

## **Grumbling and Grace**

### **Livin' the Life**

#### **John 6:41-51**

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We are in the midst of a series in the Gospel of John, Livin' the Life, looking at Jesus and the life he offers. We are still looking at Jesus' long sermon on the bread of life today, in John 6:41-51, which starts with the Jews grumbling over Jesus' claim as the bread from heaven and asking how can be from heaven (41-42). Then we see Jesus' answer (43-51) first describing God's work in giving eternal life (43-46; see also 37-39) and then Jesus offers eternal life to all who believe (47-51). What we see in his answer is that God's sovereign work in salvation does not undermine the free offer of the gospel nor removes human responsibility. As I said last time, John's gospel holds these two truths in tension, God is sovereign and humanity is responsible. So, let's look at this passage together.

Jesus is becoming increasingly clearer about his identity and as a result, the crowd is becoming increasingly resistant. Jesus is now interacting with the Jewish leaders who are leading the resistance (41). The evidence of their resistance is their grumbling at his claim to be from heaven or from God. Jesus is not just the Son of God but he is God the Son. But in their mind, how can Jesus be from heaven when we know his family (42)? One of the undercurrent themes in John is a New Exodus. God rescued his people from slavery in Egypt through God's deliverer Moses, and God is once again rescuing his people from spiritual slavery through God's new deliverer, Jesus. In the same way Israel grumbled against Moses and ultimately against God (Ex 16:6-8), Israel is once again grumbling against Jesus and ultimately against God. Resistance is the natural response to God and his word apart from divine intervention. The heart is never receptive to the truth without a work of the Spirit (3:5-6, 10-11). What we think we know about truth is always colliding with what the bible says is true. You cannot just think your way to the truth, although thinking about the truth is necessary. Resistance is the natural response to truth.

Jesus' goes on to tell them why they are so resistant (43-45). The first part of his answer is a controversial warning and the second part is a comforting promise. The controversial part can be interpreted two ways. The first option is that no one comes to Jesus without the Father drawing them means that God draws all people equally but only some come to Jesus. God's drawing makes their coming possible but is not the cause of their coming. So, the individual is the decisive factor in their coming. The other option is that no one comes to Jesus without the Father drawing them and all those whom he draws come because God draws infallibly and produces the coming. That is, the Father is the decisive factor in their coming. The individual is not forced or coerced to come but freely and gladly come because the drawing is like the wooing of a lover.

I think the second option is the best understanding of verses 43-44 (as well as 37-39) for four reasons. First, is the context. The Jews are rejecting Jesus and Jesus tells them that they are rejecting him because God is not drawing them. He is rebuking them, you are not ultimate or sovereign, God is. Your grumbling is not just rejecting me but is rebellion against God. Second, is the verb 'can' that is used (44). Do you know the difference between the words can and may? Can is ability and may is permission. Can is the translation of the verb that means able or the ability to do something (Greek δύναμαι). So, a literal translation would be, no one is able to come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them. So, no one is able to come to Jesus unless the Father draws them. Third, Jesus sees this drawing and coming as a fulfillment of the Old Testament promise that all would be taught by God but the all is defined specifically as everyone who has heard and learned from the Father (45). Jesus interprets the Father's drawing as everyone who has heard and learned from the Father. So, the way the Father draws is by giving the capacity to hear and learn from the Father so that they come. And finally, verse forty-four is meaningless if God's drawing is universal and only some come because it does not explain Judas (6:64- 65).

Now moving on to the comforting promise in Jesus' response, those who are drawn, come and I will raise him up on the last day. If you come, Jesus raises you up. The Father is decisive in your coming and Jesus is decisive in your being resurrected (see also 11:23-25). You can take that to the bank.

Then Jesus goes on to offer eternal life, whoever believes has eternal life because I am the bread of life (47-48). The offer is for whoever. How do I know I am drawn? Come to Jesus! Then he explains what he means by coming and believing and receiving eternal life by referring back to the manna in the wilderness again. Those who ate the manna died but I am the bread that comes down from heaven so you may eat and not die, have eternal life. Jesus likens believing to eating and eternal life to not dying (49-50). Then he alludes to his death, the bread that I give for the life of the world is my flesh (51). Believing in Jesus is coming to Jesus in all of life for all of your life. Believing is not a one-time act, but a commitment to follow Jesus in life. It is a continually turning from your sin and trusting Jesus to satisfy you. Jesus is sifting the crowd, separating out genuine disciples who embrace Jesus' claims and false disciples who resist Jesus' claims.

The eternal Son took on human flesh, lived a perfectly obedient life, willingly took the punishment for your sin on the cross as a sacrificial lamb. He defeated your sin and your death by his own death and his resurrection proves he overcame sin and death to offer eternal life and secure your eternal destiny.

#### Questions for Life Groups:

1. Why are the Jews grumbling (41-42)?
2. How would you describe why you are seeking Jesus?
3. Why are we naturally resistant to truth about Jesus?
4. Explain how God overcame your own resistance to Jesus?
5. In what ways or areas are you still resistant to Jesus?
6. Why do you think Jesus responds the way he does in 43-46?
7. Do you agree that Jesus is rebuking them as David suggested?
8. What are the two options for understanding God drawing and our coming (44-45)?
9. Which do you believe is accurate? Why?
10. How can Jesus promise to raise us up if we come?
11. How is Jesus the bread of life for you?
12. How has Jesus been your bread of life this week?
13. How is God speaking to you this week from this message? How do you respond?