

Marks of a False Disciple

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 6:22-40
Preached on: Sunday, May 18, 2014

We come once again to our study of the word of God. I would encourage you to take your Bibles and turn to John 6. We will be in verses 22-40 this morning. The last time we were together we looked at the previous verses that help us understand the marks of a true disciple and now we will contrast that by examining the marks of a false disciple. Let me read the text to you beginning in verse 22,

“22 The next day the multitude that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other small boat there, except one, and that Jesus had not entered with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples had gone away alone. 23 There came other small boats from Tiberias near to the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks. 24 When the multitude therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats, and came to Capernaum seeking Jesus. 25 When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, 'Rabbi, when did You get here?'

“26 Jesus answered them and said, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. 27 Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.' 28 Therefore they said to Him, 'What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?' 29 Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.' 30 So they said to Him, 'What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform? 31 Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, “He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.”’ 32 Jesus then said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. 33 For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.' 34 Then they said to Him, 'Lord, always give us this bread.'”

“35 Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. 36 But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. 37 All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. 39 This is the will of Him who sent

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Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. 40 For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him may have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.”

Today we are witnessing a fascinating phenomenon in our culture, one that is commonly called evangelical Christianity. It's really an amorphous term these days. It reminds me of the Federal Reserve which is neither Federal nor are there any reserves. Or to use another analogy: much of what passes today for evangelical Christianity can be like Grape-Nuts which has neither grapes nor nuts. Likewise, much of what is called evangelical today does not proclaim the gospel of Christ as revealed in Scripture. Most people that call themselves evangelicals have no desire to really obey the will and word of God and therefore they really have no basis to call themselves Christian. Today if someone asks me, “Are you an evangelical Christian?” and occasionally I get that question, I will immediately ask them, “Well, how do you define those two terms?” Which, by the way, is always a great segue into a conversation for the sake of the gospel. I will say to them, “If you are asking me 'Have you been born-again and therefore believe that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone and your sole authority for faith in practice is based upon the Scripture alone resulting in a life dedicated to the glory of God alone,' then the answer is yes. But if you are asking me if I believe the same way that the vast majority of megachurches on tv believe or the vast majority of best-selling authors in Christian bookstores believe or the vast majority of Hollywood-based faith-based productions believe, then the answer is no.”

Perhaps like no other time in redemptive history, it is important for us to ask the question: what are some of the distinguishing marks of a true versus a false disciple? This was a very important issue that Jesus addressed repeatedly during his ministry. For example, in his Sermon on the Mount which was given about one year before what happens here in John 6, Jesus warned about the danger of false teachers. He warned about the dangers of false followers of Christ, false conversions, of self-deception, of tares that will grow up amongst the wheat. In fact, in Matthew 7, beginning in verse 15, he said, “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.” In other words, they're going to be dressed up like a shepherd; they're going to look like a pastor but they're not. He went on to say, “You will recognize them by their fruits.” He even went on to say, “Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven, that's the one that will enter the kingdom.”

There Jesus described two ways that lead to heaven or at least they say they lead to heaven, one is true, one is false: there is the narrow way and then the broad way. There are two gates: the narrow and the wide. He describes two destinations: one that leads to

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Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/952/Marks_of_a_False_Disciple.html

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eternal life and one that leads to eternal destruction. He describes two groups: the few and the many. He describes two trees: one that produces good fruit, the other that produces bad. He describes two fruits: the good versus the bad. Two kinds of people who profess Christ Jesus: the sincere and the phony. There are two builders: the wise and the foolish who build on two different foundations: one of rock and the other of sand. There are two houses that he describes: one that is secure, the other that is insecure.

