

18th Feb 2018 - David Loke - John 6:60-71

You could imagine the murmuring.

Oh man. This guy Jesus is amazing! He's the same guy who changed water into wine. Did you hear what he did recently with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fishes? He fed like thousands and thousands of people. There were 5000 men alone. I was one of them. I'm a fisherman and many of my friends are too and we ate to our hearts content. Man I love to see him do another miracle. I won't mind another meal right now. I'm getting hungry. I followed him here to Capernaum. There's a rumour out there that he walked on water. Maybe this guy is the One, the messiah whose gonna kick those pesky Romans out. We can be our own nation again. Are you excited?

Friends The disciples were riled up. Ready for action. Riot, follow Jesus to fight against the Romans. They were ready. They wanted to make Jesus king by force. They were ready for anything. Anything ... except hearing what Jesus had to say.

The disciples wanted another miracle. Wanted more miraculous food from heaven. They wanted King Jesus to rise up against Herod and the Romans.

But Jesus disappointed them. His words pushed them away. He lay on them hard truth after hard truth.

Jesus pours cold water on them.

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life." (NIV John 6:35.). I'm paraphrasing here. I'm from heaven... believe in me... eat my flesh and drink my blood... I'll raise you from the dead.

What? The disciples couldn't comprehend that. Do not compute! Huh? The disciples' minds were so full with what they wanted Jesus to do for them, that they couldn't hear, couldn't see when the Truth was right before their eyes. This leads me to my first point.

1/ The truth is that I am not the centre of the universe. Jesus is the centre. The reason why Jesus' words were offensive was because the disciples saw things according to their own sinful 'me first' point of view. Forget about what God is trying to say.

The real problem here was a tussle between the what disciples wanted versus what God wanted.

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On one hand, the disciples want real food that satisfies their physical hunger.

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But Jesus says that he is the bread of life which gives eternal life.

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The disciples want a political king to kick out the Romans.

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But Jesus wants to be king of their hearts, to kick out sin.

The disciples want all their needs met in the here and now. I want food, I want healthcare better than Medicare, I want a political messiah. But Jesus wants them to dispense with the "I." Now God surely knows our physical needs but when we come to God, we must come to him on his terms.

A few years ago, we foolishly tried to catch a dawn flight to Melbourne. My wife was working nights and we had two young children. We woke up late. We rushed to the airport. With a toddler in

stroller, daughter on short legs, we killed ourselves to get to the boarding gate. We got there just as the gates closed. The gate staff stopped us. Too late! O Why couldn't they just let us slip in quietly. But no. We had to rebook the flights.

You see, there are rules and regulations when it comes to planes taking off. The airlines determine it all. What they say goes. The same applies with us and God. But we want to be the centre of the universe. We want God to fit into our little worldview. We want God to give us all we want, how we want it. Can you imagine telling airlines what time YOU want to board the flight? Naaa, I am not boarding the plane at 6am, just hold it till I get there, and what's more upgrade me to first class, on 2nd thoughts put me next to the pilot. Isn't the customer always right? Friends, You'd be thrown out. Just as airlines determine the rules and regulations so too God determines how we are saved.

The disciples wanted saving. Saving from hunger, sickness, from political misery. But Jesus says believe in me and have eternal life.

Many people say, I am good enough to go to heaven. Just be a good person. Give money to the temple. Help someone. Sweep the floor at church. I can earn my way into heaven.

No my friends, we are not the centre of the universe. We don't determine how we get to heaven. Jesus, God is the centre. Everything revolves around his word. We must humbly accept his words even though it is hard, too unpalatable for our taste. The only way to be saved is to say no to 'me' and to turn to Jesus and believe in him.

After we are saved, we need to continue to say no to ourselves, take up the cross and follow Jesus. I know I struggle NOT to be the centre of my universe. But I must become less and he must become more.

This leads me to my 2nd point. How does God get our attention, to set us on this road? Well, Jesus exposes our weaknesses, our frailties, our darkness within because he is the light. He has compassion on us and would rather us know the truth than let us drown in ignorant bliss.

John 3:20-21 NKJV "the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.²⁰ For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed."

Look at John chapter 6. After telling them that he is the bread of life, and knowing that they were grumbling about what he had said. What did Jesus do?

Did he try to soften things up, to make it easier for the people to swallow? Tone it down a little? Instead, Jesus turns up the dial even more. Jesus essentially says ... you guys are offended by all this. Well wait till you see me going up to heaven. Then you will be really offended!

You see the way that Jesus was going back to heaven again was through the what? Cross! That's why he came down from heaven. To take on the sins of the world. To take our place of punishment. God loves us so much that he send his only Son Jesus to take our place, to die on the cross. I know today when we think of the cross, we feel it's positive, its good. But back then it was a horrible, shameful death. Deut NIV 21:23 says "anyone who is hung on a pole is under God's curse"

What Jesus has been saying, doesn't make sense if you're trying to drive up church membership. The maths of Jesus doesn't add up. Jesus had thousands of followers eating out of his hand. He has been showing them miracle after miracle. Jesus had all the conditions

for world church domination. The people already wanted to force Jesus to become king. All he had to do was just water his words down.

But Jesus has been feeding them hard saying after saying. It was like he was reading the disclaimers to them. He told them the cold hard truths. One, You are not the centre of world. He is. Two, you have to do things his way. Jesus says I am the way.

