

What is your greatest need?

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[0 : 00] Just grab one at the doors from the people who are on duty. They'll be able to sort you out easily. Today we're looking at John chapter 6, verses 22 through to 40, which is on page 891 of the Blue Bibles.

So that's John chapter 6 on page 891. And as you turn up, let's pray together. Let's ask God for his help as we come to his word. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you that you really do speak through your word.

Please help us to approach your word with genuinely humble hearts, ready to be changed and shaped and corrected by what you have to say to us through your word today.

Please be using what we hear today to be making us all the more like Jesus, trusting in him as our eternal provider and savior. In his name we pray. Amen.

So we're reading chapter 6, verses 22 through to 40. On the next day, the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone.

[1 : 19] Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum seeking Jesus.

When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, Rabbi, when did you come here? Jesus answered them, Truly, truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.

Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.

Then they said to him, What must we do to be doing the works of God? Jesus answered them, This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.

So they said to him, Then what sign do you do that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, as it is written, he gave them bread from heaven to eat.

[2 : 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. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.

They said to him, Sir, give us this bread always. Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life.

Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. 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.

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.

[3 : 46] Amen. What do you want in life? What do you long for? Maybe today, you're taking a look outside, you're seeing storms called Kira and Dennis batter us, and you quite fancy some warmer weather.

I know I do. I would love a bit of winter warmth and sunshine. Or maybe you see the greatest needs and desires in what you want for your children, or maybe your grandchildren.

Just think about that a second. What do you want most for the people in your life you love the most? What do you want for them? Is it just a good education for them to find a stable job that puts food on

the table?

Have a nice house where they feel safe and comfortable? Have a lovely family who will bring love and joy into their life? What do you want most for them?

What do you want most for yourself? What do we need? Well, Jesus answers that question today, and he is clear that our greatest need is always, very simply, him.

[4 : 58] He's all we need. The Jews looked at Jesus and saw a man who could solve their earthly problems. That's what we saw last week. They saw a king figure who could rescue them from the Romans.

But Jesus makes it clear that while he has come to rescue, it's for a far greater need than an earthly one. He's come for an eternal rescue that only he could accomplish.

We're going to look at our passage today in two sections, seeing firstly that Jesus wants us to long for the heavenly bread in verses 22 to 34. The crowd have just witnessed Jesus feed over 5,000 people with one boy's packed lunch, and they're keen to follow him to see more.

They're on the other side of the lake, and they're understandably curious about how Jesus has got there. They've done the math and worked out that something interesting's gone on. I mean, he literally walked on water to get there, so they're curious, and they're chasing after him.

They want to know more. But Jesus calls out their intentions for what they are, making it very clear that he knows what they're really interested in. Look at verse 26 with me.

[6 : 08] Truly, truly, I say to you, you're seeking me not because you saw the signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Jesus says to these people that they're following him because, well, they're hungry.

They're not motivated by a desire to hear more of his message or to follow him as their savior, but by their appetites. After being fed the day before by Jesus, as he fed thousands with this bread of heaven, they're hungrily looking for another meal.

It's lunchtime. Miracle up. For all Jesus could offer them, they're focusing on the here and now, the worldly, earthly, material things they could get from Jesus.

Rather than the eternal, heavenly salvation he gives. They see the sign of Jesus feeding the 5,000, and they don't connect that with anything bigger than the thought of, well, this guy can keep on giving me a free lunch.

This is great. I need to jump on board this. They've missed the whole point of the sign. They're still not recognizing who Jesus is or how he meets their greatest need.

[7 : 21] Jesus continues in verse 27. Don't work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.

For on him, God the Father has set his seal. Jesus condemns them for being so short-sighted. He's not here to give them a nice lunch.

He's here to give them so much more. He's not just making their time on earth a little bit easier, a little bit better, a little bit more full of joy, but he's giving them eternal life and salvation in his name.

The people Jesus is talking to, they're thinking far too small. They're set on the things of this life rather than of the life to come. They'll have some for lunch, and then they'll be feeling the pangs of hunger hit just a few hours later.

So why would they use all their effort, why would they devote their lives to doing that, to chasing after something that doesn't last? It's not going to satisfy them, it's not going to last, so they should be wanting more.

[8 : 33] They shouldn't be satisfied with something that's just going to perish. But sadly, they're only interested in Jesus for what he can give them now. They think that their greatest need is their next meal, not their eternal security.

They're focused on the earthly, the here and now, but Jesus has something far better for them. He promises them the imperishable food that lasts to eternal life.

He's speaking of something lasting to eternity which isn't going to perish like yesterday's lunch. And this food, it only comes from the son whom the father has approved.

The father has appointed Jesus as his designated life giver, the one to look to for this enduring bread. But still, the crowd don't understand.

Their next question reveals that. Look at verse 28. What must we do to be doing the works of God? And here they're asking, well, if we're not meant to work for perishable food, how can we work for the enduring food?

[9 : 40] Tell us what to do. We'll do it. And yet again, they're too earthly minded. They're focused on what they can do themselves right here and right now.

The religious works they can perform to get bread from God now rather than faithfully, patiently trusting in his son for salvation. Well, what are they to do then?

How do they get this enduring bread? Jesus makes it very clear what they need to do in verse 29. This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.

The only thing they can do to have their greatest need met, to get this enduring bread that leads to eternal life, is to believe in the son, the one whom the father has sent.

That's it. No big, impressive spiritual works or religious practices, no wonders performed, but simply belief, faith, coming to God with the empty hands of faith.

[10 : 50] And it's not an abstract faith or something that they can't see or know. Rather, Jesus is asking them to have faith in the one God has sent, himself standing right in front of them, talking to them, looking at them in the eye.

But why should they believe him? Why should they trust him? That's their next line of questioning in verse 30 and 31. Look at those verses with me. Then what sign do you do that we may see and believe you?

What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness as it is written. He gave them bread from heaven to eat. You see, they're looking for a sign, something to hold on to and believe in.

But as they do so, they display an incredible amount of short-term memory loss. One day has passed since Jesus fed over 5,000 people miraculously with bread of heaven.

But it's gone from their memory. It's vanished. They've completely forgotten it. They've forgotten that this act they want to see Jesus do, he's already done with them the day before.

[12 : 07] It's shocking, isn't it? And these Jews questioning Jesus, demanding a sign from him, well, they were missing the whole point of the sign anyway. The manna from heaven was given after the people were rescued out of Egypt in the Exodus.

And the manna was never just about, it was never just about giving them their next meal, about satisfying a hunger or a need for food. God had greater things in mind when he gave them manna. Here's what Moses said in Deuteronomy 8, verse 3, about what God was teaching through the manna. God wanted them to know that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

They were meant to see that the Lord is the great giver of life, so life is only to be found in him. The sign was pointing to something greater. They weren't to look at the manna coming to God's people as just a meal to keep them going.

It wasn't just sustenance. It was pointing to salvation, to give them a real dependence in and faith in the Lord. Jesus wants to be understood by these people on his own terms, but the people don't get that.

[13 : 22] They wanted him to conform to what they thought their greatest needs were. They wanted him to save them from the Romans, to be their rescuer, to give them political freedom from their oppressors, or even, they're just looking for their next meal.

They were looking at the signs and seeing all the wrong things because they were just seeing what they wanted to see. They felt their greatest need was freedom from under the Roman rule of the day, so they saw a man who looked like someone who could lead the Jews into an uprising and free the people.

They saw the signs and wanted Jesus to conform to what they wished he was, to their greatest need as they felt it. And don't people in the church do that today?

Don't we try to make Jesus conform to our felt needs? Those who think the greatest problem in the world is inequality see Jesus as a figure who would conform perfectly to the 2010 Equalities Act. He'd be signing right up to that. He would never say anyone should change or should deny themselves. There are plenty of people in the church who think that. Despite the fact that he says exactly the opposite in his word, that is not why he's here.

[14 : 38] He's not here to bring equality. Those in the church who think the greatest need is peace see Jesus as an almost hippie-like figure who's just here to spread peace and love and non-judgment.

And to do that all here and now in the earth for us. Rather than his main aim of bringing us peace with God the Father eternally, those in the church who think that the greatest need in the world is climate change action see Jesus as a figure who wants us to love our neighbors.

And what more loving thing is there to do than save the planet they live in? There are many ways we can twist Jesus into something he's not and give him an agenda that he just doesn't have.

The Jews still seem to be thinking about the here and now. They're still thinking about themselves and their felt needs. They've got a very different idea of what kind of rescue Jesus is there to do.

But Jesus isn't there to make their lives a little bit easier or nicer in the here or now. He knows that humanity's greatest need is not found in the perishable but what endures.

[15:52] He knows that every human whatever their earthly situation is facing an eternal death for their sins, and that's what he's there to fix. He's there to satisfy man's greatest need of eternal salvation.

Well how can the people have this bread? How can they eat the food that endures that is imperishable? How can they have their greatest needs met? That's what the rest of our passage answers as we see Jesus tell the crowd that if they're looking for the heavenly bread they need to look to the heavenly man in verses 35 to 40.

Jesus makes it clear that only faith in him is able to raise people on the last day. Jesus is the great provider of what we need most eternal life.

How do we solve our biggest problem? Well we don't. Jesus does. And we just go to him. Look at verse 35.

Jesus said to them I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

[17:10] Coming to Jesus and believing in him is what gives you this bread of life. Because he is the bread of life. That's all it is. No impressive religious work but faith in him.

And look at the life it gives. It's abundant. You won't ever hunger. You'll never thirst if you're feeding from him. It's reminiscent of him feeding the 5,000 earlier in this chapter as people ate their fill and were satisfied.

Because that sign was always pointing to something more. That Jesus is the one who completely and eternally satisfies God's people, how do we feast on this bread that satisfies?

Well these Jews in a sense they were coming to Jesus weren't they? They were following him around they saw him do signs and they seemed to recognize that he was something special. So was that what Jesus was looking for?

Verse 36 The Jews saw Jesus they followed him they witnessed him perform miracles they got to speak with him face to face but still they didn't believe him.

