

St. John 6:24-35

Dear Friends in Christ,

I recently re-visited a statement Gene Veith made twelve years ago. He wrote:

Human nature is so deformed by sin that our very capacity to reason, to discern, and to act on truth is distorted. Our problem is deeper than mere ignorance of the facts, a mental lapse, or a sincere misunderstanding. We are dead in our sin. (Veith, *Loving God With All Your Mind*, Crossway Books, 2003, p. 77)

Deformed. *Human nature is so deformed*, Veith writes. I can imagine what thoughts travel through your minds. Webster's first definition of deformed is, "to spoil the form of." We always come back to the reality, don't we? The original form of human nature has been spoiled by sin. It's twisted in every way.

It is the deformed nature that leads us into deformed thinking about God. So, here we go . . .

WHICH BREAD AND WATER?

I. "I've Got a Secret!"

Please carefully hear this 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." (vss. 20, 21) Powerful statement, isn't it? And it's the last words which should be a wake-up call for every child of God. "He knows the secrets of the heart."

How many times have you heard or said, "I've got a secret!"? Well, we might from others, but not from God. And just to prove the deformed nature of human thinking, how many times has the thought quickly passed through our minds, "Since I can't see God, I'll do this?" Or rationalized something with that pathetic, whiney preface, "Well, I know this is wrong..." or, "I know I shouldn't say this, or do this, or think this... but..."? Come on, now, how many times?

"So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the 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.'" (vss. 24-26)

What do you want from Jesus? What do you expect from Jesus? What are the secrets of your heart? I'll tell you something: We have no secrets from the Lord, any more than these people in our text. They were interested in Jesus because He could fill their stomachs. He could do and give what they wanted. So they thought!

And look what happens. Examine what Jesus said to them. Examine what Jesus is saying to us: "'Do not work for food that perishes, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.'" (vs. 27)

"'Do not work for food that perishes.'" That is, do not work for the bread of this world. He isn't saying you shouldn't work to eat and take care of life in this world. He's talking about the most important thing in your life; and it isn't what you can get out of this world. But, then, you knew that.

And then there's that degree of self-importance, isn't there? We crave the prizes and events of this world first and foremost, and then see our self-importance as deserving of these things. Does the name Saxon N. White Kessinger ring a bell? Back in 1959 he wrote a poem which is familiar to many of you. It's entitled, "There Is No Indispensable Man." Its been in this pulpit before. I think about it quite often. I ask you to listen to it once again:

Sometimes when you feel that your going	Take a bucket and fill it with water,
Would leave an unfillable hole,	Put your hand in it up to the wrist,
Just follow these simple instructions	Pull it out and the hole that's remaining
And see how they humble your soul;	Is a measure of how you will be missed.

Paul puts our course of life in the Lord in perspective with this: "For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members." (Rom. 7:22,23) Such a battle, isn't it?

II. What to Do?

"Do not work for food that perishes, but for the 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." 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.'" (vss. 27-31)

It's always the same slice of baloney! "What must we do?" "What sign do you do, that we may see and believe you?" And this: "What work do you perform?" "Hey, Jesus, where's the miracle (the sign) that will convince us?" What!? How could they miss it? Jesus already said, "you are seeking me, not because you saw signs (miracles) but because you ate your fill of the loaves." Come on! It's what I get out of this world that rules! The world wants a "party Jesus". The "fill me up and make me happy now", Jesus.

And it's always the, "What must we do?" approach. And Jesus answers. We cannot do anything. Everything depends on what Christ has done and does for us. Here are the words: "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." (vs. 29) To believe. To trust. To know that Christ entered this world and our lives to take away the judgment that stood against us because of our sin. To know that He is always there in Word and Sacrament announcing forgiveness and impressing upon the gift - not of a wonderful life here - but the gift of eternal life.

Eternal life is the issue. But, unfortunately, it isn't a priority for most. And, if you don't buy that, consider this: Of the untold thousands who clamored after Jesus prior to His crucifixion can you guesstimate how many were there at Calvary truly mourning for Him? I'll give you an insight: a handful of sad women and cowardly Apostles. And when confronted with the truth of sin, the truth of Scripture and bearing a Cross for Christ, what is the cry of the 21st century church? Well, it's "Forget it!" It's too divisive. It's too upsetting. People will turn away. You know, just as they did with Jesus.

III. So, Which Bread?

"Jesus then 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.'" (vss. 32-35)

So, it's the old question: "Which is it going to be; the bread of this world - or - the Bread of Heaven?" The bread that's baked today and quickly consumed? Or, the Bread that feeds and cleanses us from sin and grants eternal life. Easy questions to answer, aren't they? Or...are they?

I've always enjoyed the following from Vance Havner:

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 a bowl of spinach when there's a chocolate cake at the end of the table. He's going to have a rough time eating that spinach when his eyes are on the cake. And if the Lord had explained everything to us about what's ours to come, I think we'd have a rough time with our spinach down here.

The fact is, the Lord did give us insights into Heaven. They're described in Scripture. Considering what everything in this world has always been and how, what it is, is intensifying - considering what really exists under the pretty facades of life, Heaven is the perfect and only place.

So, I'll put those familiar words of Jesus in front of us again: "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst." And these words Jesus spoke of Himself to the woman at the well: "...whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (Jn. 4:14)

And so, the question, ***Which Bread and Water?***

Amen.

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St. John 6:24-35: “Which Bread and Water?”

I. “I’ve Got a Secret!”

II. What to Do?

III. So, Which Bread?

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