

March 20th, 2016

## SEEKING JESUS FOR JESUS' SAKE

John 6:16-27

Last week we saw the miracle of Jesus feeding the five thousand. That event controls the rest of chapter six. All the conversations that take place from here on, are focused on Jesus explaining Himself to be the true bread sent down from Father. Just as physical bread feeds gives us life, so Jesus the true bread gives us spiritual life. And the way He does this is by dying. He dies on a Roman cross, and by His death we have life. That is how He is the true bread.

We saw that this sign was totally missed on the crowd. They didn't see Jesus as a soul satisfier, but as a means to satisfy their own flesh. They concluded from the sign that Jesus is the prophet who has come into the world (v.14) and therefore they decided to make him king by force (v.15). They didn't want a soul satisfier, they wanted a flesh satisfier. They wanted Jesus as a **product** to gain food, and to overthrow Roman occupation, they didn't want Jesus as a **Person**. If the Jews had their way, their is no gospel. Jesus can not save us from our sins by overthrowing the government. Jesus can not save us from our sins by giving us physical bread. They thought that they were concerned with their greatest needs, but Christ had their best interests in mind. Overthrowing the government would have been easy. Multiplying bread everyday for the rest of their lives would have been easy. He wasn't looking for easy. He came to do the will of His Father. "...the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment...And I know that his commandment is *eternal life*." John 12:49-50 **Jesus was born for one main purpose: crucifixion.** The chief end of Christ's life on planet earth was to suffer the wrath of God on the cross for ruined and hopeless sinners. Had he accepted their invitation to be king, all would be lost. They wanted something that would have eternally shipwrecked their souls. He wanted something infinitely more for them, and us.

So He refused, and Matthew's gospel says that "He went up on the mountain by himself to pray" (Matthew 14:23).

## Outline

- ☆ Jesus: "It is I; do not be afraid" (v.16-21)
- ☆ Jesus: 'You seek Me for the sake of your stomach' (v.22-26)
- ☆ Jesus: 'Work for the food that endures to eternal life' (v.27)

## *The Big Idea*

Only when we seek Jesus' for Jesus' sake are we working for the food that endures to eternal life

### I. Jesus: "It is I; do not be afraid" (v.16-21)

#### 1. How does wind relate to bread?

This incident of Jesus walking on the water doesn't seem to fit within the framework of chapter six. v.1-15 deals with the miracle of the bread, and then v. 22-71 Jesus explains that He is the bread. Sandwiched in between is the incident of Christ walking on the water, after which it is not spoken about again. So it appears on the surface that this is just some random miracle disconnected from everything that surrounds it. Why did John include it? Let's look.

v.16-17 When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them.

The disciples were in a desolate place while Jesus taught, healed, and fed the multitude. It's time to go back to town. So they begin to cross the sea of Galilee.

But the text specifically says “Jesus had not yet come to them.” That is key. It’s dark, it’s the fourth watch of the night (**Mark 6:48**), somewhere between 3a.m. and 6 a.m., and Jesus was no where to be seen. Instantly we should see the connection between darkness and the absence of Jesus.

v.18 The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing.

Anyone who has ever been on a raging sea knows it’s terror. I was on Lake Erie once. It was a sunny day, but there was waves, *because* there was wind. Small waves, but enough to make me sick. In Scripture, the sea is a sign “chaos and disorder”<sup>1</sup>, which is why when the new heavens and the new earth are re-created in Revelation 21:1, it says “the sea was no more.” So here the disciples were in the middle of the sea, and this storm suddenly came upon them. It was pitch black, and a violent wind from the surrounding mountains dumped into the lower waters, and this little boat with the twelve was struggling to stay alive. All the while, being thrown around in the dark chaos. Where was Jesus? Praying on the mountain. But we’ll get back to that.

So how does this violent storm relate to hunger? The people were hungry on the mountain and Jesus fed them, now his disciples are desperate in this wind storm. How does *that* hunger relate to *this* wind? Both can kill you if you are exposed to them long enough. As one pastor said “If hunger is about to kill you in the wilderness, you could be saved by someone who can give you bread. If wind is about to kill you on the sea, you could be saved by someone who can walk on water.”<sup>2</sup> But there’s something *deeper* than this connection.

