

John 6:35-48

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 15 January 2019

Preacher: Chris Roberts

[0 : 00] Great. If you were here last week you'll know we're kind of carrying on in John's Gospel but we're doing a little mini series within a series in John's Gospel. Looking at John chapter 6 and particularly what is known as the bread of life discourse in John 6.

You might remember Jesus saying in verse 35 last week at the top of your sheets, he describes himself as bread, the bread of life.

Come to me and get life, he says. And in this section that we've got printed here he's going to unpack that one verse, that little statement a little bit more.

And actually not just the whole verse but one word he's going to unpack from verse 35. It's the word comes. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger or thirst.

He's going to tell us now what is involved in that coming to Jesus. Namely people who come to Jesus haven't just come to him actually but they have been sent to him.

[1 : 12] They have actually been given to Jesus by the Father. Just listen to how Jesus describes these people who come to him.

Verse 37. All that the Father gives to me will come to me. Verse 39. I will lose nothing of all that the Father has given to me.

Christian conversion, coming to Jesus. Christian believers, he says, are not merely a random collection of people who've sort of blindly found their way to Jesus.

Neither are they people who are born in a certain country or family or with a certain ethnicity.

Neither are Christians manufactured by a culture around them.

Jesus says a Christian is someone who is chosen and selected and presented to Jesus for salvation by God the Father.

[2 : 17] They are people given to God the Son by him. Christians are Jesus' precious possessions, gift-wrapped and delivered to Jesus' door for him to keep and to cherish and to save forever.

I don't know how you feel about it. As we've gone through John, it feels like we're little toddlers, doesn't it? Paddling through the waters of John's Gospel step by step.

And as we do that, in this passage, I think we suddenly kind of find ourselves dropping into the deep end. And we're up to our chins in these deep waters.

Because we are entering here some deep theological waters. There's some really, really challenging content in this passage.

And it's challenging not just intellectually, but experientially and morally. Jesus is talking here, isn't he, about God's choosing particular people to give to Jesus.

[3 : 25] And him not choosing others to give to Jesus. It's what theologians call election. The early church leader, Erasmus, said that passages like this should never be preached at all.

He said, some things are of such a kind that even if they were true and might be known, it would not be proper to, he says, prostitute them before common ears.

Now forgive his political incorrectness there. But he and many others say that with this subject, we get to passages like this, and there should be a big red flag.

But the man who wrote these words, John, is clear, isn't he? At the end of his gospel, in John 20, he says, These things, this whole gospel is written that you may believe.

There's no little footnote, is there, in John 20, saying, apart from John chapter 6, verse 35 to 47. John, who writes this, says, No, the flag is well and truly green.

[4 : 29] You've got to preach this. You've got to hear this. And Jesus himself says, actually, this subject of God choosing, of election, is definitely for everyone to hear.

In the context here, do you notice who he is speaking to here? He's speaking to people he says, verse 36, do not believe. He is speaking to an audience of some believers and non-believers and

non-Christians.

If that's you here this afternoon, Jesus thinks that you need to hear about this. Oddly, he decides, doesn't he, that what you need to hear is this deep subject about God's infallible, definite, predetermined plan to give some people to Jesus and not to others.

Election. If you're a regular here, many of you are, how would you feel if we announced that in, I don't know, Easter time we were going to do a sort of evangelistic series of talks?

Sometimes we do them, don't we? And it would be a series of talks where you could invite your friends along, it would be accessible to people that have never heard about Jesus or read the Bible, and it would be sensitive to them.

[5 : 52] But the subject matter was not going to be on the question of, is there a God? Or even, why does God allow suffering? Or, why can we trust the Bible?

Although they're good things to ask, aren't they? But actually, we're going to do a series on election. How would you feel? We're not going to do that, I don't think. But you never hear that, do you?

You never hear of speech missions, or evangelistic meetings, or university outreach missions, that are focused on that subject.

Yet here, Jesus preaches election in an evangelistic sermon to believers and unbelievers. To a mixture of people.

And we wonder, why does he do that? Well, I think Jesus gives us two reasons. One is a positive reason, one is a negative reason.

[6 : 49] First off, we learn here that those given to Jesus will come to Jesus. Those given to Jesus will come to him.

