

The Bread of Life Discourse, Part 1

John 6:22-29

John 6:22-29 - *“On the following day, when the people who were standing on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, except that one which His disciples had entered, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with His disciples, but His disciples had gone away alone. ²³ However, other boats came from Tiberias, near the place where they ate bread after the Lord had given thanks. ²⁴ When the people saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they also got into boats and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.*

²⁵ And 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 and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. ²⁷ Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.”

²⁸ Then they said to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?”

²⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.”

Background Notes

After the miracles of the feeding five thousand and the Lord walking on water, the Lord Jesus proceeded to talk to the people who had been fed with the multiplied bread and fish. This talk, or conversation, is known as “The Bread of Life Discourse” - for obvious reasons! In the discourse the Lord informed the Jews that He was true Bread from heaven, stating emphatically, “I am the Bread of Life.”

The Bread of Life discourse was given at Capernaum, on the day after the feeding of the five thousand. *“On the following day, when the people who were standing on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, except that one which His disciples had entered, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with His disciples, but His disciples had gone away alone”(v22).*

A number of people had stayed overnight at the site of the feeding of five thousand. They were convinced that the Lord was still in the area, and they were probably hoping to see more miracles. They knew that the Lord had not gone away with the disciples by boat, and they hadn't seen Him start walking along the shore, so they kept waiting for Him to come back from His walk up on the mountain. But the Lord didn't show up, so finally the people decided that He was no longer in the area. They got into some boats that had arrived from Tiberias, which is on the southwest side of the Sea of Galilee, and they came to Capernaum seeking the Lord Jesus. *“When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they also got into boats and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus” (v24).*

When they found the Lord at Capernaum, they wanted to know how He had come to the other side of the Sea of Galilee: *“Rabbi, when did You come here?”* Notice what the Lord Jesus did **not** say, “Well, you folks won’t believe this, but I actually walked across the Sea of Galilee!” I don’t think we would have been able to resist telling the secret, right? I can imagine some of the disciples trying to say, “Lord, can we tell them? Can we tell them how we got here?!” But in verse 26 the Lord went right to the heart of the problem of these people: *“Most assuredly I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.”*

When the Lord says, “Truly, truly,” or “verily, verily,” or “most assuredly I say to you,” we can be sure that whatever follows is very important. The Lord said, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.”* In other words, “You’re following Me for the wrong reasons. You should have realized that the miracle of the multiplication of bread and fish was a sign of My deity – a sign that that I am the Messiah - that I am the One on whom the Father has set His seal! But no -- you just saw it as an easy way to get food to fill your appetites!”

I wonder what our reaction would have been if **we** had been in the crowd that observed and experienced that great miracle? Think of your own analytical process. Would we have seen it as a sign of the deity of the Lord Jesus, or would we have been more interested in getting “free food”? That’s a thought-provoking question - and a very convicting question, isn’t it?

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. “Man shall not live by bread alone.”

That, of course, is a quote from Old Testament Scripture, from Deuteronomy 8. The Lord quoted that verse to Satan during one of the temptations (Matthew 4 & Luke 4). Satan said, “Why don’t you turn these stones into bread? *“If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”* How did the Lord respond? He responded with the quote from Deuteronomy 8: *“that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone.”*

And that is essentially what the Lord said to the Jewish people in verse 27: *“Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.”* Now when the Lord said, *“Do not labor for the food which perishes,”* He was **not** suggesting, “Don’t bother to get a job - just go to church and read your Bible!” No, He was definitely not saying that! In fact, 2 Thessalonians 3:10 says, *“If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.”*

In verse 27 the Lord was teaching about our **priorities**. We spend too much time working for material things – bigger houses, more and better stuff to put in the houses, or the garages, or the sheds. I am talking to myself, too. We’re **all** there – working for more earthly, material things! How much hunger for the “food” which endures through everlasting life, the “food” that the Son of Man will give us?

What is that “food”? Essentially, it is the word of God! It leads us to salvation, and it’s the spiritual food we need for living. *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”* Where are our priorities? Man shall not live by bread alone.

2. Only one work is necessary for salvation.

That title sounds unbiblical, doesn’t it? A **work** that is necessary for salvation?! Well, look at verses 28-29, *“Then they said to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?” Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.”*

Now it’s true that we can’t make our way to heaven by good works. That is very clear in Scripture. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”* And Titus 3:5, *“not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us.”*

But there is one work - and only one - that is necessary for salvation. It’s faith in Christ. The one work necessary for salvation is to believe in Jesus Christ, who was sent from Heaven to die for our sins. That’s what the Lord was teaching.

The word “work,” as it is used here, is used in the sense of “act” – the act of faith, or the act of believing. And we know that even the “work” or act of faith only happens because God makes the first move in our hearts. Listen to Ephesians 2:8-9 again: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”* What is the gift of God? Salvation? I would say that the whole package is in view there. Salvation, yes – and even **our faith** - its all part of the gift of God.

Have you done this “work of God” yet? Have you acted in faith, and trusted in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? Or are you still trying to “make it” with God by your own good works? Remember, only **one** work is necessary for salvation.

Practical Applications

1. Do we thank the Lord for our daily bread?

Look at verse 23: *“...boats came from Tiberias, near the place where they ate bread after the Lord had given thanks.”* Isn’t it interesting that the Holy Spirit had John refer to the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand as **“the place where the Lord had given thanks”**? Not “the place where the Lord multiplied the bread and the fish”! No! *“After the Lord had given thanks”* emphasizes that the fact that our Lord gave thanks before the miracle was very important.

Do we thank the Lord for our daily bread? Not just for our food, but also for God’s provision for all our daily needs, which we so often take for granted – do we give thanks?

Sometimes we don't realize how much we have to be thankful for until certain things are taken away from us. For example, when was the last time you thanked the Lord for your hearing, or for your sight? We tend to take those things for granted, don't we? It's not until we begin to lose our hearing or our sight that we appreciate what we had -- and then we realize, "Hey, I never really thanked the Lord for that!" Do we thank the Lord for our "daily bread"?

Fortunately most of us are in the good habit of thanking the Lord for our literal bread, as well as our health and strength. Even in a public place, I hope we all remember to thank the Lord for our food. Let's follow our Lord's example here. And let's not just go through the motions -- let's remember to **really** be thankful! Do we thank the Lord for our daily bread?

2. Do we seek the Lord for the wrong reasons?

"Jesus answered them and said, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled'"(v26). The people were seeking the Lord for the wrong reasons. They weren't seeking Him so they could worship Him -- they just wanted Him to meet their material needs. They were seeking the Lord for the wrong reasons.

Now we might say, "We would never do that -- we are true believers!" Well, wait a minute! Let's analyze our average prayers. Think it through now -- what percentage of it is worship and praise, and what percentage of it is requests? Is it 50/50, or 5/95? And then let's analyze our requests: what percentage of our requests is for **our own wants and pleasures**? Next time you pray, check it out.

This could be convicting for some of us. Maybe it will cause some of us to reconstruct our prayer lives, so we spend a little more time in worship and praise. I was convicted about this as I prepared for this Talk, and I began to analyze my own prayers -- getting down to percentages of praise and worship vs requests.

As true believers, do we seek the Lord for the wrong reasons?