

A few years ago eight workers at a Nebraska meat packing plant hit the jackpot. They split the largest lottery prize in history, 365 million dollars. It was front-page news. Their responses to questions at a press conference were priceless. One of the winners, Quang Dao, a Vietnamese immigrant said, "This is a great country." Mike Terpstra, a 47-year-old single man is a little more philosophical. He said, "Everybody has dreams. Buy an island. Buy an airplane. In reality, I'm not a fan of flying and I don't like water." Another winner, referring to his three-month old baby said, "She's going to be happy for the rest of her life." Right? We are often fooled into believing that the source of our happiness can be found on this planet in spite of a mountain of evidence to the contrary.

The history of lottery winners reads more like a nightmare than a fairy tale. A few years ago William "Bud" Post won \$16.2 million in the Pennsylvania lottery. He now lives on Social Security. "I wish it never happened. It was totally a nightmare," says Post. A former girlfriend successfully sued him for a share of his winnings. A brother was arrested for hiring a hit man to kill him, in order to inherit a share of the loot. Other siblings pestered him until he agreed to invest in a car business and a restaurant in Sarasota, Fla., two ventures that failed and further strained his relationships with his siblings. Post even spent time in jail for firing a gun over the head of a bill collector. Within a year, he was \$1 million in debt. Post admitted he was both careless and foolish, trying to please his family. He eventually declared bankruptcy. Now he lives quietly on \$450 a month and food stamps. "I'm tired, I'm over 65 years old, and I just had a serious operation for a heart aneurysm. Lotteries don't mean _____ to me," says Post.

The only thing worse than not getting what you want in life is getting what you want only to find that it isn't really what you wanted! There is still something missing. You are still hungry. I don't play the lottery, not because I am morally opposed to it it's just that the only people who can enjoy it are those who are really bad at math. But I have experienced a few wins over the course of my life. I have had a dream or two come true. I have also known the disappointment of getting what I wanted only to find it is not really what I wanted. Every unfulfilled desire reminds me that nothing on this earth can satisfy the longing in my soul. But is there any hope to find that satisfaction in this life? Where do you turn when everything you've always wanted just isn't enough?

There are a lot of questions about God that will remain unanswered. God's majesty, holiness, power, and knowledge are beyond comprehension. This truth should comfort us. We do not want a manageable deity. But the God who reveals Himself to us in the Bible wants to have a personal relationship with us. He is the only true source of satisfaction. That raises the question, "How can an infinite, holy God have a relationship with His flawed and finite creatures? The answer is found in John 6.

God came down from heaven in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the primary means by which we come to know, love, and enjoy God. The only way we can have any access to God, any sight of God, any knowledge of God, is in and through the God-man, Jesus Christ. Jesus makes theology possible; he makes worship possible; he makes communion with God possible; and he makes heaven on earth possible. Apart from Christ there is no possibility of a personal relationship with God.

So let's see what Jesus says about our search for the source of satisfaction.

Our search begins with a journey of desire... vv. 22-26. Jesus has just miraculously fed 5,000 people. The people are so impressed they want to make him king...v. 15. Politicians are notorious for empty promises. Jesus could deliver the goods. The crowd had a purely materialistic notion of what the kingdom of God was about. Jesus challenged their superficial desires.

We often confuse our wants and our needs. We say we need money but what we really need is security. We want a mate but what we really need is companionship. We think we need a promotion but what we really want is significance. Our superficial wants reveal much deeper needs. We are like the person who discovers a crack in the wall of their home. They tape and texture and paint over the cracks and they come back. Eventually the homeowner discovers that the problem is not in the wall but in the foundation. We are restless because we have not discovered the source of our true satisfaction.

Our search is not rewarded by human effort... vv. 27-29. The question in v. 28 is based on the common assumption that the harder we work the better our chances that God will give us what we want. After all, doesn't the Bible say, "God helps those who help themselves?" No it doesn't. The Bible says v. 29...Even in the O.T. the prophets spoke of the free gift of the bread of life.

Isaiah 55:1-2 "Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost. "Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And delight yourself in abundance."

The offer of a satisfying life that requires no effort sounds too good to be true. How can we be sure?

Our search is a search for certainty... vv. 30-31. Don't you just love this question, "What sign will you give?" just after Jesus feeds 5,000 people with a little boy's lunch? But I know people like this. For some, it doesn't matter how much evidence you give them they remain unconvinced.

We crave certainty. That is why John emphasizes seven "signs." If you believe the Bible at all you won't have any problems believing these signs. Once you get past Genesis 1:1 the rest is easy. If God can create the universe in six days, providing lunch for a few thousand is child's play. Yet the people remained unconvinced. Some skeptic in the crowd must have said, "Sure Jesus fed 5,000 but Moses fed a nation; Jesus did it once; Moses did it for 40 years; Jesus multiplied regular bread, Moses gave the people bread from heaven." They seem to be saying that unless Jesus feeds the whole nation of Israel the way Moses was able to do it (Ex. 16:11-36), they would not believe. It's ironic that

the O.T. verse they choose to quote is Ps. 78:24, a psalm about the graciousness of God in the face of Israel's rebellion.

Our search is satisfied by Jesus - the Bread of Life...vv. 32-35. The manna God provided was only a temporary solution to their problem. God provided this manna as a shadow of the reality to come. Jesus is the TRUE bread that came out of heaven to satisfy man's deepest hunger. The manna in the desert didn't come from Moses, it came from God and that bread is still available ("still gives," present tense).

A personal relationship with God is possible through an intimate relationship with Jesus. 48-58. Jesus uses an enigmatic statement in v. 51. He uses eating to illustrate how we can develop an intimate relationship with Him. As Jesus, the Master Teacher, does so often, He uses the natural to explain supernatural. We require food to live. God made humans to run on fuel called food. When we don't get it we experience hunger and thirst. When we do get it the food is converted into energy and life. We don't observe the process, we don't really understand how it works, but we know that without eating we will die. Furthermore, when we are hungry and sit down to a good meal we often experience a glorious sense of satisfaction. "Barriga llena, coarazon contento."

Jesus' analogy is useful to anyone who wants to know God by having a personal relationship with Jesus. Do you partake of Jesus as often as you partake of food? If you eat three meals a day and do a little snacking in between, do you feed on the word of God that much? What if you used meal times (or even the lack of a meal – that's called fasting) to focus your thoughts on the Bread of Life? Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him." (Jn. 6:56)

At the end of this chapter we read, "many of His disciples turned back and walked with Him no more." They followed Jesus for a while but they weren't getting what they wanted. They were asking the wrong questions

The political activists asked Jesus, can you set us free?

The materialists asked Jesus, can you feed us again?

The legalists asked Jesus, what exactly do I have to do to get into heaven?

The sensationalists asked Jesus, can you do another miracle for us?

Peter asked, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." (Jn 6:68-69).

How about you? What do you REALLY want? Whatever it is, it cannot fill the longing in your soul. That hole can only be filled by the Bread of Life.