

## **John on Jesus - Hard Words**

**Sign Title: Hard Words**

**September 16, 2012**

Good morning Faith Church. For those of you who are new, my name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. We are working our way through the Gospel of John. Today, we hit a difficult section of John. Not only is it difficult to understand but once you understand it, it is difficult to accept. In addition to these challenges, this is probably the largest piece of biblical text I have taught on in a single sermon since coming to Faith Church. All this to say, we have some real challenges before us this morning.

Get your Bibles out and turn to John 6:16. If you didn't bring a Bible, it is on page 891 of the pew Bible. Take out your notes. Make sure you have plenty of caffeine. Here we go!

Let's begin by picking up where we left off. Last week, we covered the first 15 verses of John chapter 6. Jesus and his disciples attempted a vacation on the east side of the Sea of Galilee to get away from the busy ministry and demanding people. It backfired. Twenty thousand people walked around the lake to find Jesus. Rather than blowing them off, because he was on vacation, Jesus had compassion. He taught them all day long. Dinner time arrived, and there was a food shortage. There was no McDonald's in the wilderness. Jesus used this crisis to test his disciples. He asked them where they could get food for the crowd. The disciples failed the test because all they could think of were the resources they had in their hands, not the resources they had in Jesus. The only one who passed the test was a poor, teenage boy who willingly gave up his

meager lunch of five barley loaves and two fish. In the hands of Jesus, that was multiplied to feed the entire crowd with plenty to spare. We learned that “What I can give, plus what God will do, is always more than I could have done.”

**Jesus is great! He should be king.**

What I didn’t cover last week was the crowd’s reaction to this miracle.

When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!” Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself. John 6:14–15 (ESV)

The crowd liked the Jesus free-food program. They saw Jesus as the prophet Moses predicted who would be “like him” in Deuteronomy 18. From there they decided their problems would be over if they could just get Jesus involved in politics. They thought Jesus should be president.

We can understand why they would think this way. What are some of the big issues in the election between President Barack Obama and Mitt Romney? Who will lower our taxes so we can have more food on our table, and who will fix health care? If you think about it, Jesus has both of these under control. He gives everyone free food, all you can eat. He also has a great health care plan that involves no deductible and instant recovery. They pictured Jesus as the human buffet line. Look what he did with a kid who had barley loaves and fish. Next time, they thought, “Let’s send him a kid with steak and caviar in his back pack.” You can see why they want to put Jesus into office.

Jesus isn’t interested in politics. His kingdom is not of this world. He escaped up a mountain to get away from the crowds. The crowds couldn’t, and wouldn’t, follow him to the top.

### **Jesus goes anti-social and the disciples make a great escape.**

When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. John 6:16–17 (ESV)

This is funny. Jesus was up a mountain praying, and the disciples made a run for it under cover of darkness. Remember, they went to the opposite side of the lake to get away from people. The problem is, 20,000 people followed them around the lake. So there was a huge crowd, everyone tugging on the sleeves of the disciples. Even though Jesus wasn't back from his mountain prayer time, they couldn't handle it anymore. As the sun sets, they decided to make a run under cover of darkness. They hoped the crowd wouldn't see where their boat landed on the other side of the lake.

The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going. John 6:18–21 (ESV)

Last week, we learned the Sea of Galilee is seven miles across. They were in the middle of the lake and making no progress because of the headwind and the waves. If the disciples weren't discouraged enough by people overload from the crowd, the wind and the waves threatening to swamp the boat should have just about done them in. Then the fun began. Jesus caught up to the boat by walking on the water. I don't know how this worked. I used to live on Lake Michigan, and the waves were huge. I often wondered how Jesus walked on wavy water. Maybe he skipped from wave crest to wave crest. I doubt he spent much time in the troughs.