So, this is a very serious issue and you must ask yourself: to which group do I belong? What are some of the distinguishing marks of false teachers? Of false disciples? Again, in John 6, verses 16-21, the account of Jesus sending his weary disciples into a storm to teach them and to test them, there we examined the marks of a true disciple but now in the remaining part of John 6, we see several, not all but several marks of a false disciple and here we will examine some of the attitudes, some of the actions, of the vast multitude that were clamoring after Jesus for all the wrong reasons. In fact, this will be the first mark of a false disciple that I will give you this morning, here it is: they will be drawn to large crowds and yield to popular opinion. It is human nature to be intrigued by a large crowd hurrying in a particular direction, pursuing some specific goal. Crowds tend to produce kind of a herd mentality. There are people that literally study crowd hysteria that tends to suck people into a flow. Massive crowds will absorb people into kind of a universal entity. Individual thought, personal responsibility, can be abandoned as people become one with the mob. We've all seen this before and we see this in religious circles. Where do most people want to attend church? Where there are thousands of people going and you need people to help park the cars and police out front to somehow steer the traffic? Or to a small church? You go to the Christian bookstore, when you come in, what do you see? Well, you see the best-seller section. Why? Because humans are drawn to what is popular, not necessarily what is true.

As we study false disciples in the Bible as well as down through history, we see that many times they are like lemmings walking over a cliff. They will jettison common sense and reason to go along with the flow, to go along with popular opinion, and they will mindlessly march to destruction. This is what Jesus warned in Matthew 7. There is a wide gate, there is a broad way, where the many will travel and it leads to destruction. False teachers understand this phenomena and they will do everything they can to somehow attract big crowds to suck people in. They will recreate or at least try to recreate, what Jesus did to attract the masses. In fact, this is at the very heart of the prosperity gospel that is experiencing such enormous attention these days, a deceptive prosperity theology that appeals to the masses. You see, when religious con-artists offer people formulas to somehow manipulate God so that he will grant them personal miracles, their greed will cause them to run to that particular church and when other people see the massive crowds, they want to join them. What's fascinating is that as we look at Jesus' ministry, we see masses of people following him at first and we see him

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Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/952/Marks_of_a_False_Disciple.html

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trying to disperse them. He tries to avoid them and he eventually offends them to the point where they call for his execution. As we will see, when selfish crowds do not receive what they foolishly crave, they will eventually disappear. As we look at the crowd here in John 6, we will see that they love Jesus because of his works but they eventually will kill him because of his words.

So, let's transport ourselves back to the Sea of Galilee once again where approximately 20,000 Jewish people that are filled with nationalistic zeal wanting to see Rome destroyed, people that are craving to see and perhaps even experience another miracle from Jesus, they are all there. They've heard Jesus teach them many things about the kingdom. It's not what they wanted to hear but they were willing to endure the sermon so that they could see what he was going to do for them. Then, you will recall, they witness that astounding miracle, delicious bread and fish being created from the hands of Jesus, not all at once but continuously over several hours as he walks through the seated groups. Don't you know that was the best bread they had ever eaten? The best fish? I'm sure it was gluten-free; I'm sure it didn't have any preservatives; Whole Foods would have been very jealous to have tasted it. Can you imagine what was going through their minds? "Look at this! It just keeps coming!" And can you imagine what had gone through the minds of those dear disciples who'd just minutes before were all frustrated about, "What are we going to do to feed these people?" Don't you know they were saying something like this, "Guys, the kingdom is here. Can you believe this? The Messiah is here. We've just finished that grueling season of ministry where we've experienced such anger and such rebellion, where we've had to shake the dust off of our garments and off of our feet and pronounce judgment on those who will not believe. But no more! Look at this! Jesus has the people eating out of his hands literally." No doubt, Judas was licking his chops, ready to cash in on Jesus.

But then, as you will recall, to their dismay what does Jesus do? He makes his fatigued disciples get back into their little boat in the evening and he sends them into what would be potentially treacherous waters to make their way back to Capernaum, via Bethsaida, while Jesus sends the crowd away. He disperses the crowd and he gets away alone to commune with his Father and to pray. You will recall the story of the disciples almost perishing in the terrible storm, Jesus appears, he calms the storm, instantly they are on the shore of Capernaum. They are exhausted but oh, they're faith was much stronger now having gone through what they just experienced.

