

John 6:22-29

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[0 : 00] My name is Alex Kohler, if you do not know me. I will admit, when Nathan asked me to preach, he did not tell me that I would be doing so for Providence Baptist. So, I hope I'm in the right place, but I think we'll be alright.

I'm really excited to get into our text today. Our text can be found in John chapter 6. We'll be in verses 23 through 29 today. And like I said, I'm really excited to get into it.

We are continuing our study of the book of John, and we will be coming off two amazing miracles that Jesus had performed early in the chapter, both the feeding of the 5,000 and Jesus walking on the water.

Last week, as we got to see, and as Colson put it, we got to see the storm as a red carpet for the king to declare and demonstrate his authority. I love that phrase, and I love how Jesus' disciples got to see the miracle and respond to it, and now have been miraculously transported to the other side of the sea.

Our text now picks back up the morning after that with a crowd now confused to where everyone has gone. Before getting into the text, I want to remind you of the purpose of the book of John and why he includes the things that he does.

[1 : 11] You may remember that John actually tells us directly in chapter 20, verses 30 through 31, that Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book, but these, that is the works that John is writing about, are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

So, about this, consider what John is saying. John, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is writing these specific things so that we may have life, meaning it is no accident that it includes these specific miracles and interactions.

These were not just some cool stories that John thought would be entertaining, but these are specifically and intentionally written words of Scripture and sufficient for the task of proving that Jesus is the Christ and that by believing in him we may have life.

John says that is the purpose of the whole book, it is the purpose of chapter 6, and it is the purpose of our passage today. How great it is that we get to study these intentional words.

As Nathan and Colson have both pointed out, regarding the miracles, the signs that Jesus performed were amazing, but pointed to something greater. And much like those of Jesus' day, there are those who recognize this greatness and those who do not.

[2 : 27] Today we'll get the opportunity to see how those who are present in Jesus' day to witness these events, respond to him, and how that can inform our hearts as well. So, before we begin and get into our passage, let's pray for the Lord's help.

Heavenly Father, thank you so much for the opportunity we have to open up your word and to study it this morning. I pray that you would reveal its truth to us, that you would speak through me, and that you would give me clarity of thought and mind.

I pray that as we study the responses of the crowd, that it would be both a warning and encouragement for us on how we ought to respond to the works and words of Jesus Christ.

Thank you again for these people. I pray that you would give all of us listening ears to hear, and I pray this in your name. Amen. Amen. So, John chapter 6, starting in verse 23, John writes, 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. When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, Rabbi, when did you come here?

[3 : 35] 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. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.

For on him God the Father has set his seal. Then they said to him, 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.

This passage begins what is called the bread of life discourse, where Jesus will reveal himself as the true food that leads to eternal life, and by calling those who want to be his disciples to eat his flesh and to drink his blood.

It will cause the crowd and the Jews around to grumble and dispute and take offense at how difficult a saying it is to accept. Our passage serves as a transition between the works that Jesus has been performing earlier in the chapter, That's the feeding of the 5,000, walking on water, and then the aforementioned of Jesus' teaching that come later.

I mentioned that John likes to show us the response specific people had to Jesus and his works. This passage is an encouragement on how to respond well to the works of Jesus and a warning against responding wrongly.

[4 : 49] This idea of showing two paths is very common in the Gospels, and John is no exception. John warns us to look for this dichotomy at the beginning of his book. John 1, verse 9 says, The true light which gives life to everyone was coming into the world.

He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. So the question to ask of anyone who interacts with Jesus is how did they respond to him?

So let's examine this question as we experience this narrative through the eyes of those known as the crowd. And we will do this by examining the passage with three points. Point number one, the crowd seeks Jesus.

Point number two, the crowd asks a question. And number three, the crowd responds, and then I'm putting in parentheses wrongly. But we don't know that yet. So, number one, the crowd seeks Jesus.

John tells us that 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.

