

THE GIFT VERSUS THE GIVER

John 6:26-50

By Raymond White

The morning after Jesus fed the 5000, the same crowd showed up again. — for breakfast. “Wow,” they thought. “We found a guy who can make food. We want more of that.” Entitlement was really on their mind, not salvation.

John 6:26 Ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. :27 Labour not for the meat which perisheth but for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life.

Jesus was saying in other words, “You’re here for more free food, aren’t you?”

The situation gave Jesus a perfect teaching opportunity. It set up a good metaphor to teach the people about himself and the allegiance we wanted from them. But they couldn’t get their mind off the free food.

John 6:28 What shall we do that we might work the works of God?

What they want to know was how can we make food out of nothing? That was not the question Jesus wanted to hear from them.

John 6:29 This is the work of God...believe on him whom he has sent.

His point is clear: Get your mind off the gift and get your mind on the giver. Forget the food, that’s just stuff that perishes anyway. Instead, focus on me. If I can give you food, I can give you eternal life. But they were undeterred. It was the food they wanted so they argued.

John 6:30 What sign shewest thou...that we may believe? :31 Our fathers did eat manna in the desert.

How peculiar. “If you want us to believe you, show us a miracle.” But what had they just seen? If creating food out of nothing is not a miracle, then what is it? The point is, they didn’t want a convincing miracle because they didn’t want to have to believe. They wanted free food! They wanted their entitlement.

But what about the miracle of the free food that they had already seen? Oh, that doesn’t count. Why? Because that’s an old trick. Moses fed our fathers manna. That’s been done. Show us something new. This is not faith looking for confirmation, this is willful disbelief looking for justification. You fed us one night. Moses fed us for forty years. Top that! Actually, he did.

John 6:35 I am the bread of life...:49 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead. :50 This bread [me] which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and never die.

What a stunning message. He did indeed upstage Moses. True, he had fed them one night, and Moses for forty years. But they were missing the point. The manna had lasted only forty years while the bread Jesus was offering, his eternal life, was forever.

But they couldn't get off the free bread so they used his metaphor as a pretext.

John 6:41 ...they murmured...because he had said, I am the bread.

Forget the sermon, where's the food? They were getting hostile.

Gifts are supposed to endure the recipient to the giver. They don't always. Sometimes we think that gifts are owed to us, and sometimes we love the gift but hate the giver. God give us good things: life, health, money, church, family. Which of those things do you love more than God? God wants you to know that these are love gifts, unearned and unowed. But there is one gift that God has given that is better than all the rest, the one he really wants us to be most grateful for.

Romans 3:24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Justification, redemption, eternal salvation, and all by grace, all for free. Now that's a love gift worth having. But we do need to love the giver more than the gift.