

September 7, 2014
Sunday Morning Service
Series: John
Community Baptist Church
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as you prepare to study John 6:22-29.

1. What characteristics about themselves did the people display when they were searching for Jesus?
2. What was the real motivation for searching for Jesus?
3. Why did Jesus ignore the people's question and instead challenge them about their deeds?
4. What do you really believe about Jesus?

SEEKERS John 6:22-29

This is a very important story in that it serves to connect several different points. On the surface, it would appear that John simply gave us a little filler material. However, the writer followed a clear and accurate chronology of events so that we see the connection between Jesus feeding thousands of people with miracle bread and fish, and His discourse on the importance of offering Himself to the people as the Bread of Life.

It is as though John laid down in rapid-fire succession two miracles that affirm Jesus is who He claimed to be, and two lesson times in which Jesus admonished the people to believe what He said about Himself.

This story about the people seeking Jesus, who seemed to just disappear, connects the miracles to the lessons. The reason for the

miraculous feeding and the walking on the water was to affirm that Jesus is the only means for eternal, spiritual satisfaction. That is the truth where all seekers must arrive.

Fervently Seeking Jesus (vv.22-25).

There were a people who experienced Jesus' power who diligently searched for Him (vv.22-24). That's good. Right? *On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone (v.22).* Did we catch that this is a picture of sheep scattering without a shepherd? Consider the story.

This picture took place the next day, probably taking up a good part of the day. Some of the crowd of people who had participated in the feeding of the 5,000 has remained on the other side of the sea in the area around Bethsaida. Maybe some of them had friends who lived near there and they stayed with them. It is more likely that these folks simply "camped out" overnight. They were hoping for an opportunity to "connect" with Jesus again in the morning.

They got a surprise because Jesus wasn't there. Hmmm! How did that happen? The evening before it was obvious that when the other people were gone, there was only one boat left. The disciples got into that boat and rowed out to sea. Jesus, having sent them away, had gone up the mountain to pray. There was no visible means of transportation left. Where did Jesus go?

We do well at this point to quickly review the events of the previous night. The disciples had indeed gotten into the boat and rowed for Capernaum. But because of the storm, or at least the wind, they ended up coming ashore at Gennesaret on the western side of the lake.

Now we find a large group of people frantically searching for Jesus. It is obvious from John's account that the people really wanted to find Jesus. *Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. 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.*

Some people who lived in Tiberias jumped into their boats early in the morning and headed for Bethsaida. But they didn't find Jesus. Now there were a bunch of people (the ones who had stayed overnight and the ones who showed up that morning) milling about the hillside wondering where Jesus went. No doubt someone said they had heard the disciples talk about going to Capernaum (v.17) and, since Jesus stayed there quite a bit, that is probably where He was. So they all jumped into their boats and rowed for Capernaum.

Imagine the thinking (or lack thereof) that was going on here. The people were by and large convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was not normal. He could do all kinds of miracles. His teaching was beyond the scope of typical. Everyone who came in contact with this man was either blessed or offended. He was definitely a watershed kind of personality. And so the people wondered if this could be the Christ, the promised prophet like Moses. If so, He ought to be king. But if that is the case, why did He refuse to lead a revolt, why did He refuse to take the throne, why was He hiding away from the crowds?

The problem was that the people had a wrong view of Jesus' Kingship. It is a picture of human nature throughout the ages. Most people have a somewhat high view of Jesus. They acknowledge that He was special. They acknowledge that He did good things. Most folks acknowledge that Jesus displayed miraculous powers. And certainly anyone who knows about Jesus would not deny that He was connected with religion. Yea, He was the quintessential teacher of morality. But would He make a good king? Probably most people would agree. Especially people who crave entitlements want Jesus to be King. That is because they don't know Jesus.

Like the citizens of ancient Galilee, we still find that there are some people who search for Jesus. They have heard that Jesus can meet their needs. They willingly acknowledge that they have needs that are larger than their ability to handle. Some even think about eternity and the need for a "key" by which to enter heaven. But typically the searchers are looking for a solution they can control. They want a Savior who will take care of what they are willing to relegate to Him, but not a King who will sit on the throne of their lives and control them for His own glory.