California thinks they invented surfing. I disagree. Jesus was the first surfer because he was surfing the waves. Surfing is biblical. Jesus was also the best surfer. He was surfing without a board! While I don't know how Jesus surfed these waves, it understandably freaked the disciples out watching him do it. They realized it was him and they took him in the boat. They calmed down, and the sea calmed down. Immediately they made it to the other side. There might be a miracle here. I don't know.

### **Jesus plays hide and seek with his fan club.**

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. 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. John 6:22–24 (ESV)

The crowds woke up the next day after their carb hangovers because they had too much bread the night before. They began looking for Jesus. They wondered when he was serving breakfast. They couldn't find him anywhere. What happened next was a game of hide and seek. They figured Jesus was hiding, they were seeking. My guess is that part of the crowd walked back around the lake. Another part of the crowd milled around the wilderness looking for Jesus and more food. I think there was eventually more than 20,000 looking for Jesus. When happened when word gets out that somebody is serving a free lunch? Everybody starts showing up! Now we have a stadium-sized crowd of people looking for Jesus but they had no idea where he went. Some of the crowd

looked for him in Capernaum. Why Capernaum? That was the base of operations for Jesus and the disciples on the east side of the lake.

When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” John 6:25 (ESV)

You can just imagine the looks on their faces. Jesus went up a mountain on one side of the lake. They found Jesus on the other side of the lake. Nobody could figure how he came across. I would say they had a good reason to be confused. Interestingly, they addressed him as “rabbi.” It was a term of respect. It was a term of respect you gave a Bible teacher. Jesus knew they didn’t see him as their rabbi. They weren’t interested in his teaching. What were they looking for? Lunch!

**Jesus is the Pillsbury dough boy.**

Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.” John 6:26 (ESV)



Jesus called their bluffs. They were not looking to him as a teacher. They just wanted to know when lunch was served. All they wanted was more food from Jesus. Jesus challenged them.

Do not 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.” John 6:27 (ESV)

Jesus told them they were looking for the wrong food. A free lunch would leave you hungry only hours later. Instead of spending all their time working for bread that perished, they should have focused their energies on the bread that endures and would give them eternal life. Jesus said that bread comes from the Son of Man. That is a title from the book of Daniel. The Son of Man is Jesus’

favorite title for himself. This winter, we will look at that title in our Christmas series called “Christmas From the Book of Daniel.” We will learn more about that connection. Explaining why Jesus called himself this will be your Christmas present. You have to wait until Christmas for me to give it to you.

Jesus told people to change their frantic search from a free lunch and instead focus their energies on a food that would not perish and leave them hungry. Jesus was the one bread that would satisfy.

### **Jesus doesn't do karma.**

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.” John 6:28–29 (ESV)

Here is their reaction. “OK, you want to talk about eternal life. Great topic. What do we need to do to be doing the works of God? How do we obtain a relationship with God? What is our responsibility? Think about what they are saying. There must be some kind of thing God wants us to do for eternal life.” They thought they had to buy it. They had to earn it. They thought if they gave God something he would give them eternal life.

They were living in the world of karma. Karma says we do something, we get something. That is not the way God works. There is nothing we can trade with God to get the gift of eternal life. The way it works is grace. God has done for us what we can't do for ourselves. This is why Jesus says the only work you have to do is believe. You cannot earn it. It is just believing in Jesus. How do we know God? It is by faith. The simple message is that our sins are so serious that the only ones who could get us out of the jam with God is God. That is what

he did. Jesus, God's own son, died in our place for our sins. What do we need to do for eternal life? Have faith in him.

**I would believe if I had a miracle.**

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.'" John 6:30–31 (ESV)



How many times have you heard people say, "Jesus, I will believe you if you just perform a miracle for me." That is what these people are saying. "OK, Jesus, you want us to believe in you for eternal life. Do a miracle." If Jesus did a miracle, they would believe. I have a question. If Jesus performed a miracle, would this change their hearts? Absolutely not! What did they just experience less than 24 hours before? A huge miracle. Jesus fed 20,000 people with five loaves and two fish. What did they want? More tricks. All these guys wanted was a free lunch.

