

**Give Me the Hard Truth**  
John 6: 25-40, Prov 27:5-7

Well friends, there's certainly been a lot of different bugs and flu's going around over the last couple months – but I wonder if you know of anyone who's come down with a case of Bieber fever?

It usually strikes young kids, and girls are particularly vulnerable to it. Symptoms include downloading large amounts of pop music, putting posters on bedroom walls, and hysterical fits of screaming whenever Justin Bieber comes on TV or makes a public appearance.

Justin Bieber is the latest pop music sensation and He's taking the world by storm - selling out concerts, making public appearances and breaking hearts.

Now normally I'm pretty cynical about teen sensation superstars, but the other day I happened to watch an interview with Justin Bieber on TV, and I was impressed with how grounded he seems to be, and he credited it to the fact that he has people in his life who will tell him the truth about himself.

He admitted that as a pop star it's easy to become surrounded by people who only tell you how great you are, and how amazing you are - and after a while you end up believing it and you end up with a distorted perception of who you are, and that gets you into trouble because no one tells you that you're doing anything wrong.

Now we're not pop stars like Justin Bieber, but we have the same need don't we? Have you ever been at a point in your life where you wanted to know the truth about yourself and wished you could get honest feedback from the people around you?

That they would say what's on their mind instead giving you “the polite nice comments” we usually get because people are afraid to hurt your feelings.

We've all been there haven't we?

We've all wanted to know what our colleagues really thought about the presentation we just gave, what kind of first impression we just made, or if some criticism we've received is in fact really true.

Friends, I believe that our hearts do desire to know the truth. That we want to get the objective unbiased facts about who we really are.

But this is a dangerous desire, because we know the truth can hurt, the truth can overwhelm us, the truth might reveal something about ourselves we didn't want to know.

But we still desire the truth, and we hope that the truth will shine a positive light on us...so we risk it. We ask others to tell us the truth about ourselves.

“Honey does this dress make me look fat?” Well dear... do you want the truth?

Friends, the good news is that Jesus is someone we can go to ask for the truth about ourselves, and we can trust him to answer us with the truth in love - because he truly cares about us.

But again don't take my word for it – read the gospels and you'll see how Jesus demonstrated his care for us, by caring for the people who followed him.

Perhaps one of the best examples of this is how concerned he was that the crowds who were coming to hear him teach would have something to eat.

If we go back to the beginning of John 6 we see that huge crowds of people were following Jesus out into the countryside to hear him teach - and on this one particular day they were out next to the Sea of Galilee and it was getting late.

There was nowhere for the people to go and buy food. So Jesus miraculously fed the 5000 plus crowd by multiplying 5 loaves of barley bread and 2 small fishes.

It's an amazing miracle of multiplication that goes beyond the laws of nature, but its more amazing that Jesus uses his power to care for people in this way, to feed them, heal them, and free them from evil spirits, instead of using it in a selfish way.

But, selfishness inevitably occurs - because whenever somebody, like Jesus, can offer something to people, they begin to attract groupies – just like our pop star Justin Bieber, when you're famous everybody wants a piece of what you can do for them.

And Jesus knows that part of the reason the crowds of people are following him is because of what they could get out of him.

But unlike pop stars who grow resentful of their fans and groupies, Jesus cares about these people in the crowds – and because he cares He is going to confront them about it. So he says to them:

***"I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.***

Jesus knew that he had reached a point with those who were following him where he had to make a choice between his ability to give the crowds what they wanted and giving them the hard truth about themselves.

The hard truth about the crowds and his followers was that they were sinners, and their sin was manifesting itself in the fact they were following Jesus around purely out of self-interest.

If Jesus stopped feeding and healing them would they still be interested in him or would He become yesterday's news, another has-been rabbi? Jesus knows the answer; they'd drop him pretty quick.

But Jesus has been feeding and healing them, meeting their physical needs in order to bring them to a point where he can help them see more about themselves. To help them see that they have a deeper need which is spiritual.

Now the challenge for Jesus lies in the fact that if He gives the people the hard truth it will most likely offend them – after all we want the truth about ourselves but are we able to accept it?

Friends, let me urge you again to trust Jesus when he gives you the truth because he cares for you and what He tells you is only to help you – and not to condemn you.

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Jesus must give us the hard truth and confront us about our self-interest. There is no other alternative, because it is really not loving and caring to allow people to continue living this way.

So Jesus says to us this morning too – I tell you the truth, you are looking for me because of what you can get from me...not because you understand who I truly am. Jesus makes us feel good, Jesus is a good moral teacher, Jesus is inspirational.

Friends, in all honestly we're all a little self-interested when it comes to Jesus – in fact that's what this sermon series is counting on to pique your interest in Jesus! And that's where we might start from... but its not where we should stay.

Friends, the truth is that Jesus is so much more than someone who can simply inspire us, help us make moral decisions or help us to feel better about life when we're down.

And in telling us the truth about who He is, Jesus also reveals to us the truth about who we really are. So, listen to what Jesus says about himself.

**"I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.<sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."**

And then he goes on to say...

<sup>50</sup> *But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. <sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."*

In other words Jesus is the nourishment the God supplies for us in order to be truly alive, and to stay alive – and what this tells us about ourselves is that we are spiritually dead and our impending physical death is but a symptom of our being spiritually dead.

And the crowds to whom Jesus said this had been in the habit of thinking that they knew the truth about themselves because of their connection to Moses, and the great things God had done for their ancestors in the past.

But Jesus says to them

<sup>47</sup> **I tell you the truth**, he who believes has everlasting life. <sup>48</sup> I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup> Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died.

In other words, the hard truth is that being religious person, or being a good person doesn't deal with the underlying problem that we are spiritually dead.

Instead it's the person who believes what Jesus says about who He is that will receive everlasting life, they have been raised back to life – they have been reborn as it were.

That's why earlier on in the book of John in chapter 3 Jesus says **"I tell you the truth**, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.

Friends, we need to hear Jesus tell us the truth about ourselves.

It might hurt our feelings; it may cause us to become upset, it might even make us depressed.

But the good news is that Jesus tells us we are seeking him for selfish reasons, that we are spiritually dead, that we need to be reborn because He is the answer to who we are:

**"I tell you the truth**, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. <sup>54</sup> Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

The truth is that we need Jesus, as sinful humans we do not have spiritual life in us, but Jesus does. The truth is that regular food and drink can only sustain our physical life, not our spiritual life.

But the good news is that Jesus has given us himself so that we might have life. His body was broken on the cross to pay for our sin. His blood was spilled to wash away the truth of who we really are.

But we won't benefit from this good news unless we hear Jesus tell us that hard truth, unless we accept the truth of who He says he is.

Let me tell you how it ended for many of the people in the crowd that Jesus was speaking to. They couldn't handle the truth – it was too much for them.

*From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. (John 6:66)*

But not all turned away...

<sup>67</sup> "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve.

<sup>68</sup> Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."<sup>69</sup> We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

So friends, my prayer is that we won't shy away from hearing Jesus tell us the truth about ourselves that our hearts desire – even if it is hard to take. Because words of truth from Jesus are the words of eternal life!

Who else can we go to get accurate, honest feedback about who we truly are? There is no where else

And who else can reveal who we are by telling us who He is?

Only Jesus – He is the Holy One of God and He speaks the truth in love. He has the words of life

My friends...I tell you the truth! Amen