

Here's Your Sign

Sunday AM

By Dr. Jeff Meyers

sermonaudio.com

Preached On: Sunday, June 25, 2017

Crossroads Ministries

301 S. 8th Street

Opelika, Alabama 36801

Website: www.fbcopelika.com

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/jeffmeyers

This morning as we're gathered together, you know, there are two words that often come to our mind at a time like this: the first is grace and the second is mercy. Grace by definition means to receive something that you do not deserve. Mercy means to not receive something you do deserve. When we declare the wonders of his mercy, what we're declaring is we deserve his wrath. We deserve to be pushed aside. We deserve to be marginalized. But I've got news for you, in his mercy he wants to speak into your life today that his grace and, yes, his mercy is such that a God who is almighty and all-powerful and all-loving and all-knowing, knowing everything he knows about you and justified to marginalize you, says, "No, I want to pull him in and I want to speak into their lives." If that is not a God of mercy, I do not know what is.

Let's pray.

Lord, as we come to this time where you will speak to us directly from your word, we recognize that these are not just words of thousands of years ago, these are not just ideas or constructs that theologians and preachers and people have gathered throughout time, but these are your words that you have spoken and you desire to speak into our lives today. So God, I pray that in light of your mercy, that today you would see us not as how we've been and how we are but you would see us through the shed blood of your Son Jesus Christ. And today we plead for mercy that you would do in our lives what we cannot do in our own strength. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the Gospel of John 6. As you're turning to John 6, maybe you're a first time guest or visitor, maybe you haven't had the opportunity to be with us in a while, we are slowly but steadily walking through what we know as the Gospel of John or the fourth Gospel. Very unique compared to Matthew, Mark and Luke in the sense that only 7% of the Gospel of John is found in the other three Gospel accounts. However, today we come to a most unique section of the Gospel of John, John 6, beginning in verse 22, and the reason that it is unique and also allow me to say the reason that we are walking through the Gospel of John, the entire reason for doing this is over the course of the next few months our destiny is John 15. Chapter 15 is where we're headed and when we get to chapter 15, we are just going to "hunker down," that's proof I'm a Southerner, we're going to hunker down for just a little bit because in John 15 Jesus makes a very important statement, he says, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He

who abides in me and I in him shall bear much fruit for apart from me you can do nothing." A critical verse, a critical teaching for us to understand if we would apply that to our lives, how it would alter and change our lives, and we are walking through the Gospel of John with the desired intent to get to chapter 15 but the reason that chapter 6 is so important is because chapter 15, verse 5, when Jesus says, "I am the vine," that is the final of seven "I am" statements in the Gospel of John. He says, "I am the vine."

Today in chapter 6, we're going to see Jesus say, "I am the bread of life." Beginning in this passage today over the course of the next few passages, what we're going to see is Jesus very succinctly share seven key truths to who he can be and desires to be in our life. And today he not only says that he is the "bread of life," he does so as a response and they say, "We want to see a sign. We want to absolutely know that you are the answer." And so what Jesus does in John 6, he says, "Okay, you want to absolutely, positively know I'm the answer? Here's your sign, I am the bread of life. He who comes unto me will never go hungry nor will he ever thirst."

John 6, beginning in verse 22, it says,

22 The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples were gone away alone; 23 (Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks;) 24 When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. 25 And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, where did you come from? 26 Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, You seek me, not because of the miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled. 27 Labour not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed. 28 Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? 29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that you believe on him whom he has sent. 30 They said therefore unto him, What sign do you show us, that we may see, and believe thee? what do you work? 31 Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. 32 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is he which comes down from heaven, and gives life unto the world. 34 Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. 35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that comes to me shall never hunger; and he that believes on me shall never thirst. 36 But I said unto you, That you also have seen me, and believe not. 37 All that the Father gives me shall come to me; and him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out. 38

For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. 39 And this is the Father's will which has sent me, that of all which he has given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. 40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. 41 The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. 42 And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he says, I came down from heaven? 43 Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. 44 No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

We have a setting here very peculiar in the Gospel of John because as you read back into the story, we see that Jesus has fed the 5,000, he has taken the sack lunch of a small young man, five loaves and two fish, and he has fed what we would consider an entire community therein. Then he has walked across the sea. He was received by the disciples into the boat, the boat was immediately on the other side of the Sea of Galilee and the people marveled, but even in their marvel they questioned themselves, "Where will we find food again?" And even though Jesus had done this miracle, even though Jesus had miraculously shown up on the other side, they were still questioning, "Can we really trust you? Do you really have the answers we're seeking?" And in the midst of this passage he says, "Fine. If you want a sign, here's your sign: I am the bread of life. If you come unto me, you will never hunger and you will never thirst again."