Now John takes us back across the sea to the east side, to the Golan Heights as we call it today, where the multitude had been bedded down for the night and they are now awake. As we study the gospel accounts, they're looking for Jesus. They're looking for breakfast, after all, they had had such a great meal before, they're looking for breakfast. They're motivated as we will understand, by selfishness, by materialistic greed and they're ready

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to carry out their plan to make Jesus king. So they begin looking for him. We pick it up in verse 22, “The next day the multitude that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other small boat there, except one, and that Jesus had not entered with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples had gone away alone.” In other words, they realized that the only boat that had been there was the ones that the disciples had boarded the night before without Jesus. So the big question is: where's Jesus?

Verse 23, “There came other small boats from Tiberias near to the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks.” Now, there's no explanation as to why these boats came all the way from the west side to the east. We don't know why they did this, maybe they were entrepreneurs looking for a way to make a little bit of cash to take people back; maybe they, too, were looking to see what was going on; maybe they had been in the storm the night before and had been driven over to that side. We don't know.

Verse 24, “When the multitude therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats, and came to Capernaum seeking Jesus.” You say, “Why Capernaum?” Well, this is the place where Jesus was temporarily residing and this was also the location of the synagogue where he would teach, the ruins of which you can go see to this very day.

Verse 25, “When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, 'Rabbi, when did You get here?'" Now, it's really interesting: Jesus does not answer their question. You see, telling them that he had walked on water and calmed the storm would do nothing more than fuel their misguided zeal to make him king so that he could serve them because that's their mindset.

Knowing they wanted temporal rather than spiritual blessings, he exposes their motives in verse 26, “Jesus answered them and said, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.'" In other words, they were motivated by their bellies, not by their conscience, aware of their sin and their need for reconciliation to a holy God. As we will see, they failed to see the significance of the sign that they had witnessed when Jesus fed them. In fact, Mark indicates that even the 12 “did not understand about the loaves but their hearts were hardened.” In other words, even the disciples failed to realize that the sign pointed to Jesus himself, the long-awaited Messiah of prophecy, the Son of God, the true bread of life that had come down from heaven. And in harmony with the Old Testament prophets, they failed to see the spiritual basis for his kingdom, that the supreme requirement of a citizen of the kingdom is that they must love the Lord their God with every fiber of their being, with no reservation, nor any division of allegiance.

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Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/952/Marks_of_a_False_Disciple.html

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But their self-interest had blinded them to all of these truths. Instead of falling down and worshiping him, they wanted to use him to serve them. This is the second mark of a false disciple: they will agree to crown Jesus king as long as he serves them. You see, false disciples will clamor after Jesus to make him their king but in their heart they will dispute the nature of his reign. For them, following Jesus is all about self-fulfillment, not self-denial. It's about superficial worship, religious pretenses, being a Christ-follower as long as it suits their purpose. Think about it: instead of prostrating themselves in humble adoration and the fear of the Lord, they wanted him to meet their temporal and physical needs and Jesus, in his omniscience, sees that in their heart.

I want to make this clear: the discourse which follows where Jesus identifies himself as the true bread of life that comes down from heaven, doesn't mitigate the importance of physical matters, of physical needs for indeed we need this to live. But rather, it underscores the supremacy of spiritual matters over everything else. This is the quintessential basis for the kingdom of Messiah, spiritual demands that result in spiritual blessings. They didn't see any of this nor do many people see it today who call Jesus Lord. But as we will see, these false disciples will have none of this. In fact, later on in verse 66, we read, "As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore." You know, even a true disciple must ask himself, "Why am I following Jesus?" I would encourage you all to do that. "That I might worship the Lord my God and serve him with all that I am? To make him the priority of my life? Or am I just following the crowd? Am I down deep just expecting him to do stuff for me?"

With all of this in mind concerning the multitude, Jesus says to them in verse 27, "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life." Do not work, do not labor for the food that perishes. Another way of putting this is, "Don't spend your time and your money and your energy pursuing things that spoil. Stop with your greedy materialism. Stop laboring for temporal things that are eternally inconsequential." He goes on then and he says, "work for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man shall give to you, for on Him the Father, even God, has set His seal." In other words he's saying this, "Pursue me. Pursue me, not your self-interests." And this will be the crux of his continuing discourse.

This brings us to the third mark of a false disciple: they will follow Christ for the purpose of material and physical gain. They will follow Christ for the purpose of material and physical gain. You see, these miracle-seekers saw him as a meal ticket, not as the most high God deserving of their reverence and their awe and their fear. To be sure, we see this all the time in the masses that mindlessly follow the prosperity predators that fill so many pulpits around the world today, people that have been deceived into thinking that God is basically this benevolent happy Santa Claus who exists to somehow make them healthy and wealthy. You go to their services and you

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Marks of a False Disciple

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experience a party atmosphere which betrays their low view of God, which by the way, is a radical departure from men's encounter with God that we see in Scripture, where they come into the presence of God and they are so overwhelmed with sheer terror and fear at the sight of his holiness that God has to comfort them and rescue them or they would die. But this is indicative of false disciples: they follow Christ for the purpose of material and physical gain.

I need to add that we see this as well with many professing Christians who despise prosperity theology. We can see this in people who would never be caught dead in a Joyce Meyer or a Joel Osteen type service but yet are equally guilty of pursuing personal prosperity rather than Christ, although they would never admit it. Let me ask you: how do you spend your time? How do you spend your money? Serving Christ or serving self? Is your life really all about you or all about Christ? And you're always coming to Christ wanting more. I know Christians who are so overly committed to what Jesus would call "food that perishes," in other words temporal things with not eternal value, that they don't have time, they just don't have time to pursue Christ privately or publicly. He's just not a priority. I know Christians who are so hopelessly in debt because they've spent even more than they earn on themselves and their own pleasures that they have nothing to give to the King or the kingdom. Oh, they've got plenty of money to buy the latest new gadget, to go out to eat, to buy new clothes, to buy some other something for their car or buy some other television set or whatever it might be, to go on a trip, but they have nothing to give their King. They're storing up their treasures on earth not in heaven. They make no investment in eternal things because they're too in love with themselves and temporal pleasures. You say, "Well, could these be considered false disciples?" Possibly so. If that's you, you need to examine your heart. But certainly these kinds of behaviors betray a heart attitude, one that is so unfaithful, so sinful, so selfish as to parallel the wicked and slothful servant in Jesus' parable of the talents who hid his talent in the ground. Remember in Matthew 25? As a result, he lost everything and was cast into the outer darkness. My friends, beware. Beware of false disciples. Beware of those who follow Christ for material and physical gain; who live for themselves and not for the Lord, not for their King; who pursue things that benefit them, not him. For these kind of people, Christ and his church is really nothing more than a country club they belong to, that make them feel good, make them feel religious.

Notice again in verse 27, in the middle, he tells them to "work for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man shall give to you, for on Him the Father, even God, has set His seal." Here he's speaking of the fact that the Father has set his seal of approval on the Son, he has granted him all authority and power and that we see this validated by his miraculous works. Jesus is saying pursue him. In other words, "Pursue me because I alone am able to distribute the spiritual food that will nourish and sustain your soul, that will give you eternal life. That's what's really important so work for the

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Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/952/Marks_of_a_False_Disciple.html

Marks of a False Disciple

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food which endures to eternal life.” Beloved, don't miss this: by pursuing Jesus in all earnest, by making him the supreme object of your heart's desire, by pouring all of your thoughts and your energies into knowing him and worshiping him rather than temporal things, material things that are eternally inconsequential, when we do this we partake of Christ himself. That is the food which endures to eternal life. Dear Christian, there is no greater joy, there is no more supreme satisfaction in all of life than in experiencing the heartfelt presence of the living Christ because your life is dedicated solely to him. Everything else is secondary and tertiary and peripheral. How could anything on earth possibly rival the lover of our souls? You know, there should be no higher priority in a believer's life than to delight himself in the love of Christ.

