

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobonier, Illinois
Pentecost 10B (Proper 13B)
August 1, 2021
John 6:22-35

Seeking Jesus

So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. (John 6:24 ESV)

In the Name of Jesus, the only Savior of the world.

As God's redeemed people, it is most certainly good to seek Jesus. After all, He has sought us, found us, and made us His own. Yet, we may seek Him for the wrong reasons and with the wrong motives. Certainly the scribes and pharisees often sought Jesus, but for all the wrong reasons. They didn't want to learn from Him or receive the gifts He offered. They simply wanted to destroy Him. Then there are the people in today's Gospel. They too sought Jesus, but also for the wrong reasons. How do we know that? Jesus says so. "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled." Yes, Jesus knew they were looking for Him only because they had eaten their fill and they wanted more. They selfishly wanted a King who would provide all their earthly needs.

And don't we do that too at times? Don't we sometimes seek Jesus only, or even mostly, for the material needs of this life. If you don't think so, simply listen to our prayers. So often they sound like, "Gimme this. Gimme that." Now there's nothing wrong with wanting bread for our bellies or healing for our bodies. After all, God made us and He promises to provide for us, and He does so in great measure. He invites us to trust in Him, to pray to Him, to cast our burdens on Him, and to tell Him what we need and want. He even gives bread to those who don't ask or give Him thanks.

So our problem is not that we seek Jesus for the provisions of life, but that we seek Him ONLY, or even mostly, for this. Like those people, we do this because our flesh is blind to the things of God, and we are dead in trespasses and sin. We seek Jesus, as did those people, ONLY to give us what we want and to make our life in this world tolerable, if not enjoyable. But if that's all we seek Jesus for, life never will be all that great. For no matter what He gives, we will never be satisfied. We see that when the Israelites grumble that they're hungry. They had forgotten all that God had done for them. And when God gave them meat and bread, they complained about that too.

Now we too don't always see what our Lord does, even in providing for our earthly necessities, as the signs they are. They didn't see that Jesus had not come merely to ease their burdens in this life. They didn't see past the earthly healing and bread to the One Who provided it. They didn't see that the One Who healed and fed them was the Creator Himself come to save them

from their sins. Therefore, they sought a King who would make their life easy in the here and now. That's all that mattered. And, don't we do that too, at least sometimes?

But there is another life, a better and eternal one, the life of the soul, which culminates in dwelling in the Lord's presence forever, in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness. It is THIS life to which Jesus, by His Word, awakens us. And it is THIS life which He feeds and nourishes with His Body and Blood. And THIS life is lived by faith, and not by sight.

So Jesus says, "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you." You see, they had worked hard to find Jesus and were hoping that He would provide a continual flow of food. But the meal Jesus had provided for them the day before was over. The food was gone. The people were hungry again. So Jesus gives them the food they need the most. He tells them that "the food which endures to everlasting life" would be given to them by the Son of Man.

But the people don't understand. Jesus had just told them that the Son of Man would GIVE them "the food which endures to everlasting life." It would be a gift. But the people didn't hear that. All they heard was "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life." The people thought they had to DO something. They wanted to rely on their own works. They didn't realize that "the food which endures to everlasting life" is not a what but a Who, and that He cannot be gotten by our works.

So Jesus replies, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent." They had asked about works, in the plural. Jesus tells them there is only one work, and that is believing in Him. Faith, that's what God wants of us. Trust in His Son for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Yet, this is not a work that any of them, or any of us, could do. For by nature we are spiritually dead and our understanding is completely darkened, we are alienated from God, we suffer from ignorance and hardness of heart, we give ourselves "over to licentiousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Eph. 4:18-19). We can't believe in Jesus.

That's why it's such good news to hear that what God requires of us He gives to us. The faith God requires of us is His gift to us. Thus we confess, "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith."

The work of faith which God requires of us, is God's work for us and in us. He tells us to believe and He gives us the faith by which we believe. Indeed, Christ is the only Savior of the world. He alone is the Bread of Life as He Himself declares. He is the host. He is the server. He is the Bread. And He gives us His own flesh and blood so that we may live forever.

You see, just as God had rained down manna from heaven for the Israelites, so even now He gives the true Bread from heaven. For "the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." Thus He awakens a hunger and thirst for Him. This is the right reason to seek Him. For Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never

hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." Yes, the true Bread from heaven is Jesus Himself, and He alone satisfies the hungry soul.

This is the Word and Promise of our Lord Christ. He gives and sustains life in this world and the next. The sign He gives is His very life on the cross and then the open, empty grave. For He did the work His Father required. He gave Himself over to death for your sins. He shed His blood to atone for and cover your sins. He overcame death through the resurrection so that you too might overcome death. And through the faith created by the Word in Holy Baptism, this work is your work as you were brought into the Body of Christ.

So, while we strive to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which [we] have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1-3), we "do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you." Living as God's people, we seek Jesus for THIS food. Thus we faithfully attend the Divine Service, not because it is a good work which pleases God, but because here is where Christ gives you Himself, the Bread of Life, in the preaching, in the Absolution, in the Lord's Supper. He is here to give His Bread in abundance over and over again. Indeed, Christ does everything necessary for your salvation and He gives it to you freely and in great abundance. He is truly the Bread of Life. You can't live without Him. Thus, God says, "You will seek me and find me. When you seek me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13). And, "Seek me and live" (Amos 5:4). So, seek Jesus with all your heart and all your soul (Deut. 4:29) and you will most certainly find Him, the salvation of your soul. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

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