[18:28] They see a king-like figure without seeing what he was really there for. Belief in Jesus is far more than just being near him or even just being near his people week by week.

It's more than that. Often when we think of our friends who don't believe in Jesus that if God were to perform a miracle for them some kind of supernatural sign so they could see he really is real and he really exists then they would believe.

Have you ever thought that? I know I have. I would love God to perform signs for my friends and family who don't know Jesus. I think surely they'll believe then. Surely, surely that would convince them.

But we see here that sadly that's just not the case. These people received themselves the greatest sign Jesus had ever performed yet had zero levels of faith in him.

They still didn't trust in him to provide for their greatest need. They only looked to him for their earthly needs not their eternal ones. They just wanted Jesus to put food on the table now rather than feed them eternally.

[19:42] people but if people are seeing Jesus signs and not believing well have these failed? Have those signs failed?

John's method is always to present evidence about Jesus leading to belief in him which results in eternal life in his name. But that's not happening here. They're seeing the evidence.

They have Jesus right in front of them. They've seen and tasted his miracles yet they still don't believe or have life in his name. So has God's mission in Jesus somehow gone wrong?

How on earth can we trust it? We're being asked to believe quite a bit aren't we? We're investing in something we can't see to live by faith. So will it be worth it in the end?

Is God going to deliver? Especially if many of Jesus emphasizes as he speaks in verses 37 to 40. [20 : 47] He wants us to know that anyone who believes will be saved. It is a certain thing without any doubt in his mind. Everyone who God has called to be his own will come to him.

They will believe in the Son because they have been predestined to do so. God has set it in stone. Look over these verses with me. At 37 all that the Father gives me will come to me.

Whoever comes to me I will never cast out. Verse 39 this is the will of him who sent me that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me.

Given past tense it's already his it's in the bag. Verse 40 everyone who looks on the sun and believes in him should have eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day.

Everyone who looks on the sun will have the greatest need of their life met in Christ. They will have eternal life in him. Always welcomed, never cast out, never lost, never perishing, but raised on the last day, safe with him.

[22 : 10] We who have faith will eat the enduring bread of eternal life by looking at the sun, looking to Jesus. It's not something perishable, it's not going to go off, it's not going to get moldy, but it's eternal, imperishable, and it's ours if we have faith in Jesus.

It all comes simply by looking to him, by having faith in him, that he is the one who will satisfy us completely by raising us up on the last day for eternity.

Well, Jesus has diagnosed his listeners as being too earthly minded, and he wants them to look to the things that will last eternally, which you can only get by coming to him. How does that apply to us?

Well, even as Christians, we might still be sitting here as people who are far too focused on the earthly rather than the eternal. We long for the perishable when it won't satisfy, it won't last for us. How often do we find ourselves just like the fickle people responding to Jesus' miracle by asking for more bread? I want that house, I want that job, I want that car, those clothes, I want my kids or grandchildren to get those exam results, to get that university place, to get that job, to get that financial stability, to get that family, to get that life.

[23 : 35] We all focus on the earthly far more than we ought to. And part of that is slightly unavoidable. We're earthly creatures with earthly minds that fool ourselves into thinking the perishable will satisfy us because it's tangible, it's in front of us, we can see it, we can touch it, we can taste it, and it looks good to us.

We genuinely think, we fool ourselves into thinking that we need these things to be satisfied, that these earthly things will keep us safe and help us to live life well. But our felt needs are often far different to our real needs.

Jesus says we are thinking far too small. We're putting all our energy into something that just isn't going to last, that is going to come to dust one day. Jesus wants us to lift up our eyes and look to what endures, to what's lasting, what will never perish and endure eternally.

And that is only found in him. We keep on thinking that our greatest needs are right here and right now, don't we? Maybe it's your financial status as you're struggling to get by on not very much. Maybe it's your relationships with family. Maybe it's your health as age starts to take its toll. We might think that Jesus is just here to solve our problems now and we will get angry with him when he doesn't do that.

[25 : 11] But that's not why he came. He's not the bread of you getting better. He's not the bread of your relationships going well. He's not the bread of your financial stability.

He's not the bread of lunch even but he is the bread of life eternally. The Lord cares deeply about our worries and cares of this life.

But Jesus didn't die on a cross to make our lives easier now. He didn't come to make our earthly lives a bit more comfortable, a bit more cushy for us. He came because he knows our greatest need.

He knows what we need more than anything. He knows that we are facing an eternal death. We are facing becoming something that perishes forever.

And we are in desperate need of salvation. Only he can answer that need. Only Jesus will provide what we need to live eternally when we will feast forever in his presence.

[26 : 14] So let's encourage each other to keep looking to him. Let's pray together. Our heavenly father, we thank you for your word that in it you point to the life we may have in your son.

Father, we're sorry that so often we focus on the earthly, the perishable and spend our efforts chasing after things that just won't last. Please help us to look to you, to focus on the eternal, the imperishable by looking to your son.

In his name we pray. Amen. Thanks for coming everyone. It's lovely to see you.

Please do stick around and have a chat and some more lunch if you're needing it. Hopefully we'll see you next week. Take care. lots of love and you can't come, coming.

from e. audience that em said something