

Safe in the Arms of Jesus

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Brian R. Wipf

Today, I want to step back from the move, from the building, from all of the urgent needs and opportunities that are presenting themselves to us and get back to the basics; I want to remind you again of what matters most. I want to encourage you with the pure gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because that's our foundation for everything. Our hope, not merely for our own individual rescue, but our hope for societal rescue, cultural rescue, political rescue is the rescue of every man, woman, and child by the work of Jesus.

So, for us to be and grow more into a beacon of light to Taylor County and beyond, we can't drift from our own individual and communal hope, who is the Lord Jesus Christ. In such a busy and exciting time, it's tempting to get a little distracted so let me try to center us again. Our hope for seeing life change in our communities is not a new building; our hope is the Lord Jesus Christ. Burn the new building to the ground and we still have a mission, we still have a mandate, we still have a church family and a Lord and Savior that holds us. So, as we prepare to gather around the Lord's Table in a few minutes, let's turn to John 6 and celebrate the One who matters most (READ John 6:35-40)

The day before, Jesus fed 5000 people from 5 barley loaves to 2 fish; truly a miraculous sign. After he did that the people said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!" They don't say he's a prophet; they say he's *the Prophet*, the one that was promised and the one we've been waiting for. But the very next day, the day Jesus spoke the words we are going to study this morning, they had already forgotten this miracle. Not forget-forget, like they completely didn't remember. But the force of his miracle had already disappeared from their conscience. They say in vs. 30 of chapter 6, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you?" How many signs do you want? And how frequently does Jesus have to give them? The very day before he fed more people that reside in the city of Medford from a portion of food that could fit inside a lunch box. Friends, listen very closely: signs will never be enough to compel people to turn to Jesus. I know we are desperate for our friends, our family, our neighbors to turn to Jesus and sometimes we think, "If only they could see a sign!" as if that would do the trick. Sometimes, we are the desperate ones, aren't we? It seems God has gone silent; we feel so alone and we are so eager to know what to do. So we want a sign. God, will you show me? I know what you said, but can you be a little more obvious? Look what we see: the day after Jesus gives them an amazing sign, they want another one. We don't need more signs; we need more humility.

Jesus basically says, "I'm your sign; I gave you bread from heaven yesterday. Today," Jesus says, "I'm here to tell you that I'm the bread of life." We know Jesus is talking about more than feeding and satisfying our stomachs right away; this isn't about eating something freshly baked from the oven, this is about receiving the life, the sustenance, the fulfillment that are

hearts are looking for. He says, “whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.”

Can I state the obvious? Jesus is our hope, friends. The longing we have, the hope we have; that place deep inside of each and every one of us that says, “There’s got to be more for me, there’s got to be more for all of us in this world,” is truly crying out for Jesus, the bread of life. But still some don’t believe; Jesus himself says that in vs. 36, “But I said to you that you have seen me and yet you do not believe.” Why not? You know, Jesus doesn’t really give us an answer to that here and that’s beyond the scope of today’s message (though I know you’re interested). But what we see in this passage should encourage us; let me show you.

Jump to the punch line, vs. 40, “For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believe in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” First, notice how Jesus says this my Father’s will. God wants this. God desires this. I love hearing about what God wants. Do you know why? Because it’s one of the ways we are fooled about. Have you ever thought things like, “God must be really angry with me now!” or “God would never be that patient with me.” Those are pretty common thoughts. I can’t tell you how many times a burly, Northcentral Wisconsin man has said something like, “If I came into your church God would strike me with lightning!” Behind those thoughts is a presumption of what we think God wants and what he will do.

But Jesus says “This is God’s will: that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him will have eternal life and be raised on the last day.” Now get this, this is really important (and cool): the emphasis is on the certainty of our salvation. The emphasis is on the the 100% guarantee that every single one of us who looks upon Jesus and believes in him will absolutely, positively find eternal life. Why do I say that?

Just look at the previous verses. Let’s start at vs. 37 (and pay attention to how Jesus is trying to convince you and me that our salvation is 100% secure in Christ), “All that the Father gives me will come to me.” All who are given to Jesus from the Father will come to him. That’s good news. Not one will get lost; not one will be forgotten; not one will lose her way. When Korby and I were in Orlando I missed my turns from time to time (I can admit that; I’m secure in my masculinity). And of course, when I missed my turn we had to find another route, which isn’t all that easy either; I’d lost my way. That won’t happen spiritually for those the Father gives to the Son; they will come to him.

Look what’s next in vs. 37, “And whoever comes to me I will never cast out.” Same idea, but different perspective. Now, Jesus is saying, “not only will those the Father gives to me come to me, but I will not turn them away; I will not cast them off; I will not reject them. Ever. I will never do that.”

What an amazing promise! I say amazing for a couple of reasons. First of all, there really are all kinds of reasons why Jesus might cast us out. That’s not hard for us to imagine, right?

Imagine Jesus inviting us into his home. And his home is immaculate (he's the perfect Son of God, don't you know?). His carpet is glistening white; his sofas are a luxuriously, velvety ivory. His tables is pure gold. And he invites us in. And we walk in with mud covering our shoes refusing to take them off; we've brought a bag of cheetos and wipe our disgusting, cheeto stained fingers all over his sofa. We use a sharpie to draw pictures of Jesus golden coffee table the whole time using foul language and telling him how if he really were a good host he would provide more of this and more of that. I could imagine throwing someone out of my house if that's the way they treated me. But Jesus doesn't cast out anyone.

I know some of you try to perform as many good deeds as possible because you don't want him to cast you out. I know others of you have this nagging, fearful dread wondering if Jesus will say, "I'm done with him." Friends, hear these words from Jesus: whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

If you struggle believing this, do not be ashamed; many struggle with this. I struggle with this! Why do you think Jesus is talking about it? He's talking about it because we're tempted not to believe that our life and our future are secure in God. The scriptures say that the Evil One, the Devil, is an accuser. All of those messages that we hear playing in our mind and heart that say, "You're not good enough; God would never accept you; You've screw up too many times" are from the Evil One. And so Jesus is standing over the top of those evil lies this morning and saying, "No, all who the father gives me will come; all who come I will never cast out." Who will we believe this morning?

Jesus even makes our destiny with God more secure in vs. 39 where he says, "And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he (God) has given me, but raise it up on the last day."

So, Jesus has this three-legged stool that supports or secures our destiny with him. The first leg was "Whoever the Father gives me will come." The second is, "Whoever comes I will not cast out." The last leg is, "It's God's will that I should lose none." Again, we are introduced to the will or the desire of God. It's God's desire, his will, his determination (if you will) that none will be lost.

Let me ask you: if God wants something, do you think he will get it? Isn't that the sense we are getting in this passage? Doesn't it seem Jesus is trying to help us see just how secure, just how much our soul is protected by God? There's a great passage in Daniel 4 where King Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, learns a lesson the hard way. And after he learned his hard lesson he says (vs. 34-36), "At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, 'What have you done?'" Who can stop God's hand?

Who can resist his will? God always does as he pleases; he always accomplishes his will. And, my good brothers and sisters, it is his will that he loses none of his children; it is his will that everyone who looks to Jesus will be saved.

So, what does all of this mean we should do? Well, the first thing comes straight from our key verse; look upon Jesus and believe him. That's just one action, I think. Believing in Jesus is looking to Jesus and vice versa. I think that because what Jesus also says in 12:44-45 where he say, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me." Do you see how believing and seeing are synonymous. So, what does this *looking* mean? The looking implies or suggests a more active posture than merely believing.

(PIC) Take a look at this picture. What game is this? It's *Where's Waldo?* Can I make a prediction: nobody is going to find Waldo without looking; and looking rather intently. Do you all believe that Waldo is in that picture? Maybe some of you cynics out there might doubt that, but I'm guessing most of you would say you *believe* Waldo is in that crowd somewhere. But you won't find him unless you look.

Are you getting the difference? Just believing that Waldo is there in the picture is different from looking for him. Likewise, just having a passive, it-will-all-work-out faith is different than looking to Jesus. Looking to Jesus takes this active, hopeful, expectant posture that reaps a glorious reward.

Here's something else looking implies, I think: faith requires a level of specificity. Faith in Jesus is not wishful thinking; faith in Jesus is being assured of his character and trusting what he has said. So, get this: can you truly have faith in Jesus if you don't know who he is, what he's like, and what he's said? No, you can't. If faith in Jesus is more than mere wishful thinking, but is having an assurance in who he is and what he has said, you have to know who he is and what he has said, don't you? And how will you know that? You've got to keep looking.

Friends, don't stop looking towards the bread of life; it's where you will find life; you will be raised in the last day. We can have confidence that we will be safe in the arms of Jesus. I know some of you may not feel that way. But remember what we've talked about before. It doesn't matter how you feel. Your feelings don't determine whether you are safe in God's hand. Do you know what does determine whether you are safe in the arms of Jesus? The very will of God and nothing is more sure than that.

Key vs. John 6:40.