

Sunday Lesson – August 8, 2021

GOSPEL: John 6: 35; 41-51

God draws us to Him

Context

“We face another Sunday in which the Gospel text focuses on a discussion between Jesus and the crowds about bread which comes from Heaven. Verse 35 is included to make the necessary connection back to Jesus’ claim that he himself is the bread of life. The rest of today’s text acts as an explanation of that claim. In last Sunday’s text, the center of attention was upon Jesus as the gift from the Father for the life of the world. Building on that claim, this Sunday’s text focuses on Jesus as the center of faith to which the Father draws people. The movements within chapter 6 for these two Sundays, and for the one that will follow, are certainly interconnected, but they are not identical. Jesus is not simply repeating himself, and John is not writing in circles.” *(Excerpts from workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revision-common-lectionary/ordinary-19-2/commentary-on-john-635-41-51-2)*

Insight

“The clearest verse on God’s drawing to salvation is John 6:44 where Jesus declares that “no one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.” The Greek word translated “draw” is *helkuo*, which means “to drag” (literally or figuratively). Clearly, this drawing is a one-sided affair. God does the drawing to salvation; we who are drawn have a passive role in the process. There is no doubt that we respond to His drawing us, but the drawing itself is all on His part.

Helkuo is used in John 21:6 to refer to a heavy net full of fish being dragged to the shore. In John 18:1 we see Peter drawing his sword, and in Acts 16:19 *helkuo* is used to describe Paul and Silas being dragged into the marketplace before the rulers.



Clearly, the net had no part in its being drawn to the shore, Peter’s sword had no part in being drawn, and Paul and Silas did not drag themselves to the marketplace. The same can be said of God’s drawing of some to salvation. Some come willingly, and some are dragged unwillingly, but all eventually come, although we have no part in the drawing.

Why does God need to draw us to salvation? Simply put, if He didn’t, we would never come. Jesus explains that no man can come unless the Father draws him (John 6:65). The natural man has no ability to come to God, nor does he even have the desire to come. Therefore, it is only by the merciful and gracious drawing of God that we are saved.” *(Excerpts from gotquestions.org/bread-of-life.html)*

Gospel Reading

“Jesus said, “I am the Bread of Life. The person who aligns with me hungers no more and thirsts no more, ever. I have told you this explicitly because even though you have seen me in action, you don’t really believe me. Every person the Father gives me eventually comes running to me. And once that person is with me, I hold on and don’t let go. I came down from heaven not to follow my own agenda but to accomplish the will of the One who sent me. At this, because he said, “I am the Bread that came down from heaven,” the Jews started arguing over him: “Isn’t this the son of Joseph? Don’t we know his father? Don’t we know his mother? How can he now say, ‘I came down out of heaven’ and expect anyone to believe him?” Jesus said, “Don’t bicker among yourselves over me. You’re not in charge here. The Father who sent me is in charge. He draws people to me—that’s the only way you’ll ever come. Only then do I do my work, putting people together, setting them on their feet, ready for the End. This is what the prophets meant when they wrote, ‘And then they will all be personally taught by God.’ Anyone who has spent any time at all listening to the Father, really listening and therefore learning, comes to me to be taught personally—to see

it with his own eyes, hear it with his own ears, from me, since I have it firsthand from the Father. No one has seen the Father except the One who has his Being alongside the Father—and you can see *me*. “I’m telling you the most solemn and sober truth now: Whoever believes in me has real life, eternal life. I am the Bread of Life. Your ancestors ate the manna bread in the desert and died. But now here is Bread that truly comes down out of heaven. Anyone eating this Bread will not die, ever. I am the Bread—living Bread!—who came down out of heaven. Anyone who eats this Bread will live—and forever! The Bread that I present to the world so that it can eat and live is myself, this flesh-and-blood self.” *The Message*

What It Could Mean?

“The reading begins with one of the most well-known “I am” sayings from the Gospel of John: “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty” (verse 35).

The narrator adds “to see” alongside the verb “to believe.” The Johannine Jesus drives home the significance of what it means to come to Jesus and believe using a chiasm around seeing and believing:

A (verse 36) seeing and not believing

B (verse 37) Jesus will not drive away those who come to him

C (verse 38) I have come down from heaven

B’ (verse 39) Jesus will lose nothing of all that God gives him

A’ (verse 40) seeing and believing.

In sum, it is not enough to see glancingly (for example, verses 19, 25, 34, 42, and 52). Seeing Jesus rightly leads to believing in Jesus deeply.

Jesus’ words in verse 35 spark controversy among the religious leaders: “They were saying, ‘Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?’” (John 6:42). Jesus doesn’t address the complaint as such but instead begins with God’s action (verses 44-46): God sends, draws, raises, and

teaches. In turn, Jesus’ coming and being sent by God the Father gives rise to healthy verbs of receptivity: seeing, believing, hearing, and learning.

“Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’” (verse 42).

The “I am” sayings hold our gaze on a person who seems and is very human, maybe the first real human being. Maybe we wonder what it means to believe in Jesus whom we have not seen. It seems to be a problem. And yet, even if we do not “see” Jesus, we do “see” the symbols of the “I am” sayings: “I am the bread of life” (verse 35); “I am the living bread that came down from heaven” (verse 51); “I am the gate for the sheep” (John 10:7, 9); “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11, 14). The sayings point to commonplace images: shepherd, bread, vines, a viticulturist, a gate, and a gatekeeper.

But is there anything really “common” about the human experience? Or, what’s there to see that we haven’t already seen?” (*Excerpts from workingpreacher.org; Revised Common Lectionary by Robert Hoch*)

Readings for Further Study

- [John 6:65/Ephesians 1:18](#) *Father draws to Him/God enlightens the mind*
- [Romans 5:10/Jeremiah 17:9](#) *Heart hardened/deceitful*

Thought for the Day

“God is seeking those who don’t just believe in Him but believe Him.” ~ *Phyllicia Masonheimer*

A Prayer

Let me delight myself in You and receive the abundant blessings you have stored up for me. May the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved me and gave me eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort my heart and establish me in every good work. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**