

# He Who Gives Life

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Please turn with me to the book of John. We'll be starting in chapter 6. It'll be on page 892 in the Blue Bibles.

John chapter 6, starting in verse 35. Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

But I said to you that you have seen me, and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.

For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life. And I will raise him up on the last day.

[ 1 : 0 7 ] So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, I am the bread that came down from heaven. They said, Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?

How does he now say, I have come down from heaven? Jesus answered them, Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day.

It is written in the prophets, and they will all be taught by God. Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father, except he who is from God.

He has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.

This is the bread of life that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven.

[ 2 : 1 4 ] If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh. The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?

Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.

Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me.

This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever. Jesus said these things in the synagogue as he taught at Capernaum.

[ 3 : 28 ] 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.

[ 4 : 37 ] 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.

The word of the Lord. Thanks for that. It's great to see you all again this morning.

I saw most of you last night, and I know it's taxing for some folks who are busy during Christmas time, and I thought it was important for us to gather on Sunday morning together because it's Christmas time we think about family reunions, and really Sunday mornings are the family reunions for the church, but it's really not with the extended family but with our immediate family, nuclear family, the family of God, and we only get to see each other once a week, some of us, so it's something to look forward to, this family gathering, and I look forward to it each week, and we're finally finishing this chapter in John.

We spent three weeks in John 6, which is longer than usual, but this passage has so many helpful teachings for us, and it's probably a little more complex than the usual passages in John, so I encourage you to follow along closely as we go.

If you receive, a lot of people receive gifts during Christmas, but if you receive something that's too good to be true, let's say you got a little gift and it had a car key in it, then you might immediately ask yourself, so is this a joke, or I mean, what's the catch, right?

[ 6 : 29 ] Is this, it's like a key to like, I don't know, remote-controlled car or something? You know, it's like, what's the catch? Because we've been trained in our life to know and to expect that nothing is free, nothing is truly free, right?

When they give you free music, you have to subscribe to their newsletter. When they give you a free burger, you have to fill out a survey, right? So when you get a pop-up on your laptop that says free iPad, you ignore it because you know it's a scam or somehow there's some fine print that's going to make sure you pay for it, right?

And so that's kind of what we're conditioned to expect and when it comes to God's gift of eternal life, there can be a similar sense of skepticism or doubt. What's the catch?

If it's really free, if it's all God, what's, I mean, what's in it for Him? Like, why would He do that? And if it's so good, if it's too good to be true, why do so many people reject it? And that's the question that confronts Jesus and His disciples in this passage and the answer He provides is that it's the triune God who gives and guarantees eternal life and we must depend on Him because of that.

We have to depend on the triune God because He's the one that gives and guarantees eternal life and there's three things that fall in that and the first is that the Father gives His people and I'll explain that in a second.

[ 7 : 46 ] The Father gives His people and the Son, secondly, gives His flesh and third, finally, the Spirit gives His life. So, all three persons of Trinity each have a unique role to play in giving and guaranteeing eternal life for people who follow Him.

The Father gives His people, the Son gives His flesh and the Spirit gives His life and I'll talk about them in turn. The first thing is the Father gives His people and what do we mean by that?

Read verses 35 to 38 with me in your Bibles. It says, Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

Right? So, we've covered this. Jesus is the bread of life, the eternal sustenance. Jesus is the bread of life. And that's why those who come to Him and believe in Him never hunger and thirst again. But then, curiously, it says, some of those people that were living like really right alongside Jesus, seeing all the amazing miracles that He does and listening to all these amazing claims that He makes still refuse to believe in Him.

[ 9 : 02 ] And we like to think, I mean, if I were there, I don't think I'd have any doubts. Right? I mean, we were 2,000 years removed so we might justify our doubts and say, but if we were right there, we'd think, oh man, it'd be so easy to believe.

How come these people don't believe? Does that mean that Jesus' mission was in some way a failure? I mean, He came to seek and save the lost but He doesn't seem to be doing a particularly good job of that, at least at this point.

So, what's going on? And Jesus provides the answer in verse 37. All that the Father gives me will come to me. And whoever comes to me, I will never cast out.

Right? So, Jesus' confidence in the success of His mission is to seek and save the lost. It's not in the goodwill and receptivity of the people. So, He's not going out there hoping that because people are ready and they're ready to listen and willing to be charitable that He's going to be successful.

