Would you turn with me this morning in your copy of God's Word to John chapter 6. We're going to resume where we left off yesterday afternoon before that delicious lunch and before I learned a new way to eat a donut yesterday. We're going to pick up in John chapter 6 verse 41 through 59.

And as we've been working through this Reformation Conference, we've been thinking through Calvin's little work on the necessity of reforming the church. And our thought has been that Christ reforms his church through his word for his glory. And though Calvin writes to a particular issue at a particular time and a particular day, I would argue that The issues of which he discusses are timeless. You know, sinners don't change, they just find new ways of sinning until the Lord Christ intervenes. And so what we have found is that sin has continued to manifest itself in similar patterns throughout the history of the church.

We looked at John 17 and saw how their sin wants to divorce the glory of Christ from the gospel of Christ. And then we turned to John chapter 4 and how we want to divorce the glory of Christ from the worship of Christ. And then afterwards, we discussed Calvin's word. He just could not stand that word merit or what we would call works and how Sinful man tries to divorce the glory of Christ from the grace of Christ. And Calvin, as he makes his third argument on the necessity of reforming the church, turns to the sacraments.

And particularly, this is where he takes charge at the Mass, which we will speak of later. But what we could say this morning is we see how man wants to divorce the glory of Christ from the sacraments of Christ, particularly the supper. Now I have been in the Presbyterian world just about a decade, and I know that Presbyterians get squirmish when sermons about the Lord's Supper are preached out of John chapter six, so I will make just one historical footnote. We are going to blaze the path laid down both by John Calvin and by St. Augustine, that this is not a passage explicitly on the Lord's Supper, but it has a lot of application to the Lord's Supper. So with that in mind, I want us to pick up our sermon in a sentence. To feast on Christ is to taste his glory. To feast on Christ is to take his glory.

Church, can we pray? Heavenly Father, As we open your word, I think of our scripture reading from this morning, that this word is our hope, that this word is our light, that this word is what we build our life upon, that word given by the prophets and the apostles. And we're thankful that this is not a word that has been locked up in heaven, but that you're a God who's been gracious enough to speak, to have this word written where we could enjoy it now many hundreds and thousands of years later. And we ask, Lord, that you would speak to us through the reading and preaching of your word, that you'd pour out your spirit, that we would receive these truths and write them on the walls of our heart to treasure them with us and with our children and our children's children.

We ask this in Christ's name, amen. John chapter six, verse 41, hear the word of the Lord. So the Jews grumbled about him because he said, I am the bread that came down from heaven. And 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 that they shall 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 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 this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.

Well, the Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? So Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say it 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. And as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he will also 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. And Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. And thus ends the reading of God's holy word. Just as a recap for those who missed yesterday, John 6, Jesus feeds the 5,000. It's an absolute miracle. Five loaves, two fish. You do the math, that's a lot of food Jesus produced out of just a very small amount.

And for all intents and purposes, they seemed to be a zealous people. They crossed across the Sea of Galilee, which would have been like going across the Ross Barnett Reservoir. I will just tell you, no one has ever walked that far to hear me preach. They seemed incredibly zealous. And yet, as we get to Jesus on the other side, what we find is Jesus says, you have seen me. and you do not believe. If I could just summarize an entire half of a sermon, it's not that they didn't have reasons to believe.

They had seen, they had heard, they had tasted the very crumbs of that bread and bones of that fish were still in their mouth and they did not believe. It's a problem. And what we find is that these were men starved of Desire they had no appetite and we see that breaking out it instantly in verse 41 They grumbled about him and they more or less said we know who this is I know who his mama and daddy is I know where he grew up We know all these things about him and they are stumbling over Jesus Christ in his state of humility We should not be shocked by that should we? What does Isaiah 53 said? He had no form nor beauty that they would desire him, no majesty that they would seek after him. They who served only the God of their belly, who looked for fleshly things, stumbled over the flesh, the humanity of Jesus Christ.

They were starved, not of reasons to believe, but of a will to believe. And yet, what I want to focus on is not their unbelief, as we've addressed that already. What I want to instead focus on is the free offer of the feast. Look at Christ's free offer of the feast.

