

LIFE IN HIS NAME

A SATISFIED LIFE

John 6:60-71

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."

After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil." He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray him.

"A Satisfied Life." To our high school graduates: As we celebrate your accomplishment and congratulate you and send you out on a new part of your journey, we recognize that this portion of your journey opens up a grand, new opportunity. In a unique way, this part of your life is more yours than ever before. You will be in a new environment. You will have new freedoms, new liberties, and it will become increasingly more and more yours. I want you to remember this day. I want you to imagine God giving you a long, fruitful life and you looking back on this moment in your life. Will you look back on today with regret or with satisfaction?

I want to share with you from this passage from God's word the keys to a satisfied life. And as I speak to you, graduates, I want to speak to all of us, because I believe these truths will help all of us. Let's say you are in that place where you are looking way back on many years and you are tempted to regret. This message is an invitation for you to start afresh and anew with God through Jesus Christ.

We have been studying this rich, long chapter of John Chapter 6, and in it Jesus has proclaimed that he is the bread of life. He has called everyone to believe in him, and he has spoken this very powerful message, this great promise that satisfaction is found in Jesus. We are called in this chapter to believe in him. We are also told that not only is life found in Jesus, God wants you to have a relationship with him by trusting in Christ, and the events of Jesus' life and ministry are critical to how we experience that life.

He states in this chapter: "The bread that I give for the life of the world is my flesh." These two great statements stand out: "I am the bread of life," and "The bread that I give for the life of the world is my flesh." What he is saying in that statement is: "My body will be broken. I will live a perfect life in your place. I will offer myself as a sacrifice to pay the penalty of your sin, and if you will trust in me you will receive the forgiveness of sin. You will receive life eternal."

Now, we come to the conclusion after Jesus has performed the miracle of the feeding of the 5000 plus women and children, given this great message, and most of the people leave. We have this summary conversation at the end of that great teaching. It answers a question for you and me that I think really unlocks the mystery of a satisfied life. If life is found in Jesus, if life is found by faith in Christ, faith in Jesus, his life, his death, his resurrection, how do I access that life? How does that play out in everyday life? How do I access Christ? How do I live this out?

I am going to give you a little bit of a spoiler that involves the bible. One of the keys has to do with God's word, and there is a bonus outline today. You are going to get two messages for the price of one, in the same time. The bonus message is this. As we get into the teaching, I am going to try to answer this question: How do I read the bible? As we look at the keys to a satisfied life, we are also going to answer this question: How do I read God's word? Are you ready to get started?

I. The Spirit gives life.

The first key to a satisfied life is this truth: The Spirit gives life. Verse 63: "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." Verse 65: "And he said, 'This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.'" Consider this for a moment. Jesus is in what we would consider a very difficult moment in ministry. He has performed a fantastic miracle, feeding approximately 20,000 people using one small boy's lunch. He has taken this little lunch and multiplied the food to feed 20,000 people.

Bread was a part of the miracle, the multiplication of this boy's lunch, his bread, his fish, and then he teaches from that that he is the bread of life. Long sermon, and then everyone leaves. They make this statement: "This is a hard saying." Do you remember where we were in our previous message where Jesus said, "...unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you"? Their response to that teaching was: "This is a hard message. Who can hear it?" It wasn't just, "I find this difficult." Their response was, "Who would not find this difficult?!"

So Jesus comes in with an explanation. "How is it that I just did this amazing miracle yesterday, now in the synagogue I teach the meaning of it and give this promise that I am the bread of life, and everyone leaves and says, 'No thanks'?" Here is his explanation: "No one comes to me unless the Father draws him." You can only come to Christ by the work of the Spirit of God. The Spirit gives life. The flesh is no help at all. All that is human, all that is our ability, our smarts, our ingenuity, our goodness, our righteousness: no help at all. We come as the Spirit awakens our hearts to the truth.

This morning this crowd is filled with those who know Jesus Christ, and I'm sure there are quite a number who don't have a relationship with Jesus Christ. For some, the Spirit of God will move on their hearts and open the eyes of their hearts to see that life, eternal life and the forgiveness of sin, truly is found in Jesus Christ. It's a work of the Spirit of God. 2 Corinthians 3:6: "For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." In John 3:3-5 Jesus said,

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Nicodemus (a teacher of Israel) said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

The Spirit brings life. The Spirit gives life. What does that mean for us? It means, first of all, that we approach God in a wonderful, complete, transparent humility. This is not "God, you are lucky to have me." It is "God, I am completely dependent on you to know you and to know who you are." In Mark 10:15 Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." This is a reminder that we come with a childlike humility and transparency, freely acknowledging our need before God.

