You may all be seated. Church, would you turn with me to John chapter six. John chapter six, we're gonna pick up in verses 35 through 40. And I'll remind you what I said in our earlier session. Christ reforms his church by his word for his glory. And we see how important it is that Christ is doing the work. We saw last night in John 17 how there's a danger of divorcing the glory of Christ from the gospel of Christ. And earlier we saw the dangers of divorcing the glory of Christ from the worship of Christ. And now as we turn to John 6, we're gonna see the danger of divorcing the glory of Christ from the grace of Christ. That's a great danger.

I'm currently reading the 1540s edition of the Institutes with a church member in Raymond. Yes, we do read in Raymond. Calvin has this wonderful, what was the word I used last night, conniption. He has a conniption over the word merit. He does not like that word. He says, I wish that word would have never have been introduced into our theological vocabulary. Now, we don't tend to use the word merits as much today. We use the word works.

But the point is the same. And as Calvin begins to transition in his necessity of reforming the church, he transitions from the necessity of reforming worship to the necessity of reforming the doctrines of grace. And I want to pick up that thought of the doctrines of grace in a very simple sermon in a sentence. A glory shared is a gospel lost. A glory shared is a gospel lost. Let's pray and we'll read our passage.

Heavenly Father, Christ will tell us at the end of John 6, it is the spirit that brings life, the flesh profits nothing. And so Lord, we come here today leaning not on our own understanding, but praying as Paul prayed for the Ephesians that the spirit would illuminate to us the glorious truths of your word. And so, Lord, we ask this morning that both through the preaching and the hearing of your word that you would make it plain and that you'd make it powerful. So in Christ's name we pray. Amen. John chapter 6, verse 35. Hear the word of the Lord.

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 say 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 sun and believes shall have eternal life. And thus ends the reading of God's holy word.

Now I know this church are well familiar with John chapter six, but let me just get you up to speed just a minute. Jesus is teaching and he begins to feed 5,000 men and their families. He feeds a lot of people. And you can ask our lovely caterer that I met earlier feeding 500 people a chore, feeding 5,000 is a whole another ball game. Jesus feeds them. Seems to be a moment of great rejoicing. And then Jesus sends the disciples away. Jesus goes up on the mountain. We know Jesus reunites with the disciples. And the people say, where did Jesus go?

We must find him. And they walk along the Sea of Galilee, and they go to find Jesus. And just so I can put this in context, when you think of the Sea of Galilee, I want you to think of the Ross Barnett Reservoir. You got me? They walk around the Ross Barnett Reservoir so they can get an extra plate of fish. And Jesus is aware of this. And Jesus asks them, he says, I know you're just here for food, but they ask him a very important question.

What are the works of which we must be doing to be doing the works of God? Well, that's a loaded question, isn't it? And it's a question that faces each and every one of us. We know that God rewards those who seek him. We also know from Romans chapter one, verse 32, that we know the righteous requirements of the law. We know that when death comes, there will be a point in which we will have to give an account for what we have done. And this is a question that presses all of us, isn't it?

You know, it breaks my heart when our president says, well, I hope I get into heaven. He has an acknowledgment that there is a requirement of us, and we all know this in this room, don't we? I teach at a nursing home every Thursday, and the thing that I deal with more than anything else is three very dangerous words, woulda, shoulda, and coulda. And you hear conscience pressing that same thing of which they are asking, what are the works of God I shoulda, woulda, and could have done? I feel it. But there's a problem in their question. And surely you have picked up on it. Notice what they said.

What are the works, plural? What are the works, plural? What is the multitude of things we must be doing to get God's check of approval? So that I can have a sticker that said, I did this. So that I can have my share in glory. And Jesus cuts them off at the knees and he says a very simple response. This is the work, singular, one, uno. This is the work of God that you believe in him whom he has sent. Wow. He takes their works and he sums it down to one thing.