But rather, His confidence in His mission is in the fact that the Father gives Him His people. Right? And note the progression of the verbs, the logical progression there. It's the Father, all that the Father gives, all those people come and it's all those who come that Jesus never casts out.

[ 10 : 15 ] So, there's progression from Father's giving to people's coming and to Jesus not casting out. I mean, the positive way to put that would be Jesus keeping or preserving people. So, every single person that the Father gives comes to Jesus and every single one of those people Jesus keeps and preserves so that they are never lost.

right? So, that's the, that's what we call, theologians call, and we all call the doctrine of election. And verse 44 makes this even clearer.

If you look at verse 44, no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. Now, this is the same truth phrased differently. Only those whom the Father draws come to Jesus.

Really, there's no way around this. I mean, it's, it's, the God, because if, unless God draws everybody, which he evidently doesn't because some people don't believe in him, then this, this must mean that he must choose some to draw.

He draws some to come to him. And this doctrine of election scandalizes some people. It's, it's hard to believe. They cry foul or unfair, right?

[ 11 : 23 ] So, why does God choose some people to the exclusion of others? Isn't that unfair? Isn't that unjust? But let me ask you this question.

If Warren Buffett gives 2.8 million dollars to the Gates Foundation, which he did recently, do we have the right to cry foul and say, well, that's not fair at all.

You should have given 2.8 million dollars to Trinity Cambridge Church, right? Of course not, right? I mean, we, we, he has, he has no reason whatsoever to give away his money, right?

It's, the fact that he gives any of it is his generosity. We don't have any claim to that, right? This is just because, just, just, and he's the donor, he gets to do what he wants with it, right? And in the same way, it's the Father's prerogative to choose whom he will give eternal life to because no one deserves it.

No one's entitled to it. He doesn't have to, he doesn't owe us eternal life and because all of us have sinned and rebelled against him and deserve his wrath and justice. Yet, the Father, in his grace, chooses some and gives them to his Son.

[ 12 : 32 ] And that's a testament, the fact that some, some of us, we find that sometimes as unfair or unjust, that's a testament not to our sense of justice but to our exceedingly self-righteousness that we complain about God's grace, his, his right to do so.

So, the Father chooses and gives those whom he will give, whom he will save through his Son and then the Son keeps them and look at verse 38 and 39. Jesus says, for, right, so that's the clue, the word clue that tells us Jesus is about to give a reason for something.

He's about to give the reason why he keeps them. For, I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me and this is the will of him who sent me that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me but raise it up on the last day.

So, the reason Jesus keeps these people is because he didn't come to do his own will or to choose his own people but he came to do his Father's will and it's his Father's will that Jesus keeps the people whom he's given him and because of that Jesus says, no, I will never, I will not lose them and I will keep them and that's because he wants to be obedient.

He's an obedient, perfect son and what that means for us then is that if, if, anybody that Father gave and drew for it to himself failed to come to him failed to attain eternal life in the end then that would be to Jesus' eternal shame because he says explicitly he came to do his Father's will and it's his Father's will that he never loses any one of them and so, why is this important?

[ 14 : 08 ] Why is the doctrine of election important? Because it's not just in there in the Bible for no reason it's supposed to function for us and it's supposed to function in two different ways. And first, doctrine of election promotes humility because God sovereignly chose to save us and we didn't earn our salvation we don't have anything to boast about because if we think that God saved us because of our superior intelligence or greater sincerity or morality or even greater faith then we'd have cause to be prideful but because God saved us on his own accord out of his own sovereign will we have reason to be humble and grateful but not to be boastful and prideful.

It's kind of the difference between receiving a grant and receiving a donation. When you receive a grant you apply for it and because you're qualified for it more qualified than other applicants that's why you got the grant and when you get a grant then you have something to boast about so you can post it on your social media if I won this grant but when you receive a donation you have nothing to boast about.

