

Whom are you looking for?

John 6:24-35

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the word of God this day. AMEN.

Last Sunday we discussed Jesus' feeding the 5000. Following the hillside meal the crowd wanted to crown Jesus King. Nothing like this had been done since Moses' time in the wilderness. They were astonished, excited, worked up into a frenzy. Who could blame them, a man taking five loaves of bread and two fish and feeding thousands enough so there is leftovers. It's a miracle that deserves a response. But Jesus senses that the mob of people are about to act goes off by himself to the mountain top to regroup and prayer. His disciples on the other hand set off across the water back to Capernaum, where Jesus meets them amazingly enough walking across the water to meet them. But even that amazing trip could not get Jesus away from the crowds. Once the crowds realized he and his disciples are gone they get in boats and head out looking for Jesus. The crowd would not be deterred. They wanted more miracles. They wanted more free food. They wanted to hold on to this amazing man. So they followed Jesus, not because they believed he was the Christ, the anointed one of God, but because they felt he could do things no one else could do. He could entertain them, captivate them, give them some excitement in their boring lives. He healed the sick, the lame walked again, the blind saw again. He cast out demons. He cured troubled bodies and minds and he even feed their stomachs making wine from pitchers of water.

How many do you suppose came over the sea that day to see Jesus because they wanted to get something from Jesus?

Jesus confronts those in the crowd that followed him because he knows they are coming to him for the wrong reasons. "Very Truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves." He knew they were not coming because the signs showed that he was the Messiah, the Son of God. but instead because he was free provider of food. They wanted what Moses had done for the people. But Jesus corrects them and tells them that God is the one who had provided that food, God is the one who has sent the living bread from heaven. God is the one who gives the bread of life to the world. And finally Jesus tells them that he is this bread. But even then I wonder if they still don't understand, do they get what Jesus is saying?

How about today, do people get it? How many people still today come to Christ because they think they will get something from him? How many come to see what kind of

deal they can make with God you know just in case there is a judgment day coming? Or what about you – why do you come to worship? Why do you come to church?

Do you come to offer your worshipful praise up to God in thanksgiving and prayer? Or did you come to have your own personal needs met? Probably both, I would have to admit that myself. But if you had to pick just one choice, and could choose either worshipping God with thanksgiving or meeting your own needs, which way would you say you lean in your reason for being here? The answer to that question, as a congregation and as members, influence the kind of congregation we are. Do we only use songs we like or do we sing songs that have words that help us praise God. Do we only use liturgy that is familiar, or do we use services that challenge our understanding and worship of God. It even influences how sermons are given, Do I say this or that to you the members to comfort you or to provoke you with the truth. The answer to why we come to worship does in fact impact the kind of church we are.

Studies show the fastest growing churches today are what are called customer-focused congregations. They survey the community and determine what the community is looking for and then fashion their church life accordingly. If you need worship on Tuesday and Thursdays then you create the church that offers worship on Tuesday or Thursday. If people in the community overwhelmingly like country music you use country style music in worship. If the demand is small groups of this book club, or that golf group, or that dancing group, then the church offers these small groups. Whatever the need is in the community, the idea is to be the church that fills that need. This is opposite of what other churches have done that have chosen to stick with tradition, traditional liturgy that goes back centuries, traditional style of order and detail that has been done the same way for over a thousand years.

Many denominations and churches are caught in this battle of how to be the church, stick with tradition or change with the needs of the community. Wait for people to hear what God is saying through what you have been doing or go out of the way to attract new people by trying new ministries and styles of worship. This debate has been going on for years. At one time the organ was debated should it be used in worship or remain in taverns. What about communion, do we do it daily or is it weekly, then when we came to the new world it became quarterly, and then in the last century it became monthly or weekly again. The debate continues but the question still remains what is the reason people come to Church. Is worship for God or is it for us? The ideal of course is to enter into such a thankful spirit, meditative connection, prayerful dialogue with God that we truly feel the majesty of God in a

such a way that our own lives are enhanced and our faith is deepened. To have a worship service that so lifts up God that we as God's people feel lifted up as well.

The people who came to Jesus came for the wrong reason in our Gospel reading today. They came looking for immediate needs, the meaning of filling their tastes of earthly bread that Jesus can provide. They were looking for a free meal. Something that made them happy, content, satisfied. Not something that would work on their consciences, their souls and their relationships throughout their lives forever. They were looking for fulfillment in the immediate not the deeper sense of truth.

But that is what Jesus is offering. That very truth! Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life. He continues on to tell us that he is that bread of life, whoever come to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. To know the mind and heart of Jesus is to find meaning and fulfillment, not simply in the immediate hour, but for all meaning for eternity. To come to church, to enter into worship is to draw into that fellowship with God and with each other, to praise and taste a bit of that perfect meaning of life, that joy that is everlasting, It is not a one time gift that fills the stomach but is a gift that lasts for ever. He is the bread of life. He who comes to Christ will never hunger, and he who believes in Jesus will never be thirsty.

So why do we come here? Why do we come to worship? Why do we come seeking Jesus? As God's children, as God's disciples, as stewards of all he has given us we gather here to worship and proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. To come before God the almighty and receive the Spirit, the ever-present connection with God and us that is eternal. We are to seek to be dedicated to the Word, to learn and study scriptures. To commit our time and talents and gifts to the upkeep of the church of God here and through out the world so that others may know the truth, that freedom and gift that is everlasting. Ask yourselves why you come here to worship, why do you seek Jesus, is it for something you want, you think you need, or is it for the Glory of God? Amen.

May the peace and Grace of God be with you this day and throughout the week to come.
AMEN.

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people according to their needs.

Almighty Lord, you sent to us your bread of life, Jesus Christ our Lord. He came into this world not as the fulfiller of our wants and desires, but as the fulfillment of your word. To redeem and fill us with your grace now and forever. We give you thanks for this promise that has no end.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY, Hear our Prayer..

O Heavenly Father, we ask that you send your spirit to fill us once again as we take part in your meal and eat of your sacrament. Bring us into new life, new joy, restore us to your everlasting kingdom and make us your witnesses of your love. Shake the earth, move the mountains, and empower your people with a deep faith that does all things as witnesses of your kingdom.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY, Hear our Prayer.

God, stretch out that healing hand once again and lay it upon all those who are sick, that are in need. Send your comfort and peace to be with those who suffer from oppression, drought, famine, or war. Send your healing to be with all those who suffer from sickness, from disease, or from lack of proper care. Give peace to those troubled both physically and mentally. Impart your Holy Comforter to be with them in their times of need. Especially we remember today our hospitalized, our homebound, those in mourning and those who are suffering and especially.... Howell Crawford, Sylvia Dillow, Jarrett Peck, The Family of Sylvia Dillow ...The Family of Rae Koontz and all those we name now in our prayers to you

LORD IN YOUR MERCY, hear our prayer.

Lord, we pray for this community of faithful; teach us to use the many gifts you have given us for the mission of your Church. Take and use us as your stewards, filled with your gifts and word, drive us to new challenges, to draw closer to you and towards each other, to deepen our faith and grow in our mission. Use us as your servants in this community and beyond to spread your word, to share your good news.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY, hear our prayer.

Into your hands, o Lord we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.