And what Jesus is highlighting for them is the futility of a shared glory. For when the glory is shared, the gospel is lost. And Jesus begins to press home to them in our passage, man's inability. Man's inability. Notice what he says in verse 36. You have seen me and yet do not believe. You have seen me and yet have not believed. Over 5,000 people watched Jesus feed them with a few loaves of bread and two fish.

Is that amazing? That's incredible. And they kept wondering, where is it coming from? It's all marvelous work. And from all appearances, they looked zealous. I don't know about y'all, but when I go fishing, if I've got to move within 100 yards of any direction, it's time to go home. And yet they walk all the way around the Ross Barnett Reservoir to find Jesus.

Does that look zealous to you? Looks awful zealous to me. And yet Jesus points out a very startling fact. that all they worship is the God of their belly. He says it in verse 27. You are seeking me not because you saw a sign, but because you got fat and sassy. You're seeking me because you want more food.

As Paul says in Philippians 3.19, they worship the God of their belly. The things of this world, they've seen. And yet, though their eyes have seen a glimpse of heaven's glory, their desires are fixated on the things of the earth. And that should not shock us, does it?

Do you remember John chapter 11, Jesus raises Lazarus? My favorite verse in the King James is in John chapter 11 when they say, Behold, Lord, he stinketh. He'd been there four days. Jesus raises Lazarus and half of the Jews that watch rejoice and they believe upon Jesus, but what did the other half do?

They see the same thing. They go and tell the Pharisees and they say, get them. J.C. Ryle, if I can quote him one more time, J.C. Ryle says, it is not a lack of reasons why man does not believe, it is a lack of will. A lack of desire. And this is man still. Jesus says in verse 36, you've seen me and don't believe. He says in verse 44, almost the same thing. No one, no one can, that word can is important. No one can come to me unless the father draws him.

You know, I remember being in elementary school and I would say, teacher, can I go to the bathroom? And she would say, I don't know. Can you? Can is a question of ability. The human heart does not submit to God's law. Indeed, it cannot. And then he goes on in verse 65, outside of our passage. It is the spirit who gives life. The flesh is of no avail. And I would argue that for Jesus' day, for the Jews who heard Him, and for ours living in the Bible belt, the problem is only made worse, isn't it? You're really not from the South if you never attended a VBS service.

Every kid comes from their mother, drinks down the stories of Noah and Daniel and the lion's den and David and Goliath, which I hear is with us today, and all sorts of stories over and over. They drink it with their mother's milk and yet they grow old and die in unbelief. And it's made worse, isn't it? Why? They've heard. They've heard. tasted the heavenly gift. They've seen the works of God as he describes in Hebrews chapter 6.

When I was a manager at Lowe's, if an employee was only new to the job and been there two or three days and made a mistake, we'll teach him. But if he'd been there three years and made the same mistake, guess what? He gets shown the door. He's held more accountable because he knows more.

We see they have all the reasons to believe, and yet as man still is, we lack the ability. You see the effects of sin. It has taken away our desire. And may I say to us, this inability, it is our greatest shame. God made man, Adam in the garden, with the ability. But we've lost that moral ability because sin has corrupted us and all of our parts and powers. It has reached the very core, the very fiber of who we are as human beings, and that is our shame.

Again, I remember a man coming to work, and I asked him to do the same things he did every other day. And yet, he came into work, and we will say that He went to a really good water drinking party before he came to work. He was quite intoxicated. And he could not perform the task he was asked to do every other day he ever worked. Now somebody tell me, was that my fault or his? It was his, wasn't it? The task did not change. He changed. And he made himself unfit. to do even the most basic tasks.

Man would separate the glory of Christ from the grace of Christ by trying to input his own works, plural, his own achievements, his own accolades, his own awards, and what he will find is not a glory that is shared, he will find a gospel that is lost, and all he will find in its place is judgment and wrath. And day by day, as we hear the gospel and we interject ourselves and our works and Calvin's favorite word, our merit, what we find is we are storing up wrath for ourselves.

