

Why are you seeking Jesus? What is it that you hope to find? Are you looking for Jesus because of who he is, because he is the Son of Man? Or are you looking for Jesus because of what you hope he can do for you? How you answer that question says something about your heart. So let us examine ourselves today, then, as we consider our Gospel reading.

Because in John chapter 6, right before our reading, Jesus performs a very great miracle. He feeds five thousand men and many women and children besides with five loaves and two fish, multiplying that food in order to show to them and to us that he is God, that he cares for his people. And this miracle was so great, Christians, that he filled up twelve baskets with the leftovers. He didn't give them just exactly what they needed. He gave them far more than they needed, so that there was an abundance. And the people in that crowd knew that Jesus had performed a very great miracle. They knew that he was someone great, someone who could do great things. And they thought they needed a great man in that moment. They wanted someone who would lead them into victory, someone who would raise up the entire nation to fight against the Romans and set up a kingdom which would never come to an end. They wanted a king, and they were going to make Jesus into that king, someone to fix all of their problems. But Jesus didn't come to be that kind of king. Jesus was not going to lead a revolt against Rome. And so Jesus left them, and he went off by himself alone, sending his disciples across the Sea of Galilee.

And on the next day, John tells us in our reading, the crowd came looking for him. They didn't know where he went. Jesus had fed the five thousand somewhere near the city of Tiberias, which is on the west side of the Sea of Galilee. And when they couldn't find him there, they went looking for him, getting into their boats, going out and trying to find him wherever he might be. And so they went north to Capernaum, hoping to find him there. Jesus lived in Capernaum, after all, and he did a lot of his miracles there, so it was a pretty safe bet they would find him. And it turns out they were right. They found him in Capernaum, and they ask him, verse 25 of our reading: "Rabbi, when did you come here?"

Now, this question sounds pretty good. It sounds like they want to follow Jesus. Because, after all, they traveled several miles in order to go find him. They went looking for him when he disappeared. It sounds like they're serious about Jesus. It sounds like they want to be with him. "Why did you leave us, Jesus? Where did you go? We want to follow you? When did you come here?"

But Jesus shows them the real reason they went looking for him. Verse 26, he says: "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves." They weren't looking for him because of who he was. They were looking for him because of what he gave them. He gave them bread. He gave them fish. They ate and were filled. And now they wanted more. And so they went looking for him simply because they were hungry, and for no other reason. In other words, they were looking for Jesus because of what they thought he could give them. They thought that he could satisfy their needs. They thought that he could give them the things that they wanted, the things that they thought that they needed.

But this wasn't good enough. Jesus says, verse 27: "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." Don't go looking for that bread, Jesus says. That bread will perish. That bread will come to nothing. And it won't be long before you're going to need more. But look

for the true bread, the true bread which the Son of Man gives. Seek after that which comes from God, and then you will be looking for the right thing.

But the crowd doesn't understand this. They don't know what he means. And so they ask him, verse 28: "What must we do to be doing the works of God?" If we're looking for the wrong thing, Jesus, then what should we be looking for? What must we be doing? Where is this food that endures to eternal life? How do we get it? Jesus says: "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." They find the true bread by believing in the one that the Father has sent. Believe in the Son of Man, not because of what he can give you, not because of what you hope to get from him, not because of perishable bread, but believe in him because he is the Son of Man, the one who has come into the world. In other words, believe in Jesus, and then you will have the true bread from heaven, the bread which endures to everlasting life.

But the crowd doesn't really understand who Jesus is. They don't know why he's there, who he is, or what he's come to do, so they don't truly believe in him. And so they are seeking him, not because of who he is, but because of what he might give to them. And for this reason, they want Jesus to do something more in order to prove himself to them. Show us that what you are saying is true! Verse 30: "What sign do you do that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?" Give us a reason to believe you, Jesus! Give us a reason to know that what you're saying is true. They've forgotten, of course, that Jesus did this miracle just the day before when he multiplied bread and fish for them. But that wasn't good enough for them. They wanted something more. Give us a reason to believe in you! Moses, after all, gave Israel food in the wilderness. He gave them bread from heaven. He could show that he was from God by the means of that miracle. So we need something more. Why should we believe in you?

Because the problem is, Christians, when we only seek after God because of what we hope to get from him, we very quickly forget the things that we do get. It's like saying, "Thanks God, but what else do you have? What else can you give me?" That was the problem with the crowd in that day. But it was not Moses who gave them bread in the wilderness, Jesus says. It was God. And God the Father was now giving them the true bread from heaven. And this bread gives us life. This bread satisfies our deepest needs. As Jesus says, verse 35: "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst." When we seek after Jesus, then we will find the true bread from heaven. Then we will find that bread which endures to everlasting life.

So why are you seeking Jesus today, Christians? What is it that you hope to find? Have you come here because you want something from him? And you're satisfied when he gives it to you, but impatient when he doesn't? Is Jesus just a way to make our lives a little bit more comfortable? What is it that we hope to find? Have we come here because of what we want him to fix in our lives? We're worried about our daily troubles. We're worried about our future. Maybe we're even worried about our own death. Is Jesus just some kind of insurance plan, something which is nice to have when things go bad, but easy to forget about when things are fine? What is it that you hope to find? Or have you come because of all the problems out there in the world? And we're hoping that Jesus will just make all the bad things go away. Are we here because we're anxious about what we see on the news? What is it that we hope to find?

Now, of course, we should ask Jesus for help, and we should turn to him in every trouble. It is good to trust in the Lord, who alone can deliver us out of every danger. But is that the only reason that you seek after him? Only to forget about him as soon as that trouble has disappeared. When we look for Jesus only because of what we hope to get from him, then we are not looking for him for the right reason.

But rather, Christians, believing in him means seeking him because of who he is. It means delighting in him because he is God. It means loving him because he is the Lord. It means coming to him simply because he is Jesus, and that makes him more precious than gold and sweeter than honey.

And to understand what we mean by this, think about what Job says after he loses everything in one day. He loses his property. He loses his possessions. He even loses his children. And yet he says, Job chapter 1: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." Job blessed God even in the midst of his grief, because that's what it means to seek after the Lord because he is the Lord.

Or think about what Habakkuk says as he is waiting for the Assyrians to invade. He says, Habakkuk chapter 3: "Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail, and the fields yield no food, the flocks be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, and I will take joy in the God of my salvation." Habakkuk could rejoice in God even when he had nothing, because that's what it means to seek after the Lord because he is Lord.

Or above all, think of what David says in Psalm 27: "One thing have I asked of the Lord, that I shall seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." David wanted to be with God. David simply wanted to look at him, to enjoy his beauty, because that's what it means to seek after the Lord because he is the Lord.

Now, all of these men knew that God would hear them when they prayed. They called on him in all kinds of troubles. And they knew that God would answer their prayers, because God gives all good things to those who ask him. But they did it because they knew who God is. They found joy in God being God. And so when we seek the Lord simply because of who he is, then we will find life and joy in him forever.

So, Christians, let us seek after Jesus, not only because of what he gives us, although he will take care of all of our needs. But let us seek him because he is the Lord, our Savior. Let us seek to see his face, because Jesus is the true bread which comes down from heaven. And when we eat that bread, Christians, we will never be hungry again.

Let us pray. O Lord God, you are worth more than all the treasures of this world. Lead us always to look to you in all things, so that we may finally see you face to face in the joys of paradise. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.