## 2. Jesus: ‘It is I!’

v.19-21 When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. But he said to them, “**It is I**; do not be afraid.” Then they were glad to take him

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<sup>1</sup> D.A. Carson, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Gospel According to John*, (Grand Rapids, MI,: Eerdmans Publishing Company), pg. 276

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/twelve-baskets-of-bread-and-the-walk-on-water>

into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

Jesus showed His disciples something *deeper* about the bread by walking on the water. Like the crowd, they missed the what Jesus was saying. Our fighter verse today **Mark 6:51-52** "...he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, *but their hearts were hardened.*" They did not understand about the loaves, because their hearts were hardened *and so* He brings them to the end of themselves and gives them His **presence**.

*This is how walking on water connects to the feeding of the five thousand.* Jesus says "It is I!" That's what the crowd missed with the bread. The sign ceased to be a sign for them.<sup>3</sup> Jesus was saying through the bread 'It is I! It's my **presence** that you need. I am your all-satisfying bread.' They missed it. And so did the disciples. And so do we when we reduce Jesus to something useful. Jesus didn't come to be useful. He came so that we could discover that His **presence** is the greatest treasure in the universe. Jesus wants to drive this point home so He blows on this little boat. And then He walks on the water when His disciples were terrified and says 'It is I! I am your refuge in the storms to come. You missed me in the bread, can you see me now? It is I!' And then they received Him in the boat with gladness and then they immediately reach the shore. Why the sudden landing? Because the point was made. **If we are in the presence of Jesus we have all we need.**

The **presence** of Jesus is the answer to our deepest spiritual hunger, and our deepest spiritual danger. He is our all-satisfying bread that gives us life, *and* He walks to us on the water in our most desperate storm. Our small church has been rowing hard in a storm for several months now. But the smallness of our church doesn't matter to Jesus anymore than the smallness of the disciples' boat. We belong to Him, bought by blood. We started off from the shore when the weather was good, but the weather has turned violent. Where has Jesus been?

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<sup>3</sup><http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/do-not-labor-for-the-food-that-perishes>

The same place He was while His disciples were on the sea, praying on the mountain. Jesus may not ‘feel’ close to us when the storms are violent. But He’s praying for us “...*since he always lives to make intercession for [us].*” (Hebrews 7:25) He will come to us on the waters, and He will bring us safely to shore. He spilt His blood as an everlasting pledge, that He will not abandon us.

There’s no one like Jesus. “I will feed you Me, all-satisfying, eternal-life-giving-bread that you will forever feast on. And I will always pray for you to Father even in your darkest storm. And when it is time, I will come to you on troubled waters and say “It is I, do not be afraid.”

## II. Jesus: ‘You seek Me for the sake of your stomach’ (v.22-26)

v.22-24 On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.

### 1. Miracles will not produce saving faith in Jesus Christ

These details serve one very important purpose. They demonstrate yet again that this crowd knew that Jesus had miraculous power. There was only one boat. They carefully watched Jesus, and He didn’t get into it. His disciples had, and they departed. And since the evening they had been blockading the shore in hopes to see Jesus again, but He never appeared and His disciples never came back. They had to have concluded that Jesus, by some miracle, had crossed the sea. This is further proven by the fact that when they arrive on the other side of the shore He was already there. It would have been impossible for Him to make the journey by foot in that time. They weren’t exposed to the miracle as the disciples were, but a miracle crossing was the only option left available.

This backdrop is important because it shows us how deceitful the human heart is. Here these people had been exposed to multiple miracles. They initially came to the mountain where Jesus was *because* of the miracles He was doing (v.2) They personally experienced healing from Him on the mountain (**Matthew 14:14**). They personally ate the bread that He miraculously produced (v.11). Now they have seen that the only way that Jesus could have crossed the sea was by a miracle (v.25). And yet they do not believe. **Miracles will not produce belief.** If you are waiting for some sign from heaven, before you believe in Christ, you are deceiving yourself. Your heart is too deceitful. Even if a miracle was produced, you will reason it away. Jesus said in **Luke 16:31**, that if you do not believe what the Scripture says, you will not believe even if someone were to rise from the dead.

Now if someone were to say, 'But v.14 *says* that after they saw the sign, they *believed* that this was Prophet that was promised to come into the world. That's belief!' The rest of this chapter proves they didn't believe He was the prophet *because* when this Prophet began to speak they didn't believe His words. Later in this gospel, John says "Though he [Jesus] had done *so many signs* before them, *they still did not believe in him,*" (**John 12:37**)

This is why the teaching of the new birth is the very first teaching that Jesus gives in this gospel. **John 3:3** "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." You must be born again if you have any hope of believing in Jesus Christ. You must be born again if you are to gain eternal life. Short of that, even if you were to see God Himself, you will never cling to Him by faith. So how do you become born again? How can you *cause* the new birth in yourself? You can't. "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." (**John 3:8**) It is the Spirit alone, without your help, without your consent, without your approval, without your desire, without your faith, without your good works, that causes the new birth. If He doesn't do it, it won't happen. Just as you weren't the cause of your

first birth, so you can never be the cause of the new birth. If God doesn't grant you grace, you will forever be undone, and ruined.