[5 : 58] The news of the miracle of the feeding of 5,000 spread quickly as it drew the attention of the region. The fact that Jesus was able to feed such a large number of people for free would probably not have been kept a secret for very long.

John notes that boats from Tiberias were on the east side of the Sea of Galilee along with the crowd. This makes sense as Tiberias was an important city on the sea, so their boats being in the sea as well does not strike us as surprising.

But it is not 100% clear in the passage why all of them are there. It has been suggested that it might be because of the storm that took place earlier. Just a little bit ago, there's that storm that Jesus ended up walking on water, so maybe that forced the boats there.

Or perhaps these from Tiberias might have heard about the large crowd and so wanted to serve as some type of water taxi, bringing their friends or as a business opportunity people from one place to another. But another, and I would argue more probable reason, is this, simply the prospect for more free food.

The text itself refers to the place where the crowds currently were, that is that east side, simply as the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. So, as a result, that location would probably have attracted a lot of attention.

[7 : 11] Regardless of the exact reason for the ships being there, the crowd ultimately want to find Jesus. If you remember, we saw that in verse 15, there were even those there who wanted to come by force to take him and make him king.

So, whether their motives were some kind of hunger or fervor, they ended up traveling to the west side to Capernaum where Jesus was. Stopping on Capernaum, why is that city significant?

And that's because that would possibly be the best place to find Jesus. Matthew records for us that when Jesus began his ministry, and here's that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee, and leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali.

This might have been something that was known, perhaps not. At the end of the day, it ended up being a very logical place to look, and they do end up finding him there. Providing for us an even more specific place than just Capernaum, John records for us in verse 59 of chapter 6 that Jesus said these things, the things that we're about to read, in the synagogue as he taught at Capernaum.

And so, the ensuing conversation most likely took place there. Upon finding him, they are eager to talk. John does not record for us how many people make up the crowd, but it is reasonable to think that some of it was made up of the 5,000, which means it was likely a sizable number.

[8 : 30] And I will give them credit. A lot of effort and coordination probably went into getting all of them over to that side of the sea. Not only did they have to coordinate all the boats to get over, but then all successfully work together to find just one person.

So, in a way, they are seeking after Jesus. The question is though, how do we know if they are seeking rightly or not? Let's find out if looking at how they greet Jesus, which we'll begin our second point, and that is, the crowd asks a question.

The crowd asks a question. Because it was not clear to them how Jesus got to the other side of the sea, they ask him a decently logical question. They say, Rabbi, when did you come here?

Make sense? This initial interaction reveals much about their heart and why they wanted to see Jesus. In a sense, they are seeking after him, but they are trying to put all the pieces together.

But as Jesus himself will point out, it is not for the right reason. Taking a little bit of liberty from the other gospel accounts, we see that the 12 initially also responded in a confused manner.

[9 : 35] As Mark 6.52 says, that even the disciples did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened. It is not until they saw the work that Jesus did walking on the water that they seemed to begin to understand.

John specifically notes that they were glad to take Jesus into the boat when they saw him, and they wanted to be with him. Matthew even records that those in the boat worshipped him, saying, truly, you are the Son of God.

They had been amazed at the miracles that they had seen him perform, which led them to be in awe and worship of Christ himself. The crowd has a different response. This question they ask is not a response of worship.

Unlike the disciples, it would seem that they do not recognize any true significance in the person of Jesus. Notice one other thing in the words that they choose. By using the term rabbi, which John has already told us means teacher.

It's a very formal and respectful way to call someone. They consider him someone that they can learn from. But using this term in our passage is rather ironic because they will ultimately disagree and misunderstand his teaching.

[10 : 37] I know it's getting a little ahead, but that is what happens. Know earlier also how they wanted to make him king, but as we will find out, have their own idea of what his kingdom should be, and so have no clue what it means for Christ to actually reign.

It seems that at this point they are at the very least confused, and it is about far more than how Jesus got to the other side. At this point, let us not respond with pride considering the actions and words of the crowd with contempt, or thinking that we would have been more faithful in their situation.

Let us instead find ourselves in the crowd today not looking for ways to emulate their behavior, but rather finding regretful familiarity with their desire to seek after Jesus for something other than himself.

So Jesus responds, but interestingly, totally ignores the question. He decides not to entertain their query or expound on how he got to the other side of the sea, but instead 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.

So there it is. Jesus starts with his often used phrase, truly, truly. It marks that what follows is extremely important. Another way to say this might be, listen to this, this is important.

[11 : 52] It is both a call to the listener or reader to pay attention and of the authority of the words being spoken. It also means that what he is about to say is simply true.

It can be trusted. There's no doubt that what he says is the case. Up to this point, we might have been confused about the motives of the crowd, but that ends with Jesus' words here. So what are they ultimately seeking after?

Jesus confirms our suspicions and tells them that it is the bread. They ate their fill of the loaves but missed the significance of the sign and were impressed with the sign itself. I will say, please do not miss the amazing nature of the sign.

I know Nathan talked about it a couple weeks ago, but that Jesus was able to multiply the loaves and display his power over creation and ability to create something from pretty much nothing is incredible. What Jesus is doing is telling the crowd that the danger is seeing what he did as nothing more than an amazing catering event.

What this sign tells us about who Jesus is is far more significant than that. He tells us more about what he means as he continues to answer the crowd. He goes on. So he says, you ate your fill of loaves and then he goes on to say, do not work for the food that perishes but for the food that endures to eternal life which the Son of Man will give you for on him God the Father has set his seal.

[13 : 11] So there's a lot to unpack in that phrase so we're going to take it three at a time. We're going to start with do not work for the food that perishes but the food that endures. We'll talk about what the Son of Man will give them and then for on him God the Father has set his seal.

So, what does it mean when he says, do not work for the food that perishes but for the food that endures to eternal life? First, I want you to hear the echo from Isaiah from the passage that we got to read this morning.

It says, 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 yourself in rich food.

Incline your ear and come to me. Hear that your soul may live and I will make you an everlasting covenant my steadfast sure love for David. The crowd is simply not listening diligently.

They are spending their energy and effort and perhaps even some of their money seeking after that which ultimately will not satisfy. If they would simply listen. Jesus has talked this way before about physical nourishment and its fleeting nature during his earthly ministry.

[14 : 15] When he's talking to the woman of Samaria in John 4 he says, everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

What the crowd does not understand is that the food he provided for them is nothing but a mere representation of the true bread that Jesus can truly provide. Seeking after the food that does not perish puts eternity in our everyday lives and places Jesus at the center of our hearts as our supreme desire.

So that's that first phrase. The second one. The son of man will give to you. This bread which he will ultimately reveal as himself will not satisfy our physical hunger with a full belly but it will fill a far greater need than that.

The spiritual hunger that we have cannot be satisfied on our own. Our souls can only be satisfied by the only one who is perfectly righteous Jesus Christ himself and this gift he will give freely.

There is nothing that can be done to earn the free gift of God which is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Jesus is making it clear that whatever this food which is eternal life will lead to will be given to them as a gift and this gift cannot be earned.

[15 : 30] So that's what he will give them. And then lastly for on him God the Father has set his seal. What does that mean? The seal that the Father has given Jesus is the ability and the approval to dispense of the spiritual food to those whom he chooses satisfying the need that starving sinners like the crowd and us need.

It is the ability to grant eternal life and we find that John has told us about this already in the previous chapter. John chapter 5 starting in verse 19 says 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. The Father has given all judgment to the Son as the Father has life in himself so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself and he has given him authority to execute judgment because he is the Son of Man.

Jesus is reminding them if they didn't hear it already that he has been given the authority by the Father to give eternal life to whomever he wills. So, from here one would think that all present would fall down and worship the one who would be able to provide such an incredible gift and that they recognize that the seeking and striving after the physical bread that Jesus provided is short-sighted.

