

The call of the Father

John 6:37-47

Life as a Christian is never easy,
there are lots of battles that we have to face.

Some of these battles are against external forces.
If you are a follower of the news
you may have heard about the Ruddock review into religious freedom;
a review set up to investigate claims
that religious freedoms are under threat in this country;
some people experience a battle to freely express their Christian faith,
hence the establishment of this review.

Within our own congregations,
some parents have expressed a concern over the values
that their children are being exposed to in our schools.
There is a battle when it comes to guiding our children's development;
they hear one thing at home and another thing at school.
So these are some of the battles we can face from external sources,

But there are also plenty of battles that we fight on the inside, aren't there?
There's the daily battle against sin.
Christ has removed our sins from us,
and so it makes no sense for us to keep on sinning,
and so there's a daily battle which takes place:
A battle to say *Yes* to God's way of life and *No* to the world's way.
(And if that *isn't* a daily battle for you, then perhaps it should be!)

And there is another internal battle that Christians often face,
and it's a battle that our reading from John's Gospel helps us fight.
It's the battle to know for sure that you are saved;
the battle for Christian assurance.

It's a battle that's been fought by many Christians in the past,
some of whom have been leaders in the church.
It's a battle that Martin Luther was engaged in as a catholic monk
Martin Luther was the great German church reformer of the 1500s
who was one of the early leaders of the protestant churches
And towards the end of his life he recalled how as a young man,
Even though he lived as a monk without reproach, he still felt
"that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience ...
I raged with a fierce and troubled mind."

And plenty of Christian people since have been troubled by similar experiences

Even one of your own Christian leaders—a very different Martin, Martin Kemp—
even he had plenty of trouble being sure
that everything was right between him and God.

I remember as younger person being absolutely terrified
about the idea of Christ's return and Judgment Day.
How could I be possibly sure that the judge would look upon me favourably?
That's the question I found myself asking all the time,
and I'm sure there are people in our own church who ask the same question.

In John 6, Jesus has been speaking about eternal life,
and the verses we look at today
give us the reasons why a Christian can be sure of their salvation.
Jesus points to two reasons, each reflecting something of his heavenly Father.
And it's just as well Jesus has more than one thing to say
because in my experience Christians can doubt for more than one reason.
So taken together,
these two facts can help us win the battle for the assurance of faith.

The first fact is laid out for us in vs 37-40 of John 6.
Just take a look at the first verse with me there, verse 37. Jesus says
All those the Father gives me will come to me,
and whoever comes to me I will *never drive away*.
The first words of assurance come from a promise of Jesus,
the Son of the Father.
Whoever comes to me *I will never drive away*.

In this world It's very easy to find yourself being driven away:
The teenager comes home crying that her friends have excluded her from the group;
The parent comes home from work at lunchtime
having suddenly been handed a redundancy envelope;
The grandparents who are no longer permitted to visit the grandchildren.
There are so many stories of banishment and exile, aren't there?

Jesus says he's never going to do that.
If we've come to him in a genuine and sincere way,
recognizing him for who he is and not whom we wish him to be,
then he'll always have a place for us.

And there's a reason why Jesus will always accept us.
Follow along from verse 38
For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.
³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me,
but raise them up at the last day.

Jesus makes the promise to never drive us away
because he's seeking to carry out his father's will.

As the obedient Son of God,
Christ's desire is to complete the task that his Father has set him,
which is to protect and care for all those the Father has given him
until the day when they are raised from the dead and into eternal life.

I remember one of the earliest ministry tasks I ever received
was to organize a reunion for a high school holiday camp
that was run by Anglican Youthworks.
So I organized a trip from Circular Quay on the ferry over to Manly
And I remember the camp director handing me the list of expected children
which I was to check off as they arrived
and which I was to keep checking as they day progressed,
ensuring that we didn't lose anyone on the way
And I checked that list about five times before we left,
twice again on the ferry ride over, once more upon landing,
and about ten times again before the day was through.
There was no way that I was going to loose anyone of those children
that were on the list!
Perhaps we have some people with teaching experience here this morning,
you know that when you go on an excursion
you count those heads before the bus leaves, don't you!
There's no way that you're going to let one just walk off,
even if they might like to try.
And so it is with both Father and Son in their concern for us.
The Father doesn't want any of his children to be lost,
and neither does the Son.

This is good news for people who might doubt God's interest in saving them.
You know how I said that people can doubt for different reasons?
One reason might be they doubt God's ongoing concern for their salvation.
Perhaps they might fear God is short on patience,
or is too lofty for the little person.
Maybe this has come about because of what their own earthly father was like.

