

Stage IV. The Great Galilean Ministry

I. Jesus' Third Tour of Galilee and its Aftermath

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #114

7. Jesus Begins the "Bread of Life" Discourse in Capernaum (#114)

JN 6.22-29

22 ^JOn the next day (after the 5000 had been fed) the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake (at Bethsaida) realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone. 23 Then some boats that came from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks.

24 Once the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

25 When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?"

26 Jesus answered, *"Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill."*

27 *"I command you to stop working for the kind of food that spoils, but work for food that endures forever--that is eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For God the Father has stamped his seal of approval on him."*

28 Then they asked him, "What must we do to continually engage in the works that God requires?"

29 Jesus answered, *"This is the work of God: to keep on believing in the one he has sent."*

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *the words of Jesus are italicized in red*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

	CONTEXT DIGEST
Location	The Synagogue in Capernaum
Timeline	Early April (Month 26)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage IV: The Great Galilean Ministry
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Title	7. Jesus Begins the "Bread of Life" Discourse in Capernaum

COMMENT:

On the morning after Jesus had fed the 5000 near Bethsaida, the multitude was surprised not to find Jesus there anymore. They remembered that he had sent his disciples off in the boat the night before, but remained on land himself. They were unaware that he had walked across the Sea of Galilee in the stormy night to Gennesaret. How could they anticipated such a thing?

So the crowd headed off to Capernaum in search of Jesus, knowing that it was his headquarters, and therefore the most likely place for him to rejoin his disciples. By the the time the people arrived there in the late afternoon,

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Jesus had finished ministering in Gennesaret and returned to Capernaum himself. The "Bread of Life" Discourse in John Ch. 6 then occurred in the large Synagogue in Capernaum.

This crucial teaching took the form of a question and answer session with Jesus. The essential points of Jesus' instruction were preserved by John, but Jesus actually said much more than what was written down. It only takes several minutes to read JN 6.25-59 out loud. The actual dialogue probably took one or two hours. (All of the teachings of Jesus recorded in the gospels are summaries of his key points, rather than transcripts of everything he said.)

"*Repent and believe*" were the twin commands with which Jesus had begun his preaching in Galilee (DJN #49; MK 1.4-15). In today's reading Jesus once again declared that believing in him is the most important requirement God makes of us. (6.29). This restated the "***I command that it be done to you according to your faith***" principle that the Synoptic writers had been emphasizing in their narrative the second and third Tours of Jesus.

The verb "believe" is used about 100 times in the gospel of John, which is close to half of the usage in the entire New Testament. Verse 6.29 is one of the most important sayings of Jesus' entire ministry about the indispensable role of faith in a relationship with God. He could not have been more clear. Let's dig a bit deeper here.

The crowd had asked Jesus how they could be continually be active in doing the works that God required of them. The Law gave them over 613 specific commands to obey. In the 1400 years since Moses, generation upon generation of Rabbis had developed their "traditions"-- thousands of additional applications of the covenant commandments. These had gradually become functionally equal in authority with the original 613 commands. In addition, the Pharisees claimed to be constantly doing God's works in everything they pursued and taught. It had become confusing to the common people...what was most important to God, out of everything they had been taught?

Jesus came back with one clear answer. Believing in him--all the time--is what God requires. Everything comes down to believing in Jesus. It is impossible to love, worship, follow, obey, repent, or learn--to do any of the essential things necessary for relating to God in an appropriate way--without believing in who God is, on the basis of what he has done to reveal himself to us in Christ.

"*Without faith it is impossible to please God, because everyone who comes to him must believe that he exist and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*" Heb. 11.6 On the other hand, "*everything that is not an expression of faith is sin.*" Rom. 14.23B Faith is what connects us to God; love is what relates to him in an appropriate way.

Jesus is the ultimate, unique self-revelation of God, because he is God in human flesh. HE is the way God has chosen to reveal himself to us, so that we can have the kind of faith that never stops believing in him. Believing in Jesus then becomes the originating source for everything else we do in our relationship with him. This is the key that opens up all the other infinite possibilities of our relationship with God.

Jesus created another great play on words with his key phrase: "***This is the work of God: to keep on believing in the one he has sent.***" Since believing is the commitment of our entire being--body, mind, heart, will, strength, soul and spirit--to Jesus as our LORD and Savior, it is a "work," because it is something we DO. Our faith must keep on depending on Jesus as an ongoing, permanent way of living, so it is a "work" we keep on doing.

However, forgiveness, eternal life, the gift of the Holy Spirit indwelling us, fellowship with the Trinity and one another--these and every other aspect of God's fulness that is given to us in Christ are true gifts that cannot be earned, they can only be received with gratitude. WE must make the decision to believe--that is our "work" that God cannot do in our place--no one can do it for us. GOD's work is then to do everything else for us, in us, and through us by His Spirit.

APPLICATION

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All of God's work in our life is designed to birth and multiply our ability to believe in Jesus, like the entire universe exploded out of nothing in the first moment of creation. All we bring to God is our faith, and he creates everything else.

What aspect of your faith are you struggling with the most right now?

The answer to our struggle always comes from seeing Jesus with our spiritual eyes, as the Holy Spirit enables us to see him in his Word. When we see Jesus, our faith naturally follows his example.

What portion of his Word can you go to today, as fuel for your faith? How will you pray for the Holy Spirit's power to enable you to see Jesus afresh, in the way you need right now?