

In Nomine Iesu

Laetare, the Fourth Sunday in Lent 2025 **Hide and Seek ... and Find – John 6:24-36**

“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. Do not work for the 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.”’ 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. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.’”

Grace be to you from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who is the Bread of Life come down from heaven. Dear fellow redeemed in Christ:

The Bible often presents us with things that we do not understand, at least at first. God does the same in our lives, presenting us with things we have trouble understanding. In the case of God’s word, the best thing to do is to keep listening, keep reading, keep seeking, until the Bible itself clears up your lack of understanding. And this may not happen for a while. Be patient. Wait on God. He wants you to come to the knowledge of the truth, as His word says. God’s word always contains within itself the answers to the questions it raises in our minds and hearts. In the case of the things God allows to come into our lives, the best thing to do is much the same. Keep listening to God’s word. Be patient. Wait on Him to make things clear. In time all your questions will be answered. This is the way of God. It is the way that leads to peace in our soul, and to the sure and certain hope of eternal life.

I

In today’s Gospel there is a puzzle, in fact two puzzles, one for the 5000 men Jesus had just fed with five loaves and two small fish in the wilderness near the Sea of Galilee, and one for us today. As we just heard, each of the 5000 ate their fill, and still there were twelve baskets full of leftovers. Naturally, the 5000 were more than a little impressed. They quickly made the Old Testament connection they should have made. Jesus reminded them of Moses. He had to be the “prophet like Moses” that God said He would send to His people. (Deuteronomy 18:15) John records the fact of their recognition, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.” (John 6:14) Then John notes, “When Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone. Here is the puzzle for us: If the 5000 men recognized Jesus as the promised prophet like Moses, why did they want to make Him a king?”

There was also a puzzle for those who had eaten of the loaves and fish. When they last saw Jesus, He was heading away from the Sea of Galilee toward the mountain where they first found Him after following Him on foot. There He fed the 5000 miraculously. Night had fallen, and Jesus had not returned to the shore. His disciples had waited for Him by a boat that was on the shore. But then some of the 5000 saw that the disciples began to make preparations for leaving. What surprised them was that the disciples not only were leaving without Jesus, but leaving in the dark to cross over the lake to Capernaum. When morning came, their boat was not in sight, only some other boats just beginning to come out onto the lake from the town of Tiberias not far away. Some of the remaining crowd hailed the boats from Tiberias. They persuaded those in the boats to take them back to Capernaum to look for Jesus. When they finally got to Capernaum they did find Him, and asked Him what puzzled them, "Rabbi," they said, "**when** did You come here?" (v. 25) Of course, what they really meant was, "**How** did You get here?"

They wanted an answer to what puzzled them. But He didn't answer their question, not right away. Instead, as He often did, and so often does with us, Jesus seemed to change the subject. "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him." (vv. 26-27) His answer looks like a reprimand, even though they had come to the right conclusion. John indicated this by telling us that they said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world." They had seen Jesus, noted the miracle of the loaves and fish, and concluded that He was the One like Moses, the promised One. So why did He respond to them as He did? We are missing something here. Something is eluding us. Something was eluding them.

Let us take the simpler of the two puzzles, the one that preoccupied those of the 5000 who followed Him back across the lake. How had Jesus gotten to Capernaum before they did? His disciples knew the answer. John tells us what happened: "It was already dark, and Jesus had not come to them. Then the sea arose because a great wind was blowing. So when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near the boat; and they were afraid." (John 6:17-19) What do you think was on the minds of the disciples? Yes, this One was like Moses. Yet, in another way He was very different. Moses had told Israel in the wilderness that God would send them bread, and God did so. The reason Moses knew this was because God told Him. Jesus, on the other hand, just took the bread He had in hand, five small barley loaves, and blessed them, multiplied them, gave them to the people, gave more than they could eat. Moses told the people that God would part the sea for them to pass through when he, Moses, lifted his arms. God did so. Jesus, on the other hand, said nothing to anyone. He just walked across the water, storm and all. Moses told the children of Israel, "This is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat." (Exodus 16:15) Jesus told those who came looking for Him because He did remind them of Moses, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." (v. 35)

II

You see, the real problem is not that the people failed to take note of the fact that Jesus clearly, obviously evoked the memory of Moses in their hearts and minds. They **did note** that, as John unquestionably observed. No, the real problem was not that they didn't understand that Jesus was the One like Moses, but that they didn't understand who Moses was in the first place. In this they were like their fathers in the

wilderness, who complained to, argued with, and rebelled against, Moses. They did not grasp that Moses truly spoke for God. God chose him to shepherd Israel to the Promised Land. The words Moses spoke were the words of God, not his own. The sea Moses led Israel through was a shadow of a coming reality. The bread Moses gave to Israel to eat was a shadow of something much greater to come. The tabernacle Moses instructed Israel to build according to the pattern God gave him on Mt. Sinai was a picture of what someone else was going to do. The practices of the tabernacle Moses established for Israel were shadows of things to come. The Promised Land to which Moses led them was just an earthly representation of the true home God had prepared for those who were His by faith. And Moses himself was only a shadow of Him who was to come, a picture God held before Israel to show them what the Messiah, the Christ, would look like when He walked among them. Moses was the sign pointing to Jesus. Jesus is the reality. He is the Messiah, the promised Savior of Israel, and of all the nations of the earth.

Imagine how those who pursued Jesus back across the lake to Capernaum reacted when later they got the full story out of His disciples as to how Jesus got back to Capernaum so fast. Imagine their faces as they were told how he had come walking calmly through the waves the disciples struggled to row against. Yes, the disciples' story solved the puzzle in their minds: "Rabbi, when did You come here?" But it would have left them with the second one, the puzzle that we too struggle with.

The people of Jesus day knew more than we tend to credit for. On the other hand, they were so much like us. They knew the Messiah was to be a Prophet like Moses. They knew the emphasis was not so much on **Prophet** as **like Moses**. And like Moses the Messiah would shepherd Israel, but to what? To political freedom? To freedom from hunger, thirst and disease? They knew that He would be not only prophet-like, but also priest-like and king-like, just like Moses himself. That is why they tried to seize Him and make Him king by force. But He would not allow that. They must also accept Him as Prophet and Priest, as the One who spoke for God and the One who would make the sacrifice to atone for their sins. He must be all three for us, as we learned in the Catechism, or He is not the Messiah, not the Savior God promised.

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"Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because of the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled." (v. 26) Here is the solution to everyone's puzzle when it comes to this Jesus. The signs Jesus did were not pointing back to Moses. No, the signs Moses did pointed to Jesus. Signs point the way; that is why they are called signs. Moses' signs, and Moses himself, pointed to Him who would come into the world to be the Shepherd who'd lead us out of death to life. Moses' signs pointed to the greater reality of the Christ that had to be believed because it could not be seen. Jesus is the Prophet who speaks of heavenly things, the Priest who makes the one sacrifice for the sins of all people, the King whose kingdom is not of this world. And there you will find the answer to all our questions and concerns for all things in life, perhaps not right away. But He is the Good Shepherd sent to guide you to life, eternal life. Faith finds this Jesus, your Savior, in God's word. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria