

John 6:22-40
July 6, 2025

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: What are possible reasons that people look for Jesus these days? [Let people engage]

Transition: First, it is my hope that people are looking for Jesus, because God tells us that “If you seek me, you will find me!” I think Jesus is delighted when people look for him.

But...are people seeking Jesus for the right reasons? Do people seek him as a “first responder” to an emergency situation? If that ultimately leads them to a saving relationship with Jesus, that’s great!

Do people want the appearance of knowing Jesus by going to church every Sunday for image management reasons? I have a family friend who attends church to look religious because it enhances her image, but when I shared the gospel with her, I could tell she wasn’t connected at all.

In today’s text, Jesus is not necessarily looking for a fan club. He is looking for people who want to be in a relationship with him and who understand how to be in an eternally secure love relationship with Him. Let’s read the text to find out what that is. Let’s begin.

BOOK:

²² The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone.

²³ Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks.

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

Jesus the Bread of Life

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

²⁶ Jesus 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.

²⁷ Do 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.”

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

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

³⁰ So they asked him, “What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?”

³¹ Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’ (Exodus 16:4; Neh. 9:15; Psalm 78:24, 25)

³² Jesus 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.

³³ For 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.”

³⁵ Then 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.

³⁶ But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe.

³⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

³⁸ For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.

³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

⁴⁰ For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What stood out to you? What questions do you have? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about man? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about God or Jesus or the Holy Spirit? [Let people engage]

Q: What is your takeaway? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

Jesus pointed out that there are two kinds of food: food for the body, which is necessary but not the most important; and food for the inner man, the spirit, which is essential. What the people needed was not food but *life*, and life is a gift. Food only *sustains* life, but Jesus *gives* eternal life.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 1, pp. 310-312)*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Jesus Teaches the Multitude (John 6:22–71)

The purpose of the sign was that He might preach the sermon. Again, it was a ministry of “grace and truth” (John 1:17). In grace, our Lord fed the hungry people; but in truth, He gave them the Word of God. They wanted the food, but they did not want the truth; and, in the end, most of them abandoned Jesus and refused to walk with Him. He lost His crowd with one sermon!

The next day began with a mystery: how did Jesus get to Capernaum? The crowd saw the disciples embark to go across the Sea of Galilee to Capernaum, and then the men were lost in the storm. The crowd also saw Jesus leave the place and go by Himself to a mountain. But the next morning, here were Jesus and His disciples *together* in Capernaum! Certainly He had not walked around the lake, and there was no evidence that He had taken another boat. Other boats had arrived, no doubt driven in by the storm; but Jesus had not been in any of them.

No doubt some of the people who had been fed simply went away to their homes, while others stayed to see what Jesus would do next. Our Lord's sermon probably began outdoors, and then the discussion moved into the synagogue (John 6:59). It would be impossible for a huge crowd to participate in the synagogue service, though the overflow could remain outside and hear what was being said.

This sermon on “the bread of life” is actually a dialogue between Christ and the people, especially the religious leaders (“the Jews”). We see four responses of the crowd to the Lord Jesus in John 6: seeking (vv. 22–40), murmuring (vv. 41–51), striving (vv. 52–59), and departing (vv. 60–71).

Seeking (vv. 22–40). The disciples may have been impressed that so many people stayed through a storm in order to seek their Master, but Jesus was not impressed. He knows the human heart. He knew that the people originally followed Him because of His miracles (John 6:2), but now their motive was to get fed! Even if they were attracted only by the miracles, at least there was still a possibility they might be saved. After all, that is where Nicodemus started (John 3:1–2). But now their interest had degenerated to the level of food.

Jesus pointed out that there are two kinds of food: food for the body, which is necessary but not the most important; and food for the inner man, the spirit, which is essential. What the people needed was not food but *life*, and life is a gift. Food only *sustains* life, but Jesus *gives* eternal life. The words of Isaiah come to mind: “Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy?” (Isa. 55:2, NASB)

The people picked up the word *labor* and misinterpreted it to mean they had to *work* for salvation. They completely missed the word *give*. Steeped in legalistic religion, they thought they had to “do something” to merit eternal life. Jesus made it clear that only one “work” was necessary—to believe on the Savior. When a person believes on Christ, he is not performing a good work that earns him salvation. There is certainly no credit in believing, for it is what God does *in response to our faith* that is important (see Eph. 2:8–10).

The crowd began by seeking Christ, but then started to seek a sign from Him. “For the Jews require a sign” (1 Cor. 1:22). The rabbis taught that, when Messiah came, He would duplicate the miracle of the manna (see Ex. 16). If Jesus was truly sent by God (see John 6:29, 38, 57), then let Him prove it by causing manna to fall from heaven. They wanted to “see and believe.” But faith that is based on signs alone, and not on the truth of the Word, can lead a person astray; for even Satan is able to perform “lying wonders” (2 Thes. 2:8–10). note also John 2:18–25; 4:48. The quotation in John 6:31 is from Psalm 78:24, a psalm that records the unbelief and rebellion of the nation of Israel.

In His reply, our Lord sought to deepen the people’s understanding of the truth. It was *God*, not Moses, who gave the manna; so they must take their eyes off Moses and focus them on God. Also, God *gave* the manna in the past, but the Father is *now giving* the true bread in the person of Jesus Christ. The past event is finished, but the present spiritual experience goes on! Then Jesus clearly identified what the bread is: He is the true Living Bread that came down from heaven. But He came, not only for Israel but for the whole world. And He came, not just to *sustain* life, but to *give* life! Seven times in this sermon, our Lord referred to His “coming down from heaven” (John 6:33, 38, 41–42, 50–51, 58), a statement that declared Him to be God. The Old Testament manna was but a type of the “true bread,” the Lord Jesus Christ.

This dialogue began with the crowd seeking Christ and then seeking a sign, but listeners soon began to seek the “true bread” that Jesus talked about. However, like the woman of Samaria, they were not ready for salvation (see John 4:15). She wanted the living water so she would not have to keep going to the well. The crowd wanted the bread so they would not have to toil to maintain life. People today still want Jesus Christ only for the benefits He is able to give.

In His reply to their impetuous request, Jesus used two key words that often appear in this sermon: *come* and *believe*. To come to Jesus means to believe on Him, and to believe on Him means to come to Him. Believing is not merely an intellectual thing, giving mental assent to some doctrine. It means to come to Christ and yield yourself to Him. At the close of His sermon, Jesus illustrated *coming* and *believing* by speaking about *eating* and *drinking*. To come to Christ and believe on Him means to receive Him within, just as you receive food and drink.

John 6:35 contains the first of seven great I AM statements recorded by John, statements that are found nowhere else in the Gospels. (For the other six, see John 8:12; 10:7–9, 11–14; 11:25–26; 14:6; 15:1, 5.) God revealed Himself to Moses by the name I AM (Jehovah) (Ex. 3:14). God is the self-existent One who “is, and ... was, and ... is to come” (Rev. 1:8). When Jesus used the name I AM, He was definitely claiming to be God.

John 6:37–40 contains Jesus’ explanation of the process of personal salvation. These are among the most profound words He ever spoke, and we cannot hope to plumb their depths completely. He explained that salvation involves both divine sovereignty and human responsibility. The Father *gives* men and women to the Son (John 6:37, 39; 17:2, 6, 9, 11–12, 24), but these men and women must *come* to Him, that is, *believe* on Him. He assured them that nobody who came to Him would ever be lost but would be raised at the last day. Even death cannot rob us of

salvation! (In regard to the “last day,” see John 6:40, 44, 54. Jesus was referring to His return and the final events that climax God’s program for mankind.)

From our human and limited perspective, we cannot see how divine sovereignty and human responsibility can work together; but from God’s perspective, there is no conflict. When a church member asked Charles Spurgeon how he reconciled these two, he replied, “I never try to reconcile friends.” It is the Father’s will that sinners be saved (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9) and that those who trust Christ be secure in their salvation. Believers receive eternal life, and Jesus can never lose them.

Blum, E. A. (1985). *John*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 294-296) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

6:22–25. **The crowd** who had been fed were still on the eastern **shore** of the sea. They saw Jesus compel **His disciples** to get into the **one boat** which was there. But since **Jesus** did not get into the boat, the crowd supposed that He had stayed in the area. After some time they **realized** He was no longer **there**. **Some boats from Tiberias landed**, so the people decided to seek Jesus in the **Capernaum** region and **got into the boats**. The people’s question, **When did You get here?** introduces His long discourse in Capernaum (v. 59). Jesus did not explain how or when He crossed the lake, for His walking on the water was a private sign for the disciples only.

6:26. **Jesus** began with the solemn words, **I tell you the truth** (cf. comments on 1:51). Jesus spoke these words four times in this discourse (6:26, 32, 47, 53). This drew attention to the importance of what He was about to teach. He rebuked them for their materialistic motivation and their lack of spiritual perception. They **saw miraculous signs**, but to them it was only an easy meal. They failed to see what it signified.

6:27. When Jesus said, **Do not work for food that spoils**, He was not condoning laziness. Rather He was saying that people should expend their efforts for what will last forever. “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). Physical **food** is short-lived but spiritual **food** leads **to eternal life**. **The Son of Man** (who has access to heaven [John 3:13]) **will give** people this spiritual food, which is ultimately Christ Himself (6:53). **God the Father** Himself authenticated Jesus’ claim that He is true heavenly “food.”

6:28. The people recognized that Jesus was saying God had a requirement for them. They would do God’s requirement if He would inform them what it was. They believed that they could please **God** and thus obtain eternal life by doing good **works** (cf. Rom. 10:2–4).

6:29. Jesus’ response to their question was a flat contradiction of their thinking. They could not please God by doing good works. There is only one **work of God**, that **is**, one thing God requires. They need to put their trust **in the One** the Father **has sent**. Because of their sin people cannot please God by doing good works for salvation (Eph. 2:8–9; Titus 3:5). God demands that people recognize their inability to save themselves and receive His gift (Rom. 6:23).

6:30–31. In response the people demanded a **miraculous sign** (*sēmeion*; cf. “Jews demand miraculous signs” [1 Cor. 1:22]). They thought God’s order is **see and believe**. But the divine order is believe and see (cf. John 11:40). They did not have faith or spiritual perception, but they understood that Jesus was proclaiming something new.

His coming was claimed as an advance over Moses. They reasoned, “If You are more than Moses, do more than Moses.” The crowd that asked for a sign from Jesus must have felt that the feeding of the 5,000 did not compare with Moses’ gift of **bread from heaven**. They remembered the divine gift of **manna** (Ex. 16; Num. 11:7). They thought Jesus’ feeding was less significant because manna fed the whole nation for 40 years. But they missed two things. First, many of the Israelites who were fed 40 years did not believe. The important thing is not the magnitude of the sign but the perception of its significance (cf. Luke 16:29–31). Second, both Moses and Jesus were authenticated by God’s signs; therefore both should be listened to and believed.

6:32. In a solemn revelation (**I tell you the truth**; cf. vv. 26, 47, 53) **Jesus** corrected their ideas in three ways. (1) The Father, **not Moses**, gave the manna. (2) The **Father**, was still giving “manna” then, not merely in the past. (3) **The true Bread from heaven** is Jesus, not the manna. Thus the supposed superiorities of Moses and his sign vanish. Manna was food for the body, and it was useful. But Jesus is God’s full provision for people in their whole existence. Jesus repeatedly said He had come down from heaven (vv. 32–33, 38, 41–42, 50–51, 58).

6:33. God is the Source of all life. The Son has life in Himself (1:4; 5:26) and He has come to give real and lasting life to people. Sin cuts them off from God, who is Life, and they die spiritually and physically. Christ has come **down from heaven** to give **life to the world**. Jesus is thus **the genuine Bread of God**.

6:34. As yet, the crowd did not perceive that Jesus is the genuine **Bread** which He had been describing. Like the woman at the well (4:15), they asked for **this** better food. And they wanted it continually (**from now on**), not like the manna which lasted for 40 years.

