

Why are you here? You better not say, “Well, it’s Sunday morning and going to church on Sunday is just what you’re supposed to do!” Being here isn’t another thing to do because it’s a cultural norm or expectation. You’re here to find Jesus! Why, though? What do you want from Jesus? It better not be a buncha bogus reasons, but because you know that without him, you are lost and dead. You are here because you know Jesus is essential for life, both this one, to live it to the full, and the next, to have it all!

Don’t we sometimes miss the point of Jesus? Of course we do. Jesus isn’t for acquiring stuff, making life easy, advancing of social standing, pushing selfish agendas or any other such nonsense. Jesus tells us, “The Son of Man came to serve, not to be served, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” He came to offer himself as payment for our sins to save us from them and deliver us to life in heaven for eternity.

This is a pretty big thing to miss, but sometimes we do! The crowd that saw Jesus feed at least 5000 of them, missed the point of Jesus, too. The day after this miracle, they were looking for Jesus. Why? Food was the reason! Which of us can blame them for that? A miraculous source of unlimited free food is an enticing prospect. I’ve day dreamed many times about having one of those food replicators from Star Trek. The crowd played coy and tried to casually ask Jesus, “So, Rabbi, have you been here long or...?” Part of their curiosity is legit. They saw the disciples leave in a boat without Jesus, but now he’s there. How’d that happen? Jesus walked on water in the middle of the night, rescued Peter, and transported the boat and the other side instantaneously. Recounting that would have caused hysteria. Jesus revealed their motivations instead, “*Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.*” (**John 6:26**)

They missed the point of the miracle, but Jesus takes the opportunity to talk about what’s essential, “*Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.*” (**John 6:27**) Jesus is not saying to quit your job and stop buying groceries. Jesus is saying that there is a lot we think is essential, but isn’t, and we end up chasing those things, dwelling on them, exerting much effort to get them, and then allowing the things to occupy so much more space in our hearts than they should. Your life isn’t defined by your stuff. You aren’t the logo on your car. You aren’t your clothing label. The things you own can end up owning you, so don’t fall prey to thinking that things are the sum of existence and that they define you as a person; they aren’t, they don’t. You’re gonna die and someone else will get it. We get confused about what’s truly important so Jesus helps us out by telling us to exert our efforts into what does last forever, food which lasts and causes the eater to last into eternal life. Jesus is the only one approved of by the Father to give this food away and he does gladly!

That’s another missed thing, that Jesus gives the food. The work part they latched onto which tracks for people steeped in works righteousness, so they asked what they had to do. Further clarification from Jesus, “*The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.*” (**John 6:29**) The work of God is exactly that, something he works in us so that we believe. Faith comes from the gospel of Jesus so that we can say, “I believe!” This work of God in us, faith, is something we can’t earn, we’ll never be deserving of it. Jesus gives us the bread, the Spirit works belief in us and by that power, we’re able to strive with everything we have and are to take hold of the love of Christ which has taken hold of us and saved us! Work righteousness is totally out, but so often we catch ourselves thinking, “Here’s all the things I do for you, God: I go to church, I volunteer, I give, I read the Bible, I’m considerate...” and on it goes. Don’t think you can work for this bread, Jesus certainly doesn’t want you to!

Side note: for people with the proclivity to focus on the stuff of this life because we see it, smell it, are inundated with it all the time, we need to be reminded that the possession of the bread of life, the having of saving faith, will not be accompanied by specific material things to function as validation we have it. The peace that surpasses understanding and the certain hope of heaven through faith is God's validation he'll take care of you in quite literally every way. Side note over.

Back to the crowd. By this point, they're intrigued, but had the audacity to demand proof! They pointed to Moses and the manna as proof that Moses was God's guy. They experienced Jesus' miracle, they ate the fish and the loaves Jesus multiplied right in front of them so that a crowd of at least 5000 could eat their fill. That's not physically possible, yet they saw it, and then demanded proof of Jesus' godliness the very next day, "*What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?*" (**John 6:30**) That's like seeing Superman fly by, land next to you, and then ask for proof he's Superman! Who would do that? These people with short term memory loss. Jesus isn't a trained animal or jester who does tricks on demand. Jesus is the Son of God who works miracles of his own power according to the Father's will so that his glory as the one who came to live among us, Immanuel, full of grace and truth and salvation, would be revealed.

Who in the world would ask for further proof? Well, these people, the ones watching online, the ones right here. Demanding proof that God can do all the things he says he'll do for us is something at which we're expert, forgetting each time we do that faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we don't see. "What will you do to show me you're legit and on my side?" All of us are, at times, stricken with acute spiritual memory loss. They pointed to Moses, as though he earned the bread from heaven. We might point to some of our spiritual forebears and their successes as though they earned them. Jesus lovingly dismisses all this and explains, "*It is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.*" ³³ *For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.*" (**John 6:32-33**) The Father gave true bread, it came down from heaven when God gave his eternal, almighty, all-sufficient in every way for our salvation Son. Eternal life is knowing the Father sent Jesus as the Christ.

Thinking Jesus was talking about manna 2.0, they wanted in. Now that they're hooked, Jesus very directly, very clearly, explained what the bread of heaven is, "*I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.*" (**John 6:35**) Jesus had been talking about himself the whole time, but let them know it after they'd been primed by the benefit of the bread. Those who come to Jesus, the Bread of Life, will never hunger ever again, but have eternal life. Those who believe in Jesus, the Water of Life, will never thirst ever again, but have total satisfaction of soul. That's what Jesus is for – for whoever none are turned away or rejected – this is what you want and need from him; it's why you're here. Jesus satisfies in the truest and most lasting of ways because he forgives, takes away sin, gives the very righteousness of God, fills with the love of God, gives belonging, and brings to heaven where there is only life. So, break off a hunk of the bread God has freely given you and share. Give people what they need to live. Give Jesus. Amen.