

## John: 6:24–33

### 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. xlili. 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. xlv. 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.

6:28–34

28. Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?

29. Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

30. They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?

31. Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

32. Then said Jesus unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.

33. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

34. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xlv. 1) But they said this, not that they might learn, and do them, but to obtain from Him another exhibition of His bounty.

**THEOPHYLACT.** Christ, though He saw it would not avail, yet for the good of others afterwards, answered their question; and shewed them, or rather the whole world, what was the work of God: Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxv. in Joan) He does not say, That ye believe Him, but, that ye believe on Him. For the devils believed Him, and did not believe on Him; and we believe Paul, but do not believe on Paul. To believe on Him is believing to love, believing to honour Him, believing to go unto Him, and be made members incorporate of His Body. The faith, which God requires of us, is that which worketh by love. Faith indeed is distinguished from works by the Apostle, who says, That man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. (Rom. 3:28) But the works indeed which appear good, without faith in Christ, are not really so, not being referred to that end, which makes them good. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth (Rom. 10:4). And therefore our Lord would not separate faith from works, but said that faith itself was the doing the work of God; He saith not, This is your work, but, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him: in order that he that glorieth might glory in the Lord.

**AUGUSTINE.** (xxv. 12) To eat then that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, is to believe on Him. Why dost thou make ready thy tooth and thy belly? Only believe, and thou hast eaten already. As He called on them to believe, they still asked for miracles whereby to believe; They said therefore unto Him, What sign shewest Thou then, that we may see and believe Thee? What dost Thou work?

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xlv. 1) Nothing can be more unreasonable than their asking for another miracle, as if none had been given already. And they do not even leave the choice of the miracle to our Lord; but would oblige Him to give them just that sign, which was given to their fathers: Our fathers did eat manna in the desert.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xlv. 1) Whereas many miracles were performed in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the desert, they remembered this one the best of any. Such is the force of appetite. They do not mention this miracle as the work either of God, or of Moses, in order to avoid raising Him on the one hand to an equality with God, or lowering Him on the other by a comparison with Moses; but they take a middle ground, only saying, Our fathers did eat manna in the desert.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxv. s. 12) Or thus; Our Lord sets Himself above Moses, who did not dare to say that He gave the meat which perisheth not. The multitude therefore remembering what Moses had done, and wishing for some greater miracle, say, as it were, Thou promisest the meat which perisheth not, and doest not works equal to those Moses did. He gave us not barley loaves, but manna from heaven.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xxv. 1) Our Lord might have replied, that He had done miracles greater than Moses: but it was not the time for such a declaration. One thing He desired, viz. to bring them to taste the spiritual meat: then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. Did not the manna come from heaven? True, but in what sense did it? The same in which the birds are called, the birds of heaven; and just as it is said in the Psalm, The Lord thundered out of heaven. (Ps. 17) He calls it the true bread, not because the miracle of the manna was false, but because it was the figure, not the reality. He does not say too, Moses gave it you not, but I: but He puts God for Moses, Himself for the manna.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxv. 13.) As if He said, That manna was the type of this food, of which I just now spoke; and which all my miracles refer to. You like my miracles, you despise what is signified by them. This bread which God gives, and which this manna represented, is the Lord Jesus Christ, as we read next, For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

**THEOPHYLACT.** He calls Himself the true bread, because the only-begotten Son of God, made man, was principally signified by the manna. For manna means literally, what is this? The Israelites were astonished at first on finding it, and asked one another what it was. And the Son of God, made man, is in an especial sense this mysterious manna, which we ask about, saying, What is this? How can the Son of God be the Son of man? How can one person consist of two natures?

**THEOPHYLACT.** But this bread, being essentially life, (for He is the Son of the living Father,) in quickening all things, does but what is natural to Him to do. For as natural bread supports our weak flesh, so Christ, by the operations of the Spirit, gives life to the soul; and even incorruption to the body, (for at the resurrection the body will be made incorruptible.) Wherefore He says, that He giveth life unto the world.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xlv. 1) Not only to the Jews, but to the whole world. The multitude, however, still attached a low meaning to His words: Then said they unto Him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. They say, Give us this bread, not, Ask Thy Father to give it us: whereas He had said that His Father gave this bread.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xv. 13) As the woman of Samaria, when our Lord told her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall never thirst, thought He meant natural water, and said, Sir, give me this water, that she might never be in want of it again: in the same way these say, Give us this bread, which refreshes, supports, and fails not.

