

Sermon for August 11, 2024 – 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

John 6:24–35 (EHV)

**Theme: Why are you looking for Jesus?**

- 1) To merely make your earthly life better?
- 2) Or to receive everlasting life as a gift?

*<sup>24</sup>When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus. <sup>25</sup>When they found him on the other side of the sea, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?” <sup>26</sup>Jesus answered them, “Amen, Amen, I tell you: You are not looking for me because you saw the miraculous signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled. <sup>27</sup>Do not continue to work for the food that spoils, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.” <sup>28</sup>So they said to him, “What should we do to carry out the works of God?” <sup>29</sup>Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God: that you believe in the one he sent.” <sup>30</sup>Then they asked him, “So what miraculous sign are you going to do, that we may see it and believe you? What miraculous sign are you going to perform? <sup>31</sup>Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, just as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” <sup>32</sup>Jesus said to them, “Amen, Amen, I tell you: Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the real bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup>For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” <sup>34</sup>“Sir,” they said to him, “give us this bread all the time!” <sup>35</sup>“I am the Bread of Life,” Jesus told them. “The one who comes to me will never be hungry, and the one who believes in me will never be thirsty.”*

Most people come to our little church for the same noble reason: they are looking for Jesus. But that invites the question: Why are you looking for Jesus? Are you merely hoping that he will make life easier for you on this earth – granting you the physical blessings you desire? Or do you hope to find in him relief for a greater spiritual hunger that you feel deep in your heart?

If you are looking for Jesus, you have come to the right place. Why do I say that? Because Jesus promises to be wherever his Word is taught, and Sacraments administered. Yes, Jesus is most certainly present in our sermon text today, ready to tell us about himself and how he fulfills our greatest need. Therefore, let us meditate and apply his words to us, under the theme: **Why are you looking for Jesus?** 1) To merely make your earthly life better? 2) Or to receive everlasting life as a gift?

Part One: To merely make your earthly life better?

Our sermon text takes place the day after Jesus miraculously fed over 5000 people. The crowd was so impressed with Jesus’ miracle that they wanted to force him to be their bread king: someone who would provide for all their needs and grant their wishes. Because that is not why He came into the world, Jesus hid himself from the crowd – miraculously crossing the sea of Galilee at night.

The next day, <sup>24</sup>*When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.* One wonders if the people were hoping to beat Jesus to Capernaum. How shocked they were to see him already teaching in the synagogue.

<sup>25</sup>*When they found him on the other side of the sea, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?”*

Jesus doesn't address their question. Instead, revealing his divine ability to read hearts, <sup>26</sup>*Jesus answered them, “Amen, Amen, I tell you: You are not looking for me because you saw the miraculous signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled.*

Jesus' criticism was sharp. The word translated as “ate” means “to eat like an animal.” In other words, Jesus claims that the only reason they were looking for him was so he could fill their physical hunger. They missed the point that his miracles of healing and providing were all meant to underscore his divine power and compassion – testifying to the fact that he is God's promised Saviour from sin.

Sadly, the people didn't understand that. Why? Because their sole focus was only on how Jesus could make their physical lives less burdensome so they could live at ease. And isn't that the desire of most people in our society as well? Think about it: the entire drive behind our Western culture's technological advancements and economy is making physical life easier. And, if we are honest with ourselves, don't we also often run to Jesus – hoping he will make our earthly lives more trouble-free and grant us the physical things we desire?

Don't misunderstand me: I am not saying that there is anything wrong with asking Jesus to give us daily bread, heal our sicknesses, and grant us relief from our earthly troubles. God created humans with a body and soul, and cares for both. The problem is when we only concern ourselves with this life, forgetting everything God says about the temporality of our present age and His desire for us to be reconciled to Him. To put it another way, *what good is it for a man to gain the whole world and yet forfeit his soul?*<sup>i</sup> *The world and its desires pass away, but the one who does the will of God remains forever.*<sup>ii</sup>

Because Jesus wants everyone to understand that we need him to be more than just a genie who grants earthly wishes, he says: <sup>27</sup>*Do not continue to work for the food that spoils, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.*”

Food spoils, clothes wear out, relationships end, and people die. How meaningless life would be if our earthly existence was all there is! But our earthly existence is not all there is. God created us for so much more: an everlasting relationship with him in all perfection. Sin has spoiled that relationship, separating humanity from God and leaving us to hunger for him without relief. But that is why Jesus came: to satisfy our spiritual hunger for peace with God and grant us everlasting relief. By perfectly obeying God's law in our place, Jesus won the righteousness we need to stand before our perfect God: the righteousness humanity lost because of sin. By dying on the cross, Jesus paid for our sins and then proved he satisfied God's justice by rising from the dead. Because

of Jesus, we can have everlasting life with God through faith in Him. The miracles Jesus performed were God's seal of approval so that we can believe Jesus is exactly who he says he is. Don't just look for him to satisfy your earthly desires; instead, receive the everlasting life and peace with God He offers you through faith in him.

### Part Two: Or to receive everlasting life as a gift?

Jesus' offer of eternal life certainly caught the people's attention. Unfortunately, they missed the part about it being a gift.

*<sup>28</sup>So they said to him, "What should we do to carry out the works of God?" <sup>29</sup>Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God: that you believe in the one he sent."*

I want to draw your attention to an important play on words. The people wanted to know how they could *earn* God's favour and blessings. Jesus, however, does not point to "works" that God required from them. Instead, he speaks of the work God does for them. "*This is the work of God,*" Jesus says, "*that you believe in the one he sent.*"

From beginning to end, our salvation is God's doing. First, he sent His Son into the world to pay for our sins, as Jesus said on another occasion: *God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*<sup>iii</sup> Then, having paid for our sins in full, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to create and sustain saving faith in our hearts through the preaching of His Word so that we might recognize our sins, repent, and receive the salvation He won through His cross as our own.

Unfortunately, the people met Jesus' words with skepticism. Don't get me wrong: they were happy to worship Jesus as a Messiah who would make their earthly lives easier. But trusting in him as the promised Saviour from sin? That was another matter altogether. Therefore, *they asked him, "So what miraculous sign are you going to do, that we may see it and believe you? What miraculous sign are you going to perform?" <sup>31</sup>Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, just as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'*"

God the Father had been providing sign after sign through all the miracles Jesus performed. Didn't they remember the previous evening when Jesus not only fed over 5000 of them but also healed all their diseased, disabled, and demon-possessed gathered there? One wonders if Jesus could do anything to satisfy their doubts concerning His claim.

Sadly, this sinful skepticism was not unique to the crowd asking Jesus for a sign. It is the condition of every human heart. Even our sinful hearts want more signs: "Why aren't you doing miracles today, Jesus? Relieve me from my stress and trouble so my faith in you might grow stronger." All the while we are tempted to ignore the greater testimony God gives us concerning Jesus in His Word.

Jesus, however, patiently answers their skepticism by correcting their false ideas about Moses and the miracles God accomplished through him. <sup>32</sup>*Jesus said to them, "Amen, Amen, I tell you: Moses*

*did not give you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the real bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup>For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”*

God, not Moses, had always been the one providing what His people needed. And he didn't just provide physical manna to care for their bodies. More importantly, he has always been offering them the spiritual bread of a promised Saviour, who would give his life for the world. That same Saviour that God offered the Israelite forefathers in the wilderness stood before the crowd in the person of Jesus. He is the true bread that came down from heaven to give life to our souls.

Jesus' words affected the crowd. They truly desired peace with God and the everlasting life Jesus spoke about. <sup>34</sup>“Sir,” they said to him, “give us this bread all the time!”

<sup>35</sup>“I am the Bread of Life,” Jesus told them. “The one who comes to me will never be hungry, and the one who believes in me will never be thirsty.”

In calling himself the Bread of Life, Jesus claims that He is God's gracious gift of salvation to humanity. Everyone who turns to Jesus in daily repentance and faith will never again hunger or thirst for forgiveness, peace and salvation. Why not? Because they have Jesus, who has won all these gifts for them. No matter what a believer may face in life - hunger, pain, sorrow, or persecution – having Christ means having everything they need and more. The LORD will keep his promise to rescue believers from every evil work and deliver them safely to his eternal kingdom.

Sadly, as we will learn in the coming weeks, skepticism and unbelief prevented the people from believing in Jesus as their promised Christ. Because he did not meet their earthly expectations of who they thought the Messiah should be and what He should do, many stopped following Him.

That is why it is not only important to look for Jesus, but have the correct reasons for doing so. Therefore, think deeply about this question: Why are you looking for Jesus? Do you seek a relationship with him merely hoping that he will fill your earthly life with physical blessings? Or do you seek him because you hunger and thirst for an everlasting relationship with God – a relationship you lost because of your sins, but that God promises to restore in Jesus? If you seek Jesus for this latter reason, then take heart in knowing that Jesus is that kind of Saviour, as he once said: *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, because they will be filled.*<sup>iv</sup>

Yes, blessed are you for seeking out Jesus, your Bread of everlasting Life. He will make sure that you will never hunger or thirst for righteousness again, for he will satisfy your sin-parched soul with himself. He will keep his promise to create and strengthen faith in your heart through His Word and Sacraments - never letting anything separate you from His love. He will fulfill His Word to protect you throughout your earthly existence and grant you everlasting life with Him in paradise. Amen.

---

<sup>i</sup> Mark 8:36 (EHV)

<sup>ii</sup> 1 John 2:17 (EHV)

<sup>iii</sup> John 3:16 (EHV)

<sup>iv</sup> Matthew 5:6 (EHV)