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What are You Working For? *John 6:22-40*

Capitol Commission Bible studies are held on Tuesday and Wednesday. The legislator Bible study meets from 8:00-8:45 AM in Room 203, Ryan Bldg. (during

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDY 201st General Assembly

- **TUESDAY (SESSION) @ 8:00 AM**
IN ROOM 203, RYAN BLDG.
- **WEDNESDAY (EVERY) @ 1:00 PM**
IN ROOM 203, RYAN BLDG.

session weeks). An open-to-all Bible study meets from 1:00-1:30 PM in Room 203, Ryan Bldg. (during non-session weeks). The Bible studies are nonpartisan and non-denominational, and will focus on the Gospel of John for the 2017/2018 General Assembly.

– Jeff Whitebread, Pennsylvania State Minister, Capitol Commission

John 6:41-71: “What Are You Working For?”

Sometimes it is helpful to take a step back before we plunge into the deeper teachings of Jesus. John is writing that the reader might believe Jesus is the Messiah, God only and only Son, and that by trusting him you would have the life of Jesus living through you (John 20:31).

Jesus as a 1st Century rabbi is gathering around him students who would be with him, so they would be like him, so they would be able to do the things that he was doing. For those who would claim allegiance to Jesus, they make a commitment to being apprentices of Jesus, his students in kingdom living.

As a disciple of Jesus, I will always be learning from him. And the place of my discipleship is wherever I am at now, and whatever I am doing, I am constantly learning, and there is a long way to go before the end of the lesson. Sometimes we might wish that the lessons would end, but they don't because life moves on, the challenges change, and so I must be reconciled to the fact that I am going to be a student of Jesus from here on out.

Also, it is critically important to understand that Jesus is, in fact, the smartest man in my field – he is not just nice, but he is brilliant. It does matter what we are doing, he is the smartest man on that job. So, we're constantly in school under Him. And he is our master and teacher. We are learning how to do things on his behalf and with his resources – or might we say, doing things “in his name.”

I remember hearing the story about Jimmy Carter's chief of staff asking the following question at a Christian seminar: “How do you get Christianity in the boardroom?” The speaker had a very simple answer: have a Christian - a full-functioning disciple of Jesus - walk in and sit down, there is no other way.

One might ask, what does a fully-functioning disciple of Jesus look like? These three characteristics are absolutely foundational: (1) a growing trust and confidence in God (2) a willingness to say no to ourselves - to move away from a life that says, my will be done, to a readiness that says, thy will be done, (3) and a life that is filled with agape love – a life that gives and receives love in the context of their relationships. It is our discipleship to Jesus that corrects orientation towards God in faith, towards ourselves in death to self, and others through agape love.

The Frantic Search for Jesus

John 6:56: Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them - One of the most moving stories about King David concerns the time when he was fighting the Philistines, who had occupied his native town of Bethlehem. Among David's fiercely loyal fighting men he had three in particular who were renowned for their bravery and their readiness to do whatever the king might ask. When he and his men were pinned down one day, David longed for a drink, and said out loud how much he would like to have water from the well at Bethlehem – which was of course inaccessible due to the Philistines. But that didn't stop his three heroes. Off they went, broke through the Philistine army, got water from the well at Bethlehem and brought it back to David.

But David didn't drink it. He didn't want to be seen to profit from their readiness of these men to put their lives on the line for him. ‘God forbid’, he said, ‘that I should drink the blood of these men, who went at the risk of their lives’ (2 Samuel 23.17; 1 Chronicles 11.19). He poured the water out on the ground.

Into this backdrop Jesus speaks his words to those who would come after him as his followers. If you want to gain any value from what I am doing, he says, you must eat my flesh and drink my blood. Jesus, the Messiah, is going one better again. He will put his own life at risk - indeed he will actually lose it. Jesus is saying that the impartation of Himself to us is what makes our life eternal. Even now, Christ is extending this offer of God's life to us, our life can become eternal by making what we are doing part of what God is doing in his world. In this, Jesus is teaching us how to live in such a way that God acts with us

John 6:24: They...went to Capernaum in search of Jesus - As they wake up, Jesus is nowhere to be found. They begin their search, possibly looking for him in the mountains and the search gets more frantic as time passes. Some other boats arrive near where they had spent the night. After being convinced he is not there, the next logical move is to head in the direction his disciples went, and they make their way toward Capernaum.

