

John 6:25-34

25 When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" 26 Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. 27 Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal." 28 Then they said to him, "What must we do to perform the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." 30 So they said to him, "What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing?" 31 Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" 32 Then Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." 34 They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always."

The only problems Jesus had were people problems. The disciples had difficulty in understanding his divine nature. The religious establishment was self serving and rejected him and his teaching. Jesus also had a problem with the crowds due to his healing powers (John 6:2) and they wanted to make him ruler (John 6:15). In John chapter 6 Jesus leaves Jerusalem and goes to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. The Bible says that a large crowd kept following him. So, Jesus goes outside of Galilee (the land of the Jews) and now, even though he is on the other side of the sea he has a large crowd on his hands. Now he is faced with the problem of feeding everybody. So, there is the great miracle of feeding five thousand men plus the women and the children. This miracle is a big one so it gets a lot of attention. Thousands of people see it, experience it, receive it, and talk about it. They say "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world." In other words - this is the Messiah!

Jesus knows what they want. As is typical what people want conflicts with what God wants. They want to take him by force in order to make him king. They want Jesus for political reasons, not religious reasons, not spiritual reasons. So, Jesus needs to get away. What else can he do? He left the kingdom and went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee and the Bible informs us that a large crowd kept following him. Jesus knows they want take him by force to make him king. Now, in order to get away from the crowd Jesus goes up a mountain. Meanwhile, the disciples head back for Capernaum, that is back across the sea into Galilee. Then when it was safe for Jesus to avoid the crowd, Jesus walks across the sea to catch up with disciples. The crowd realizes that Jesus has disappeared so they go looking for Jesus and that brings us to today's Scripture.

The crowds find Jesus on the other side of the sea and ask him about when he arrived. The question is not one of innocent wonder - like, "oh, hi, when did you get here?" The question is one of accusation - "we have been looking for you, when on earth did you get here!?" Jesus does not answer the question. Instead Jesus addresses their motive because that's what the problem really is. They are looking for Jesus because he fed them. Let's take time to think about this. We end up taking in and caring for stray animals. We have feral cats that came to our house and we ended up taming them and now they live with us. What got them to latch on to us is that we fed them. My son's dog Davy is a sweet little, loving, and happy Shih tzu. He is a good companion and is part of the family. But whenever someone has food, he comes running and at

that time you have his full attention. His loyalty is motivated by food. He is loyal to his own immediate gratification. This is the scenario Jesus is faced with. The people are loyal to their own immediate gratification. This is not the scenario that Jesus is after.

Jesus knows the motive of the people. They are not focused on his divine nature even though they have proclaimed that he is the Messiah (John 6:14). Their loyalty is based on their own selfish interests and that is a problem. So, Jesus goes into the lesson and uses food as a metaphor. He teaches them "do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal."

The food that perishes is food that we eat. The food that endures for eternal life comes from Jesus and is set by God. Jesus announces that he is going to give food for eternal life. It is obvious that the crowds don't get it because they ask him what it is that they have to do. Jesus answer is that you have to believe. Jesus knows the real problem is a matter of their lack of faith. You have to believe in the one that God has sent. And what do they want? Instead of belief they want proof. In John 6:11 Jesus feeds thousands. In John 6:14 people proclaim him to be the Messiah. Now, in John 6:30 people demand a sign. I think it is funny they ask for a sign after Jesus has fed the crowds and has been identified as the Messiah. Since Jesus brought up the idea of food for eternal life they think about the Israelites in the desert eating manna during the time of Moses. Jesus informs them that the bread that they ate did not come from Moses. The bread is from heaven and it came from God. It is the bread of God that gives life to the world!

Here is the deal. Jesus put it to them like this "You are looking for me not because you saw signs but because I fed you, do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal." In other words - do not work for food - work for salvation! Believe in Jesus and you will get it. Here we have a set up for the sacrament - food for eternal life. Jesus teaches that the bread from heaven is from God and the bread of God gives life to the world.

Then at the Last Supper Jesus presents to the Disciples the bread of God. We see today that before Jesus presented the sacrament he set up lessons. He didn't just do it. It was not some novelty. It was not a sporadic idea. He didn't think "oh, I will do this so that they will remember me." He set up lessons on the bread of life and food for eternal life. He taught them that the food that endures for eternal life is given by him. Jesus gives you food for eternal life. How do we respond? This is a reason to celebrate. This is a reason to be thankful. This is a reason to have a joyous response of gratitude and appreciation. What God has done for us is absolutely amazing. Jesus gives us the food for eternal life.