

It's been bread, bread, bread, bread, bread – for five weeks and now we've finally come to the end of the sixth chapter of John's gospel. Although at times it has felt like John was just writing the same thing again and again, there are some interesting twists here at the end. It has to do with *what you're looking for* and *where you might find it*.

At the start of the chapter, there were people following Jesus. They had seen him heal people who were sick and they wanted to see what else he could do. They wanted to experience more miracles and they were looking to Jesus to be the miracle maker. Unfortunately, when they started following him, they didn't think it through. They followed him out into the middle of nowhere and when supper time approached, there was no place to get any food. The disciples looked to Jesus to give them some help but he told them to figure it out for themselves. "You feed them! You go look for food!"

They only find one small lunch but Jesus is able to take that meal and create a miracle that was far grander than anyone had expected. After all the leftovers were cleaned up from feeding several thousand people, Jesus tried to get away from it all. He crossed the sea of Galilee to the other side, but the people managed to find him anyway. They were looking for Jesus and they figured out where to find him. But Jesus knew that they weren't looking for him as much as they were looking for more bread.

They were looking for physical, tangible bread. They were looking for someone like Moses, who could hook them up with a continuing source of physical nourishment. And Jesus lets them know that they were looking in the right place, but they were looking for the wrong thing. HE is the Bread of Life. He is the manna from heaven which will give them life and give it abundantly.

Which just seemed to confuse people. They were looking for a great prophet but instead they found the son of Mary and Joseph. They were looking for miracle bread and they get preaching and teaching. And so there's heckling and questions. Up until now, when folks have objected to what Jesus has said, John refers to the speakers as "they" or "the Jews." They've been nameless strangers who don't seem to be fully convinced about what Jesus has been saying or at least they're in a position waiting to be convinced. But in verse 60, things change.

Now the people who are struggling with Jesus are some of his disciples. They aren't "the twelve," but they're committed followers. People who have promised to follow their teacher wherever he goes. They've been in on the happenings. They were there to help gather up the leftover bread and fish. They were some of the folks who were rescued by Jesus when their boat got caught in a storm. And as fellow disciples, they feel more like "us" than "them." They're not the scoffers or the haters. They aren't the hecklers or the hangers-on. They're disciples. They've made a commitment. They look at Jesus and they see someone sent by God.

Yet now, in today's gospel, they're grumbling. Grumbling just like those "other" folks back in verse 41. But unlike those other folks, the disciples aren't confused about what Jesus is saying. They understand him – they get him- but they can't believe what Jesus has said. They aren't prepared to keep following a teacher who has said such strange and difficult things. I mean, we've talked about this. Some of what Jesus said was really hard. Of course, Jesus, being Jesus, didn't back off from what he'd been saying. He didn't soften it up so that the disciples would stick around. Instead he pushes the point. Sharpens it, by saying that if they can't handle this, what will they do

when things get more dramatic, when he ascends? In John's gospel when he talks about Jesus ascending he means being raised on the cross. What will they do when Jesus is crucified?

Jesus calls them to see things differently. Stop looking at life from a sensible, flesh and bones perspective. If they were going to believe in Jesus and be his disciples, then they would have to stop relying on what they could see with their eyes. They were going to have to look deeper. The blessed life – the eternal life – wasn't going to come in the way they had expected.

Luther gets at this same point in the Small Catechism. In his explanation of the Apostles Creed he wrote, "I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy, and kept me in the true faith..."

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What we have today is a story that makes it clear that believing and unbelief aren't just about insiders and outsiders. It isn't them on the outside and us in the inner circle. Among the disciples there are those who are struggling, who cannot seem to believe what Jesus has to tell them and so they walk away. So where did Peter and the others who stuck around, get their faith? Or to put it in another way, what made them different from all those who gave up on Jesus and went home? It's a tricky question to ask, because we know that Peter wasn't always faithful. He had his flaws and so did the others, but what kept them hanging around? They had doubts and fears. They could be cocky and prideful – and even conceited about their connection to Jesus. And then when Jesus needed them the most, their courage seemed to run out and they deserted him.

The twelve weren't smarter than the other disciples. They weren't more faithful or more courageous. They weren't any better than the ones who went home that day, and I suspect, they weren't any better or worse than any of us. So what is it that set them apart? Why did they stay when others were leaving?

One thing and it's right there in the text.

Jesus asked the twelve, "Do you want to leave? Do you want to go away?" And Peter replied, "Lord, where should we go? Who should we look for? You have the words of eternal life. You're the guy!"