As Jesus is communicating this in John 6, the first thing he does, though, is he gives them a comparison. Beginning in verse 22 he says, "As your fathers received bread in the wilderness," he's speaking of that manna experience that the book of Exodus 16 spoke of, that for 40 years the Israelites went out and every single day they received from the Lord that which they needed to eat that day. The problem with manna was if it did not arrive on the day in which they went out, they would not have bread to eat. And in the same sentence, we find out that when he multiplied the bread at the feeding of the 5,000, when that bread was gone, those people would hunger again. So they come to him and he says, "The reason you're seeking me is not because of the miracles but you're hungry and you're wanting food that will never run out." Now, he's not chastising them, he's using this as an opportunity to compare what they're wanting to what he is willing to provide.

In our home and maybe in yours as well, there is this saga of comparisons. My children are always talking about, it typically involves two subject matters: either sports or cars or sometimes even sports cars, we combine the two. One of the things they always want to talk about is how or who is the best player at this sport, and one of the things that I always try to communicate with them is you cannot compare someone who played in the 20s to somebody who plays in the 21st century. The technology is different. The game has changed. In fact, we move onto cars, you know, we have Model T's and then we have Lamborghini's and they're both used for transportation but I know which one we'd all choose if we had enough money to do so. And so what we do is we tend to compare –

listen – apples to oranges. Oh, they may both grow on trees and they both may be good for you, but they're different colors and they're different textures and they are a different substance. And what Jesus is saying to them is, "You're comparing apples to oranges here. You're wanting that which you need but will go away. I am here to provide that which you desperately need and will never run out." So he's not chastising them as much as he's comparing. What you're really wanting to fill you ever day, I'm willing to give you that it will never go away.

Then he clarifies something. In fact, he brings a word of clarification because they receive this comparison and they say, "Oh great, then if that's the case, what do we have to do to do the works of God?" Isn't that the question that all humanity has? What do I have to do to please God? What do I have to do to make God happy with me? What do I have to stop doing so that God will be pleased with me?

You know, we live in a world that has religion as its foundation for everything. Now, I know what the pundits say and I know what the research says and at least here in Western civilization they're telling us that the millennial generation, those in their mid-20s and down, we're hearing that 25% of them, 25% have no religious affiliation. They're either atheists, agnostic or there's this new word called "no," which means they have no religious belief at all. But the last time I checked and I was not a statistical major in college, but if 25% have no religion, does that not mean 75% do? That means 75% of even the most non-believing generation is seeking some type of religious answer and if you look at the world at large, the overwhelming majority of people on planet earth today, in fact this weekend, has spent a lot of time, a lot of energy, and in some cases a lot of money, to do something or to not do something that will make them justified or pleasing to their god's eyes.

Think with me for just a moment. There is a certain segment of our world that prior to you and I getting up this morning, they've already gotten up. In fact, they will suspend sleep, they will suspend work, they will suspend their family at least five times a day to make sure that they pray the right prayers, face in the right direction, to somehow appease the god of their faith.

There are other people in the world who today and this weekend, they will take incense and they will take certain vegetable items and fruits and they will sacrifice them and they will offer them to their ancestors, hoping that those who have died before them will somehow receive their request in this life they're still living.

There are still others who will spend countless hours in some type of meditation, hoping to somehow seep out of their lives all the negativity and all the bad thoughts so that somehow, some way, they can be at peace with the universe and all that surrounds them.

There are others that will deprive themselves of certain foods. They will deprive themselves of certain pleasures because in their religious fervor some are excluded, some are included, some should not be partaken of and some should. In fact, worldwide this weekend, there have been those that will gather on certain days but not others. There are

those who will not lift a finger or walk a step, there are others who will be removed from this or that just so that somehow either what they are doing or what they're not doing will somehow please the god of their faith.

I want you to notice what Jesus says here in John 6. They ask, "And what might the work be that we should do?" Verse 29, "Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that you believe on him that has sent me." Here's what distinguishes Christianity from every other faith system in the world. Every other belief system says do something or stop doing something so that your god will be happy with you. Christianity says you can't do anything for God to be pleased with you so God himself is going to do everything on your behalf. Do you see the difference? All other faiths try to "please God," Christianity, God comes and does the work on our behalf. Jesus says, "Do you want to know what you do? All you've got to do is believe on him who sent me."