He came from heaven and he is going back there. He hints at a shameful death on the cross. Jesus strips them of their sensibilities, removes any pretences and confronts them. This is how it is. Take it or leave it. Jesus is the great physician. He knows our hearts. But he shines a beacon of light into the disciples hearts to show them where they are really at.

I had a doctor friend who used to work in Hong Kong a long time ago. He told us of a patient who developed cancer in his leg. There was only one solution. It had to be cut off to save his life. Now do you think the doctors did the right thing by exposing the truth about the cancer in his leg? Why didn't the doctors just water it down? Tone down the diagnosis? Oh! It's not a cancer, it just a little cyst. Don't worry about it. You'll be fine. Is that being compassionate? Would you like a doctor like that?

Sometimes, in this life, we get exposed for what we are. Our lack of faith, our indecision for Christ, our self centeredness, our worship of all things 'me.' Sometimes, God in his grace exposes our frailties and weakness. Perhaps you been going through a tough time. Things don't seem to add up. Why doesn't God help me? Why doesn't God just give me what I want? Why doesn't he just give fix all my problems?

Romans 8:28 NASB "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose."

Sometimes God allows us to go through pain, suffering, loss because he wants us to grow up in him. When we go through loss and pain, we realise we don't have the resources to fix all things. It reminds us of our true condition before God. We are but dust. Even our very breath comes from God. CS Lewis said that pain is God's megaphone to us. We come to the end of ourselves. We need, rely, depend on Jesus. We must come to the cross of Christ for grace and mercy.

Perhaps today you realise you do not have the resources to be master of your life and destiny. Which way should you go? Will you be like masses of Jesus followers who when they were shown the truth of their situation, rejected Jesus words. It was too offensive. It was just too much.

Or would we be like peter? Will we say... we got no where else to go? We got nothing. We cant save ourselves. We need God's grace not just for salvation but everyday to sustain us in our work, in our pain, in our every day life. We need the cross. We need grace. We need Jesus.

This leads me to my 3rd and final point.

What do we need to do? You already follow Jesus. But your life is still hard. And pain and suffering abound. What now? Peter points the way. 6:68 **“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life”**

But friends, what is this thing... eternal life? Is it about when we die, we live forever? Is it about an insurance policy in the distant future, totally divorced from the here and now. Eternal life is indeed about being with God forever but it is so much more. It's about the here and now. It's about knowing and feeding on Jesus today. John 17:3 GNT says, **“And eternal life means to know you, the only true God, and to know Jesus Christ, whom you sent.”** Eternal life is knowing Jesus, feeding on him, and his words of eternal life.

These words of Jesus are God's grace for us to help us in this life. I suggest 2 disciplines that helps us receive God's sustaining words of grace.

The first is read or listen to God's word. The bible tells us that man shall not live on bread alone but every word that comes from the mouth of God. The bible helps me know Jesus.

I feel a bit weird if I haven't read or listened to the bible for awhile. Something's amiss. There is a disquiet in me. That's because I'm getting hungry. Spiritually hungry. We must cultivate a habit of consuming God's word. It is the primary means of the grace of God to us. It sustains us, encourages us, gives us direction in this life both generally and specifically. God's word can speak specifically in your life. This word is living and active, sharper than any double edged sword. (Hebrew 4:12).

The second discipline is prayer.

Only by coming to the cross can you have the right to ask of God. Without the cross, without accepting and believing what Jesus has done for us, you cannot approach the throne of grace to get help in your time of need. Let me give you some practical examples on receiving Jesus's words in prayer.

Let's say my car is broken down. I need help. I called NRMA and I'm waiting anxiously. What do I do? PRAY. Lean on his grace to give us strength. His words may come to you in prayer like “Cast all your cares on him for he careth for you.” (1 peter 5:7)

Let's say, I'm struggling my with studies. Drowning in it. PRAY. O god, I'm drowning here. Please help me less I fail. Help me to study. His words may come to you like “do it for my glory.”

I'm sick. I'm in pain. I'm waiting to see the doctor now. What if they find something horrible with me? What if I have cancer? O God, I come to your cross. I lay all my pain and fear at your feet. Perhaps a verse like “though I walk through the valley of death, I will not fear” (Psalm 23:4) may pop into your mind. Do you begin to see now how we need the words of God? How we feed on his words.

As I come to a close, I would like to share a personal story. When I was about in year 12, I began to develop some problems. Perhaps triggered by a move to a new country and the

stress of doing year 12. Who knows? But as the years rolled on, my problems got worse. I became really depressed.

I became overwhelmed. I was down in the dumps. I had cried to God to help me. I held on to something a wise man of God at the Christian student fellowship had said to me. He told me that I was facing a mountain, that one day God will send someone who would help me over my mountain. I believed but the answer only came about many years later. Suffering had changed how I saw life. I thank God now for the suffering. For I see now that I am not the centre of the universe. God is. No matter how good I was, it was God who held all the aces. I was completely reliant on his grace, his words of eternal life.

John chapter 6 exhorts us to reject the self , the 'me' as the centre of the universe. Give up on our 'self' and put Jesus at the centre. Feed on him , for his words give us the grace for eternal life today and forever.

Let's pray. Dear Lord, help us not to be like the many disciples who gave up on you. But instead help us to come to your cross, to Jesus to receive grace and mercy. We are sorry for putting our selfish selves first. Help us give up on the self and follow you. For who else can we go to, for you, Jesus,-+ holds the words to eternal life. Amen.