My friends, it is a dire place of which we are in. It is dire. However, where do we see glory in this passage? What do we see? Glory. And we see contrasted in this passage, man's inability. And then we see God's gracious ability. Oh, this passage oozes with grace. We see this grace in eternity, in what some love to call the covenant of redemption.

Notice what Jesus says, all the Father gives to me. Well, when did this giving take place? But down in the halls of eternity, where time had not dawned, where light had not broken forth, back in the counsels and decrees of God before the first bush or shrub was ever planted in creation. God had a plan to redeem a people from before the foundations of the world, according to 2 Timothy 1, 9, all throughout Ephesians 1. And he said, I have a great desire to save a people. And we see that triune God, those inseparable operations of father in giving a people to his son, and the Son receiving these people and saying, Father, I will take on flesh.

I will take on their flesh. I will fulfill their righteousness. I will bear their curse. I will take them unto myself. I will be their head. They will be my body. What we see is as we peer down the halls of eternity, if I could put my ear on the bedroom door of the triune God, what I would hear is not a cold, sterile love, but I would hear an eternity brimming with God's love for man in his sin. Oh, it brings me much comfort. I love Robert Webb's book, The Reform Doctrine of Adoption, and he would make a comment similar to this, that it's as if the papers have been signed, the names have been chosen, the room has been painted, long before the child crosses the threshold. Long in eternity. Christ had taken a people unto himself, given by his Father.

But then don't we see it in time? Look at our passage. Not only do we see it in eternity and time in the covenant of redemption, we see it also in the covenant of grace. Look at verse 39, he says, and this is the will of him who sent me. who sent me." And then Galatians 4 says, in the fullness of time, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under the law to redeem those who are under the curse of the law. Then in the fullness of time come, he sent a son.

But as we look through the Old Testament, don't we see echoes of that throughout? We see almost, if we could call it labor pains. We see in Genesis 3, 5, as soon as man falls into great inability that God meets them in the garden and what does he give them but a promise of his son. Thomas Paulson's got a beautiful line in this in where he says that Christ was so eager to save his people that he rushed to Eden and preached the gospel to them. of the seed of the woman that would crush the head of the seed of the serpent. In my favorite book of the Old Testament, which is Leviticus, we see the same way. Moses cannot enter into God's glory, and so God calls him and says, Moses, here is a sacrificial system.

I'm sending you a sacrificial system now, but one day, I will send my son. Oh, do you not see the great love of the father? And then too, we see the son's coming. The son's coming. He was sent, which means he came. We see that in verse 38. I have come. How did he come?

You will find, if you talk to me very long, I have a desire and a great love for small churches. And one of the greatest comforts I have in pastoring in not one but two small churches is that Jesus, our Savior, when he took on flesh, when he came, he did not come to the biggest city in town, he did not come to Jerusalem, his church membership was not at the flagship, no, he came to the least of the tribes of Judah to Bethlehem, that when our Savior came, he came to be in poverty, that we may be made rich through him. That there was life, he says, foxes have holes and birds have nests, and the son of man has nowhere to lay his head, so that he could prepare a place for us, because in his father's house are many mansions.

He had no docky, he had no tomb, everything he had was borrowed. He came in abject misery for us. And we can trace the whole line that when we see him in his death, He is taking the debt we owed and He's paying the bill. And in His resurrection, He's taking that bill and He's shredding it up in front of us so that we would know there is not a

remnant of debt to be paid. And like a good friend on a vacation that says, I will drive ahead of you, he goes ahead in his ascension and he prepares a place for us. And he rules and reigns, Romans 8, 34, for us. And he intercedes for us.

I hear a lot of Christ doing, but do you know how much I hear of me doing? None. What word I do not hear in all of the scripture is that word merit. What I find is God's great ability. But it does not end there, does it? What's he say in verse 39? Not only is the sun coming, but he says, I shall lose nothing. of all that has given me church. He's not only comes and redeems, but he redeems and he keeps. And this is to me a world of comfort.