In Luke Chapter 10 there is the account of Jesus sending out the 72. This was an important ministry excursion where Jesus sends out this group of disciples. He tells them, "Go and do these acts of

blessings for others, and preach the kingdom of God.” They go and they are shocked. They have amazing success, and they come back all excited. They say, “Jesus, you won’t believe it! Even the demons are subject to your name!” Do you remember how Jesus responded to them? We are told in verse 21 of that chapter:

In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

Then turning to the disciples he said privately, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.”

Do you hear what Jesus is saying? They are coming back, they are all excited. “We have power!” Jesus’ response is this: “Listen, that’s not what should excite you. What should excite you is that your names are written in the Book of Life, that you have been given the gift of life. You are going to live forever!”

Just set that beside John Chapter 6. Jesus, in a profound moment of success feeds 20,000 people, then in a profound moment of failure they all leave upset at him. Do you feel the weight of that? Have you ever tried to do something? Have you ever had a party and no one shows up? That’s a failure. Jesus is saying to you, “That is not the key to satisfaction. It is not your power, your gifting. It is you knowing Christ and everything changes.”

First of all, celebrate that, and then know this grand truth: If you are seeing those things, it is because the Father is making them known, and it’s an act of his mercy. He loves to find the children of this world and show them things that kings and prophets long to know but don’t. If you are a follower of Jesus, it’s probably because you are a nobody. That’s good news, isn’t it? Listen, I often just thank the Lord that I’m a nobody. The devil picks on the big people, right?

Just one more illustration before we move on from this point. I want you to see that a satisfied life is found in Christ. We see by the Spirit of God. The Spirit gives life. Do you remember Matthew 16? We talked about it last week briefly. Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do you think I am? Who

do you say that I am? Peter comes out with the right answer: “You are the Messiah, you are the Christ.” He gives this glorious confession. What does Jesus explain to him? “Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah! For flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father who is in heaven,” bringing us back to this glorious truth: The Spirit gives life. That’s key #1.

Here is what I am going to do. I am going to give you these keys, and then I am going to bring them back and relate them so that we get a picture for the entire process.

II. Key #2 is this: The Spirit works through God’s word.

The Spirit gives life -- #1. #2 – He works through God’s word. He uses the word of God. Again, verse 63: “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.” Jesus promised that he would give the Holy Spirit. Before we leave the book of John, we are going to come to these great promises where Jesus is preparing to be crucified. He will be raised from the grave. He will then ascend to heaven. He tells his followers, “I know that that grieves you. You think that that’s bad news. But I will atone for your sin, and if I go, I will be able to give the Holy Spirit to you. He is going to take my words, he is going to take the truth of God and he is going to enliven that in your heart.” It’s very important that you understand that when we say the Spirit gives life, that what he does is he opens to you the truth of God’s word.

I think it might help if you would turn with me to 1 Thessalonians 1:4. Paul now is writing to these dear Christians. He writes: “For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.” Paul is saying that if you are disturbed by the truth that you can’t come to God unless the Spirit of God helps you, and you are sitting here thinking, “Okay, so in John Chapter 6 Jesus is teaching us about election. He is saying that he chooses those who come to him.” Maybe you are seated, hearing that, and saying, “Well, what if God hasn’t chosen me?”

Paul helps us here. Clearly, Jesus helps us in John 6 by reassuring us that no one is going to snatch you out of my hand. If you have come to me, you are not to come to me in an insecure, fearful place and say, “Well, I want to be saved, but maybe God hasn’t chosen me.” He is saying, “No, if you have come to him, it’s because God has moved on your heart.” Are you tracking with me?

But what does Paul say here? We know God has chosen you. How? Because the word of God came to you in the power of the Holy Spirit. There was a conviction of heart. It wasn’t just

information. “For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.” The Spirit of God works through the word of God. Are you getting this picture?