It's simply the generosity and the will of the donor to give you this donation so you just have a reason to be humbled and thankful and that's how the doctrine of election is supposed to function so that even when we look at people who are stubborn in their unbelief we don't have anything to boast about in their presence because we were also saved by God's grace and his election drawing us to himself and the flip side of that is so it promotes humility but it also provides assurance for us because it's if you think about it this way if you could merit salvation if you could merit eternal life it's something that we did to earn it then in the same way you could also demerit eternal life you could do something wrong to mess it up because you earned it in the first place so then we're constantly in this sense in this insecurity just asking ourselves do I have enough faith today have I been holy enough this week have I done enough good works in my life right see those questions will never leave us if we don't have the doctrine of election because we believe in the end the result that we came to be saved we earned eternal life with our own doing and so but doctrine of election because it assures that it's God who gives and guarantees eternal life the Father gives his people that tells us that we have assurance we can have great assurance in that because God did it without our earning of any of it in the first place there's a song that we sing sometimes as a church entitled

He Will Hold Me Fast I don't know if you guys remember that that song really gets at this truth well one verse it says those he saves are his delight Christ will hold me fast precious in his holy sight he will hold me fast he will not let my soul be lost his promises shall last but by him at such a cost he will hold me fast and that's where our faith lies not in our own earning or deserving or merit but in God's election his sovereign choosing so that's provides humility it provides assurance and promotes humility for us but what if you're not a believer what if you're talking to someone who's not a believer and what does that truth mean for them does that mean that they have to resign themselves to fatalism and say well I don't have faith so I must not be chosen and resign yourself to that faith that's not at all what John says because look with me in verse 40 this is a necessary correlator to the doctrine of election look at verse 40 with me for this is the will of my father that everyone who looks on the son and believes in him should have eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day so notice there's two wills of the father given in this in this passage first is in verse 39 it says it was the father's will the same word that Jesus preserved those whom he's given sovereignly given and then in verse 40 the same word will is used the father's will that everyone who looks on the son and believes in him should have eternal life so there's two wills what Jesus must do to keep the people that father sovereignly gave and then what we must do which is to look on him and believe so what the fact that the father sovereignly chooses people does not abrogate our responsibility to look on him and believe those two things exist simultaneously and it's a mystery it's a paradox and a pastor from the mid 20th century named Donald

Gray Barnhouse you guys may have heard of him it's he had a remarkable facility for using analogies to explain difficult concepts and he has a spectacular analogy about this that illustrates this truth that I want to share with you because he'd say this often he says imagine a cross like the one that Jesus died on but imagine that it's so big that there's a door in the middle of it right it's the doorway to heaven so on the outside of the door it says this the words from the book of Revelation it says whosoever will may come whoever wishes whoever believes they may come these words represent the free and universal gift the offer of salvation to all people right and now on the other side of the door if you enter through that door and then look back on the other side of the door a happy surprise awaits the one who believes and enters because on the door it says the words of Ephesians written it says chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world on one side of the door it says whatsoever will may come on the other side of the door it says chosen before the foundation of the world that's that's how election is it's best understood in hindsight when you've come to be saved when you've come to have a relationship with God have eternal life you realize that well all along

[ 20 : 09 ] God had chosen me and had been pursuing me it wasn't me it's best understood in that hindsight so we need to hold those two truths together and we could use the words of John in the same illustration on one side it says whoever looks on the son and believes in him may come and on the other side it says all those whom the father has given right so this is how the father gives his people it's an important doctrine and so now let's look then at how the son gives his flesh in verses 47 to 59 verses I should start with verses 41 and 42 so the Jews grumbled about him because he said I am the bread that came down from heaven they said is not this Jesus the son of Joseph whose father and mother we know how does he now say I have come down from heaven so this is a classic example of familiarity breeding contempt right so these people if you may recall are in Jesus' hometown they're in Galilee in Capernaum a town within Galilee and so they knew

Jesus' family it doesn't say anything whether they're still alive or not Mary's still alive but they knew we know where you're from we know your family we knew Joseph and Mary so why are you saying what is this nonsense about you coming down from heaven we know exactly where you came from so that's their objection but the irony of this is that not only do they betray ignorance of Jesus' virgin birth so Mary at the immaculate conception she conceived without intercourse and not only that Jesus' true identity they betray their ignorance of that as well because Jesus' true father is not Joseph but it's God God the father so Jesus is unapologetic and he continues verses 47 to 50 truly truly I say to you whoever believes has eternal life I am the bread of life your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and they died this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat of it and not die

I am the living bread that came down from heaven if anyone eats of this bread he will live forever and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh so Jesus is saying that the bread he offers is far superior to the bread that Moses offered to the Israelites and there is indisputable empirical evidence because the people the Israelites who ate the manna in the wilderness every single one of them died right and that's verifiable but Jesus says if you eat me if you eat the flesh that I offer the bread of life that I am that you will have eternal life and the reason why Jesus can offer us eternal life he gives two reasons the first is that he is from heaven because he's from heaven he can offer eternal life he has access to eternal life and the second is he came down right because if he were still in heaven he would not be able to offer this to us because he's a bread from heaven that came down that is able to offer eternal life to us it says in verse 57 as the living father sent me and

I live because of the father so whoever feeds on me he also will live because of me so Jesus heavenly origin enables him to give eternal life and the fact that he came to us and to impart this eternal life is what gives us access to it and so that's the message of Christmas as we remember this morning without Christmas without the incarnation there can be no salvation if he didn't come 2000 years ago on this day there can be no salvation for us because he's the bread that came down from heaven in there's a series it's kind of children's novel but C.S.