The book of John is one of the best chapters to define the language of faith. I think of our beloved shorter catechism, it uses the word rest and receive, As we know, the language of faith is not limited to those two words. We see in John chapter 1, it says those who believed upon him and who received him.

But then as we come on to chapter 6, there's lots of other verbs used. He uses the language of come. Come to me. All the Father gives to me will come to me. We know that famous passage in Matthew. Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. He is calling them to come out of themselves and unto Christ. We see again. In our passage, or the passage from yesterday, all who look to Him, all who look away from themselves and look to this Christ shall have eternal life. He uses the language of turning, turning from your own devices, turning from your works, turning from your pride and selfish ambition and turning unto Christ. But then, I love the way he describes faith in our passage.

Eating and drinking. Y'all may not know this as someone who's 123 pounds, but I love eating. And let's think about all of these verbs that we have just recited. Receive, come, look, turn, eat, drink, feast, all of these are looking for nourishment, for salvation in something outside of ourselves. We are coming from where we are to another place. We are turning from what we're focused on to something else.

We are eating something outside of ourselves to find nourishment. That's very important. I'm a little hungry right now. Have you ever been so hungry you said, my stomach's eating itself. Does that ever bring you any nourishment? No, you must bring something from outside of yourself in.

Is this not the language of faith? Of receiving what Christ has offered? As Augustine would say and Calvin would echo, faith is the mouth of the soul. These Jews were looking to only feed their belly, but Christ was offering them true food, that living bread that has come down from heaven. He was saying to them, take and eat, take and eat.

You put faith in me. Let me be your nourishment. Look outside of yourself, that barren, empty wasteland of a heart that is as hard as stone where nothing will grow and nothing will flourish. Go away from your poverty, your drought, your hunger, and come to me, that living bread that has come down from heaven. And as we see this definition of faith is going out of itself and taking nourishment from another source, we see what is the object of that faith. It is Jesus. Look how he describes himself. The bread of life. Oh, what a beautiful description. It's a beautiful description, not because we love to eat bread and we love living. It's a beautiful description because of our Savior.

Instead of thumping them on the forehead and saying, you big dummies, do you understand what I'm talking about? He accommodates himself to their weakness. He speaks in their language. He wants them and is eagerly desirous of them to turn from their hunger and turn to him for nourishment. He is the object of faith. We can go through our verbs. We receive from Him grace upon grace. We receive a whole Christ, His righteousness imputed to us.

We come out of ourselves to Him who is meek and gentle and lowly of heart. We look not at our own hearts, but Him who would be crucified for us, who's risen and reigning in heaven. We turn from going down the way of the covenant of works and we go to the covenant of grace and Christ who is the head of that covenant. We no longer feast in the pig's eyes like the prodigal son, but instead we feast on Christ. He is that hope. And as we see that object of faith, we must look at the offer of the feast. that Jesus lays down before us.

The way that Jesus offers the feast, if I can be quite frank, was missing in Calvin's day. They spoke in Latin. Not going to save a whole lot of souls if you're speaking in a language no one understands, are you? The gospel was not

offered freely and abundantly then, but dare I say it's not offered freely and abundantly now. Anytime I go to a funeral and the preacher preaches the gospel, I give him a hug because I go to so many funerals and guess what I don't hear? The gospel. So we must take time to look at how Christ is offering the feast. And the first thing we see is a progression of the offer. Notice how Christ changes his terminology through here. First, he says that he is the bread of life. And if that was not enough for them, he presses it harder. He is the bread that has come down from heaven. And then he goes even further and he says, I am the living bread that come down from heaven.

As their hearts grew harder and harder and they grumbled louder and louder, his offers of the gospel grew bigger and bigger. He did not allow their stony hearts to repel the offer of the gospel. Instead, he saw their hunger, he saw their famine, and it caused him to lean in harder with the gospel.

It's beautiful. And then we see that Jesus goes on, not just to progress that offer, but to expand it. Look in verse 51, he says, and the bread that I will give for the life of the world. Is that not incredible? It reminds me of, don't you hate when you have a name and it just, there it went.