Asaph, the eminent singer of Israel, the chief musician of Israel, said this in Psalm 73, beginning in verse 25, “Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And besides Thee, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” My friend, that is the heart of a true disciple. Paul's highest aspiration for the saints in Ephesus is recorded in Ephesians 3, beginning in verse 18. He wanted them that they “may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.” But to the false disciple, those are just mere words.

They are following him because they want physical and material gain. They really care nothing for Christ and for what he is all about and what he would have them do. They follow him because they are hoping that somehow he will make their life more enjoyable. So, Jesus says “work for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man shall give to you, for on Him the Father, even God, has set His seal.” Notice what they say to him, verse 28, “What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?” This is amazing. Their response to Jesus betrays the intransigent self-righteousness that dominates their thinking. They are saying this, “Okay, if we aren't supposed to work for the food that spoils, what are the works that God requires of us and we'll do them.” This is reminiscent of the rich young ruler who asked Jesus in Matthew 19:16, “Teacher, what good things shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?” Beloved, this is the fourth mark of a false disciple: they believe they have the ability to earn their salvation. They believe they have the ability to earn their salvation and isn't it interesting that every false religious system has its list: do this, do that and then you're in.

Those lists are both endless and in many cases they are onerous as it was in the case of the Jews. It's so sad, isn't it? Legalism where you try to work your way to heaven with good works. It does give you the illusion of spirituality but ultimately it fuels your pride. Isn't it interesting: as people we love to flatter ourselves, don't we? And certainly the unsaved will do this, to flatter ourselves by imagining that we can do something that will

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Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/952/Marks_of_a_False_Disciple.html

Marks of a False Disciple

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Bible Text: John 6:22-40

Preached on: Sunday, May 18, 2014

merit salvation, that will impress God and make him a debtor to us. But think about it: what astounding arrogance to assume that you have the intrinsic ability to perform whatever task God gives you to merit salvation. By the way, do you want to know what that task is? Obey the law perfectly. It begins with “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength,” and secondly, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” If you want to expand that a little bit, look at the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments and it goes on from there.

But like all false disciples, they foolishly assume that God isn't really that holy and we're not really that sinful so if you can bring God down where you like him and bring yourself up where you like yourself, then it looks like everything is good to go. That's what they were doing. So, in verse 29, “Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.'” Folks, this is the gospel; this is salvation by grace alone, through faith alone and Christ alone. It is, as Paul says in Romans 3:23 “the free gift of God.” What is it that God requires? Faith, believing in him whom he has sent.” I like the way Paul put it in Romans 3:27, “Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.” Then, of course, we know that genuine saving faith will produce works, that's why James said in James 2:17 that “faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.”

Back to verse 30, “They said therefore to Him, 'What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform?’” Folks, this is unbelievable and yet I have to say if I was unsaved and I was in that group, I'm sure I would have been right there with them, “Yeah, yeah, you know, what he said.” Show another sign? Are you kidding me? The Lord has just said “believe in me” and what do they say? “Show us another sign that we may believe in you.” Stop and think about it: just the day before, they witnessed Jesus creating the food. By the way, I figured roughly 20,000 people, let's just say one pound of food per person. I know for some of you that's not much but one pound per person, that's 20,000 pounds. That's nine metric tons. Being an old horseman, I think of it in terms of horses: that's basically 20 horses. They see him make all of that food and they eat it and then want another sign? In fact, in chapter 6:2, we read “a great multitude was following him.” Why? Because they were seeing the signs he was performing. If you look back and see what they saw, they saw him cause the lame to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear, he raised the dead, he cast out demons. And you want another sign? What an example of the power of unbelief and the depravity of the human heart. John Calvin commented, “This wicked question clearly shows the truth of what God has said elsewhere,” referring to Matthew 12:39, “a wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign.”

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Now, notice their depraved and foolish thinking in verse 31, “Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.'” In other words, “Prove to us that you're greater than Moses. You fed us once, he fed us for years and years and years. Beat that.”

Jesus then gets very assertive and he rebukes them in verse 32, “Jesus therefore said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven.'” By the way, notice the Father who gives, present tense. He is currently giving. He is giving it to you right now, the true, the genuine bread out of heaven referring to himself, the bread of life.

Verse 33, “For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.” This term “life,” zoe in the original language in John's gospel, whenever he uses it, it speaks of spiritual and eternal life that can only come through Jesus Christ. By contrast think about it: the manna would perish after a short period of time and so too, the people that ate it but not so the life that is granted and sustained by the bread of life, the Lord Jesus Christ.

They still don't get it. Verse 34, “They said therefore to Him, 'Lord,'” it could be translated sir, “Sir, evermore give us this bread.” They're still thinking physical bread because they're obsessed with physical gratification, they're blinded by their own lusts. Like the woman at the well when she said to Jesus in chapter 4:15, “Sir, give me this water so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw.” It's the same type of mindset. Once again we see how false disciples tend to follow Christ for the purpose of material and physical gain which causes them to completely miss the magnificent truths of saving grace. They are convinced that somehow they can merit salvation by their own works.

So, believing in Jesus, in other words, trusting and worshiping and obeying him, is not what is important. What is important is material and physical gain. “Show us some more signs,” translated into, “How about another meal? Give us this physical bread from now on. Keep it up, then we'll believe in you. We don't want or need spiritual food and eternal life. We're good on that, I mean, we're righteous, we obey the law. We want material and physical prosperity. We don't want another sermon, we want another meal.” That's the point.

This brings us to the fifth mark of a false disciple: they will be indifferent or hostile to gospel preaching. They will be indifferent or hostile to gospel preaching. It reminds me of what Jesus said in Luke 16:31, “If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.” It's so true, isn't it, what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:14, “A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for

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they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.” He has no capacity to discern spiritual truth because he is spiritually dead and unless God does something, he will remain that way. I find it fascinating to see how clever Satan is in capitalizing on this unique aspect of human depravity. Isn't it interesting how he raises up men and women who will come along and offer the masses a perverted gospel of cheap grace and easily believism, just kind of say a little prayer, walk a little aisle and then you're good to go for eternity. Add Jesus to the rest of your life, get that ticket punched or come to Jesus so that you can see how you can have private miracles and personal prosperity. For many, their entire theology and every ministry of their so-called church is focused on accommodating the felt needs and desires of their consumers. They draw massive crowds which in and of itself draws more people. Men and women by the thousands will push and shove to get in to hear their favorite guru and learn how to cash-in on Christ. Masses who really care little about Christ; who know nothing of really worshipping him; who know nothing really of the true gospel, they won't have that. But they are convinced that somehow he exists for one primary reason and that is to give them what they want. My friend, make no mistake: the Jesus of their imagination doesn't exist but the true Christ does and he will never yield to those kinds of selfish demands. He will never give a selfish man, a proud man, what he wants but he will always give him what he needs and that is the gospel which he will reject apart from regenerating grace. Why? Because false disciples will be indifferent or hostile to gospel preaching. They have another agenda and that is temporal and material prosperity.

We see this play out in the rest of chapter 6. Again, in verse 34, “Sir, evermore give us this physical bread.” But I find it interesting that instead of giving them another sign, he gives them the thing that they don't want, he gives them a sermon and it infuriates them and eventually they will forsake him altogether. There is a difference, my friend, between the narrow and the wide, the few and the many.

Verse 35, “Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.’” He can't be any more clear. He's saying, “I'm talking about myself, not physical bread. Your greatest need has nothing to do with your body but it has to do with your soul. You must come to me. You must believe in me.” Two verbs, isn't it interesting: come and believe. Coming to Christ speaks of repentance recognizing what sin really is, recognizing its consequences and having a supreme hatred for it and then voluntarily turning from it and turning toward God. A change of purpose, a decisive commitment to a radically new direction, a passion to cry out for pardon. Crying out as the Psalmist did in Psalm 51, “Create in me a clean heart, O God.” Charles Spurgeon said it so well. He put it this way, “You and your sins must separate or you and your God will never come together.” That's repentance. That's what he says here, “Come. Come to me.” Then he also says “believe.” This is the idea of faith, to decisively and deliberately cast one's entire being, one's entire life, upon the truth of

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the world of God. Believing, understanding the historical facts concerning Jesus Christ who is the ultimate object of that faith, one's only hope of salvation. So he says, "I am the bread of life. Come to me. Believe in me."