Lewis' series Chronicles of Narnia I don't know if some of you guys have read that but in the last book called The Last Battle there's this wonderful scene where there's a manger a stable and that's kind of a portal to eternal life or heaven and Lucy one of the main characters says about this it's inside is bigger than it's outside they say about that stable and then Lucy says this in our world too a stable once had something inside it that was bigger than our whole world that's such a cool way to refer to the incarnation a stable had inside it something that was bigger than our entire world isn't that amazing that's what happened on Christmas day Jesus the creator of the universe became in the form of a creature and if this doesn't cause us to marvel there's something really profoundly fair tale stories that we know of like a king taking on the identity of a commoner and living among them or this prince becoming some creature like a beast or a frog it's far more grander than that it's more like the author of the book somehow becoming the character in the book that's how mind boggling it is that

[ 25 : 23 ] God the cosmic creator universe comes into this story that becomes a creator to live among us and it's because he did that because he was the God man Jesus the son of God who became a son of man that he's able precisely to save us because if he's not God he can't rightly represent God or to offer forgiveness because God's the offended part and he's the only one that can forgive but at the same time because man who sinned humanity that sinned only God and man in order to be able to bring salvation and give eternal life to us and that's the genius of the incarnation that's God's amazing plan so that's 1st Timothy 2 5 it says for there is one God and there's one mediator between God and man the man Christ Jesus because he is man he can offer his flesh to impart eternal life to us and this is another thing

Jesus flesh and eating of his flesh right so they say verse 52 how can this man give us his flesh to eat I mean that's Jews of course abstain from cannibalism as we all do right and the entire Greco-Roman empire abstained from cannibalism so they're asking this question what do you mean you can give us your flesh to eat and then Jesus doesn't make it any easier on them in his response instead of qualifying it he goes further he says in verse 53 truly truly I say to you unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood you have no life in you and drinking blood I mean cannibalism is bad enough but drinking blood has been forbidden since Leviticus 17 10 11 since the time of Moses drinking blood has been forbidden so the Jews reaction against what Jesus is saying you have to eat your flesh and drink your blood for us to have eternal life but of course

Jesus isn't speaking literally here right and we see that in verse 54 whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day but then recall verse 40 and compare it side by side it says everyone who looks on the son and believes in him should have eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day you guys notice the parallel the result is the same right they they were gonna have eternal life and be raised up on the last day the same result of these two sentences but the way you get there is two different things parallel verse 40 it's by looking on the son and believing in him but in verse 54 it's by feeding on his flesh and drinking his blood so they're parallel because they're referring to the same thing to feed on his flesh and to drink his blood is to look on the son and to believe in him they're conceptual parallels and that's why Augustine the fourth century theologian he wrote this believe and you have eaten so that we receive the bread and juice by faith that these disciples are asking is precisely the mistake that

Catholics make that we see a lot is that they point to John 6 as indisputable evidence that salvation is gained by partaking in the Lord's Supper they say you get saved by eating Jesus that's where salvation is unless you do that you're not saved and so they believe in a doctrine called transubstantiation which says that the bread and the wine even though in their appearance or what they call accidents they appear unchanged actually within the substance is changed it actually becomes the physical blood and body of Jesus that's what they believe and that's how they interpret John 6 and that's why you must eat that in order the audience they have been practicing the

Lord's Supper for decades so right when they hear the word give thanks which is what Jesus did before he distributed the bread in verse 11 give thanks comes from the Greek word which means Eucharist that's the name that the early church used for the Lord's Supper to give thanks so right when they see that in their mind they're thinking oh the Lord's Supper the breaking 54 it sounds even more like the Lord's Supper because notice what Jesus says verse 54 but eating his body and then he speaks of feeding on his flesh so he switches the words before he was talking exclusively about eating the body but now he says feeding the flesh it's two different words and the word feeding it means to munch on to chew so it's very graphic kind of a physical is much more much less abstract than body and it's more concrete like the flesh you have to feed you have to munch chew on my flesh that's what

