’re path continues to get darker/“hungrier”/“thirstier”/if not now then when they die, because everything they trusted in perished and can’t be taken with em... BUT for those who learn to trust and rest in Jesus, their path continues to get brighter/they “thirst” less-and-less, because even as the things around us perish, we’re moving one step closer to a more glorious eternity that never ends.<sup>3</sup>... You offer someone the opportunity to trust and rest in Christ and you’re offering em the greatest investment they could ever make! **THAT’S helping people!**

But ***Two and Finally***, the reason learning to trust & rest in Christ is what God’s after in you and with us, is because it’s **the ONLY thing that’ll truly HOLD us together**. You see in **v.30**, after Jesus answered the crowd - what did they do? They immediately pushed-back. They say, “*Then what sign do you do? What work do you perform?*” Translation? “*C’mon! It can’t be as simple as just believing in you! That can’t be the ‘work of God.’ Prove it.*” What are they doing? They’re doing what we all do: They’re assuming, like all of us, there must be a role WE play; a part in which WE participate; something WE do right?... But here’s the problem with that: It’s not the Gospel! As I’ve told you before, the Gospel/the Good News of Jesus is not spelled, D.O. - ya know a bunch of things you gotta DO to earn God’s favor. And nor is it spelled, D.O.N.T. - in which you gotta make sure you DON’T do certain things, otherwise God’ll be mad at you. No! The Gospel is spelled D.O.N.E - the gracious work of Jesus Christ - crucified and resurrected for your forgiveness, acceptance, justification, and salvation... FINISHED... such that all you have to do/all ANYONE has to do is awaken to it and then rest in it for every area of life!<sup>4</sup> Friends, can I tell you: If that is NOT at the center of this church, you know what will be? Merit! Cuz those are the only two options. You can either hold-out grace, meaning underserved merit OR you can hold-out MERIT. But if it’s the latter that’ll mean things like, those with more Bible knowledge’ll be able to take pride in being “smarter” than others of us... Those who are more successful will have justification for looking down on those who aren’t... Those with strong political opinions/on either the left OR the right will never be able to coexist, because they’ll always assume the other side is the enemy. It’ll be a mess... But by contrast, when you embrace grace/trusting and resting in Jesus’ performance alone, two things happen. **First**, that spirit of divisiveness leaves you, because you see that in JESUS’ economy you have nothing about which to be proud. All you and I bring to the table is our sin. HE’S the one who brings the forgiveness, acceptance, adoption, and salvation. So what could you possibly be proud and divisive about?... And then **Second**, there’ll be this felt sense of God’s grace among us. No matter how different we might be in opinion, background or the like, we’ll be relieved to gather together. Church will be a place to which we sprint when things are tough, not avoid/because it’s here that honestly... our blood pressure can get lowered... In other words, we’ll be **held** together!... So let me ask again: “*Why are we here?*” “*Why are you here?*” “*Why do we wanna invite others to be here with us each week?*” Because it’s here that we’re able to PAUSE and learn to trust and rest in Christ for every area of life! Because THAT is the “*work of God!*”... **Let’s Pray...**

<sup>3</sup> Quote adapted from J. D. Greear, “[Summit’s 10th Anniversary](#),” in *J. D. Greear Sermon Archive* (Durham, NC: The Summit Church, 2017).

<sup>4</sup> Explanation adapted from J. D. Greear, “[Holiness: Exodus 20:18–26](#),” in *J. D. Greear Sermon Archive* (Durham, NC: The Summit Church, 2017), Ex 20:18–26.