Look at verse 37 again. All that the Father gives to me will come to me. People who are chosen and given to Jesus Christ by God the Father to be rescued and loved will find themselves coming to him and being his forever.

as if they are caught in a sort of tidal wave of God's love. God doesn't send these people to Jesus like we send and receive gifts and things to each other.

When we do that, all sorts of things can go wrong. You get those red cards coming through your letterbox don't you at times? And at the top it says attempted delivery.

And the thing that was meant for you hasn't arrived, it hasn't come to the right place. You didn't get what was sent to you. Maybe you weren't in, you didn't sign for it or the fee hasn't been paid.

[8 : 02] But those who come to Jesus, those who arrive at Jesus' door are never like that. The giving of his people to Jesus is infallible.

It is effective. They are flawlessly delivered and received by him. Jesus sees his people, his disciples and followers, not just as a kind of random collection of people.

He doesn't come into the world and sort of go eeny, meeny, miny, moe. Which one shall I have? I'll put all their names in a hat and I'll pick out a few. It is not like that.

In one way, those who come to Jesus is not up to Jesus on one level. He says, no, I've come to do my, not to do my will but the will of him who sent me.

Which is not to lose anyone that the Father has given me. This is how he sees his people. He is the good shepherd, he says in John 10, whose sheep are those who he has given to me.

[9 : 10] It's my job, John 17, he prays to God, to give eternal life to all you whom you have given to me. And the encouraging thing here in this kind of positive thing is that this is a mixture of people, isn't it?

The crowds do not believe at this moment, some of them, but that is not a problem for Jesus. He's not fazed by that. It's okay.

It doesn't mean that his church is going to die out. Because Jesus knows that it's not their ability that is the prime reason that people come to him. Nothing about them actually is the issue.

Since those who God gives to Jesus will come. They will. One way or another. They will come. If you are here as a believer, maybe you've got a great testimony of how that happened.

Maybe you were in the right place at the right time. You were born maybe into a believing family. Maybe you had a Christian friend. You were invited along to church. I don't know your story.

[10 : 21] But let me tell you what really happened. What really happened is that in eternity past, God the Father thought of God the Son and said, I want to give you a people.

I want to give you this man. I want to give you this woman. And so I'm giving you David Jones. I'm giving you Chris Hosier.

I'm giving you John Mark. I'm giving you such and such a person. And I'm going to get them and wrap them up and give them to you and deliver them to you, my son. For you to have them and to save them. When we give gifts that can go wrong for all sorts of reasons. The person might not even want the gift. Some parcels get sent to us, don't they? But they get re-gifted. Some deliveries get marked return to sender. But again, it's not like that here with the people that come to Jesus.

[11 : 24] Notice the all in verse 37. All that the Father gives me will come and I will not cast any of them out.

It's not as if Jesus doesn't want any of these gifts or only a few of them. He doesn't grin and bear the gift.

Maybe you think that's you if you're a Christian. You're the one that became a Christian but secretly Jesus thinks doesn't he, great, but actually they're not what I had in mind, Father.

But I suppose I'll grin and bear it and I'll receive them to myself and be thankful. It's not like that because actually Jesus does have a choice in who he receives.

He says to his disciples, I chose you. You didn't choose me. And so on another level it's a mutual thing. It is like when a parent says to the child, I want to give you a gift, son, and I know what you want.

[12 : 31] And the son says, yes, you know that I'd love that thing, Father. And the father says, yeah, I'm going to give you that thing. You will have that. And it's a mutual decision between the father and the son that Jesus would receive his people and not turn any away.

And so the father gives to Jesus whom he chooses and Jesus chooses those whom the father gives. It's a really deep thing, isn't it?

Hard thing to get our heads around. And so these people, whoever they are, those who come to Jesus are bound to do that.

They are bound to Jesus by this divine, infallible gift, giving. Whoever they are, wherever they are, they will come.

They will be delivered to and signed for by and paid for by and received by Jesus. Notice how John switches his description of Jesus' audience.

[13 : 40] You might remember early in our passage he calls them the crowd, doesn't he? The crowd who ate bread and fish. It's just a neutral description of a group of people, isn't it?

The crowd. But look at verse 41. He switches the title and he now talks about the Jews, doesn't he? That is the title for the people that we've come to know in John's Gospel as those who are most against Jesus, the ones who frequently reject him.