It's very important here when Jesus says, "I am." He is appropriating to himself the Old Testament name of God. Remember when he told Moses in Exodus 3:14, "I am who I am." He refers to himself in the present continuous tense denoting self-existence. In other words, "I have always been and I will always be. There's never been a time when I haven't existed." Here in verse 35, he says, "I am the bread of life." By the way, this is the first of seven very important metaphors in John's gospel describing the person and the work of Christ. He says in chapter 8, "I am the light of the world." In chapter 10, "I am the door of the sheep." And also in chapter 10, "I am the Good Shepherd." Chapter 11, "I am the resurrection and the life." Chapter 14, "I am the way and the truth and life." Chapter 15, "I am the true vine."

But they're not seeing any of this, so he says in verse 36, "But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe." In other words, "You've seen me as a miracle worker that can make your life happy. You have seen me as a potential king who can come along and fulfill all of your political and material aspirations. But you have not seen me as the Son of God."

As we contemplate this scene, it seems hopeless, doesn't it? What else does Jesus have to say or do? Haven't you been there before with hard-hearted friends and loved ones? You give them the gospel, you pour your heart out to them and no matter what you say, no matter what you do, regardless of the innumerable evidences of the existence of God, regardless of the compelling truths of the gospel that they can see lived out in genuine, twice born saints, they simply cannot see it and they will not believe it. So what do you do? What do you do? I'll tell you what you do based on the word of God: you keep on preaching the word even if they don't want to hear it and then you relax and you rejoice in God's sovereign grace knowing that his purposes in salvation can never be thwarted, they can never be frustrated by man or by devil.

We see this plainly in what Jesus says next, verse 37. You can almost see him sighing here and saying, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." He's saying as we see in so many other passages of Scripture like in Ephesians 1:7, "All those chosen in him before the foundation of the world," John 17, "All whom the Father has given the Son will come to me." No doubt, there were those people among that multitude that day. Beloved, we were once amongst that crowd but isn't it great, Paul says to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:9, he has "saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity." It's man's

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responsibility to repent and believe. “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved,” Romans 10:13. And all whom the Father has chosen and given to the Son will do exactly that. Salvation, according to Romans 9:16, “does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.”

Beloved, were it not for God granting us faith and repentance, we would never have believed nor would any of these people in that crowd ever believe because there is no one who seeks after God. And those who come, prove that they were among the number of the elect and when they come in genuine faith, in sincere humility, we see that they will never, ever, ever, ever be turned away. Jesus says “the one who comes to me I will certainly not cast out.”

Then he closes in verse 38-40, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.” What a magnificent promise. A. W. Pink put it this way, “Eternal predestination guarantees eternal preservation.” I love that. What a wonderful truth. It should motivate all of us.

Dear Christian hear this: salvation does not depend upon man's will but on the drawing power of the Father so relax and rejoice in this great truth, even when you're dealing with false disciples who will be drawing the large crowds and yield to popular opinion; who will agree to crown Jesus king as long as he serves them; who will follow Christ for the purpose of material and physical gain; who will believe they have the ability to earn their salvation but who will be indifferent or hostile to gospel preaching. Know this: that God in his mercy and in his grace and in his power, can break through all of that stubbornness and transform them into new creatures as he did you and as he did me. If that is not true of you today, I pray that today you will understand your need for the Savior and that you will cry out to him to save you before it's too late. May God have mercy on your soul.

Let's pray together.

Father, these are such amazing truths as we look at them and it causes us to just rejoice all the more in what you have done in us. Lord, we thank you that you caused us to come to you, to believe in you, to eat of the bread of life that has come down from heaven and Lord, we pray that the same will happen for all of our friends and loved ones who know nothing of our blessed Savior. Use us mightily to that end and save them we beg you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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We pray you've been edified by this presentation. You've been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at otcr.org.