The great congregationalist in the 1700s in America, Parsons, Edward Parsons. And he's preaching in a small country church and only one man comes to church that morning. Well, he preaches just as if a thousand men had come to church that morning, and the man is here, and he offered the gospel. And the man looks to the left, or looks to the left, and he looks to the right, and he realizes no one else is there, so the preacher must be preaching to who?

To him. And he's converted. And Jesus expands this offer of the gospel to the world to say that there is not a sinner in whom is not invited to this feast. Period. We see that displayed in a similar way in Luke chapter 24, where Jesus says, I want you to go to all the world and preach the gospel, but start in Jerusalem. And you may say, why start in Jerusalem? Jesus was sending a message. That is where the worst sinners were. They knew who the Messiah would be and crucified him anyway. They were to be held more accountable, and Jesus says, I want to go there first, so no sinner can say, I'm too sinful to come to this feast.

He expands the offer so no one can say, I was not invited. What's he saying, Isaiah 55? Come, no money, no anything, come and eat. But what gets me is not The progression and the expansion, it is the duration of the offer. It actually comes right outside of our passage in verse 66. After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. Notice something here.

When did Jesus stop preaching? When did he stop offering the gospel? When did he stop inviting them to the feast? He didn't. They left. Do you see the difference? How many times we give up on people, we've offered the gospel and offered the gospel and offered the gospel and we reach a point where we want to Wash our hands with them. But what do we see in Jesus? When did he stop?

He did not leave off preaching. They left off listening. It was not that his heart was too small. It was that their heart was too hard. Do we see as Jesus is freely offering the gospel, how the reformers could look at the preaching in their day and be absolutely broken? Do you see why Thomas Boston in his day could look at the preaching in Scotland and be absolutely broken? Do you see why Zack Bird goes to funerals and cries? Not because people are

dead, but because the gospel is absent. Church. Jesus is setting up for us an example of what does it look like an ordinary means of grace ministry to offer the gospel.

And it is to offer it as long as you can, as wide as you can, as deep as you can, so that no sinner could say, I was not invited. And what of us? Even in this room today, he is calling us who may have heard the offer over and over and yet have never come to Christ, have never tasted to see that the Lord is good, has never known the greatness of his pardon, has never known that life, that deep experiential life that only Christ offers. And today, he says, you may have turned your nose up at the bread of life for 60 years, but I have not left off offering an invitation for you to come to the feast.

That is what we see Jesus is inviting us to enter into a feast, to feast on the bread of life, to take hold of Christ, and to taste and see His glory. Now you may say to me, well, Zach, that's all fine and good, but how does this, there's a table there, how does this pertain to the table? How does this pertain to the Lord's Supper? Well, let me remind you that Christ freely invites us to the feast, and as we spread this table, Christ is freely offered in the feast. Now, what do we mean by this?

Well, there's a reason that John Calvin and St. Augustine leave off discussions of the supper to the end of their sermon. If I can take off the famous distinction of St. Augustine, We have an audible word through the preaching of the gospel and we have a visible word as we come to the table. The audible word is a saving ordinance to bring unbelievers and invite them to the feast that they may be saved. But this table is a sealing ordinance.

It is used to strengthen believers, those who've already professed their faith in Jesus Christ and are members of his church. And when we see that this table is given to strengthen our faith, well, now we begin to see some of the problems that arise when Calvin writes the necessity of reforming the church.

You know, I was raised to believe that for every mile of road, there is two miles of ditches. And I would argue that we have two miles of ditches before us. You have the Roman Catholic ditch of which they obscured the supper. The mass is a bloodless sacrifice of Christ where he is physically present through the transubstantiation. Where the cup do not receive the laity, or the laity do not receive the cup, they obscure Christ in the supper by worshiping a piece of bread as if it is a savior. Is that a ditch? That's a deep ditch. But there's another ditch, isn't there? What about when we minimize the supper? What about when we minimize the supper? How many weddings it's popular for the bride and groom to have communion and no one else?

Is that a problem? It's a problem in our culture. Nothing breaks my heart more than when people say I was baptized on a Thursday in a horse trough. Though we're not talking about the supper, we do see there is a minimizing of the table And what these things do, it separates the glory of Christ from His sacraments. It separates the glory of Christ from His supper. Church, this is not us.

What of 1742 when in Scotland 10,000 people came to celebrate the Lord's Supper? Do you think they held it in high esteem? What of us, when we have communion at this church, do we spend time repenting and preparing our hearts to feast with Christ? He's here by his spirit. When we come to the supper, we are reminded of Robert Bruce,

that famous Scottish pastor, who, by the way, preached some pretty fiery sermons against James I. who he would say that in the supper we do not get a better Christ.

What we do is we get Christ better. What happens is the Spirit brings to bear on us Christ's death and his resurrection, his body broken, his blood spilled, his life and death for us. that the Spirit presses upon us as a seal, as a wax seal, seals a document and confirms it as it strengthens the authenticity. He brings these things to bear to point us to Christ and press His truth, His work deeper into our hearts.

And I don't know about you believers, but I need Christ better. I need Christ better. I need this Christ better who accommodates himself to my weakness. Where in our passage he goes from flesh and blood, or from food and drink to flesh and blood to bread and wine. He is accommodating himself to our weakness. I need it.

I need it because I read the larger catechism that says if I doubt, can I still come to the table? Can I remind you that was a document written by pastors, not men in ivory towers, men who wrestled with doubts. I even was thinking this morning, sitting in that chair, looking out at, you know, I remember the first time I preached here and I talked about a Zepco 33.

That's a long time ago. There's a lot of faces not here anymore. What did Richard Wyman once say? There's a broken heart in every pew. That there is grief over the last nine years since I've been here last that continually, like a tide, rolls itself back in. That there are believers in this building who are dealing with temptations that they fear will overtake them. despair at a culture and a community that seems to be caving in, of which we wonder how much longer will the gospel be proclaimed? That there is misery and suffering and sorrow and temptation and weakness and droves in this place? Church, do you need Christ better? I do. As we think of the table, it is like my wedding ring. When I wear this, it doesn't make me more married, does it? But what it does is seeing it removes all doubt.

And when we come to this table, what Christ does is he assages our doubts, he speaks to our fears, he comforts us in our distress, and he reminds us, I will be with you until the end of the age. as he prepared this table on the night he was betrayed for disciples who were troubled in heart, fearful of falling away, destined to be a disappointment.

He prepared the table for them to strengthen them and he looks at us in the same situation and spreads the same meal and calls us in the same name to bless us in the same way because we too need Christ better. Let us not separate the glory of His kindness and His compassion and His steadfast love from the very sign and seal by which He shows it by either covering up His glory by making an idol of the table or diminishing His glory by moving the table aside. Let us keep it in the right place that Christ's glory may remove all of our doubts and sorrows and trials and temptations and despair. Church, I close with simply this, as Christ's glory, as he points out in John 6, is revealed in the resurrection, so too his glory is revealed when we feast with the Lord of glory.

That is a call to us. It is a call for us to come to faith. As I say in my church when we serve communion, if you're not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, have not been baptized, or you're living in scandalous sin, under church discipline, let these elements pass. But let it be the last time. This is a call to faith. But it's also for us believers, it's a call to feast.

You are weaker than you think. Christ is stronger than you know. And he has called you to this table to strengthen you, that you may taste his glory now on earth, that it may sustain you for enjoying his glory in perpetuity in heaven. And this table serves as a reminder that nothing will separate you from his glory. Can we pray? Heavenly Father, Lord, we come and repent.

We've offered the gospel far too little. We have raised our voice far too lightly. We have not called near enough men to the bread of life, and we have shut down the buffet way too early. And we ask, Lord, that you forgive us for when our offers of the gospel come so far short of Christ's offer to us.

And we ask, Lord, that as we've set our eyes upon that living bread that came down from heaven, that you would strengthen us through all of our trials and temptations, through all of our sorrows and times of despair, That the Christ who nourished us in the very beginning is the same Christ who nourishes us all of our days. Help us day after day, moment by moment, receive him, come to him, look to him, turn to him, feast on him. Whether that be through the preaching of the word or through the visible word, that we as your people may be strengthened unto holiness. Father, we ask this in Christ's name. Amen.