[ 31 : 19 ] Jesus says here and I think that's unmistakably an intentional way John which brings attention to how the physical dimension of our eating and drinking in the Lord's Supper brings spiritual nourishment and consumption as well so then let me just bring out two lessons about the Lord's Supper since I haven't done any teaching on the Lord's Supper up to this point that we can get from this so first is that the primary meaning of the Lord's Supper the eating of the bread and drinking of juice is faith it's to believe in the son that's the primary meaning so without faith the Lord's Supper doesn't do anything for us unless you have faith it has no benefits to give to us it's not some autonomous ritual that no matter where you're coming from if you eat it there's kind of magic happening that somehow gives you spiritual nourishment it's not like that the primary meaning is faith you have to have faith and so that's the mistake of the

Catholics that we must avoid but second it doesn't follow from this truth that the Lord's Supper is merely a memorial it's merely a symbol just remembering what Jesus did and that's the mistake that often many evangelicals make because sure we're not eating and drinking the physical body and blood of Jesus at the Lord's Supper but we are eating and drinking the spiritual body and blood of Jesus right and so if so you can think about it this way if the preaching on Sunday morning is the proclamation of Jesus then the Lord's Supper is a participation in Jesus his body his spiritual body and blood right and in that sense it accomplishes three things when we participate in the Lord's Supper first it unites us to Christ right because that's it reinforces the union that we have with him through faith and through that union with him it also reinforces the union we have with one another because we are the body of

Christ as a church and then thirdly through that union with Christ we also are entered into the fellowship of the triune God because Jesus is a person within the Trinity so then when we eat the bread and it's in the same way when we eat physical food and drink they are ingested they go into our system they become part of us in a way in a spiritual sense through the Lord's Supper it says whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him right and I think an analogy might be helpful here for you to think about it because well let me mention this first because you guys might remember Paul's teaching on the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians and he says this in chapter 10 verse 16 17 the cup of blessing that we bless he's talking about the Lord's Supper is it not a participation in the blood of

Christ the bread that we break is it not a participation in the body of Christ because there is one bread we who are many are one body for we all partake of the one bread so he sees the physical partaking of the Lord's Supper as participation in the body and blood of Christ and then later in chapter 11 the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord let a person examine himself then and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup for anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself right this kind of dire warning really would not make any sense if the Lord's Supper was all symbol mere symbol and no substance there would be no judgment there would be nothing wrong with treating it as an empty kind of ritual reenactment merely of what

God said no Lord's Supper is serious business it's a serious spiritual ritual and it's helpful for me to think about it this way so when you're born right you have life once and for all right when a child is born they have life intrinsic life they have but that doesn't mean even that doesn't mean that they could stop eating and drinking right they need to keep eating and drinking in order to sustain that life even though they don't have life because of the food because they had life before they ate anything life was given to them but they eat and drink to sustain that life right so I think about it it's similarly so for spiritually it's by faith that we're born again that's how we once and for all have the life that comes through Christ but that life we nurture and we grow and we sustain through our participation in the Lord's supper right and that's and so faith is the instrument by which we receive it's through that that happens but the



[ 36 : 29 ] Lord's supper like eating and drinking brings the necessary sustaining grace for that and that's why we as a church practice the communion every week instead of doing it once a month or once a quarterly because we see it's an important aspect of church life and John Calvin for example Protestant reformer said there's two marks of a true church if a church is a true church is a genuine church then two things have to happen and it says first is that the word of church history people have seen those two things as marks of the true church and so we do that every week so try to keep those two things clear and in the right order right is that when we think about the Lord's supper the first sense the primary sense in which son gives his flesh is by dying on the cross for our sins and we take hold of that by faith a secondary sense in which the son gives his flesh which is effective only because of the cross is through the

Lord's supper and participation in it and that's why it's very serious when a believer is ex or a member of a church is ex communicated and are no longer able to partake in the Lord's supper because it doesn't just mean they can't just go home and say well I have faith in the Lord so I can do it on my own no if you've been excluded from the Lord's supper that means you no longer have participation in the body and blood of Christ that's why that was taken so seriously throughout church history and that's why churches don't do that lightly unless there is clear evidence that these people are unregenerate in their unrepentant sin so that's how the to them it's difficult to accept but notice how

