

The Man, The Myth, The Legend
Week 4: The Jesus Genie

I. Last week, Edy Herrera unpacked for us a common myth in a pluralistic culture. It's the myth that Jesus is "an" option. Edy did a wonderful job in showing us why Jesus is "the" option! He reminded us that our calling isn't to convince anyone that Jesus is "the" option, but as we surrender our lives to Jesus, people experience Jesus through us. I can't recommend enough to go back and listen to that message on the Tab Church Podcast if you missed it!

II. Today we're going to be in John chapter 6, looking at another myth that is easy to buy into. Edy touched on it briefly last week when he articulated a common tendency to make Jesus one of our accessories. We can begin to think of Jesus as an accessory to our life like our smart phone or watch.

A. We can easily add Jesus to our life as a cosmic Siri or genie but how does that fit with Jesus's own claim: John 14:6 – 6 Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

What does it mean for Jesus to be the life? Not an accessory as we are doing life. Not a genie we cry out to when we've run out of options or answers.

1. What does it mean for Jesus to be equivocal to:
Life?

I believe there are many frustrated and discouraged Christ-followers today because we've bought into the myth that Jesus is a wonderful accessory rather than the very sustenance of our life. I am not immune to this myth. When I think I'm entitled to something, or deserve something, I too can easily get frustrated with God. Especially when something seems so obviously good from my perspective. No matter how good the gift may be, when we exchange the Giver for the gift, we always miss out on God's best.

2. Let's see what Jesus has to say about this myth starting in John 6:24:

John 6:24-25 – 24 When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus. 25 When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?"

a. This is the beginning of the Bread of Life Discourse which is one of the hinge points in John's gospel. The feeding of the 5,000 has just occurred which culminated in a frenzy to make Jesus: king.

b. Not the King of kings sent from heaven, but an earthly king to reestablish the power of Israel. Jesus refused to accept kingship on these terms and withdrew.

c. Why would Jesus do that? Because His kingdom isn't a means to an end! Those that were gathered that day weren't looking to find life in Jesus. They were looking through Jesus to give them what they wanted. Those are two different things!

John 6:26-27 – 26 Jesus answered, "Truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled. 27 Don't work for the food that perishes but for the food that lasts for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set his seal of approval on him."

3. Some of the crowd from the Feeding of the 5,000 has pursued Jesus, not because they recognized the significance of the sign, but because their stomachs were satisfied.

They missed the significance of what occurred on the hillside the day prior in the wilderness. This was the time of Passover, the festival that commemorated God's freeing them out of Egyptian bondage. Jesus had brought forth a miraculous feeding in the wilderness similar to the manna God provided in the exodus. But the people were blind to the significance of God's work before them.

a. God was bringing sustenance in Jesus that would sustain them for:
Eternal life.

b. The people were enamored by the fact their bellies were full.

c. The sustenance that is Jesus is like food for a hungry soul.

It is a meal that we cannot prepare or purchase but is the gift of Jesus.

And the gift is the very Giver himself who will give His life to grant life for all who believe.

c. It wasn't the answer the people wanted.

4. We can easily see how the people of Israel missed it that day, but we can also recognize the tension within us to have a genie Jesus.

We miss the significance of eternal life because we have all these current problems now.

Jesus, can't you just solve the problem I'm having at school?

Jesus, can't you just fix this broken relationship with someone I love?

Jesus, can't you solve this financial problem that is about to crush me?

5. We can likely see ourselves in the questioning that was presented to Jesus that day.

John 6:28 - 28 "What can we do to perform the works of God?" they asked.

Jesus, can't you fix this or show us what to do to fix this?

People have been asking God a similar question throughout the generations.

What can you do or enable us to do to fix this?

Jesus is so much more than a genie. He loves us enough to not become a means to an end.

John 6:29 - 29 Jesus replied, "this is the work of God- that you believe in the one he has sent."

6. There is nothing that God could provide greater than Himself. God has sent His very Son Jesus to give His life in exchange of our life. Eternal life in the very presence of God. Completely whole, completely healed, completely and utterly satisfied. Jesus has come to grant us eternal life that begins the moment we simply believe in the one he has sent. The work of God is that we believe in the One He sent. Jesus as an accessory doesn't really work because we've ceased believing in Him and replaced Him with that which He provides.

B. Have we ever wondered why God says:

No, to our requests?

I certainly can't claim to answer this question unilaterally, but there's a powerful lesson to be gleaned from John 6!

John 6:30-31 - 30 "What sign, then, are you going to do so we may see and believe you?" they asked. "What are you going to perform? 31 Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, just as it is written: He gave them bread from heaven to eat."