So this crowd was seeking Jesus (v.24), not for Jesus' sake, but for some other reason.

## 2. 'You are seeking me...because you ate your fill of the loaves'

v.25 When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?"

They are curious enough to at least ask the question. But their question was insincere.

v.26 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves."

Truly, truly Jesus says. Jesus reads their motives with the utmost certainty. 'You are not seeking me, *because* the signs are pointing to me. You are not seeking me because I am the all-satisfying bread *that* the physical bread pointed to. You failed to see the glory of the giver, and instead worshipped the gift.' Congregation, whatever we give ourselves over to, as the pursuit of our lives, is what we worship. These people were seeking something, but not Jesus. **Those who seek Jesus for something else, do not seek Jesus.** The professing church is full of people who seek Jesus, but never know Him. Who pray, read their Bibles, go to church, do good works, just like the Pharisees, but who are shut out from the kingdom of God. Jesus solemnly warns us

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.' Matt. 7:21-23

If you are seeking Jesus in order to satisfy some other desire, like your reputation, or (children) to please your parents, or *merely* to ease your conscience, or *merely* to escape hell, you're not truly seeking Jesus. This crowd was hungry, and were seeking Jesus to fulfill a God-given desire within their own bodies, and Jesus says 'that's not how you seek Me. I'm not the means to an another end. I Am the End. I am the Bread the satisfies, not merely a means to get bread. If you miss that, you miss Me.'

### III. 'Work for the food that endures to eternal life' (v.27)

v.27 Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.

#### 1. The heart of Jesus Christ

Between v.26 and v.27 we see the heart of Jesus Christ. Here this crowd continually came to Jesus with ill motives. **James 4:3** says "You ask and do not receive, *because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.*" These people didn't love Jesus, they loved the loaves. They loved their own private pleasure. But what does Jesus do? He doesn't shut off the conversation, though they are trying to use Him for fleshly reasons. Instead He seeks to correct them and lead them to eternal life. John Bunyan says here "Oh! how willingly would Jesus Christ have even these [*mere professors of religion who*] come to him with pretense only, *come to him sincerely*, that they may be saved."<sup>4</sup> Jesus has pity on rebels who would seek to destroy the gospel. He continues to call to them through the prophet Isaiah: "Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and *your labor for that which does not satisfy?* **Listen diligently to me**, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and *come to me; hear, that your soul may live;*" (**Isaiah 55:2-3**)

Jesus says four things in v.27 for our souls to *hear* and *live*.

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<sup>4</sup> John Bunyan, *Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ*, (Carlisle, PA,: Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2011), pg. 3

## 2. “Do not work for the food that perishes.”

This crowd worked hard to track Jesus down. They followed them around the bank the first day, and now they are putting aside their business to track him down this second day. They were working. But for what? To fill their stomachs. Jesus is saying ‘Don’t do that. You’re spending all your energy on perishing bread, while I am right in front of you.’

When He says “do not work”, He doesn’t intend for us to understand this to mean that working is bad. Some have taken this in a wooden literal sense to mean that Jesus intends for us to quit our jobs, and live a life that resembles a monastery. That’s the furthest thing from Jesus’ mind. He upheld the creation mandate of work. Work was created before the fall. Paul says “If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.” (2 Thessalonians 3:10) We work so that we can eat. Working says something glorious about God.

What Jesus is saying, is ‘Don’t work in such a way where you are **satisfied** with perishing food.’ “Don’t be nailed to the things of this life.”<sup>5</sup> Don’t let the work that can *only produce* perishing things be *the defining work* in your life.’ If all our energy is spent on our jobs, or our families, or our vacation plans, or our t.v. watching, or our hobbies, or our homemaking, how will that profit us? Yes it’s good to put food on the table. But to what end? It is only to have enough energy to go to work the next day to earn more food. Do we exist merely to provide things for our physical bodies? That’s a wasted life. The chief end of life is not food, or family, or vacations, or a nicer car. Jesus tells a parable in Luke about a man who lives like this and God tells him “Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” (Luke 12:20) Pursing after perishing things will not help us on the day that our soul is required of us. That is the point that Jesus is driving home to us. ‘Don’t work like that! Pursuing perishing things will cause your true pleasure to perish with them.’