You know, I mentioned the word Christianity, allow me to distinguish between Christianity and Christian-dumb. The difference in those two words, Christianity is the faith of those who believe in Jesus Christ, Christian-dumb is a culture or a community that just so happens to have Christian values and principles as a guideline for life. You and I today, whether we want to admit it or not, we live in a society that is Christian-dumb. As a whole, the values, the principles are stated in line with Scripture and yet even in that context, there are people this weekend who they believe that even the God of the Bible if they say certain prayers a certain amount of time in a certain place and give a certain amount of money, somehow they are justified before a holy God. I've got news for you: where did Jesus say you've got to pray a certain amount of time? Where did Jesus say you had to be in a certain location? Where did Jesus say you have to give a certain amount? He said all you have to do is believe in him who sent me. Jesus is making it real clear our forgiveness and our salvation is not based on what you do, but on what he has done for you.

So he compares himself to the physical blessings of God and he's providing a spiritual eternal gift of salvation. Then he clarifies it's not based on what you do, it's based on what he has done on our behalf. Then he confirms it because they come to him and they say, "Man, this is a great idea. This is wonderful. However, if we're going to embrace this, we need to know the sign." Now, when you go through the Scripture, you will discover that there are lots of miracles in the Bible but there are very few signs. Let me define for you a biblical sign. A biblical sign is something that only God can do. It cannot be attributed to man. It cannot be attributed even to the miraculous, only the hand of God can pull it off. For example, in the Old Testament when the rainbow appears and God declares he'll never judge humanity by water again, that's called a sign. When Gideon puts his fleece out and it's dry and the ground is wet and reversed the next day, that's called a sign. When the Bible says in Isaiah that a young lady before she's ever known a man will give birth to the Messiah, that is called a sign. And these people come to Jesus and they say, "We desire a sign." A sign is only that which can come and be declared from the hand of God.

You know, some years ago I, like many of you, had a propensity to be in athletics and, you know, there are some guys that say, "I used to play ball," I'm one of those that I never

was. I'm just going to be honest with you. I attempted and baseball was kind of my sport of choice but as I grew up playing the game, there was one team that I traveled with and we had this coach, man, he was an institution and I could tell stories for hours. He was a former collegiate baseball player and he wasn't really re-living his life through us, he just wanted us all to follow in his steps and, I mean, he was demanding with our time and his expectations were higher than anybody else and because of that, we won and we won a lot. But one weekend we were at a tournament playing ball and the same thing happened that happened over half the time. You see, when our coach coached us, he was the third base coach and in most baseball teams, your head coach is the third base coach. He sits there and he gives signals. You've seen it. You know, they're rubbing their arm, tipping their cap, whatever it may be, all kinds of signals to tell you steal, bunt, hit and run, whatever it may be, take a pitch. He would give signals but he had a unique way of coaching because he would give signals at third base, we had an assistant coach who was the first base coach and he wanted him to give signals at the same time. So if you're in the batter's box, you had your third base coach and your first base coach both look like they're swatting flies the whole time. But we knew that the only person that mattered was that third base coach. He said, "I don't care what the other coach does," in fact that was part of his strategy, to get us to look at the first base coach while looking at him out of the corner of our eye so that the other team would try to pick up this signal which meant absolutely nothing.

Here's the problem: fabulous coach, incredible desire for excellence in our lives, but he had a short temper. In fact, I will tell you that in all the games he coached me, he probably did not finish half of them. He got kicked out of almost every game we played. I mean, he was one of those, he'd yell at the umpire, he'd kick dirt, throw bats. I mean, he was a wild guy and he would always get kicked out. Here's the problem: when he would get kicked out of the game, he had to leave the facility. Our first base coach became our third base coach and one of the players would take turns being the first base coach which meant that nobody on the field actually had a signal worth paying attention to.

Ah, but he was smarter than that. He had a plan. You see, he knew his short temper and he knew he got kicked out of a lot of games. Are you ready for this? This coach of mine actually had a separate set of signals. When he got kicked out of the game, he would be removed from the field and he'd go and sit on the hill and the way he was sitting would tell you what you were supposed to do. In other words, it didn't matter what that guy at third base now was doing or your friend at first base, the only person that we were to pay attention to, the only person who we would get directions from whether he was at third base or on the hill was the one who was our coach.

That same analogy works when they're saying, "We desire a sign." Let me tell you what these people were saying, "We're tired of hearing this opinion and we're tired of hearing that opinion. We're tired of following this philosopher and we're tired of listening to this perspective. We just want God to speak in our lives." What does Jesus say? He says, "Fine. You want a sign, here it is: I'm the bread of life. He who comes unto me, you will never go hungry and you will never thirst."

Now, this is interesting, this part of the Scripture because earlier in Matthew 12 it says Jesus got upset with a group of people and he says, "An adulterous generation seeks after a sign." And it says there that the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the scribes were there and they were arguing with Jesus saying, "Jesus, we don't think you're the right guy. We think you've got everything twisted up." And Jesus said, "Do you know what? You want a sign, I'll give you a sign: as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so I will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights." He tells a group of people that he's only going to give them one sign but here in John 6 he says, "You want a sign? No problem, here it is." In fact, you go to the end of the Gospel of John 22:30-31 and it says, "And other signs," listen to this, "he gave his disciples that they might believe on his name." You see, in Matthew 12, Jesus tells his critics, Jesus tells those who don't want anything to do with him, all they want to do is put him in a corner and expose him to be false in their perspective, he says, "There's only one sign I'm going to give you. I'm going to raise from the dead once my body's been put in the tomb." But to those who were seeking him, even though he says you wanted the woes and you were seeking the miracles, he says, "Those who are desiring, those who want to know the truth, here's your sign: I'm the bread of life. If you will believe in me, it's not based on what you do, it's not based on what you stop doing, it's based on having a relationship with me. If you will do that, all of your desires of the temporal will be replaced by the needs of the eternal."

Here's the great news: Jesus then concludes by talking about all this bread of life and never hungering, never thirsting, and this is the first of seven such statements. You see, here's his conclusion, it's real simple: we're all searching for truth, we're all desiring truth, we're all wanting the answers and he's the only one who can provide it. You see, here in chapter 6 he says, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never thirst and will never hunger again." You go to chapter 8, verse 12, and he says, "I am the light of the world. He who comes to me will never walk in darkness." Chapter 10, verse 9, he makes this statement, "I am the door. I am the entryway." Verse 11, he says, "I am the good shepherd." Chapter 11, verse 25, he says, "I am the resurrection." Verse 26, he says, "I am the life." Chapter 14, verse 6, he says, "I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life." And in chapter 15, he says, "I am the vine."

Let me tell you what Jesus is concluding: Jesus uses illustrations like bread and light and a door and a shepherd and life to say everything that we're desiring and craving and wanting in the physical, that he is the only one who can provide in the eternal. And in every one of those illustrations, every one of the "I am" statements, he makes that very clear. But secondly, he concludes this: if we embrace and if we believe him, we will never be hungry, never be thirsty, never walk in darkness, never have to worry about death, never be confused about which way we go, and know we're always connected to him in a relationship. So not only does he provide in our belief in him that which we crave the most, it is secure in the sense that we never have to worry about it fading away. And finally, his conclusion is that all we have to do is believe. That's what he told them. They wanted to do something, they wanted to sign up for a class, they wanted to say, "Do I go here or go there?" He said, "All you have to do is believe."

Now, as we wrap up today, I want to deal with verse 44. You see, verse 44 has been seen by some as a contradiction. I mean, here is Jesus making this very clear comparison: as manna came from heaven, physically he has come from heaven spiritually. He has made it very clear we don't have to do anything, he has done it all for us. He confirms it by saying directly from the hand of God I have provided. And then he concludes, he's the bread of life. We'll never go hungry or thirsty again. Then verse 44, it says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." You see, in that passage of Scripture, it says that no one can receive this forgiveness and no one can receive this salvation and no one can possess the bread of life unless the Father draw him.

I cannot tell you how many hundreds of conversations that I've had throughout the years, people whose lives are sordid at best and messed up at worst, who have been places they had no business being and been with folks they had no business being with, doing things that we would call unseemly and unthinkable. You see, they have a past and that past, they have a present, and they see what Jesus is willing to do for them and how many times do we come to this point and we say, "Yeah, that might be good for them but not for me"? How many times do we fall into the trap of saying, "There is them and there is us. There is Group A and there is Group B"? And oftentimes I've seen people take verse 44 as a justification for that, to say that there is an "us" and a "them" and who the Father draws and those who are rebelling and those who are struggling and those who lose sleep at night because they know what their lives really look like, they look at verse 44 and there is a propensity to establish a contradiction that it is for some and it is not for others.

