Our Daily Bread University

Philip Yancey Devotional

Food that Endures

John 6:22-71

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. . . . This is the bread that came down from heaven. Our forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever. (John 6:54, 58)

All four Gospels include an account of the feeding of the 5000, but John adds the most detail. He describes the effect of the miracle on the ordinary people who saw it. At first, dazzled by the miracle, they tried to crown Jesus king. Characteristically, he slipped away, but the persistent crowd commandeered a few boats and sailed across a lake in pursuit.

The next day when the crowds caught up with him, Jesus met them with a blunt warning, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you."

That response shows why Jesus distrusted sensation-seeking crowds: They cared far more for physical spectacle than for spiritual truth. And what happened next certainly bears out his suspicion. As he was interpreting the spiritual meaning of the miracle, all the enthusiasm of the previous day melted away. The crowd grew downright restless when he openly avowed his true identity as the one sent from God. They could not reconcile such exalted claims ("I have come down from heaven.") with their knowledge that he was a local man, whose mother and father they knew.

Jesus used the miracle they had seen firsthand as a way of introducing his topic of the bread of life (his words were later applied to the Lord's Supper). But in the end the crowd—who had proof of Jesus' supernatural power digesting in their bellies—abandoned him, unbelieving. Many of his disciples turned back too, never to follow him again.

Life Question: Why did the crowd take offense at Jesus? Why do people take offense at him today?