Interestingly, think about how they approached Jesus on this one. They didn't want to believe in Jesus. They wanted Jesus to work for them. They wanted Jesus to prove himself to them on their terms. What miracle did they want? They wanted Jesus to top Moses' miracle of manna in the Old Testament. There was manna bread every morning in the wilderness for 40 years as God's people wandered in the desert. They wanted Jesus to give them bread every day just like Moses did in the wilderness. They would worship Jesus if he was their Pillsbury dough boy. If Jesus could top Moses and the manna, if Jesus was the bread man, then they would believe.

How cheesy can you get? They were telling Jesus what he needed to do to get their faith; they ignored what he had already done. They just wanted to use Jesus. Before we bust these guys chops too much, we need to realize that we are not much different. We try to broker these kinds of deals with God. “Jesus, let me pass calculus and I promise I will attend youth group for an entire month.” “Jesus, don’t let the IRS check my tax return and I promise I will give at least 10 percent of my income to you next year.” We try to broker these deals where God works for us.

“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.” John 6:33–36 (ESV)

Jesus corrected the crowd. Moses did not give the Israelites bread from heaven. Moses was just the mouthpiece. Don’t give the guy credit for bread when the guy didn’t spend any time in the kitchen. It was God the Father who gave them bread from heaven. Jesus tried to bring the crowd back to understanding his metaphor. He said, “I am the true bread from heaven.” He would give his life for the world. Did the crowds get it? No! The crowds were still clueless. They still thought he was talking about physical bread. They wanted him to give them free bagels and cream cheese. So the crowds were on one level wanting free bread. Jesus was on another level using bread as a metaphor. He told them he was the one they need to eat. He was the one they needed to sustain themselves on. When they tried to sustain themselves on him, the result will be eternal life, not just another day of physical life. They did not



need another miracle to believe. They already had amazing miracles, and they still wouldn't believe. Why wouldn't they believe?

Sometimes I hear people say that if they were alive while Jesus was on earth, they would believe. No, they wouldn't. Sometimes I hear people say that if they saw a miracle, they would believe. No, they wouldn't. These guys saw Jesus in the flesh. They literally ate the barley and fish he multiplied but they still wouldn't believe he was the son of God.

Why wouldn't they believe? If you thought this was deep, now it gets deeper.

**You won't believe because you can't 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." John 6:37–40 (ESV)

Here goes theology class. "All the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out." Who are the *only people* who will recognize Jesus for who he is? The people the God the Father gives to Jesus. By inference, what happens to the rest? He drives them away. We have this idea that everybody is desperately seeking God. We think that if we could just get people in the doors of a church, they would all find God because the problem is ignorance. Wrong! Jesus said nobody is seeking God. Paul said in Ephesians 2 that we are all dead in our sins. Everybody is in hard core rebellion against God. There is nobody who can recognize Jesus for who he is. Nobody will naturally come to Jesus, even if they see miracles. It is only when God the

Father chooses to give a rebellious sinner to Jesus that he or she can come to Jesus. God the Father opens their eyes so they can recognize Christ for who he actually is. If God the Father doesn't open someone's eyes to Jesus, all they will see is Jesus the bread man, the guy who can make our lives better here and now by giving us a free lunch. That is called the prosperity gospel. Come to Jesus and get rich, get healthy and get happy. That is not necessarily true. For the disciples, it was come to Jesus and die a martyr's death.

Those that come to Christ, Jesus will never cast out. Those the Father gives the Son, the Son will not lose. What Jesus begins in us is a supernatural work from God. What began from God, God will complete.

Jesus had this huge crowd. This was his chance to give his sales pitch and get lots of followers. Instead, he frustrated everyone and scattered them. He said that in this crowd, some would never get beyond physical bread. "You can't get beyond physical bread because you are spiritually dead. Some of you, God the Father is giving me. You will see me for who I am. You will get the bread metaphor and you will recognize me for who I am as the true bread from heaven. What God began by drawing you to me, he will complete."