I can't even keep up with two socks and there's only two in a pair. We can't keep up with anything. What do we say all the time? If my head was not screwed on, I would leave it somewhere. And yeah, what we find is he keeps us. And we go through hard times. We go through dangerously hard times.

But when I was growing up, we used to go fishing at a place called Bush Dairy Creek. It was a small creek. It got thick in places and we would go, me and my father would go fishing and we would hop from sandbar to sandbar and we would fish the day away. And as we would go through the deep places, this is embarrassing, but I'm 38 and cannot swim. The water keeps trying to drown me, I don't know why. And I couldn't swim then either. And so my dad would grab me by the hand and we would walk through the thick creek together.

But somebody tell me whose grip was more important, my grip or his grip? And what do we see in our passage? We see God's great ability, not just in sending his son and his son coming, but in his son keeping us. What work is there to do? Well, there's only one. What does he say? That you believe.

That in the gospel, why don't we let the glory of God and the grace of God stay together? That when we bring open hands, as Thomas Boston says, we so lose so many blessings. God has given us pearls and we bring in our hands nothing but rocks. And we wonder why we leave with nothing.

He says what? Those who believed in me are those who received me. Come to him with nothing, no ability, no presumption, and say, Lord, I have nothing. And enjoy that great fullness. It is similar to what C.S. Lewis says when a child asks his father for money. He says, Dad, I need some money so I can buy you a birthday present. Yes, we may purchase a great thing, but it is with our Father's coin.

There is no glory shared, there is no grace diminished. If you have never come to Christ, this is the day you leave everything behind and you say, I want grace, grace, and grace abounding. So he may receive all the glory, I need to turn the screw just a hair. I said earlier, I teach at the nursing home every week, and the three things I hear more than anything else is very simple.

Woulda, shoulda, and coulda. And for the believer, the question is always, do I have enough faith to hang on until the end? What if I get to the point where he wants to cast me out? And what does it say in our passage? All the

Father gives to me will come to me. They will come to me. They'll place their faith in me. They will receive from me. They will trust me. They will look to me. They will turn to me. They will feast on me.

And whoever comes to me, I will never cast out. I'm sure many of you are familiar with John Bunyan's famous soliloquy where he says, but Jesus, I am a great sinner. And he says, but I will never cast you out. But Lord, I've been a hypocrite for all these years. But I will never cast you out.

But Lord, I knew better. I went to every VBS for six years. I got a badge. I knew better. I will never cast you out. But Lord, I'm old. And I look back at my life, and my life is filled with shame and regret. I am not worthy of the least of your blessings, Lord. And what does he say to us? I will never, never ever, no, not ever, never cast you out. Believer, you may be cast down, but you are never cast out.

His glory shines the brightest when the grace of Christ is magnified. And not only is it magnified in the saving of great sinners because their sin is great, but it is magnified in keeping them. Let us, church, not separate the glory of Christ from the grace of Christ. A glory that is holy Christ is a gospel that is holy kept, and a gospel that is holy kept is a believer holy kept.

Can we pray? Heavenly Father, we come here today first to repent We grow up in the South where good old boys are the ones who we are told make it into heaven. The good old boys that attend church and don't drink and don't smoke and give the shirts off their back, they're the good ones that get in. But Lord, though we deny that so often, we fall into that pattern. And so often we've even turned great things like the means of grace into badges of honor to display our ability, our worth, that we can do the works of God.

Look how much I have believed. Look how much I've repented. Look how much of the catechism I've memorized. Look at the things I've done for you, Lord. And we repent of each and every time that we have tried to share in your glory with our works. And we ask, O Lord, that you would forgive us of our great sin, and that you, O Lord, would be merciful to us, that you would cast down every idol, every work that we have lifted up with human hands, and that you would cause us, you would call us with your effectual calling, the Father would draw us to Christ empty that in him we may be full, full, hungry, that we may feast upon him, that we may be a people that proclaim the marvelous riches of his grace, that he would receive all of the glory and us all of the grace. Father, we say these things in Christ's name. Amen.