

Reflection on John 6:24-35

Greetings,

This passage of scripture begins with a question the crowd asks Jesus when they find him on the other side of the lake: “Rabbi, when did you get here?”. In the verses preceding this passage of scripture we see that the crowd saw the disciples leaving in a boat without Jesus. In asking this question I imagine they are wondering how Jesus managed to get away without them noticing and when did he leave? So the question they are asking is not ‘when’ as much as ‘how’? Considering this is a question that Jesus ignores and is one that anyone reading the gospel would know has already been answered in verses 16 to 21 of this chapter, it is interesting that the question is left in.

As you reflect while you read this perhaps it is a question to think on yourself, how did you come to be where you are today? Maybe in this reflecting you might want to think over the course of your life, and the particular times and events which impacted your journey of faith. Perhaps you may only wish to reflect on a short time, where or when have you seen God at work in your life over the last week or two?

When Jesus responds to the crowd that have come looking for him, rather than answering the aforementioned question he reprimands them by telling them that the only reason they have come looking for him is not because of any miracle or sign he has performed but because he fed them. They were only interested in having their physical rather than their spiritual needs met. Jesus is calling the crowd to see past their purely physical needs to their spiritual needs, to believe in and follow him. In response to this call the crowd demand he performs a sign that would show him to be a prophet like Moses, who fed the Israelites when they were in exile. There are two things here. Firstly, their focus has not changed - they are still purely seeking physical nourishment rather than the greater spiritual nourishment on offer. Secondly, they are viewing manna from heaven (Exodus 16:4) as a miracle performed by Moses. So Jesus corrects them by pointing out that the manna was provided by God not Moses. It also had to be given daily in order to sustain them, it was not the true bread from heaven. Jesus reveals to them that it is he who is the true bread from heaven.

When I think of my own story of faith I realise that there have been many times when I have been so focused on what I thought was my immediate need that I did not notice where God had been at work. One particular example of this is when I was recovering from open heart surgery. After the operation I got a condition called compartment syndrome in my right leg. This is when insufficient oxygen gets to the limb and the muscle essentially rots away. It left me needing to use a walking stick which I still use today. However, when I was recovering I desperately wanted to experience some big miraculous healing of the leg and when this did not happen I thought God had abandoned me. However, later when I was reflecting on that time I realised that I had missed where God had been present and I had missed opportunities for greater spiritual healing that I desperately needed as well as opportunities to grow deeper in my relationship with God. I learnt that I needed to take the time to look to see where God is at work rather than wanting God to respond to what I believed were my needs. In doing this I believe I experienced what Jesus meant when he said, "I am the bread of life. Whoever believes in me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." By focusing more on my relationship with Jesus have grown in my faith and while I may not have been healed in the way I had wanted I have grown stronger physically and spiritually.

As I come to the end of this reflection I want to revisit the question I asked at the start, "how did you come to where you are today? In what ways has Jesus been at work in your life? Where has he brought healing or drawn you into a deeper relationship with him?". Perhaps like me you need to try to see past what you perceive as your most immediate need and see Jesus who is waiting to provide the real sustenance that comes with putting your faith in him to provide not just for what you feel you need, but what God knows you need.

God bless

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