Those are hard words. We think God is supposed to save everybody. Put your finger in the text. The offer of salvation is extended to everybody in the crowd but it is only effective for those the father gives to Jesus. In the meantime, the rest of the guys still wanted Pillsbury dough Jesus to make them loaves of bread.

The reason we don't like this is because we think everybody should come to Jesus. We think we should be in control. I'm sorry, that is pride. God is in control. God the Father decides who he will give to Jesus and who he won't. We know those he gives to Jesus, because they see Jesus for who he is and they persevere in following him. I am not making this stuff up. I am just putting my finger in the text. Argue with the text; don't argue with me. Does that mean we don't make real choices? Yes, we make real choices, but ultimately, we didn't choose Jesus because we were so dead in sin we couldn't choose Jesus. Those of us who know Jesus chose Jesus because God the Father made us spiritually alive so we could choose him.

I love when Jesus says he will lose none of those given to him by his father. You know how this gets talked about in church. You hear about people losing their salvation. You hear about people walking away from Jesus. Jesus failed. Jesus didn't keep them. Put your finger in the text. If you walk away from Jesus, did you originally belong to Jesus? No! Listen to me on this one. In the church there are some great pretenders. They are people who look good but ultimately they do not endure. The classic example is Judas. He was part of the inner 12 disciples, and they trusted him so much they put him in charge of the money. He did not endure because he never really knew Jesus. He was just following the Jesus crowd because he liked all the attention.

Let's recap. Many people come to Jesus. They come looking for bread. Only those that God the Father gives to Jesus will catch the metaphor that Jesus is the bread they need not just for physical life but for something more important,

eternal life. If you recognize Jesus as the bread of eternal life, it is a gift from God, not yourself. No matter what happens, you will persevere in your faith in Jesus all the way to the end because your spiritual life did not originally come from you, but it was a gift from God the Father. I know that for some of you, these are hard words. They are Jesus' words. Those of you who are grumbling about this are in good company, because the Jews didn't like it either.

So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" Jesus answered them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day." John 6:41–44 (ESV)

We began with a crowd anxious to see Jesus. Then Jesus had people angry. A huge crowd broke into small groups complaining about Jesus and his claim to be from heaven. They said Jesus couldn't be from heaven. "We know his family. We remember him on traveling baseball. He played second base, and he wasn't that good. He was on the football team, but he was too skinny so he only played junior varsity. We don't remember him as anything special. This is insanity. He did not come from heaven."

I love way Jesus handled this as the crowd went into rebellion. He didn't apologize or try to clarify, he simply told them to stop grumbling. "Why are you getting so upset? You can't recognize me for who I am unless God the Father draws you to me. Why grumble? It just means God the Father hasn't opened your eyes to see who I am." As you might guess, this was a great way for Jesus to thin the crowd.

It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me— not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." John 6:45–51 (ESV)

Jesus cites Isaiah 54:3 in the Old Testament that the only way to be saved is to learn from God, to be called by God. You have to be chosen by God to be saved. This is not a new thing. This is something the Old Testament teaches. They should have known this. Jesus plainly stated that if someone knows God the Father, they will recognize God the Son. The way you know people who don't actually know God the Father is they claim to know God but they reject Jesus. I know some of you don't like this but take it up with the book, not with me. There is no plan B. There are not 31 different ways to God, only Jesus. There is only one way to God the Father and it is through Jesus the Son.

Jesus hit it again. You want to live forever? It is not about Jesus the baker who can give you hot cakes and cinnamon buns. The people who ate manna in the wilderness still died. You want to live forever, Jesus is the bread of life. He is the one you need to believe in. He is the one you need to satisfy your hunger with. Forget the bread, satisfy yourself in Jesus.

