

John: 6:22–27

From Catena Aurea:

22. The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples were gone away alone;

23. (Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks:)

24. When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus.

25. And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither?

26. Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.

27. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. xliii. 2) Our Lord, though He did not actually shew Himself to the multitude walking on the sea, yet gave them the opportunity of inferring what had taken place; The day following, the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto His disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples were gone away alone. What was this but to suspect that He had walked across the sea, on His going away? For He could not have gone over in a ship, as there was only one there, that in which His disciples had entered; and He had not gone in with them.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xxv. 8) Knowledge of the miracle was conveyed to them indirectly. Other ships had come to the place where they had eaten bread; in these they went after Him; Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias, nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks. When

the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither His disciples, they also look shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. xliii. 1) Yet after so great a miracle, they did not ask Him how He had passed over, or shew any concern about it: as appears from what follows; And when they had found Him on the other side of the sea, they said unto Him, Rabbi, when earnest Thou hither? Except we say that this when meant how. And observe their lightness of mind. After saying, This is that Prophet, and wishing to take Him by force to make Him king, when they find Him, nothing of the kind is thought of.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xxv. 8) So He Who had fled to the mountain, mixes and converses with the multitude. Only just now they would have kept Him, and made Him king. But after the sacrament of the miracle, He begins to discourse, and fills their souls with His word, whose bodies He had satisfied with bread.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. xliv. 1) Kindness and lenity are not always expedient. To the indolent or insensible disciple the spur must be applied; and this the Son of God does. For when the multitude comes with soft speeches, Rabbi, when earnest Thou hither? He shews them that He did not desire the honour that cometh from man, by the severity of His answer, which both exposes the motive on which they acted, and rebukes it. Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek Me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xxv. 10) As if He said, Ye seek Me to satisfy the flesh, not the spirit.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. xliv. 1) After the rebuke, however, He proceeds to teach them: Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life; meaning, Ye seek for temporal food, whereas I only fed your bodies, that ye might seek the more diligently for that food, which is not temporary, but contains eternal life.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xxv. 10) Under the figure of food He alludes to Himself. Ye seek Me, He saith, for the sake of something else; seek Me for My own sake.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. xliv. 1.) But, inasmuch as some who wish to live in sloth, pervert this precept, Labour not, &c. it is well to notice what Paul says, Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Ephes. 4:28) And he himself too, when he resided with Aquila and Priscilla at Corinth, worked with his hand. By saying, Labour not for the meat which perisheth, our Lord does not mean to tell us to be idle; but to work, and give alms. This is that meat which perisheth not; to labour for the meat which perisheth, is to be

devoted to the interests of this life. Our Lord saw that the multitude had no thought of believing, and only wished to fill their bellies, without working; and this He justly called the meat which perisheth.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xxv. 10) As He told the woman of Samaria above, If thou knewest Who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water. (c. 4) So He says here, Which the Son of man shall give unto you.

HILARY. (viii. de Trin. c. 44) A seal throws out a perfect impression of the stamp, at the same time that it takes in that impression. This is not a perfect illustration of the Divine nativity: for sealing supposes matter, different kinds of matter, the impression of harder upon softer. Yet He who was God Only-Begotten, and the Son of man only by the Sacrament of our salvation, makes use of it to express the Father's fulness as stamped upon Himself. He wishes to shew the Jews He has the power of giving the eternal meat, because He contained in Himself the fulness of God.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. xliv. 1) Or sealed, i. e. sent Him for this purpose, viz. to bring us food; or, sealed, was revealed the Gospel by means of His witness.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xxv. 10) How many there are who seek Jesus, only to gain some temporary benefit. One man has a matter of business, in which he wants the assistance of the clergy; another is oppressed by a more powerful neighbour, and flies to the Church for refuge: Jesus is scarcely ever sought for Jesus' sake.

From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:

6:22–24 People Were Looking for Jesus

Opportunity for the Crowd to Infer a Miracle.

Chrysostom: Why didn't he enter the ship? Because his intention was to make the miracle greater and more openly reveal to them his Godhead.... The day following, the people who had stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there except the one that his disciples entered. They also saw that Jesus had not gone with his disciples into the boat but that his disciples were alone when they left. And why is John so exact about this? Why didn't he simply say that the multitude had crossed over on the next day? He wants to teach us that Jesus allowed the multitudes, if not openly, at least indirectly to infer what had taken place.... What else could they do but suspect that he had crossed the sea on foot?

For he could not have gone over in a ship since there was only one ship there—that in which his disciples had entered. Homilies on the Gospel of John 43.1.

A Greater Miracle Than That of Moses.