But Jesus isn't fazed about talking to them, is he? even amongst those people who typically reject him, if they are given to him by the Father, they will come to him.

It's not a question of if, but it's a question of when for some of them. And by preaching the Gospel, that is the means, isn't it, that God uses, and through prayer, and through the witness of his people, that they will come.

And what an encouragement that is to us, isn't it, as we seek to share our faith, God's choice of people to give to Jesus, doesn't make us lazy, it spurs us on to keep talking, and to keep witnessing, and to keep praying, because in the end, those who are given to Jesus will come inevitably, and irresistibly.

[15 : 13] I'm sure that there are people in Ealing right now, walking around on the streets, and maybe in your workplace, people that you know, who haven't got the first idea about Jesus, but if God has prepared them to be delivered to Jesus, they will be delivered to him, and they will come.

It's not if, but when. So that is the first thing, all given to Jesus will come. But then secondly, and lastly, Jesus says, another implication of this is that those not given to Jesus will not come.

Those not given to Jesus will not come. And this is the negative side, isn't it? Drop your eye down to verse 44 with me. He says, no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. when we send things all kind of things can go wrong. One thing, you might get sent something to your door that actually wasn't meant for you in the first place.

Maybe it was meant for your next door neighbour, or to someone living previously at your address. Some things can come through our door that we don't want, junk mail, or whatever.

[16 : 36] But the door to Jesus' kingdom is not like that. because nothing outside of what the Father gives to Jesus will come through his door and will be received by Jesus.

If the person is not sent, the kind of stamp by God the Father, and drawn by the Father, they cannot in any way, apart from that, slip their way into the letter box of salvation.

salvation. And that is their problem here, isn't it? Jesus says the negative thing here in response to something that they say in verse 42, just look there, and they say, is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?

How does he now say I've come down from heaven? Now, the kind of confusion on that may be understandable, but John hints at a problem that we've seen before in the gospel, it is the problem of people's proud assumption of Jesus.

It is their reliance on faculties of human deduction alone, isn't it? It's those words that we've heard before, we know, we know, we know Jesus' father and his mother, we know where he's come from, we know his mum and dad, we know who he is.

[18:02] They are judging him by human standards. And so because of that, they cannot receive his gifts. Doesn't it highlight the powerlessness of the natural person to come to Jesus without being drawn by the father?

Without God working in a person in us and giving us to Jesus, we are totally unable to see who Jesus is and where he has come from and what he's come to do.

It reminds us, doesn't it, that we can witness and preach and take people to church and we can tell them the gospel until we're blue in the face. But unless the father draws them, nothing will happen.

In that case, even the greatest theologian on earth will never come to Jesus. And yet we do all those things, don't we, knowing that those he has given to Jesus will come to him.

Just as we close now, it struck me this week preparing this, that Jesus does tell people in John's gospel to do things that he knows they cannot do themselves.

[19:24] Think about that. He commands people to do stuff that he knows full well they are incapable of doing. He tells a lame man to walk, doesn't he?

He tells a dead man to get out of a tomb. And maybe the even harder thing, he tells people to believe and come to him.

Knowing full well they can't do that by themselves. And on one level it's utterly ridiculous isn't it really? But Jesus in his wisdom he does that freely and confidently knowing that God uses the means of his words to do the impossible and to draw those who otherwise would not.

Knowing that some at least will come. love to love to If you're a bit worried about this election thing this whole God choosing people if you're sat thinking have I been chosen am I one of those people that has been chosen to be given to Jesus I just want to say that actually isn't the right question to ask but the right question simply is have I come to Jesus?

am I coming to Jesus? and if you haven't then you need to pray for God's help don't you? knowing that you can't do that by yourself you need to pray to the Father that he might draw you to Jesus knowing that he's doing that right now as his word comes to you and do it and come to him with his help but if you have already done that if you've come to Jesus and you want to do that and you're seeking to do that we're not perfect are we?

[21:23] but we want to do that honestly don't be fazed by the rejection of people around you who refuse to do that because those given to the Son by the Father will come they will come and if they are given they will be delivered and they will be received and they will be kept by Jesus so keep doing what you're doing freely and confidently as Jesus does let's pray thanks Thank you.