But what Jesus reveals to us here is a much more comforting picture:
It's God's will, it's his desire, his decision
that his children maintain their place in the eternal Kingdom.
And when the creator of the universe,
the one who spoke the world into existence,
who set the sun moon and stars in place,
when he decides that we are going to spend eternity in paradise,
then nothing is going to stop that wish being fulfilled.

Its often this way when people decide they want to be together, isnt it?
When I decided to ask Jas to marry me, and when she decided to answer yes,
then the future was sealed.

Have you ever tried telling two people in love that they can't be together?
That's a train that's pretty hard to force off the track!
And so it is with our union with God; his desire is for us,
And I think to hear Jesus say this is a great comfort for many people.
Hear it from Jesus again, v 40
For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him
shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.

But sometimes the doubts we carry come from a different place.
This was the case with me when I walked through this darkness.
I had no trouble comprehending God's capacity to forgive me
or even his willingness to forgive me.
But knew my own imperfect heart all too well.
I knew all about my own inability to maintain holiness,
I knew about my own imperfect obedience,
and so my issue was my worry that somehow I was disqualifying myself.

I want to say that if this is your situation,
then you're not in an entirely bad position,
because you are getting one thing right – you do have a problem with sin!
We all have sins that need forgiving,
and as I said right at the beginning of the sermon,
this side of heaven we will all have to face the daily battle of resisting sin.

But it's the reality of sin which makes this next fact about the Father so important.
 Verse 44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them,
 and I will raise them up at the last day.
 Jesus uses what I think is a very significant word
 to describe what God is doing when he saves us.
 He speaks about the Father *drawing* us to his son.

What are some of the things we might *draw* in day-to-day life?
We might *draw* the curtains over,
we might try and *draw* someone's attention to a newspaper article.
In other words to *draw* something is to drag something or to pull something
that would otherwise be left *unmoved*.
Left to our own devices we would never secure our own salvation,
nor would we ever be attracted to Christ,
but thankfully God will is so set on our salvation, that he pulls us in anyway.

From time to time we have working bees here at church,
a working bee is a morning or a day
where a bunch of church members get together
to do some work on our buildings.
These days are great
because you get to see all these hidden skills that people have,

skills which as a minister I either don't have or haven't practiced.
This one time I was working with a retired tradie
and we were screwing something to an outside wall
when a screw fell to the ground and we couldn't find it amongst the leaves.
But then he pulls out a magnet, and wiping it over the ground
the screw jumps up and becomes stuck to the end of the magnet.
There's no way that tiny piece of metal was going to jump up on its own!
It needed to be drawn in order to find its salvation,
And this is exactly what God does with us
as he leads us to place our trust in his Son, Jesus Christ.

If the seed of our doubt is because of the clear understanding of our own sin,
then Jesus's words remind us of an important truth:
salvation is effected by God *despite* our sin.
We are saved by God's action alone: he is the one who *draws* us,
he is the one who's *will* ensures that we stay saved
despite our own imperfections.

So, how is it that God draws us? What is the magnet that he uses to pull us along?

Verse 45 It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.'
Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me.
Jesus quotes Isaiah 54:13, and that verse in Isaiah
goes on to say of those that receive this teaching, that great will be their peace.
The way God leads us towards peace with him and within ourselves
is to teach us with words that points to Jesus as Divine Son and Saviour
This teaching that has been relayed by Jesus himself:
We're reminded again in verse 46
that Jesus has come from the Father,
and so he is the one who can safely pass on the Father's teaching.

If you want to know what it looks like to reject this teaching,
then have a listen to the crowd in verses 41 and 42
the Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down
from heaven.” ⁴² They said, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we
know? How can he now say, ‘I came down from heaven’?”
This is what it sounds like to not be saved.
These guys have been brought face to face with Jesus,
they’ve heard his teaching and they’ve started scoffing.
John wants us to note the irony in what they’re saying.
On one hand they say We know who his parents are!
and then in the very next breath they ask
How can he say ‘I came down from Heaven’?”
They claim to know where Jesus is from
but they’ve got no idea who Jesus’ real Father is.
In fact, they’re far from God and it’s evident by their rejection
of what God has been trying to teach them through his Son.

How do you find *yourself* responding to what Jesus is teaching?

If you're a scoffer then you're in trouble.

But if you believe it, then that's evidence of your salvation!

It's evidence that God has drawn you and that he intends to keep you!

Earlier we spoke about battles.

Life is hard work, not only do we have to battle against different forces,
but life also seems so tenuous at times.

Our health can be fragile,

our finances are at the mercy of markets that move up and down,

Sometimes love doesn't last,

but the fact of our salvation is one thing we *can* have confidence about.

Because God himself is the one behind it.

I'll lead us in prayer.