The bread he provided earlier was only a foretaste but ultimately they do not do this. How similar were we before the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit? How often are we tempted to miss the true meal as well?

[16 : 56] I do not question that just like the crowd we too would follow by responding just as the crowd does. Which brings us to our third point the crowd responds wrongly.

So, they say the crowd does not fall down to worship instead they ask a strange question. They recognize that what he says is some kind of spiritual insight they hear eternal life and know that they should work for it maybe that's some kind of Old Testament thought coming in.

Perhaps they are confused by the term Son of Man even though it is one of Jesus' favorite terms to refer to himself. Perhaps they miss the whole part about the seal and what that means. Perhaps they are like the woman at the well who misses the point of what Jesus was referring to with living water by asking him to give the water so that she won't be thirsty again.

Again, simply thinking about physical sustenance. In a crowd that big it's probably a combination of a bunch of that. So what do they ultimately ask? They ask what must we do to be doing the works of God?

They do not ask how they can get the bread that Jesus talks about even though he says that he will give it to them. They hear about the benefits of God and wonder what work must be done to get it. Much like the rich young man asking teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?

[18 : 09] Or the lawyer who stood up to put Jesus to the test saying teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? The crowd thinks that they can or need to work for this special bread.

The crowd says they are ready to meet any demand that Jesus might ask or tasks that must be completed and totally miss the fact that salvation is a gift. Jesus just told them that he will give him this food that endures to eternal life.

God gives this gift freely and is through one person, the son of man sent from God with the seal, Jesus Christ. There's one thing that it requires which Jesus will tell us in just a moment.

He responds to their question and does so in a way that is slightly short and void of any metaphor or imagery of the bread. He speaks very plainly and says, this is the work of God that you believe in him whom he has sent.

It's rather rare that he is this explicit and begs just one question. Who is the one who has been sent? And he has already alluded to it and as we will find later in the passage, it is Christ himself. To truly receive this bread of life is by grace alone through faith alone in the son of man Jesus Christ alone.

[19 : 19] John tells us in the beginning of his book, but to all who did receive him who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. Without getting into the next passage too much, something eventually does click for the crowd.

They follow Jesus' response by asking, then what sign do you do that we may see? What works do you perform? Our fathers ate man in the wilderness. Which makes me think for a moment, were they not just there the previous day and saw what he did?

I guess not. Jesus then says to them, my father gives you the bread from heaven for the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. Starts a click, they then say, sir, give us this bread always.

So Jesus says to them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. It's a little bit later that Jesus ultimately reveals that he is the true bread and that believing that he can find life in his name.

This work that Jesus is talking about, that's the work of God is to believe, takes the plural out of the question that they initially asked. The crowd was concerned about doing many works, works that might help them to earn God's favor, but Christ's answer is incredible.

[20 : 25] The work of God is to do one thing and that is to believe. Romans 3.28 reminds us, for we hold that one is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. To believe in Jesus is all that is required.

The true food is Christ himself. If we have the woman at the well and the 5,000 in mind while reading this passage, we see exactly what John is doing. We see that he's exposing the physical need for food to express a deeper spiritual need in our hearts.

He presents Christ as a solution, the nourishment that I so desperately need, and all that is required is to believe. He also shows us that the crowd has missed it.

So, what does true belief look like then? If we are to believe and that is the simple work, what does that look like? It is receiving him into our lives. It is trusting him as not only the one who can satisfy us in this life.

He does care about us. He cares about the sparrows, but ultimately preserve us for the life to come. It is worshiping him for all he has done for us in salvation, and it is obeying him as we now have the freedom to glorify God through our works.

[21 : 30] Now, the letter that James wrote reminds us that faith apart from works is dead, but don't be as the crowd and think that eternal life is by the work. Instead, these works are what result upon receiving this free gift.

At the end of the chapter, we see the responses that John records for us after the end of the Bread of Life discourse. It says, After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

So Jesus said to the twelve, Do you want to go away as well? Simon Peter answered, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. So, the question is, based on this passage, how will you respond to the works and words of Jesus?