6:35. **I am the Bread of Life**. This corrected two more errors in their thinking: (1) The food of which He spoke refers to a Person, not a commodity. (2) And once someone is in right relationship to Jesus, he finds a satisfaction which is everlasting, not temporal. This “I am” statement is the first in a series of momentous “I am” revelations (cf. 8:12; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5). “Bread of Life” means bread which provides life. Jesus is man’s necessary “food.” In Western culture, bread is often optional, but it was an essential staple then. Jesus promised, **He who comes to Me will never go hungry, and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty**. The “nevers” are emphatic in Greek.

6:36. Jesus then rebuked the crowd for their lack of faith. They had the great privilege of seeing Him and yet they did **not believe**. Seeing does not necessarily lead to believing (cf. v. 30).

6:37. Jesus then gave the ultimate explanation of their lack of faith: **the Father** works sovereignly in people’s lives. There is an election of God which is the Father’s gift to the Son. The Son has no concern that His work will be ineffective, for the Father will enable people to come to Jesus. Jesus has confidence. But people may have confidence also. (Cf. the crippled

man's response to Jesus' question, "Do you want to get well?" [5:6–9]) One who comes to Jesus for salvation will by no means be driven **away** (cf. 6:39).

6:38–39. Jesus then repeated His claim about His heavenly origin. The reason He **came down from heaven** was **to do the will of the Father who sent Him**. The Father's **will** is **that** those whom He gives to the Son will not suffer a single loss and **all** will be raised to life in the resurrection (cf. vv. 40, 44, 54). This passage is strong in affirming the eternal security of the believer.

6:40. This verse repeats and reinforces the ideas of the previous verses. One who **looks** and **believes** on Jesus for salvation has his destiny secure. The divine decree has insured it (cf. Rom. 8:28–30). He has **eternal life** (John 6:47, 50–51, 54, 58) and **will** be raised **at the last day** (cf. vv. 39, 44, 54).

White, J. E. (1998). *John*. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman Concise Bible Commentary* (pp. 474-475). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Bread of Life (6:25–59)

After the feeding of the many thousands, it is not surprising that these same numbers sought Jesus out again. When they found Him, Jesus read their hearts and confronted them with their motive: "You are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill." Jesus then encouraged them not to devote themselves to such pursuits but rather to "food that endures to eternal life."

This eternal food is the teaching of Jesus. When asked about what works were necessary to appease God, Jesus replied in a decidedly different fashion than they anticipated. Rather than outlining a list of do's and don'ts, Jesus replied, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." Salvation is not something that is attained through human effort, but instead it is a freely given gift. The only "work" necessary is to receive the gift of God for eternal life through His Son, Jesus Christ.

The crowd then asked for a sign, as Moses gave with the manna, that Jesus was indeed the One sent from God. This revealed that their primary interest was food, attempting to goad Jesus into giving them bread in exchange for their faith.

This interchange resulted in the first of the seven "I am" statements found within the Gospel of John. Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life." The Greek language at this point is strongly emphatic, reminiscent of God's own "I am" recorded in Exodus 3:14. Jesus stated that all who come to Him in saving faith will never be driven away and that it is God's will that all should so come. Such statements did not please the Jews. Jesus was claiming to have come from heaven, and this was unacceptable for them to bestow upon one "whose father and mother we know." In reply Jesus maintained the following: first, that no one can come to the Father through Christ except as the Father wills. Second, to be in relationship with God is to be in a relationship with Jesus. Third, only the Son, Jesus, has seen the Father; Fourth, the bread of life (Jesus) is that which comes from heaven, and only by eating of that bread, given for the world, can life eternal be gained. The Jews understood this to mean that Jesus was going to give of His actual flesh for

them to eat. Jesus added to their confusion by stating that “unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.”

This verse is subject to many misinterpretations, such as thinking that it refers to the Lord’s Supper, or Eucharist. Nowhere, however, is it taught in Scripture that the taking of the Lord’s Supper is the single requirement for salvation. The sole requirement for salvation is not partaking of the elements of the Lord’s Supper but faith in Christ. So what is the flesh and blood of which Christ spoke? Clearly it is the flesh and blood He offered to the world at the moment of His death, an offering made to the world for acceptance, resulting in eternal life for those who accept His death on their behalf as an atonement for their sin.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). John 6:22-40. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

© 2025 Lee Ann Penick