

Bible Study Guide: Week of 7-26-2021

1. Read through the passage below
2. Read my notes and commentary
3. Read the questions at the end and ponder or discuss with others

Pastor Andrew

John 6:24-35

²⁴So 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. ²⁵When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” ²⁶Jesus 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. ²⁷Do 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.”

²⁸Then they said to him, “What must we do to perform the works of God?” ²⁹Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” ³⁰So 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?” ³¹Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” ³²Then 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. ³³For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” ³⁴They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” ³⁵Jesus 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.”

²⁴So 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. ²⁵When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?”

The crowd is evidently chaotic enough in the aftermath of the feeding of the 5,000 that the people don’t initially realize Jesus slipped away from their midst. They saw the disciples leave in the one boat Jesus and his disciples had shared, but when they noticed Jesus wasn’t with them, they set out across the sea to figure out where Jesus had gone. Their question of Jesus indicates their confusion at how he was able to get away from them and get across the sea undetected. We know that Jesus himself walked across the lake during the night, but the crowd doesn’t know that.

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In typical Johannine fashion, Jesus doesn’t answer the question that was asked, but rather the one that should have been asked (see John 3—the discussion with Nicodemus—as well as John 4—the conversation with the woman at the well—for examples of this). Jesus explains that the crowd’s physical hunger rather than their spiritual hunger is what motivates them to search for Jesus. Jesus also turns the topic of the discussion toward the concept of “work.”

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The crowd picks up on this notion of “work” and asks Jesus how they are to do the work he is talking about—working for the food that endures for eternal life. They rephrase this as “the works of God.” Again, Jesus steers the conversation toward faith. In the gospel Jesus is all about the work of God. Elsewhere in the gospel Jesus claims “For this I was born and for this I came into the world—to testify to the truth.” Jesus is the presence of God. He is authorized by God (see verse 27 above—God has “set his seal” on Jesus) to do this work of drawing others to believe in him and to trust God. The people in the crowd, however, demand a further sign. Evidently feeding 5,000 people with 5 loaves and 2 fish is not enough of a sign to suit the people. They demand more, which is ironic given that

they quote Psalm 78:24 referring to Moses' cooperation with God in providing manna for the people to eat. If you read the rest of Psalm 78, though, you see why this is ironic: Psalm 78 is all about the refusal of the people to trust God during the Exodus. Here, the people demonstrate that they are not trusting Jesus and are testing him as the people tested God and Moses in the wilderness.

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Jesus offers a correction to the people's interpretation of Psalm 78. Psalm 78 is somewhat vague in terms of who is doing the action. It could be Moses or it could be God or it could be both. Jesus, at least, assumes that the people are referring to Moses and corrects them, stating that it is God who provides this "true bread." Just as in his conversation with the woman at the well when the woman asked Jesus to give her the "living water" he promised, referring to literal water, here the people ask Jesus for this heavenly bread thinking he is talking about actual food. Jesus corrects them once again, pointing them to himself as the presence of God in their midst.

Discussion/Reflection Questions:

- 1. Why do you think the crowd asks Jesus for a sign even after witnessing the feeding of the 5,000 and all of his healings?**
- 2. Why do you think the crowd is comparing Jesus with Moses?**
- 3. What do you remember about the manna in the wilderness from Exodus? (If you need a refresher, go back and read Exodus 16). How does this knowledge impact your understanding of this Gospel story?**