

August 4, 2024

St. John 6:22-35:

## **We Must Endure**

- I. The Direction
- II. It's Work
- III. Real Bread and Water

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Dear Friends in Christ,

Jim Elliott was a missionary who, in 1956, was killed by the Auca people of eastern Ecuador while trying to make contact with them. His wife, Elizabeth, would ultimately spend two years as a missionary to the tribe members who killed him. She would write:

We cannot capitulate to the spirit of the age, or accommodate ourselves to what the public is said to want. "The public" is notoriously fickle; if we could ascertain what it wants this week, it would still be impossible to predict what it might want next week.

Well, look where the spirit of the age has taken and is taking everything. As this world moves to its end, we can't look the other way and ignore Jesus' Word: "For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man (Mt.24:37)." In the Genesis account of the days of Noah we're told, "Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence (Gen.6:11)." After the flood God said, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth (Gn.8:21)." The days before His return will be filled with violence and corruption. We don't know how much more this will intensify. You see, what was before the flood is.

Everybody is scrambling everywhere for something. And with the scrambling is a loss of direction and stability. God doesn't fit in the picture. "Who needs the Lord? We want what we want!" And look where that's taking everything! It is precisely what Jesus said: "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be (Mt.24:21)." It wasn't over at the time of Christ. It isn't over now. Not yet. You see . . .

## WE MUST ENDURE

### I. The Direction

Our text begins: "On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea ...(v.22)." So, what was the day before the next day? The feeding of the five thousand.

"...when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.

"When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, 'Rabbi, when did you come here?' Jesus answered them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves (vv.22-26).'"

Please listen to these words from Psalm 44: "If we had forgotten the name of our God or spread out our hands to a foreign god, would not God discover this? For he knows the secrets of the heart (vv.20,21)." Do we ever, honestly, give much thought to that? *He knows the secrets of the heart.* Our fallen nature has a funny way of thinking and doing funny things that are not funny. We sometimes reason in ways that we know will not be acceptable to God; that strange and twisted notion that we can actually hide something from Him. After all, we can't see him, so He can't see us - so we think.

Again, Jesus says, "...you are seeking me, not because you saw signs." - that is, not because they really wanted to know that Jesus is God in the flesh who came to secure forgiveness of sin and eternal life! That wasn't the issue for these people, any more than it is the issue for most of the church today. If we back up to the verses following the miraculous feeding of the five thousand we're told:

"When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, 'This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!'

"Perceiving then they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself."

I know it sounds like a commercial, but the flesh screams, "It's my life, and I want the good life now!!" They wanted a "bread king" to feed their stomachs. Jesus said . . .

## II. It's Work

"Do not work for the food that perishes, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal." Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent (vv.27-29)."

It was around 23 years ago when I was given a worship folder from a church in St Louis. I was stunned by one of the Communion songs. I say "songs" because it wasn't a hymn. A hymn teaches, praises and glorifies the Lord. Here are the lyrics:

"Hold on just a little while longer. Hold on just a little while longer. Hold on just a little while longer everything will be alright.

"Pray just a little while longer. Pray just a little while longer. Pray just a little while longer everything will be alright.

"Fight on just a little while longer. Fight on just a little while longer. Fight on just a little while longer everything will be alright.

There, does that encourage you and make you feel better? Does that comfort you and answer your questions and concerns? You can do it! But look; it doesn't end there:

So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat (vv.30,31).'

Nothing has changed. All they were listening to was the voice of what their flesh desired. It's exactly what Jesus had stated: "...you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves (v.26)." The stuff of this world reigns. That's who Jesus is for most; "Dr." Jesus who would heal all our earthly pain and fill our earthly lives with stuff that makes us happy. Nothing changes. Not really. For most, it's the craving for the bread and water of this world and not the Bread of Heaven and the Living Water of Christ that gives eternal life...Jesus.

## III. Real Bread and Water

Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.' they said to him, 'Sir, give us this bread always.'

"Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst (vv.32-35)'"

So, what's it going to be? Furiously laboring for the bread and water of this world that quickly passes away, or the Bread and Water that gives...Heaven!? It's rather lengthy, but please listen to these words from C.F.W. Walther:

"A true picture of most so-called Christians is sketched here (referring to our text). For how many baptized Christians are not truly earnest in things pertaining to salvation? God's Word says, 'But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things (our daily bread - what we need) will be added to you' (Matthew 6:33), and 'But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into

temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction...(I Tim.6:8-10.)”

“What do most so-called Christians do? Are they grieved over their sins? Do they seek to recognize them more vividly and deeply? Do they fight against them? Despite their flesh, are they busy and diligent in watching, praying, and hearing and reading God’s Word so as to sweep all sins from their hearts and lives and to grow in sanctification? Not at all...

“What are all such people really seeking in the kingdom of Christ? Nothing except luxury and good days...” (C.F.W. Walther, God Grant It, Concordia Publishing House, Saint Louis, 2006, pp.297-299).

We all see our weaknesses, our sin. While I have certain conflict with features of his theology, I like the following from Vance Havner, which I’ve quoted in the past:

There are a lot of questions the Bible doesn’t answer about the Hereafter. But I think one reason is illustrated by the story of a boy sitting down to eat a bowl of spinach when there’s chocolate cake at the end of the table. He’s going to have a rough time of eating the spinach when his eyes are on the cake. And if the Lord had explained everything to us about what’s to come, I think we’d have a rough time with our spinach down here.

Well, the fact is, God did give us insights into Heaven. The more we feed on Christ’s teachings and love through Word and Sacrament, the more we see how corrupt and violent this world really is. It’s clear, isn’t it? “Work “for food that endures to eternal life.” It’s simple: We Must Endure!

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott