



More Than We Can Ask - August 2024

John 6:22-40

The next day the crowd that had stayed on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there. They also saw that Jesus had not gotten into the boat with his disciples but that his disciples had gone away alone. But some 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 neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" 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. 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." Then they said to him, "What must we do to perform the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." 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? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" 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. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always."

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away, for I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me but raise it up on the last day. This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day."

In this story, the crowds come looking for Jesus after having been (literally) fed by him. As they begin to ask him questions, Jesus instead responds to the expectations and assumptions that are *behind* their outward questions. By the end of the conversation, Jesus has begun his much larger, more hopeful, more challenging teaching that he has come not to give them any *thing*, but to be given to them and to all for the life of the world.

In his words: "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

Questions for us all:

1. In what kinds of moments do you go looking for Jesus? What do you hope to receive from him when you do?
2. Scholars have suggested that John uses "the disciples" and "the crowds"—the insiders and the outsiders—as a way of holding up a mirror to us, his readers. I invite you to ponder John's question to us: "Read the story again, and picture yourself in it. Which group do you see yourself in?"
3. Following Jesus closely means walking into uncomfortable situations. When has the loving Way of Jesus led into unexpected opportunities to sacrifice your time, money, or comfort for the good of someone else?

4. Think of a time in your life when you or your family have walked a dark and difficult road. What evidence can you now see that Jesus had gone ahead of you down that road?

5. Do you ever run to find Jesus expecting him to give you a to-do list? Why would this be our expectation?

6. Do you still ask Jesus to prove himself by what he can give? Or have we recognized and received him as the ultimate gift?