Will it be like the crowd, confused about physical food and works, or, like his true disciples, who follow the miracles upwards to Christ and believe in him? An early church document called the Didache was a short manual believed by many to be a catechism.

The intro to that document, I think, sums up the answer to this question well, or at least presents the two options. It says, there are two ways, one of life and one of death. To think some more about responses to this question, let's take some time to consider some application.

[22 : 44] So, number one, if you are not saved, know that the gift of salvation is free. There is nothing that you can do to work, nor is there anything that you could do to earn eternal life. We have a problem so much greater than simply being hungry in a physical sense.

John records Jesus performing these signs and presenting himself as the true bread, ultimately to show that greater need. We are dead in our trespasses and sins and need a savior. So, praise be to God for giving himself as the free gift of eternal life to all who believe.

Turn away from your worthless bread that will ultimately never satisfy nor last for eternity and instead turn to the true bread of life who can save your soul. God has put his seal on Jesus, granting him authority to grant life to those who do believe.

Paul's letter to the Titus sums up this idea of faith and belief in God not being a result of works well. He says, for we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another, eating that bread that does not satisfy.

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, in that phrase is everything that Christ did. It's him coming to this earth, his earthly ministry, the work he did to die on the cross for our sins and raised again on the third day, defeating death.

[24 : 03] All of that is contained in that phrase. In that work, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness like the crowd would say, but according to his own mercy by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

God has given Jesus the authority to do that and we can accept this freely as a gift. The saying is trustworthy and I want you to insist on these things so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works.

These things are excellent and profitable for people. So all that faith results ultimately in those good works. Notice it doesn't say that because of the good works we can have that eternal life.

No. It's so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. There is a progression there. So number two, for those who are saved and those who have tasted this bread, let's live as though we have ultimately been satisfied.

Why are we so captivated by things that do not satisfy us? In regards to our salvation, let's daily take up this bread of life and remember what Christ has done for us.

[25 : 13] Let's live as though we are saved. While salvation cannot be earned by works, our salvation ought to result in works. Do not think that you can earn it by these works, but instead know that your life, if your life is not evidenced by them, you may have not actually tasted the bread of life.

Practically, the way in which we work should look different than those around us. As those who have been given the gift of eternal life and have Christ as our supreme treasure, we are working for far more than our boss or for other people.

We are working for a new master, Jesus. And so work as if you are working for him. Jesus was not calling us to cease working for our physical sustenance. We still need that.

Paul reminds us that if anyone is unwilling to work, let him not eat. We ought to instead have the best attitude, lead in a way that models Christ, follow as Christ obeyed his Father, build the best homes, care for others, or in my case, serve the best chicken.

Not because Truett told us, or I feel obligated or want to impress, or think that it will earn me something, but because we are ambassadors for Christ. Lastly, let us share this news with others.

[26 : 22] Far too many people think that they need to work harder to earn their salvation. Maybe somebody else worked for their own salvation and they can accept that. Or maybe they simply don't know of their true spiritual need.

I would talk to them like you've had a good meal. I don't know if you enjoy going to the restaurant and getting an amazing steak or whatever meal that you like, having fantastic service.

Maybe you end it with a dessert and coffee and it's just awesome. You want to tell people about it or take other people so that they can experience it with you. This is the idea that we should have with what Christ has done for us and the meal that we have tasted.

We should want to do this way more and it should inspire us to do it way more than that meal. So let's take others to show them the incredible and truly satisfying nature of the bread of life. With that, I actually was going to read a passage from Charles Spurgeon based on this, but I actually like the one in the bulletin better.

So, still Charles Spurgeon. He says, there's a tendency to think about us all to get away from Jesus and to look rather to these dreams than to the fountainhead.

[27 : 26] Why are we more taken up with the bits of glass that sparkle in the light than the sun himself? Let's pray.