Continuing in verse 5: “You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit...” Do you see that dynamic? They are being persecuted. Paul says, “We were right there, in your midst, living as Christians, teaching you. We were an example to you, but in the midst of your affliction you received the word with the joy of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God quickened God’s word in your heart and you were filled with joy, even when life was a mess.” Sound familiar? Verse 7:

...so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

That’s a mouthful, I understand. Let me just give you a brief summary and we will move on. He was saying that a message came to you: There is a wrath that’s coming, a judgment of God against sin, but Jesus has paid the penalty of your sin and there is complete forgiveness, freedom from God’s judgment, freedom in him, eternal life. As that message of who Jesus is went forth, the Spirit of God was moving on your heart. There was great joy and you embraced that in truth. You saw the glory of Christ and what he has done, and the love of God for you, and you responded in faith because God’s word came to you in the power of the Holy Spirit.

#1 – The Spirit gives life. #2 – He uses God’s word.

III. The word reveals Jesus.

This is very important. Jesus is at the center of it all. It’s all about him. It’s all making him known. Let me just give you a little bit of that bonus outline. How do we read God’s word? Well, we have a guide who shows us, who opens God’s word for us. It’s the Holy Spirit. We have a guide. He shows us. Where do we look? We look in the bible. What do we look for? We look for Jesus

Christ. We looked to see God revealing himself as he makes Jesus known. The Spirit of God takes God's word and shows us Jesus. We see the glory of Jesus and we are changed. We are transformed.

I am giving you what I believe the scripture says: This is the key to life. The key to your life is knowing Jesus Christ, as Adam so appropriately read to our graduates from Philippians 3. But if we don't understand a little bit of how God works, we feel paralyzed. Do I just sit here and wait for God to speak out of the heavens? No, I go to God's word. I ask for his Spirit to give me understanding, to open my heart, and I'm looking for that revelation of Christ, who Christ is.

I'll take you back to last week for a moment. I shared with you Isaiah 54. Jesus, speaking in John Chapter 6, referenced this promise from Isaiah 54 that your children are going to obey God from their hearts. He was speaking about a time in the New Testament, in the New Covenant when the Spirit of God would be given to every believer.

Just stay with me for a minute, okay? Roll up your sleeves. Let's go to work for one moment. If you are an Old Testament believer, you've seen, maybe, some of the great prophets of God. And you see the Spirit of God speaking through them in this fantastic way. But that's not your typical experience as an Old Testament believer. The prophets are giving these promises that one day the Spirit of God is going to be in every child of God, and you are going to be full of the knowledge of God, speaking God's truth. Jesus quotes one of those promises from Isaiah 54.

What was the image? I'm not going to test you, but I want you to try to recall that the prophet speaks to a barren woman, a woman who was unable to have children, an unmarried, barren woman, and he gives her a promise. He says, "In your inability to have a husband and to have children, I'm going to give you more children than the married woman. You are going to enlarge your tent. You need a bigger house, I'm going to give you so many children." If you can, go back in time 2500 or 2800 years, to a day when that was really that woman's calling in life as she understood it for that day and in that culture. The shame and the reproach that was on her life because she was unable to fulfill that calling is lifted.

I made a statement in applying that passage. I said, "Here is the picture: Christ is your husband. Christ is your provider. Christ is your protector." This Old Testament prophecy is telling you that in your lack of power, Jesus comes so that he can pay for your sin, pay for your barrenness, and give you the Spirit of God so that there will be this fruitfulness in your life, and you are going to change

the nations because Jesus died for your sin. It's all wrapped up in this image of "Jesus is your husband."

What I am suggesting to is to go to God's word, asking the Spirit of God to help you. You want to say, "Lord, how do I see Christ in this passage?" Then you begin to see, "Okay, Christ is my high priest. Christ is my shepherd. Christ is my king. Christ is my husband. Christ is my sun, shield..." on and on, image after image. "Christ is my sacrifice. Christ is my priest. Jesus is my sufficiency in all things." 1 Corinthians 1:30: He is my wisdom, my righteousness, my sanctification, my redemption.

Maybe you thought the entire goal of reading your bible was so that you could say, "I've read the whole bible." That's not a bad thing, right? It's a great thing to start going through it at the beginning of the year. If you fail, start again next year and keep at it. But the goal is to see Christ. When you see the glory of Christ, you are changed. Are you with me?

Now let's go back to John Chapter 6. You know what I see that's so glorious about Jesus? I see Jesus feed this mass of people. I see that he cares about this little boy and he uses him. He teaches the disciples. Then he kind of secretly walks on water so that they see it and the crowd doesn't. Then he comes and preaches this glorious message and tells them essentially, "I am going to give my life for you," and they all get mad at him and leave him. He just keeps loving. He is unswayed. He is unmoved.

My savior is a rock! He doesn't care if the Op-Ed piece in the New York Times gives him a bad review. He doesn't care if you don't approve. He loves you and gives his life. The bread that he gives for the life of the world is his flesh. And when you don't see it and when you reject it, he still chooses to bring his Spirit and to show mercy and to bring that glorious truth alive in your heart. That is good news.

Are you with me? Three glorious truths: #1 -- The Spirit gives life. #2 -- He uses God's word. #3 -- It's all about Christ. It's revealing Christ. Let me give you the fourth key, which seems to break the progression, but it's important and it's helpful, especially in light of this theme of experiencing a satisfied life.

IV. The fourth key is this: God rules all things.

One of the things that is becoming clear is that God is not passive in salvation. He is moving on the hearts of people. He is ruling even our hearts. He is bringing himself to those that will be saved.

We are given that description in verse 65. “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.” There is this picture of the sovereignty of God. Nothing is beyond God’s control. That’s one picture of this truth that God rules all things. But did you see the other one? It’s a very disturbing one. What is it? Jesus said to them in verse 70: “‘Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.’ He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray him.”

Jesus chose twelve. Now step back and look at John Chapter 6. “I am the bread of life. How will I do that? I will give my flesh. My body will be broken.” You come over here to this explanation: “That will come alive to your heart by the work of my Spirit. And by the way, I chose twelve of you, and in order to accomplish this, there will be a betrayal. I chose one of the Twelve because he is going to betray me so that I will go to the cross to pay for your sin. I am Lord of all. I don’t want you to be undone when Judas meets me in the garden in the dead of night and kisses me. I don’t want you to think that God has lost control when soldiers arrest me and beat me and spit upon me and crucify me.”

God is sovereign. High school graduate, you are going to face a number of disappointments in life. Chances are that God will lead your life in a way that you will not get everything you want. There may even be heartache and suffering that God ordains. He rules it all. If you want to walk in the fullness of Christ, there is a place where we learn to come and eat the bread of life and drink the living water by coming to his word, asking the Spirit of God to open our eyes that we might see the glory of Christ. As we see his glory, the Father is revealed and we are transformed. We are changed.

We said it this way last week. We go through trials, and we come to a desperate place, and God delivers us. We see God’s provision in one form or another. Many times we go through a cycle of this, even at times multiple trials. That’s not to put you in a condition, Christian, where you feel like this cloud of gloom is over you. No, God wants you to understand that Christ is your sufficiency. As you go through this process of deliverance and seeing his sufficiency and experiencing it, then the truth of that lays hold of you and you really begin to live by faith in him and not yourself.

By God’s grace, my wife and I have really enjoyed the teenage years in our children. We love this season. They are all in college or grad school. One is married, one straggler still in high school who is precious to us. They are all wonderful. But after raising six you learn a few things. You have that

conflict or that moment where they are absolutely convinced that they know everything and you are just so dimwitted, right? You say, “Oh, I’ve been here before.”

This is just part of a natural process of them trying to stretch out and detach a little bit and establish themselves in their own personhood. Some of it is sin, but it’s not all sin. Some of it’s my sin, but it’s not all sin. Some of it is just life. We learn as we progress in Christ. There is a spiritual dynamic to going through trials and learning to live by faith.

Listen, I would like to always have more than enough money in the bank. I would love to live that way. It doesn’t seem to be the case. It seems to be every day, “Give me this day my daily bread.” I don’t know what the areas in your life are going to be where you experience that. There are going to be some places where it is so easy for you to lay hold of God and believe, and there are other places where it’s really tough. One person believes for health easily, and for another person it’s a great trial. One person believes for material provision or a career, another just can’t seem to find his or her way. We must live by faith because God wants to show us that we don’t live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Father. Christ is the ultimate revelation of that. He reveals to us the glory of God’s sufficiency, the glory of God’s provision. We see it by the Spirit of God. We see it in the word of God, and as we see the glory of God, we are transformed. Amen?

Alright, we are closing. I’m going to ask the worship team to come up. As they do and prepare themselves, if you have not trusted in Jesus Christ, there is a need for a moment in your life where you bow your heart before God and say, “Lord, save me. I repent of my sin. Cleanse me of my sin. I am trusting in you, Lord Jesus.” If God has moved upon your heart, I want to encourage you to respond.