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" John 6:52 (ESV)

If you thought this was a hard sermon, we are just warming up. Jesus is talking on one level about needing faith in himself using the metaphor of bread that satisfies the real hunger in the heart. Satisfying ourselves in Jesus through

faith in him is the only way to live forever. The crowd still didn't believe he was from heaven. They were still stuck on physical bread. When Jesus kept talking about himself as bread and satisfying their real hunger in him, what did they think he was talking about? Cannibalism!

By the way, the first century Jews weren't pro-cannibal. Not many people are. Jesus said, "You think I am advocating cannibalism? OK, let's go with the cannibal motif and really get in your face." The crowd was running from Jesus at this point.

### **Jesus goes cannibal.**

So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever." Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum. John 6:53–59 (ESV)

The crowd was dissipating fast because Jesus was in people's faces. He moved from the metaphor of eating his flesh to drinking his blood. This was Jesus doing a bad Halloween horror film titled "Having Jesus to Lunch and Eating Him." Remember that most of the crowd, because God hadn't chosen to draw them to Jesus, couldn't make this transition to Jesus speaking about himself and his body in a metaphorical way. Many of us could see clearly what Jesus was talking about. He is the one who satisfies the true hunger of our lives. If God isn't drawing you to Jesus, will you understand this? No! You will be repulsed by it. You will scatter away. This is what happens. Most of the people

are running away cupping their mouths because they are grossed out. A small number understand.

By the way, if you were raised Catholic, you are familiar with these verses. Many Catholics use them as a proof-text to say we are saved by taking communion. They believe the bread and the wine turn into the actual body and blood of Jesus freshly crucified for us. That is not what the Bible says. Jesus just told us where eternal life is found. It is found by believing in him, not by literally eating him.

Put your thinking caps on. In these verses, is Jesus saying anything about communion? No! Communion doesn't come until the end of the Gospel of John, right before the crucifixion. This has nothing to do with communion. This was Jesus telling the Jews that they didn't want physical bread that would leave them hungry and dead. They wanted him. He will continually satisfy us, and it is through our faith in Jesus that we are brought into a relationship with God the Father and we live eternally. Don't get side-tracked.

### **These are hard words!**

When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, "Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe." (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." John 6:60–65 (ESV)

Then even the disciples were grumbling against Jesus. They didn't like the whole cannibalism thing. They didn't like that God is the one who does the choosing, not them. That is a hard teaching.

Jesus said, "Why do you grumble against God on this one?" Even if you were to see the Son of Man, that is Jesus, ascend to where he was before at the Father's right hand, that would not make them believe. They didn't need another miracle to believe.

It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. Ultimately, people only turn to Jesus because God the Father makes them alive. Even if they see an incredible miracle, like the feeding of the 20,000 or seeing Jesus ascending to the right hand of the Father in heaven, they still won't believe unless Jesus is the Son of God unless the Father draws them to Jesus. Why will they not see Jesus for who he is? Because they can't. Everyone is spiritually dead.

From this big piece of text, there are a number of things we can learn. The big one is this: No one can come to Jesus unless the Father draws him. Recognizing Christ's true identity is a gift of God. From this there are a number of implications.

1. **Not everyone will become a Christian.** --- Faith in Christ is not just a matter of information, but it is a matter of God the Father giving supernatural transformation. Even seeing miracles will not lead everyone to Christ.
2. **We need Jesus more than we need lunch.** --- Take lunch away and we get grumpy. When you are starving for lunch today, remember what Jesus says in this passage. You need him more than you need physical food.



3. **The only way we truly know someone is a Christian is when they persevere to the end.** --- God the Father begins salvation, and he gives us the strength and faith to sustain our salvation all the way to the end. That is why we read of martyrs being burned at the stake. How did they have the strength to face death for Christ? It was a supernatural gift of God.

### Prayer

Jesus, thank you for this passage. Thank you for these hard words that challenge our thinking and understanding of God the Father. Heavenly father, thank you for being in charge of beginning and maintaining our faith. If we were in charge of it, we would just mess it up. Amen.



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