### **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.

## **6:28–29 The Work of God**

### **Faith in God's Sealed Son.**

Hilary of Poitiers: In setting forth the mystery of his incarnation and his Godhead, our Lord has also uttered the teaching of our faith and hope that we should work not for that food that perishes but that which abides forever; that we should remember that this food of eternity is given to us by the Son of man as sealed by God the Father; that we should know that this is the work of God: even faith in him whom he has sent. And who is it whom the Father has sent? Even he whom the Father has sealed. And who is he whom the Father has sealed? In truth, the Son of man, even he who gives the food of eternal life. On the Trinity 8.42.

### **This Faith Is the Work of God.**

Augustine: Why do you make ready your teeth and stomach? Believe, and you have eaten. Faith is, indeed, distinguished from works, as the apostle says, “that a person is justified by faith without works.” And there are works that seem to be good ... because they are not referred to that end from which they are good.

“For the end of the law is Christ, unto justice to everyone who believes.” Therefore, he did not wish to separate faith from work, but he said that faith itself is a work. For this is the faith that works by love. He did not say, “This is your work” but “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent,” so that he who takes glory may take glory in the Lord. Tractates on the Gospel of John 25.12.1–2.

### **6:30 Looking for a Sign**

#### **They Ask for Yet Another Miracle.**

Chrysostom: There is nothing worse, nothing more shameful, than gluttony, which clouds the judgment and reduces the soul to satisfying appetites.... For instance, nothing can be more unreasonable than their asking for another miracle, as if none had been given already. And they do not even leave the choice of the miracle to our Lord but would oblige him to give them just that sign that was given to their ancestors: “Our fathers ate manna in the desert.” ... There were many miracles performed in Egypt, at the Red Sea and in the desert, and yet they remembered this one the best of any. Such is the force of appetite.... They do not mention this miracle as the work either of God or of Moses, in order to avoid raising Jesus on the one hand to an equality with God or lowering him on the other by a comparison with Moses. Rather, they take the middle ground, only saying, “Our fathers ate manna in the desert.” Homilies on the Gospel of John 45.1.

### **6:31–32 The True Bread from Heaven**

#### **Jesus Gradually Reveals Himself As the Bread of Life.**

Chrysostom: He calls this the “true bread,” not because the miracle of the manna was false but because it was a type and not the very truth itself. But in mentioning Moses, Jesus does not compare himself with him, for the Jews did not as yet prefer him to Moses, of whom they still had a higher opinion. So that after saying, “Moses did not give,” he does not say “I give” but says that the Father, and not Moses, gives. When they heard this, the people replied, “Give us this bread to eat.” They still thought that it was something material, and they yet expected to satisfy their appetites, and so they quickly ran to him. And what does Christ do? Leading them on little by little, he says, “The bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” Homilies on the Gospel of John 45.1.

### **Getting Them Accustomed to His Bread and Wine.**

Ephrem the Syrian: From a little bread, our Lord made an abundance of bread in the midst of the desert, and in Cana he turned water into wine. At first he set out to give instruction to their mouths about his bread and wine, until the time came for him to give them his blood and his body also. He gave them the taste of a superabundance of transitory bread and wine in order to give them an eager desire for the superabundance of his living body and blood. He gave them these lesser things without price, so that they might know that this gift of his, of highest value, was free. He gave to them freely those things that they were able to purchase from him at a price. He therefore did not sell to them anything that they were able to buy, so that they might know that there was no fee he required from them for that which they did not have; for they were able to pay the price of his bread and wine, but they could not pay the price of his body and blood. It was in this way that he not only gave to us freely, but he was even enticing us as well; for he gave these lesser things freely to captivate us to come and receive this of highest value, which is without price. These lesser things that he gave of bread and wine delighted the mouth; that [highest gift] of body and blood brings aid to the mind. He captivated us with these things, which bring pleasure to the palate, in order to draw us to that which brings life to [our] souls. For this reason, he hid the sweetness in the wine he made, so that they might know what treasure is hidden in his life-giving blood. Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron 12.1.

### **6:33 The Bread of God Gives Life**

#### **The Manna Foreshadowed the True Bread.**

Cyril of Alexandria: Imagine Christ saying something like this: "You foolishly suppose that the manna is 'the bread from heaven,' since it merely fed the people of Israel in the wilderness while there were countless other nations throughout the world. You suppose that God wanted to demonstrate his loving kindness so narrowly as to give food to only one people?... Let no one think," says Christ, "that the manna was truly the bread from heaven; but one should rather choose that which is clearly able to feed and to completely give life to the whole world." ... The only begotten of God the Father is the true manna, the bread from heaven, given to all rational creatures by God the Father. Commentary on the Gospel of John 3.6.