Jesus doesn't stop there and says well no actually it's not a hard saying you think it's hard just because you misunderstood me he doesn't say that disciples seem to have understood him rightly and that's precisely where the offense lies so then Jesus somehow perhaps supernaturally knowing that these disciples were having a hard time he says to them in verses 61 and 62 do you take offense at this then what if you were to see the son of man ascending to where he was before in other words if you think it's offensive when I say that I descended from heaven to give eternal life then how much more will you find offense when you see me later ascend back to heaven where I was before and doing that and by doing that give even more offended when I later returned to where I came from so that

Jesus continues in 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 now this is a really hard verse to understand interpret because it's very easy to misinterpret that first to mean to negate everything that kind of came before it because Jesus mentions his flesh so what does it mean that the flesh is no help at all does it mean that his flesh is no help at all I mean I don't think that's what the passage is saying because Jesus says very clearly in verses 55 and 56 for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I and him right Jesus flesh that's what we celebrate on Christmas day his incarnation is integral to his saving mission without his flesh there's no salvation for us so he's not talking here about his flesh saying that flesh is no help at all but rather he's talking about the flesh of his disciples and you can there's an instructive parallel in

John 3 which we went through verses 3 to 6 where Jesus says to Nicodemus truly truly I say to you unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God I say to you unless one is born of water and the spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God that so you see that contrast between the flesh and the spirit so what he's saying when he says that flesh is no help at all it is the spirit who gives life but the flesh is no help at all he's explaining why his followers have such a hard time with this they can't believe they can't see the kingdom of God they can't enter into the kingdom of God because they were born not of the spirit but of flesh and so Jesus says of them the flesh is no help at all and that's why in verse 65 he reminds them this is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the father so to put it really bluntly Jesus is saying those who reject his words are doing so because it's not been granted born of the spirit who has his life that are able to see and enter into the kingdom of

[ 42:10 ] God so the father gives his people the son gives his flesh and the spirit gives his life right so the father initiates and plans the salvation it's the son who obeys and executes the salvation and it's the spirit who applies and manifests the salvation so all three of them work in our salvation and how exactly does the spirit give life Jesus says in the second half of verse 63 the words that I've spoken to you are spirit and life the words of Jesus the spirit the life that the spirit gives is tied to his words the spirit of God does not work apart from the word of God and there can be no eternal life and experience of the spirit apart from the proclamation of the word of Christ the gospel of Jesus Christ in the same way that Jesus only does what the father wills the spirit only does what glorifies the son and points to him and that's why Jesus says he has the words of eternal life as

Peter confesses in verse 68 now this is an incredible teaching really jam packed so the father gives talking about John's teaching people the son gives his flesh and the spirit gives his life and you would think that there would be you wonder what the response would be when people hear this and disappointingly it's not wild popularity and acclaim but desertion by his own disciples verse 66 after this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him so the twelve stay with him as you see in the later verse but though his wider circle of disciples they all leave him because of this teaching and this is helpful for us as a church as we seek to grow and as we seek to minister to people because it's widespread practice throughout churches to try to be popular right it's we put up decorations programs events and then we shape our services and messages to cater to people in the world but

Jesus example here is quite contrary to that he seems really almost shockingly unconcerned about his own popularity indeed it almost seems like he's intent on being unpopular he says these things and so his disciples leave him and I think the reason for that is because Jesus is not concerned with impressing men but with pleasing his father he's not concerned to be popular but he wants to be faithful to his father and similarly we're going to be tempted at times as a church to cater to the world in order to attract more of them but at those times we have to remember the message of this passage that it's the triune God who gives and guarantees eternal life and if that's really true and if we really believe that as a church then we can't ultimately have put our confidence in our programs and expertise and strategies abilities or advertisements that's not so what that means for us then is the mission that we have set out to accomplish as a church is impossible in our own strength it's impossible it's beyond the reach the ministry success is beyond the reach of our own abilities because

God is the one who guarantees and gives eternal life and that should drive us to prayer right and I want to reiterate what Matt said earlier too as maybe it's because it's only by prayer as we depend on God do we acknowledge this truth in fullness that really only he can give and guarantee eternal life and so as a church and as we interact with unbelievers as we minister as a church let's remember this truth that is to try in God who gives and guarantees eternal life let's pray together goodbye