I want you to turn a few pages to chapter 12 of the Gospel of John, verse 32, and I want to deal with this supposed contradiction because Jesus said that the only ones who can receive this bread of life, the only ones who will never go thirsty again are those who the Father brings unto him and there can be that approach of, "Well, maybe there are some and not all." But look at chapter 12, verse 32, Jesus, these are red letters in your Bible, "And if I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw some unto me." Just making sure you're reading. He says, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all unto me." Now, I was not an English major in college but I took enough English to know that the word "all" means "all." And Jesus said, "If I be lifted up," you see, back in chapter 6, verse 44, Jesus says, "I can only forgive those, I can only save those who the Father brings unto me," but then in chapter 12, we see the establishment of the Father's plan. He says, "If I be lifted up."

Now, I want you to think about this for just a moment. On that fateful day of the crucifixion of Jesus, what did they do? They lifted him up on a cross. Three days later, he lifted out of an empty tomb. And 40 days later, he was there in Acts 1, two angels on each side, he lifted up into the heavens, into the clouds. The angels looked around and said, "The same Jesus that you're upset that departed, will return in like manner." What did Jesus say in chapter 12, verse 32? "If I be lifted up." He was lifted up on the cross. He was lifted up out of the grave. And he was lifted up into the heavens. And he said, "If that occurs," he says, "if I be lifted up." In other words, "If this takes place, I will draw all men unto me."

You see, there are some of you out there today whether in person or by way of media, you have fallen for a lie. You have fallen for a lie that you've done something that cannot be forgiven. Or you've been somewhere that cannot be forgiven. Or maybe you've lived such a life, you've gone too far or you've done this or you haven't done that and you've fallen into this trap of believing that Jesus is for some but he's not for you. You've fallen into this lie that says Jesus will save those that are religious but not you. You've fallen in the trap of thinking Jesus is for those people but not for me. I've got news for you: Jesus was lifted up on the cross, Jesus was lifted up from the grave, and Jesus was lifted up into the heavens so that all men, and that means you, can come unto him.

Maybe you're that person today, you've fallen for the lie, believe that somehow, some way, Jesus wasn't for you. I've got news for you: he said, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto myself," and all men means you and all men means me and all men means everyone who hear upon his name. Here's the great news, church: you don't have to do anything. You don't have to sign up for a class. You just have to believe on him. Would you today say, "I'm a part of the all"?

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. You know, maybe you're that person today, maybe you're that person who has believed the lie way too long and even though you're at church or maybe you're watching church online, maybe you're that person who is just trying to do something to somehow appease a God you know you've sinned against. Can today be that day where you quit doing something? Can today be that day where you quit doing something? Can today be that day where you just do what Jesus told us to do, just believe on him? It doesn't matter where you've been, who you've been with or what you've done, he said if he was lifted up, and he was, he would draw all unto himself which includes you.

If you're in that situation, that position today, I've got great news for you. You don't have to sign up for a class. You don't have to check a box. You don't even have to cross a T. All you need to do is have a real serious conversation with God. You don't have to have this conversation out loud, in fact, you don't even have to say the same words I would say, but maybe that conversation would go a little something like this. "God, today I quit. God, I'm going to quit trying to do it on my own. I'm going to quit trying to do it in my strength. I'm going to quit trying to be religious. I'm going to quit it all. I today surrender. I surrender to the fact that Jesus Christ is the only means of forgiveness. Jesus Christ is the only means of salvation. God, I believe today it's not what I have to do to impress you, but it's what you've done to forgive me. I believe today that Jesus Christ loved me so much he was born on my behalf. I believe today that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he lived a sinless life on my behalf. I believe today that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he was willing to go to the cross and raise from the dead so I could be forgiven. And God, today I don't have all the answers to all the world's problems but I do know that Jesus Christ is the answer to my sin problem. And God, in the best way I know how, I'm confessing him and I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, maybe today is that day. Maybe today is that day where you quit listening to the lies and you started believing the truth. We just want the opportunity to dialog with you. We want the opportunity to celebrate with you. Or maybe there's something else the Lord's moving and doing in your life, maybe you're already a believer and you haven't followed in baptism. Or maybe that's taken place and the Lord has said this is your spiritual home or maybe it was something else. All we want to do is celebrate with you and dialog with you, whatever the Lord is doing in your life.

Lord, as we come to this time, how grateful we are for your mercy. Lord, we know what we deserve. We know what we're worthy of, but you have reached out of heaven with the hand of your love and the hand of your grace and the hand of your mercy and though, Lord, we're not worthy, Lord, today we come and we declare and we say thank you that you are willing to forgive us, you are willing to save us, you are willing to move in our lives even though we don't deserve it. God, today we come to celebrate your mercy moving in our lives. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.