Chrysostom: The Jews, guided by Moses, passed over the Red Sea, but that case is widely different. Moses did everything with prayer and as a servant. Christ does this with absolute power. There when the south wind blew, the water yielded so as to allow them to pass over on dry land, but here the miracle is greater. For the sea retained its proper nature and in this way carried its Lord upon its surface, thus testifying to the Scripture that says, “Who walks on the sea as on pavement.” Homilies on the Gospel of John 43.2.

6:25 Rabbi, When Did You Come Here?

The Crowd Forgets About Making Jesus King.

Chrysostom: After such a great miracle, the crowd does not ask Jesus how he had crossed over or how he had arrived there. In fact, they do not seem to be concerned about it at all. They ask him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?” but what they are really asking is “How did you get here?” And see how shallow they are. After noting that he was “that prophet” and trying to take him by force to make him king, they do nothing of the sort when they finally do find him. Homilies on the Gospel of John 43.1–2.

Bread for the Soul.

Augustine: So he who had fled to the mountain mixes and converses with the multitude. Only a little while before they would have kept him and made him king.... But after the sacrament of the miracle, he begins to teach ... and fills their souls with his word whose bodies he had just satisfied with bread—provided they take it in. And if they do not, let that be taken up which they do not receive so that the fragments may not be lost. Tractates on the Gospel of John 25.9–10.

6:26 Looking for Bread

Jesus’ Reproach.

Chrysostom: And when he was about to enter into stubborn and disobedient Capernaum, he worked the miracle of the loaves because he wanted to soften their disobedience, not only by what took place within

the city but also by those [miracles] done outside the city. For this should have been enough to soften even the hardest [heart] of stone, as is evidenced in the multitudes who flocked to that city [because of the miracles]. And yet their hearts are calloused, looking again for food for the body, which is why Jesus reproaches them. Homilies on the Gospel of John 43.2.

Satisfying the Flesh Instead of the Spirit.

Augustine: It is as if he said, "You seek me to satisfy the flesh, not the Spirit." How many seek Jesus for no other objective than to get some kind of temporal benefit! One has a business that has run into problems, and he seeks the intercession of the clergy; another is oppressed by someone more powerful than himself, and he flies to the church. Another desires intervention with someone over whom he has little influence. One person wants this, and another person wants that. The church is filled with these kinds of people! Jesus is scarcely sought after for his own sake.... Here too he says, you seek me for something else; seek me for my own sake. He insinuates the truth that he himself is that food ... "that endures to eternal life." Tractates on the Gospel of John 25.10.

6:27a The Eternal Food

Do Not Be Nailed to the Things of This Life.

Chrysostom: To "take no thought" does not mean "not to work" but "not to be nailed to the things of this life." In other words, do not worry about tomorrow's comfort; in fact, consider it superfluous. There are those who do no work and yet lay up treasures for tomorrow. There are also others who do work and yet are careful for nothing. Carefulness and work are not the same thing. People do not work because they trust in their work but so that they may give to the person who is in need. Homilies on the Gospel of John 44.1.

Temporal Food Should Lead to Eternal Food.

Chrysostom: I fed your bodies, he says, so that after this you might seek that other food that endures, which nourishes the soul. But you run right back to that food that is temporal. Therefore you do not understand that I lead you not to this imperfect food but to that which nourishes not the body but the soul. Homilies on the Gospel of John 44.1.

6:27b The Father's Seal

The Son Is the Entire Imprint of the Father.

Hilary of Poitiers: It is the nature of a seal to exhibit the whole form of the figure graven on it and that an impression taken from it reproduces it in every respect. And since it receives the whole of that which is impressed, it displays also in itself entirely whatever has been impressed on it. Yet this comparison is not adequate to exemplify the divine birth, because seals presuppose matter, difference of nature and an act of impression where the likeness of stronger natures is impressed on things of a more yielding nature.... What God had sealed should display in itself none other than the form of the God who sealed it.... As far as his being in the form of God by virtue of God's seal on him, he still remained God. But inasmuch as he was to take the form of a servant and become obedient unto death, not grasping at his equality with God, he emptied himself through obedience to take the form of a slave. And he emptied himself of the form of God, that is, of that in which he was equal with God—not that he regarded his equality with God as any encroachment—although he was in the form of God and equal with God and sealed by God as God. On the Trinity 8.44–45.

Through Christ We Can Receive the Divine Seal.

Cyril of Alexandria: The countenance of God the Father is the Son who is the imprint of God. But the light of God is the grace that passes into creation through the Spirit, by which we are refashioned to God through faith. We receive through God, as with a seal, the being conformed to his Son. Commentary on the Gospel of John 3.5.

The Mark of Perfection and Love.

Ambrose: [Christ] is our seal, which is the mark of perfection and of love because the Father, loving the Son, set his seal on him. Isaac, or the Soul 8.75.