1. Do we notice the irony taking place? The day prior, Jesus took 2 fish and 5 loaves of bread and fed 5,000+ people. One day has passed and the same group of people are clamoring for a sign in order to believe!
2. God loves us enough to tell us "No" when the Giver has been replaced by the gift. Belief that is contingent on what God can do for me robs me of my ultimate delight which is the very presence of God in Christ. If we don't get this right, we end up going from one "sign" to the next and when God doesn't perform our faith gets rocked.

C. Do we see what is really being described at heart:

Idolatry

1. Idolatry is when we substitute the supreme value or worth that belongs to God for any lesser thing. That even includes when we substitute the Giver in exchange for the gifts He supplies. Even when those lesser things are good things like relationships, our health, our emotional strength; when our worship (value/ worth offered to God) is contingent on what God does or doesn't do, then that "thing" becomes an idol.
2. Scripture talks of God being a jealous God. God doesn't become jealous; God is jealous. Jealousy becomes a negative attribute when it is in response to the action of another. God has always and forever will be jealous of His glory (honor) because He alone is holy. God is distinct in His glory and infinitely greater than any other created being. When we set our heart on what God can do or provide, we are missing out on the delight of God! That's why the creeds of the church have always stated, "The chief end of man is to glory God and enjoy Him forever!" The more value and weight we place in God the more our souls become alive. When we see God moving in the world, from the life of an individual, to revivals in the nations, we should praise God and thank Him for the gifts, but they should always deepen our pursuit of:
The Giver!

John 6:32-33 - 32 Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, Moses didn't give you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

D. More signs aren't what the people needed. More signs aren't what we need either.

We need life that is eternal. Eternal life is to be in the presence of God. They are one in the same.

Do we understand what Jesus is declaring? He is life!

The people that day were looking for a temporal solution to a short-term problem when all the while Life was standing before them.

The very presence of God that can sustain them for all of eternity.

We didn't have to seek Him out or go find Him, God sent Him down from heaven to give life to the world!

John 6:34 - 34 Then they said, "Sir, give us this bread always."

1. They're looking right through the Bread of Life and still asking for something He might provide.

Don't miss Jesus today. The Jesus who is. The Jesus who says, "I love you too much to be an accessory.

I alone can quench the thirst and hunger of your soul." Not the gifts but the Giver.

To treat Jesus like a genie is to miss out on our greatest need and even our greatest desire.

John 6:35-36 - 35 "I am the bread of life," Jesus told them. "No one who comes to me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in me will ever be thirsty again. 36 But as I told you, you've seen me, and yet you do not believe."

2. This is the first of the great "I Am" statements in John. "Give us this bread," the people ask. Jesus responds, "I am the bread of life!" Filling our lives with any other thing might serve as a temporary fix but consuming Jesus as the Bread of Life is the only One who can fill our soul.

3. If we don't believe that, just stop and consider this for a moment. How many times have we received what we thought would "fix" the issue only to discover it was short term at best?

I'm a sinner saved by God's grace just like anyone who has a relationship with Jesus.

I think back to times I wasn't walking with Jesus or times even now when I sin, and I elevate something that I want more than Jesus. That sin never makes good on its promise. It leaves me wanting more.

Jesus alone quenches our soul.

John 6:37-40 - 37 "Everyone the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will never cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. 39 This is the will of him who sent me: that I should lose none of those he has given me but should raise them up on the last day. 40 For this is the will of my Father: that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him will have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

E. I would like us to pause momentarily and consider our relationship with Jesus. If you don't have a relationship with Jesus, it is the Father's will that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him will have eternal life. That's really good news! Believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that He gave His life in exchange for your sin and mine so that we can be in relationship with a perfect God.

I don't understand it all, but even our belief is a gift from God and He always finishes what He begins.

1. Eight times the word "will" is utilized in 4 verses and each time the word "will" is used in one of 2 ways.

God's will that declares what will happen! There are many uncertainties in the world but praise God our salvation isn't one of them! We will be raised up on the last day because Jesus has been raised up!

2. God sent His Son as the Bread of Life that we might consume Him for eternal life.

He gave up His flesh and blood through death so that we might partake of Him.

Through the Holy Spirit that indwells us, we are in Him and He is within us.

It's an inseparable spiritual union that we have with Jesus that can only be described by consuming Him.

We are so intimate and interconnected through His Spirit within us, He gives life to our very being.

3. We must allow Jesus the right to define the relationship He has with us.

I hope today we've seen that a genie Jesus or accessory Jesus is a myth.

It's not an option for a relationship with Jesus because He has declared Himself to be the Bread of Life.

We find life in Him, not in those things He might do for us.

The gifts are wonderful, and we should praise God and thank Him.

He's a generous God, but if the gifts ever impede our pursuit of the Giver, we aren't experiencing the relationship Jesus intended. And we want to experience relationship with Jesus on His terms because in Him we discover that the deepest desires of our heart are met.