Why should we go anywhere else? You see, Peter, knew where to look. That's what makes him and the rest of the twelve different. It's not that they are so incredibly clever. It's not that they have great gifts of intuition or a deeper understanding of scripture. It's not where they came from or who they know or where they've been. It isn't even their faith. They simply knew where to look.

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As you probably know, we moved recently. We're getting settled in but there are still lots of boxes to unpack. There are still things to find. Important things.

When we moved in April, it took me much too long to figure out where the box was that had some basic dishes and cooking utensils. After a while I just gave up and we bought some dishes at the Goodwill store. This time, I cannot find the drill and I have stubbornly refused to try and put up curtain rods until I can find the drill, which of course means that we haven't hung any curtains. And so getting dressed means sneaking around the house and dodging all the windows. I keep asking Matt to look for the drill and he keeps asking me if I've found it yet. Honestly, if I knew where to look I would go there and rip that box wide open, but I don't know where to look.

There have been other things, that when asked, I have been able to walk across the room and quickly lay my hands on the missing object. I found a box of Katie's books yesterday, in under two minutes. I knew where to look! The drill continues to escape me. If only I knew where to look!

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Peter, knew where to look. In order to find the words of eternal life, to find what he needed the most, he knew that he only needed to look to Jesus. The same is true for us. It may seem trickier since we cannot see the flesh and blood Jesus, but Christ would argue, that it is to our advantage that he is with the Father, because instead of depending on a flesh and blood Jesus we have been blessed with the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit grants us an incredible accessibility to God. The answer to the question of where to look is **Jesus**. But in order to get to that question, you have to know what you're looking for!

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The drill, my very nice drill with two rechargeable batteries and all kinds of screwdriver bits and such, is in a black case about so big. I'd recognize it from across the room, but it's inside a box and I am not altogether certain what the box looks like. It could be a medium box or a large one. A brown Home Depot box or a white one that the movers brought along. I thought I knew what I was looking for – but I'm not as certain as I was a week ago. It's been almost five months since I saw the drill, and I'm just not sure what I'm looking for.

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So what are you looking for? Not in your garage or basement, but in your life? Not everyone can answer that question or if they answer, it isn't complete. The people who followed Jesus all through the sixth chapter of John vary so much in what they were looking for: a miracle worker, a prophet, a benefactor, a teacher, a leader, a king. And of course there were those who just wanted someone to give them another free lunch. What are you looking for?

In Jesus, we can find so much but at the heart of it all is the truth that Jesus is the source of our life. Our real life. Our true life. Our eternal life. But I do believe, just like all those in our gospel today, if we go looking for Jesus we are bound to find something more.

Lots of Christians look to God for eternal life. That's the thing that brings them in the door and that's what keeps them coming. They believe they have to work for it. They have to earn it, but that's not what we teach in this church. Eternal life is a gift at baptism. It is taken care of and there is nothing more that you need to do. So what else are you looking for?

We look to God for care and comfort. For courage and strength. We come to God in hope and trepidation. In sorrow and in joy. And if we are honest, we look for God to save us. To keep us safe. To bring us safely home. We look to Jesus for forgiveness and healing. We seek him out for good news on the bad days. We keep our ears and eyes open to recognize again and again the promises of new life.

Luther once wrote, "Although [God] is present in all creatures, and I might find him in stone, in fire, in water, or even in a rope, for he certainly is there, yet he does not wish that I seek him there apart from the Word, and [thereby] cast myself into the fire or the water, or hang myself on the rope. He is present everywhere, but does not wish that you grope for him everywhere. Grope, rather, where the Word is, and there you will lay hold of him in the right way" (LW 36:342).

"Grove where the Word is." That's where Luther tells us to look. Look for Christ the Word in scripture, in baptism, in the bread and the wine. Look for him in the conversation and consolation of

the brothers and sisters and I guarantee you that you will find more than you hoped to find. Christ is our constant companion. That's what people seem to miss.

Do you remember the story of the thief at the cross? He is hanging next to Jesus receiving the punishment that he deserved. He'd done whatever he pleased for all his life, but at the end he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And Jesus promises, "today you will be with me in paradise." So why bother with doing the right thing? Why get involved in church or Bible study? Why not do whatever you want for as long as you can because at the end, you can ask for forgiveness and Jesus will let you in the door?

What the thief didn't get, was a lifelong relationship with Jesus. His life was less because he missed out on having a significant connection with God.

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Keep looking every day. Look for Jesus. Look in the Word and you will find the words of eternal life. And you are bound to find something more.