

“Why Are You Here?”

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[John 6:22-35](#)

Why are you here? Yes, *you*. Each of you. *Why* are you here? *What are you doing here today?* I don't think I've asked each of you that question. I haven't found out from you just why it is that you come here. There are so many reasons, good and bad, that we might come to worship. Are you here because this is what you always do? Every Sunday morning, you can be found occupying your pew, and you wouldn't know what to do if you weren't here? That's not a bad thing – good habits help us to have good lives. Are you here because someone else expects you to be here? “You know how upset *Mama* would be if we didn't go to church today, so we better be there.” Probably not the best reason, but if it gets you here, I suppose it's OK, if you are truly *present* while here. Are you here because it's part of your job to be here? There are several of us in that category, but I hope that's not the *only* reason we are here. Are you here because you are looking for something? Are you looking for *Jesus*? The crowd in the lesson from John today was looking for Jesus, but not for the right reasons.

Last week, Pastor Matt talked about the feeding of the multitudes. After that miracle, John tells us that Jesus departs quickly because the crowd wants to make him king by force. The disciples leave the scene by boat, but Jesus doesn't go with them. He catches up later, walking on water, but only the disciples see that. And that is what happens between last week's reading and this week's reading. The crowd knows Jesus didn't get in the boat with the disciples, but they can't find him anywhere. They decide to go on across the sea where the disciples went, and maybe the disciples can tell them where Jesus is. To their surprise, when they arrive, *there* is Jesus and so they ask him how he got there. Rather than tell them about the whole *walking on the water* deal,

Jesus doesn't answer their question. Instead, he tells them, essentially, "you are looking for me, not because you believe in me after the miracles I did, but because I gave you some good food and you want more of it." In John's gospel, the miracles are known as "signs." The people are focusing on the act itself, rather than its purpose as a *sign*, pointing to a greater truth. Jesus tells them they are there for all the wrong reasons. *Why are they there?* Maybe just to get some more food.

Perhaps we can't really grasp this, but food was pretty scarce in those days and so maybe they were hoping this Jesus guy would just make a little more food for them. But Jesus tells them, even in this area and time where food was relatively scarce, to forget about the food that only satisfies you temporarily, but go for the food that gives you eternal life, namely Jesus himself. The crowd doesn't get it, of course. I'm pretty sure we wouldn't, either, if we were in their place. They ask Him "what do we need to do" and Jesus says "just believe in Me. That's *it*. That's what you need to do." They aren't convinced of who this guy really is, and so they say "What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you?" "Allright. If we're gonna believe in you, you're gonna have to earn it first. What tricks do you have up your sleeve? Give us another trick, but do it slower this time, so we can see how you do it. That whole 'multiplying of fish and loaves' trick – that was cool – can we see it again?"

It feels a bit like watching a good magician's act. You come away in awe and, often, wanting to know how they did it. The crowd gathered in today's text seems to want the same thing of Jesus. Do that trick again so we can figure it out. Maybe we can watch from another angle. Or, better yet, do another, better trick. Of course, Jesus knows better than to fall into that trap. "New and Improved," "Now Even Better," "Bigger and Brighter Than Ever!" only leads to a desire for more and more tricks. The crowd says that good ole Moses did this neat trick where he got them bread from heaven – can you top that one, Jesus? Jesus has to remind them that it wasn't *Moses* who gave them bread from heaven; it was God. And here, again, *we* resemble the crowd. We, too,

mistake the source of our blessings. When something good happens to us, many say that we were *lucky* or that it was the result of *our* hard work, rather than realizing that God is the source of our blessings. We think that *we* are running the show. I've shared with some of you a story about a man who is working on a steep roof and he loses his balance and starts sliding down the roof. Frantically, he prays to God for help, promising to be a new man if God will just save him. Just then his belt catches on an exposed nail at the edge of the roof and that stops his fall. He looks up to Heaven and says "Nevermind, God, I've got it!"

The crowd doesn't remember that it was *God* who provided for them. Besides, they are asking the wrong question, anyway. They still don't get it. Jesus tells them that the "true bread" is that which God has sent down from heaven and gives life to the world. And *now*, they are really interested. "Ah, yes, Jesus, give us *that* bread! That stuff sounds good!" The response of the crowd echoes the response of the woman at the well, which John tells us about in chapter 4. Jesus offers her living water that will bring eternal life and she responds "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." The crowd here responds "Sir, give us this bread always." Jesus speaks metaphorically to the crowd about He himself being the living bread and to the woman at the well about being the living water and they all just take him literally. "Yeah, give us *that* bread and *that* water!" It is like an Abbott & Costello routine, full of misunderstandings. Jesus says "I am the living bread" and the crowd says, "Hmm...we're hungry, bread sounds good. Give us some of that." Isn't that true of us as well? We too are constantly seeking the temporary fix. We seek things that fill our earthly desires, for a time, rather than seeking what is eternal. Jesus offers us the true living bread and we instead strive for the latest and greatest object of our desire. We must drive bigger or fancier vehicles. We must have bigger and fancier television sets. We must wear the latest fashions and have the latest accessories. Jesus says to us, "hold on – all of that stuff is temporary. When the next fancy new vehicle arrives,

you'll want it. When your neighbor buys a bigger TV than you have, you'll want to buy an even bigger one. When the next fashion trend arrives, the clothes in your closet won't be good enough and you'll want to buy more. You are looking for fulfillment in the wrong places! Even the bread that you eat will leave you hungry soon after, but *I* am offering you the true bread of life which will never leave you hungry."

I picture Jesus shaking His head – actually, I picture that a lot both when reading the stories of the Bible and in looking around at the church universal today – but, here I think Jesus is shaking His head saying, "No, no, no! You still don't get it. *I* am the living bread and water. It's *me*, folks!" To the woman at the well who says she is waiting for the coming Messiah, He says "I am he, the one who is speaking to you." To the crowd looking for another free meal, He says "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

And so Jesus tells the woman at the well and He tells the crowd and He tells *us* that He is the living bread of which we should partake. He tells the crowd that the work of God is to "believe in Him who God has sent." That's what we are to do. Jesus says "come and get it" – come and partake of this living bread that is the path to eternal life. In Matthew 11, Jesus tell us "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Come and get it – "Come unto me". Jesus offers us eternal life, the bread of life. If you have come seeking the "true bread from heaven," you will find it here. Jesus told us that whenever two or three are gathered in His name, He is there among them. Jesus is here today, inviting each of us to partake of the true bread of life. Jesus tells us "Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and

whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.” So, come – whatever reason brought you here today, there is always room for more at the table of our living Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen.