

Misconceptions Corrected By Jesus by Mark Jarvinen

²⁴Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

²⁵When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?"

²⁶Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.

²⁷Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."

²⁸Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?"

²⁹Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

³⁰So they asked him, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? ³¹Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

³²Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

³⁴"Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread."

³⁵Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.

(John 6:24-35)

Every so often we slow down just long enough to face life's ultimate questions. **Why am I here? Where am I going?** Often it's a hardship or loss

that puts us in touch with our hunger for meaning. The sudden loss of **my mother** in December of 1992 brought me face to face with life's ultimate questions and worked to reconfirm my sense of call to the ministry. On the other hand, sometimes being spared from tragedy or calamity heightens our awareness of our hunger for meaning. For example, a salesman I knew while serving as a pastor in the east was scheduled to be on **United Flight 93** bound for San Francisco on **9/11/2001**, but changed his flight at the last minute that morning to include a stop in Kansas City, averting that horrible and deadly tragedy. This experience rocked his world, prompting him to consider what higher purpose God might have for him.

Our text opens with a crowd searching for Jesus. They were among the number who just one day earlier had taken part in Jesus' miracle feeding of over five thousand people with five small barley loaves and two fish. Why were they searching for Jesus? It was because they could see He was special. He had something extraordinary to offer them, even if they weren't sure exactly what it was. Jesus had aroused their inner hunger for meaning - what **Dr. Larry Crabb** describes in his classic book, **Inside Out**, as our human "ache." Dr. Crabb says,

"Beneath the surface of everyone's life, ... is an ache that will not go away. It can be ignored, disguised, mislabeled, or submerged by a torrent of activity, but it will not disappear. And for good reason. We were designed to enjoy a better world than this."

This ache prompted the crowd to search for Jesus on the day after his mighty miracle. **"Jesus may just be the one to lead us to a better life,"** they speculated.

The crowd found Jesus on the other side of the lake (v.25). Unflattered by their search, Jesus immediately began to teach them, seeking to clarify their misguided perceptions about His identity and purpose. In today's text Jesus corrects three misconceptions of the crowd concerning Him. People carry the same misconceptions today.

I. JESUS CORRECTS THEIR MATERIALISM. (VV. 26-27)

Jesus said to the crowd, "***You are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill***" (v. 26). Jesus perceived that the people were following a trail of breadcrumbs, and not the footsteps of the Messiah. They were looking for a gravy-train - an easy handout - not changed lives. To this motivation Jesus replied, "***Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you***" (v. 27). The bread provided in the previous day's miracle was the kind that spoils. "***Seek the bread that doesn't spoil,***" was Jesus' word to them. As people hungry for meaning, our first instinct is to feed our stomachs, to satisfy our material needs and desires; little realizing that the real emptiness lies in our souls. Only the Son of Man can provide the "***soul food***" that we need to satisfy our inner hunger.

Some time ago **an experiment was conducted with some lab mice.** The mice were caged and given easy access to water, but not food. Their food was buried deep in the sand at the bottom of their cage. By nature mice are not digging creatures. However, in their hunger they smelled the food and started digging in the sand. Each day a new supply of food was buried in the

sand, and each day the mice dug it up and ate it. Then one day, no one buried the food. It was placed in a food dish in plain sight, right next to the water dish. **BUT THE MICE KEPT ON DIGGING.** Every day, for the rest of their lives, the mice continued to dig in the sand. They couldn't stop digging, even though their food was now being provided and was easily accessible. Are we like those mice, still digging, still worrying, still chasing the almighty dollar, when what we really need in order to live is right in front of us?

And of course, if this is true of adults, the same values will be passed on to our children and youth. It's one thing to model hard work and to teach a strong work ethic to our kids, but it was **Socrates** who pointed out that it's not so much what youth are taught that influences them, as much as what they see applauded in the public assembly and the marketplace. Sadly, what many of our young see today is a society that worships material things.

II. JESUS CORRECTS THEIR SELF-SUFFICIENCY. (VV. 28 - 29)

The crowd asked Jesus, "***What must we do to do the works God requires?***" (v.28). The very question smacks of self-sufficiency. The tone emerging in the question is "***show me a mountain I can't climb, or an ocean I can't swim. God, just name it and I'll do it.***" Our human tendency is to earn favor with God by performing good works. We try to patch together a righteousness of our own making, just like Adam & Eve made clothing out of fig leaves, not only to hide their shame for disobeying God, but also to make themselves acceptable to God through their works. God's desire instead is to gift us with a robe of righteousness made possible through the sinless life and sacrificial death of His one and only Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus corrects this notion of self-sufficiency by saying: ***"The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent" (v.29).*** In other words, if we've got to use **"works language,"** the only **"work"** necessary for eternal life is to **"believe"** in Christ, which is simply to **"rest"** in the certainty that Jesus is the ultimate soul food, who alone can satisfy our inner hunger for meaning. But even the ability to believe does not originate with ourselves, it is a God-given gift. ***"For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, lest any one should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).***

Many will acknowledge that Jesus was a great teacher and an outstanding moral example, but that's not what he asks for. **He doesn't want to be appreciated or applauded, He wants to be believed. He doesn't want a fan-club, He wants to be followed.** He wants to be recognized as the one God has sent into the world to bring salvation, and acknowledged as the One worthy of making an exclusive claim on our lives. Later in John, Jesus said, ***"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through Me."*** Jesus was not saying ***"I know the way."*** He was saying something profoundly more personal, ***"I am the way"*** Jesus was not offering a recipe for a meaningful life, or steps to a better you, but a relationship that alone will satisfy one's deepest hunger.

III. JESUS CORRECTS THEIR PSEUDO-SPIRITUALITY. (VV. 30-31)

The crowd's question to Jesus was ***"What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you?" (v.30).*** It seems incredible

that they could have already forgotten the miracle of the previous day, the feeding of the 5,000. Yet for the pseudo-spiritual, those seeking spiritual experiences more than substantive truth, their sense of fulfillment lasts only as long as their most recent spiritual high.

We live in a day in which spirituality is important to people, yet for many, especially the young, it is just one element of a successful, multi-faceted life. Back in 2007, with the publishing of a groundbreaking study entitled *Unchristian*, by Kinnaman & Lyons, we learned that fewer than 1 in 10, who were at that time under age 30, considered faith to be a top priority in their lives, despite the fact that many of them had attended church during their teens. The dominant reason for this, according to Kinnaman & Lyons, was their distrust for anyone who claimed to be peddling “**absolute truth.**” Spiritual experiences, taking on a vast variety of forms, reign supreme among this younger demographic. We’ve heard how groups like Scientology and zen Buddhism, with their celebrity adherents, have fearlessly and without embarrassment, disseminated their ideologies in the public square. Similarly, varieties of New Age thought, espousing that truth is found by looking within ourselves, have elevated spirituality to new heights without the perceived ethical constraints of Christianity and other more traditional religious groups.

The crowd Jesus addressed in our text wasn’t made up of GenXers or Millennials, but they wanted a sign from a leader, like the manna their forefathers had eaten in the wilderness under Moses. Jesus reminded them that it was not Moses, but God Himself, who had provided the manna in the wilderness; and moreover, through Him, the Father had “**true bread from**

heaven to give them" (v.32). Thinking again in materialistic terms, they asked for this bread, not realizing that Jesus meant that He was the true bread from heaven. In **verse 35** Jesus gets to the point, saying:

"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."

Here Jesus claims to be the only permanent satisfaction for the human hunger for meaning. The attainment of this satisfaction would hinge exclusively on faith. Jesus would fill their spiritual hunger in an ultimate sense if they would receive him for who He was, the giver of eternal life; not just one who could satisfy their temporal needs. It is a personal relationship with Jesus, Himself, on the basis of faith, and not just blind participation in an institution bearing His name that Jesus offered. This is the Jesus that the world is still hungry to know and whose gospel message is still as poignant and powerful to effect salvation today as it was then .

Many approach faith in Christ from a ***"what have you done for me lately?"*** perspective. But understand this – in the physical realm when we eat a meal we're hungry again in a few short hours. Faith in Christ, on the other hand leaves us perpetually satisfied. Jesus said, ***"I am the bread of life."*** Our hunger for meaning is satisfied in Him. May Christ, who is the bread of life, continue to satisfy our souls, even now as He invites us to His table to participate in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. **A-men.**