Their search continues until they find Jesus in one of the local synagogues in which the following interaction takes place. Jesus, always the teacher, uses their pursuit for physical food to touch on their deeper need, he seeks to address that which is necessary for them to trust that Jesus can provide for all their needs, not just the ones that are immediately obvious on the surface of things.

Working for Food that Spoils

What are You Working For? (cont'd) - John 6:22-40

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John 6:27a: *Do not work for food that spoils* – What is the food that spoils? How is it that these people who put such great effort into searching for Jesus are working for food that spoils, according to Him? John, the writer of this gospel, also wrote the epistle of 1 John. There he penned these words which might give us a clue as to how to understand what Jesus is saying:

(16) For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. (17) The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever. – 1 John 2:16 -17

John tells us that the world, those desires that constitute the world, are the things that pass away, they are the things that spoil, they are what is temporary and will not last. Now, when John speaks of the world, he is not referring to the created world of nature, nor the many good things that make up the world of human culture. What he is pointing to specifically are those aspects of our world, especially practices, both cultural and social, that are under the control of Satan and, thus opposed to God. A quick example for us to consider is how freedom, in our culture, has come to mean unrestrained desire. It has become a cultural belief that I should be able to do whatever I want, with no qualifications.

Thus, the world is marked by three spiritual underlying forces that John defines as the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life.

Now, when we hear the word lust our initial thought is that of sexual temptation, but a better word to use, for our understanding, is desire - wanting something that appears to be good for some purpose or pleasure. And so, we could say these three spiritual forces are: the desire of our flesh, the desire of our eyes, and the pride of life. You see, temptation always comes in one of these three forms. This is what is happening in this account.

As we consider Eve's temptation in Genesis 3, we find these three forces at work when she is tempted: (1) it was good for food, (2) it was pleasing to the eye, (3) it was desirable for gaining wisdom. Then, we recall that *Hebrews 2:14* tells us, "Jesus was tempted in every way just as we are and yet without sin." When considering Jesus' temptations in Matthew 4, he is tempted in the same three ways: (1) turning food to bread - desire of the flesh, (2) jumping from the temple - the desire of the eyes (to look good in front of others), (3) political power and glory - the pride of life (a life in which we have power to control others).

The Ploys of Satan

This is Satan's way of dealing with people, he catches us up in these three patterns and then makes us think we are doing what we want to do.

We obsess over the immediate things we want, and he assures us that all will be well. There is no need to be concerned about the consequences.

He whispers in our ears, "Everything will be okay. Don't worry, be happy. Get in there and go for it!

As you admire some wonderful thing, Satan comes along and provides you with all the reasonable explanations of why you are justified in having it, and how it would be quite all right to have what you desire, moral qualms aside.

John 6:26 – *You are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you're ate the loaves and had you fill* - Isn't this what is happening in this account, the crowds are being tempted with the thought that Jesus is able provide them with an endless supply of food and so they are determined to hitch their wagon to him and make him king – whether he wants that or not. In their view of him, Jesus becomes no more than an object they can use for securing what they desire in their lives.

Satan uses not only our desires to deceive us but also our fears. Fear that we will not get what we desire can provide motivation for actions that cause many of the problems we face. When connecting the three main sources of temptation with the things we fear, what a person finds is that nearly all our fears are grounded in the things we desire.

Depending on our circumstances, we are frightened that our needs will not be met. We can become afraid of what others will do to us – the harm they may bring to us physically or in other ways, such as hindering the things we want to accomplish in our careers. While these are real concerns, what drives these fears are the desires that sit upon the throne of our hearts, and those are the things that Satan can easily manipulate for his purposes. And so, we must step beyond Satan's ploy and not cooperate with him and his agenda.

Working for Food that Endures

John 6:22: Believe in the one he sent. – This is the work according to Jesus, and yet it may seem like somewhat of an innocuous statement to us. The crowds, on the other hand, seem to grasp the challenging nature posed in believing Jesus because immediately they ask for another sign as proof.

Believing Jesus means that he has the right ideas about God and makes known what God is like. If it's true, as John says earlier, that the one sent by God speaks the words of God, it's Jesus who communicates to us God's thoughts, character, and purposes. Believing him means that we trust he's right about everything and we act as if what he says is true

And so, Jesus says, we are to work toward goal of eternal life (6:28), the way we get that life is from the bread that comes down from heaven

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