

- I. Jesus speaks truth to the crowd about themselves and about Himself
 - A. John 6:26-29 . . . Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. [27] Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, [who is] God, has set His seal." [28] Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so 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 has sent."
 - B. Pray
- II. The crowds seek Jesus for the earthly benefits they can get from Him
 - A. As you may recall from last Sunday, we ended with vs 26, and I pointed out that Jesus did not directly answer the crowd's question about how He got back to their side of the lake. Instead, He used their question as an opening to talk about their true intentions in pursuing Him. I used His example to talk about a tactic of communication which we can use in certain situations, and always with respect, grace, and humility, to respond to a question with something other than a direct answer.
 - B. Today, we will return to vs 26, because there is one more lesson there that we would be wise to consider. As you may recall, John tells us back in vs 2 that this same crowd of people pursued Jesus to the other side of the lake, where He fed them, because of the signs he had performed.
 1. However, here in vs 26, Jesus says that they were seeking Him on this day, not because of the signs they had seen, but because He had fed them just the day before.
 2. Which raises the question: What happened between the time they pursued Jesus because of the signs they had seen, and pursuing Him on this day because He fed them as much free food as they wanted?
 - a. In other words, something happened between the first day when they pursued Jesus for more heavenly and more spiritual reasons, and this second day when they were seeking Him for more earthly, temporal, and selfish reasons.
 - b. And to help us keep an honest perspective of this crowd of people, I want to remind you that in between their first and second

seeking, they personally experienced the miracle of an all you can eat dinner, to which they responded by saying that Jesus must be the prophet (*spoken of by Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15-22*), and by wanting to make Jesus their king (John 6:15).

3. So what happened that changed their interest in Jesus from that which is heavenly and spiritual to that which is earthly and fleshly? And has this happened to you, or has it happened to others in the church that you know?
 4. I believe Jesus gives us an explanation of what happened to them, and can happen to us, in the parable He told about a sower who sowed seed that fell on four different kinds of soils.
 - a. One of those soils had thorns growing in it. Nevertheless, when the seed – *which represents the word of God* – was sown in that soil, the soil received it. But in time, the thorns – *which represent the worries of this world, the deceitfulness of wealth, the pleasures of this life, and the desire for things other than God and His righteousness* – choked out the importance of God and the truth of His word so that the priority in that person’s life changed from God, His righteousness, and His word, to the things and cares and demands of this world (Matthew 13:22; Mark 4:18-19; Luke 8:14).
 - b. In other words, though some people begin pursuing Jesus for heavenly, spiritual, and eternal reasons, those noble reasons slowly get choked out by the thorns, that is, they slowly get replaced by lessor, more earth bound, and temporal reasons.
 - c. For example, we are repeatedly faced with challenges and conflicts that need our attention. Then there are the demands of family life, work life, school and community life, friends, extended family, and even to some degree church life. And added to these are such things as the common belief that more money will give us a better life, and that earthly pleasures are a worthy source of happiness.
 5. And because none of us is immune to thorns growing in our own lives and choking out what really matters, I want to urge you to be on your guard against those things that turn your primary attention away from God and toward yourself and other things of far lessor importance.
- C. John 6:27 . . . Do not work for the food which perishes, but [work] for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.

1. To properly understand what Jesus is saying here, we must keep it within its context. So let me remind you of the context –
 - a. As you recall, John 6 begins with the story about Jesus feeding the 5,000, and here in vs 27, Jesus is talking to a number of those who He had fed the day before. And as you recall, Jesus, His disciples, and this crowd of people started on one side of the lake, went to the other side – where Jesus fed them, and returned to the first side of the lake. Jesus and His disciples used a boat. But the crowd of people walked from their side – around the lake to the other side – to get to where Jesus fed them.
 - b. Following the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus perceived they were intending to forcefully make Him their king. At this, Jesus slipped away, and the disciples got into their boat and headed back to other side of the lake. Later that evening, Jesus caught up to His disciples by walking on the water, and together they finished the trip back.
 - c. Some of those Jesus fed stayed overnight on the “feeding” side of the lake, but traveled back to their home side the next day in pursuit of Jesus. When they found Jesus, they asked when He had gotten to this side of the lake. Jesus responded by saying “*Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled*” (John 6:26).
 - d. And that is the context – a context in which reveals that this crowd of people worked hard by walking all the way from one side of the lake to the other – in pursuit of Jesus. And then they took boats back to the other side – again in pursuit of Jesus.
 - e. Now to give you an idea of how hard they had worked, the Sea of Galilee is 33 miles in circumference. It is 13 miles long and 8 miles at its widest point. Whether walking or rowing, there would be work involved in going from one side to the other.
2. After pointing out that this crowd of people had done all this work in pursuit of Him – not for heavenly and eternal reasons, but for earthly and temporal reasons, Jesus said, “*Do not work for the food which perishes, but [work] for the food which endures to eternal life.*”
 - a. The context tells us that Jesus is not speaking against going to work each day in order to earn the means to provide food, shelter, clothing, and other assorted amenities in life. Nor is He talking about putting work that addresses our spiritual and eternal well-being ahead of work that addresses our earthly and temporal well-being – as He did in Matthew 6:33.

- b. However, the larger context tells us that Jesus is saying your faith must work in order for it to be saving faith – as James does in James 2:14-26. Therefore, what Jesus is saying to this particular crowd of people in this particular context – and to us as well even though we were not there – is that if you are going to put forth a physical and intellectual effort in the pursuit of Jesus, then do not waste that effort, or do all that work to get from Him that which is earthly and temporal. Use your effort to get from Jesus that which is spiritual and eternal.
 - c. In other words, do not use your time, energy, and mental ability to pursue Jesus and believe in Jesus and seek to follow Jesus just to get the food that perishes. Instead, use those things to get the food which endures to eternal life.
 - d. God used the entire chapter of Isaiah 58 to give us a practical picture of this truth. The essence of the message in that chapter is that Israel is committing a grave sin by seeking God for earthly and temporal benefits rather than spiritual and eternal benefits. God goes on to verify their foolish sinfulness by pointing out the hypocritical differences between their religious behavior and their daily living behavior.
3. We modern day Christians may not be as crass as the Isaiah 58 Israelites, or as obviously earthly minded as those who follow the prosperity gospel. Yet we all face repeated temptations to use God for our own purposes, and to put more time and energy into seeking earthly and temporal benefits from God than heavenly, spiritual, and eternal benefits.

D. So what are we to do to make sure our time, energy, and intellectual abilities are appropriately used to gain that which is spiritual and eternal? Let me give you some examples. And I want to be clear that this list is not comprehensive, so I urge you to add your own ideas to it.

1. When you read the Bible, read it to learn as much as you can about God's character, God's ways, God's values, God's love, and what it means to live by faith in God as your primary source of security, provision, and protection.
 - a. As you read the Bible, read it to learn as much as you can about how you should think about yourself, how you should think about and what you should do about your old sinful nature and sinful ways, how you should think about and what you should do about become Christ-like in all your behavior, and how to apply in the

- most practical ways possible God's truths to your life so that you become a transformed Christian.
- b. As you read the Bible, read it to learn how you should love your neighbor, to learn how to be compassionate, understanding, patient, kind, meek, and humble toward your neighbor, to learn the extent to which you are to forgive your neighbor when he sins against you, and to learn to what extent you are to love you neighbor even when he is your enemy.
 - c. As you read your Bible, learn what God's relationship is to the Church and what your relationship ought to be to the church. Learn what you are to do to fulfill your role in the church, and what you are to do to promote the spiritual health of the church.
2. Beyond reading the Bible, there is the need to ponder or meditate on what you are reading in the Bible.
 - a. God's word is living and active. Like a double-edged sword, it has the power to pierce deep into our thoughts, desires, fears, hopes, and the intentions of our heart (Hebrews 4:12).
 - b. Because God's word is inspired, it has the ability to produce spiritual profit in us when we allow it to teach us, reprove us, correct us, and train us in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
 - c. However, reading alone will not do all this great work in us. We must repeatedly ponder and meditate on what we are reading, for this is the way to drive home the truths we have read, and to see where we are lacking and therefore need to apply those truths to ourselves, and to see the most practical application possible of each truth to everyday living.
 3. So if you wish to use your time and energy to gain from Jesus the food which endures to eternal life, read and ponder and mediate on God's word.
- E. Beyond using your time and energy to read the word of God, use it to pray for others, but also to pray for yourself and your spiritual growth toward becoming more and more like Christ.
1. For example, pray fervently and often – at least at first – for God to search you and reveal what it in your heart toward Him, toward others, toward sin, and toward righteousness. Pray that He would reveal your anxious thoughts, your unfounded fears, and your areas of distrust. Pray that He would reveal any unloving and hurtful ways in you. And pray that He would lead you in the way that is everlasting (Psalm 139:23-24).

2. Pray fervently and often that God would lead you in paths of righteousness for His names sake. Along with that prayer, ponder why it is so important for you to live righteously for His names sake, and why it would be exceedingly helpful to have Him doing this kind of leading in your life (Psalm 23:3).
 3. Pray fervently and often that God would begin and continue teaching you how to be meek and humble – like Jesus, how to have a servants mindset and serve – like Jesus, how to be patient and even long-suffering with sinners – like Jesus, how to forgive – like Jesus, how to remain godly while enduring such things as unkindness, mistreatment, false accusations, injustice, and even hostility – like Jesus, how to love anyone and everyone – like Jesus, and how to trust God to bring about a good end to whatever circumstances you face – like Jesus trusted God.
 4. Pray fervently and often that God would strengthen you with power by His Holy Spirit in your inner being so that you would live in such a way that Jesus Christ would feel at home in your heart, and that you would be able to comprehend the full meaning, intent, and application of love – toward God and man, and that you would experientially know the love Jesus Christ has for you, and how blessed you are to be so loved (Ephesians 3:16-17).
 5. Pray that God would strengthen you inwardly, spiritually, and mentally to face and deal with – in godly ways – whatever God brings or allows to come into your life (Philippians 4:13).
 6. And pray that God will fill you with the knowledge of His will and give you the necessary wisdom and understanding to apply His will in living a life that is worthy of the Lord so that you please Him in everything, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God so that you live a faithful, steadfast, patient life, filled with joy and thanksgiving to God (Colossians 1:9-12).
 7. Therefore, if you wish to gain from Jesus the food which endures to eternal life, pray often for your spiritual understanding and growth.
- F. Beyond reading and prayer, there is the work of putting off and putting on – a work that you must do – and yet it can only be done by the gracious empowerment and help of God – who has set us free from the enslaving power of sin, planted us in His kingdom, made us His children, and given us a new nature so we can become new creatures. Therefore, I am encouraging you to consider how you might pour your time and energy into the truths and ways described by the following scripture verses.

1. Because you have the promise of God dwelling with and in you, cleanse yourself from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2 Corinthians 7:1).
2. Set your mind on the things above. Put to death the members of your body that are on the earth – immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. And beyond these things, put away anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth, and do not lie to one another (Colossians 3:2-9).
3. Run the race of the Christian life in such a way that you may win (1 Corinthians 9:24). And I want to point out that the time, energy, self-discipline, and whatever other preparations are required to win the race take far more time and effort than running the race. To skimp on the preparation side of running will result in losing the race.
4. Flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart (2 Timothy 2:22).
5. Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you (James 4:7-10).
6. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things (Philippians 4:6-8).
7. So if you wish to use your time and energy to gain from Jesus the food which endures to eternal life, deal with sin and pursue righteousness according to the ways described in God's word.

III. Conclusion

- A. Now in spite of all the work we must do to gain those things that endure to eternal life, salvation is a gift, and it is God, and God alone who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the glory of His presence – blameless with great joy (John 6:27; Jude 1:24).