

Food That Does Not Spoil

John 6:22-29

In feeding the five thousand, and in walking on the Sea of Galilee, the Lord revealed much about his identity and his power over the created order. What follows, in verses 22-71, is a passage that many people stumble over in their unbelief. It was true in Jesus' day and it is true now.

The Lord had crossed over the sea, in a miraculous way, for part of the journey. The rough threatening waters were his path, until he came near the disciples, who had rowed between three and four miles. They were, some of them at least, commercial fishermen. They knew the unpredictable character of this body of water. They may have had some anxiety from the weather conditions, but ironically it was the appearance of the Lord walking on the water that frightened them. He spoke and set their hearts at ease, then he entered the boat, and continued along with them.

The crowd that had received the benefit of the miraculous feeding began to seek Jesus, when they realized that he was no longer on their side of the water. They too crossed over, and when they found him they asked, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" He, as was often the case, did not give in to their agenda. He did not answer their question, but made a statement about their motives for seeking him. God had been willing to give miraculous signs. That should have been impetus enough for their continuing interest in the Lord. But they really wanted to find him because he had filled their stomachs.

Here is one of the great problems of democracy. People do not always vote according to noble principles. They often do vote the interest of their pocketbook, in so far as they can see it.

The Lord Jesus will reject anyone who seeks to follow him for personal advantage. Christian institutions that have been established for the best of reasons often become the haven of those who see the institution, (denominational structures etc.), as an opportunity for employment and for "professional" advancement.

The Lord exhorted them not to labor for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life. Money, sexual dalliance, an inordinate interest in clothing and appearance, intellectual pursuits, political power, and aesthetics, may all be turned into the idols of this world. Spoiled food once looked very good, but eventually it changes into something rotten. We must examine ourselves to see what our real priorities are. It is no good for Christians to say something high sounding and live in a different way. The things that are most important to us are idols, if they displace the Lord as first in our lives.

Christ began to teach them that eternal life is real, and that there is a food that can endure eternally. This food is spiritual in character and is, Christ said, the gift of the Son of Man. It does not spoil. The crowd did not hear him well. They asked him, "What must we do to be doing the works of God?"

Many years ago, I and my family were at my mother's house. We were just about to sit down to eat, when a knock came at the front door. There stood a teenager holding the literature of his religious group. I told my family to eat without me, as I expected to be a while with the young man. I asked him the question that the crowd wanted the Lord to answer. "What must we do to do the works of God?" (KJV)

The young man said, "We must believe in God, and we must do good works, and we must be baptized, and we must be good witnesses." I then asked him, "What did

Jesus say when asked that question.”

He looked at me with a bewildered look and said, “Mister, I am just fourteen years old!” My heart went out to him. I took the scriptures and showed him the answer of the Lord. “This is the work of God: that you believe in him who He has sent.” In other words, it really is a gift. Eternal life comes through believing in Christ. It is the work of Christ that saves; it is not our work. It is his death for sinners on the cross that saves.

Do you identify yourself as a Christian? Is that because you think that by your good deeds you will justify yourself before God? Or have you received the gift that Christ alone can give?

by Joe Nesom