

What are you looking for?

John 6:1-21

INTRO:

We are encouraged to put ourselves at the center of our world in our society. Then we come to the pew one Sunday to hear that we should really put Jesus at the center. At Church, the risen Christ comes among us, not just to meet our needs, but to rearrange our needs so he can reveal himself to us. When we come to Church we might just get more than we are looking for. We get the Christ, the one who is looking for us so he can call us, change us, transform us.

ME:

I come to Church because if I don't, *you won't pay me!* You'll call the DS or the bishop, and then we will have lots of meetings about it.

Really, I come to Church because it is here that I can encourage you in unpacking your discipleship and the reconciliation we talked about last week. I can remind you that you are doing better than you may think you are and that you can find God wherever you are. But that it is good to gather with other disciples for worship and accountability and service.

YOU:

Why do you come to Church? What are you looking for? Well, we are here, let's see if we can find God. Let's see if we can hear from God this morning in John's Gospel.

Let's pray together first...

GOD:

6:1 After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. 2 A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. 3 Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. 4 Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. 5 When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" 6 He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. 7 Philip answered him, "Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 9 "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" 10 Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. 11 Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they

wanted. 12 When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, “Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.” 13 So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those John 6:13–21 (NRSV): who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. 14 When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, “This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.”

15 When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

16 When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, 17 got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. 18 The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. 19 When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. 20 But he said to them, “It is I; do not be afraid.” 21 Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

WE:

“Jesus understood that they were about to come and force him to be their king, so he took refuge again, alone on a mountain.”

In our staff meetings on Tuesdays we spend time selecting the hymns that we sing on Sunday morning. We try to connect the hymns to the assigned

scripture lessons for the day, the season of the church year. But we also, believe it or not, take into account what you like in your hymns. We ask ourselves, **“Do they want to sing this hymn?”** It makes a big difference what sort of music you like. Honestly that is probably the main reason why at least one hymn is chosen for singing on Sunday:

Does the congregation like this hymn?

While that’s a fair question, isn’t it interesting that we rarely ask an even more basic question:

Does God like this hymn?

Think about that for a moment. It is really a scary question. It is scary because there are bound to be lots of answers, lots of conflicting answers to that basic question. It is scary because we see in Scripture that Jesus drove away almost as many people as he attracted. So it seems obvious Jesus did not base his ministry on whether or not people like he has to say.

In our passage this morning, we see a story about Jesus, but first the story is about the crowd. John says that a large crowd followed Jesus. **What a sure sign of success, right? Who can argue with numbers?** Just look at the bottom line—*a large crowd!* Jesus has become popular.

What caused this popularity? What were they looking for? They saw the miraculous signs he had done aging the sick. Jesus healed the hurting,

he was a health care provider! They saw signs, they were healed, he met their needs. They followed him.

Then, without warning, he heads for the hills! He did not continue to meet their needs, even Jesus needed a break, just a little break from giving, giving, giving and meeting people's needs.

After he had a breather, Jesus looks and sees a large crowd of people heading towards his mountain retreat. He asks Phillip how much money he thought it might take to feed all these people, with a sly grin on the corner of his lips.

Phillip takes him seriously and swallows hard, **"Ummm, about six months wages, I guess.** A kid is there with his brown bagged lunch of a few loaves and a couple of fish. Jesus tells everyone to sit down. He gives thanks for his Father's provision of bread and fish...*then the boy's lunch becomes Golden Corral! Everyone was fed and there were leftovers!!*

That is not the need of the story, though. The people were impressed.

"This Jesus must be a prophet from God who has come into the world!"

Of course, Jesus probably said, **"Aww shucks!"** After all, they are finally starting to see who Jesus is and calling him Lord. *Finally, this Jesus thing is getting somewhere!*

Well, actually, Jesus rejected their enthusiasm. He realized they were about to come and make him their king,. So, again, he heads for the hills.

Why did he head for the hills right when he was about to be crowned king? They needed bread, he gave them bread. They want to make him king, **what else could Jesus want?**

Do you remember, at the beginning of Jesus's ministry, how he was tempted in the wilderness? Satan met Jesus and offered him this world and heaven too. **"Make stones into bread,"** said Satan. Jesus refused.

Isn't bread good? Isn't feeding the hungry self-evidently good? Why did Jesus refuse, and why, when he did feed people, was he so put off by their calling him king?

Jesus refused to do for the crowds what they wanted, as if to do so would be a forsaking of his mission. **"Jesus, what will you do for us?"** must be follow up to the question, **"Jesus, who are you and what is your mission?"**

What are you looking for? Most of us are here just to get help making though the week. To get an inner peace, some guidance in the difficult choices we all face.

Notice that this story, which at first seems to be about us, before it is done is a story about Jesus. We come to church thinking mostly about ourselves, but then the Bible talks mostly about God.

When will we ever learn? That is why we are told this story. Following Jesus is the way God gets what God wants, not the way we get what we want. The Gospel is about us not knowing what we want or need until we meet Jesus.

William Sloan Coffin said he did not know how you attracted people to the Gospel be appealing to their selfish needs and then end up offering them the unselfish Gospel of Jesus.

We want to be entertained. At school, at work, at home, we want to be amused, captivated, entertained. We would rather watch sports than do sports. This entertainment bias undercuts our ability to grow morally or intellectually, maybe even spiritually. Neil Postman says that in order to compete with television, teaching—which once was thought of as formation—has been reduced to popular entertainment: >

“Drawing an audience—rather than teaching—becomes the focus of education, and that is what television does. School is the one institution that should present a different worldview; a different way of knowing, of evaluating, of assessing. What worries me is that if school becomes so overwhelmed by entertainment’s metaphors then it becomes not content-centered but attention-centered, like television, chasing ‘ratings’ or class atten-

dance. If school becomes that way, then the game may be lost, because school is using the same approach as television. Instead of being something different from television, it is reduced to being just another kind of television.”

Is there a message here for the Church?

What are you looking for?

Are you looking to be fed by Jesus? It's great if you are, but not so great if you stop there. You need to feed others after you are fed.

THE SERMON IN A SENTENCE:

We find what we are looking for so we can help others find it too.

YOU:

What are you looking for? Did you find it? What will you do about it now?

Let's pray together now...