That’s the first thing Jesus tells us to hear so that we can live. The other three things are part of our application. First let’s review our doctrine.

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<sup>5</sup> Chrysostom, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 14*, Ed. Phillip Schaff, (Peabody, MA,: Hendrickson Publishers, Fifth Printing 2012), pg. 158

## *Application*

*Our Doctrine:* Only when we seek Jesus for Jesus' sake are we working for the food that endures to eternal life

Those who seek Jesus for something else, do not seek Jesus. This crowd wanted Jesus so long as He was useful to them. In v.26 Jesus says “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.” The point of the miracle was to get them to see that Jesus is infinitely satisfying so that they would delight in Him, and not bread. But they missed it. They believed Jesus had some power. However believing *that* does not honor Christ. The devil believes that Christ has power, and he trembles (**James 2:19**). They wanted to exploit Jesus for His *usefulness* to them. But that is not why Jesus came. If we view Jesus as the extra that is thrown in after we get what we need, we’re not worshipping Jesus. That’s not the gospel. Jesus is not the *extra*, He’s everything! All natural men love the gifts and blessing of God, but they don’t love Jesus. Jesus says “*Come to me*, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (**Matthew 11:28**) He says ‘come to me’ not come to my stuff. Knowing Jesus, personally, intimately, relationally is what eternal life is. **John 17:3** “And this is eternal life, that they **know** you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” If we don’t know Jesus, but only His stuff, we will not inherit eternal life.

*Our Duty:* Work for the food that endures to eternal life

Now we look at the rest of v.27. Jesus said “Do not work for the food that perishes, *but* for the food that endures to eternal life” Do you see what is at stake here? Eternal life. Jesus is saying that we do not automatically possess that. It is something that we have to gain, and if we don’t gain it, we everlastingly perish. That is what is on the line here in Jesus’ words: your everlasting happiness or your everlasting ruin.

**How does the unbeliever do this?** How do you work for the food that endures to eternal life? Because somebody could take this to mean, that we need to earn our salvation by performing good works. The crowd asks this very question in next week's passage, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you *believe in him* whom he has sent." (**John 6:28-29**) But if you believed the way the crowd believed you will perish. Remember they believed He was a Prophet sent from God (v.14). That is not saving belief. Saving belief is seeing Him as spiritual and all-satisfying Bread, such that if you don't have him you die. If you don't see Him like that, whatever else you might believe about Him, you don't believe savingly. Listen Jesus is offering life, and all that He requires from you is to eat the bread He offers. Put away the moldy bread of your own self-righteousness and pride. Put away that bread that continues to leave you starving and diseased. It can't bring you joy. Believe Jesus at His Word, that He alone can forgive your sins, that He alone can make you clean before God, that He alone will satisfy your soul.

**How does the believer do this?** How does the believer *work* for the food that endures to eternal life. By considering carefully the last part of v.27. So here it is all together: "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, *which the Son of Man will give to you*. For on him God the Father has set his seal."

*Our Delight:* The Son of Man gives us this food for on him God the Father has set his seal

Knowing that Jesus gives us this food *is* food. Consider what we've seen thus far. There is not one person that has come to Christ rightly, or answered Christ rightly, or obeyed Christ rightly. What do we see instead? Carnality and hard-heartedness. What did you experience this week? Carnality and hardheartedness. Yet what is Christ doing right now? Giving us food. He's not waiting for us to clean up. He's not looking to our performance. He's not

judging whether we've had a good week to see if we deserve this meal. Nobody in here has had a good week. God doesn't judge on a sliding scale. We don't deserve this meal, left to ourselves we wouldn't eat this meal. Nothing can overcome this unworthiness or resistance except the Son of Man on whom God the Father has set his seal.<sup>6</sup> "For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise...For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will." (John 5:19; 21) No man could make this claim except for Christ. "I alone can feed souls, because I alone have the Father's seal. I am God the Son, sent by God the Father. And I give food to ruined sinners so they can live." **Revelation 1:18** "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades."

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<sup>6</sup>**Consider** the end of the verse "for on him God the Father has set his seal." The word 'for' should be taken as 'because': "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. **Because** on him God the Father has set his seal." Jesus gives us eternal life because He has been sealed by the Father. The *seal* here is reference to the *mark* of a king. In the OT a king would seal a law by pressing his personal royal ring into the wax at the bottom, showing that this law has his authority. It was then irrevocable, because the law was proven to be given by the king's own person. Counterfeit claims could be proven to be so because they didn't have this seal.