Therefore, we are not surprised to discover that in the setting before us the people's question reveals a wrong motivation (v.25).

When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?"(v.25). That question is so shallow. That asked it "when they found Him" on the other side of the sea. Finding Jesus is a noticeable theme in John's Gospel. At the beginning of the Gospel, we read that Andrew said to Peter, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ) (John 1:41). Then Philip said to Nathanael, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (John 1:45). At a later time, Jesus to the Jews, "You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come" (John 7:34). Finding Jesus is important.

Several years ago, the Southern Baptist Convention promoted an evangelism program titled, "I Found it." Signs with that message popped up all over Greenville at churches, on billboards, and on bumper stickers. Some folks took offense to the campaign's title because the thrust of the work was to help people find Jesus who is definitely not an "it." However, truly finding Jesus ought to be like finding the buried treasure, the pearl of great value, or the lost coin. He is without question the most precious "find" in our lives.

Finding Jesus and then asking, "When did You come here?" indicates that the seekers didn't know who or what they had found. The question might also imply, "How did You get here?" Either way, it is obvious that Jesus' power caused confusion for the people. It was a question that seemed shallow but which Jesus used to lead to deep truth. The day before, they tried to make Jesus their King. He quickly defused that idea. Now they addressed Him as Rabbi. Okay, that was a good thing. There is no question that Jesus was a teacher. Peripatetic teachers were somewhat common in the culture. Many teachers had a group of followers who sought to understand and live out the teacher's creed and lessons.

But the official teachers of the Israelites were supposed to be the scribes. However, the popular opinion regarding Jesus was that He was not like the scribes because He taught like someone who had authority (Matthew 7:29). That was not to conclude that Jesus only had the ability to teach – though He certainly did that. Rather, the people concluded that Jesus' teaching demonstrated mastery of the truth and the right to teach truth. Then was it not very inconsistent

for the people to address Jesus as teacher and then proceed to argue with His teaching (6:30-58)?

Their inquiring about when He arrived on the other side indicates that they were not fully aware of who Jesus was. If they understood who Jesus was, they would have known that He could cross the lake in a moment without walking on it. If they understood who Jesus was, they would have been more concerned for spiritual and eternal matters than physical logistics. The better question would be, “Who are you?” It flows from a conflict between ourselves and Christ. That Jesus of Nazareth was above normal humanity in many ways was quite clear by now. Therefore, the people had to come to grips with the fact that He was special compared to them – the normal people. Which means that they had to wonder why He was special.

“Who is Jesus?” is still the important question of the day. All of the events and teaching about Jesus written in the Bible are intended to force people to ask, “Who is Jesus?” The Bible makes it very clear that Jesus was not just another Jew from first century Nazareth. This is why there has been a concentrated attack against Jesus’ miracles and His claim to divinity over the ages since He returned to Heaven. If we let the record speak for itself, people must answer this very important question: “Who is Jesus?” The answer to that question is the difference between eternal life through sins forgiven and eternal punishment because of sins retained.

But herein does a problem lie. The people thought they knew who Jesus was. We don’t ask questions if we think we already know the answer. Jesus’ peers were quite sure that this was Jesus whose father was the carpenter from Nazareth, whose mother was Mary, and whose brothers and sisters were well known in the area. And so our peers are too often satisfied that they know Jesus. They are sure that He was a good example to follow. Or they are sure He is the Savior from sin. But instead of humbly confessing their sins to Him, they try to tack Him on to their life making Jesus a follower of them. Or they believe that Jesus has a wonderful plan for their lives and then, having laid out the plan, they submit it to Jesus to be rubber stamped.

That kind of response is so typical that it is as common today as it was in Jesus’ day. The seekers were seeking but did not understand who or what they were seeking. They were looking for satisfaction in the wrong place.

Now That You Found Him, Believe Him (vv.25-29).

Right away after the people found Jesus, He told them to stop looking for satisfaction in all the wrong places (vv.26-27). The root problem was that people searched for temporal satisfaction. *Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves” (v.26).* Notice that Jesus answered the people but not their question. They asked, “When (or how) did you get here?” No doubt if He told them He walked across the water, they would have been impressed. But what good is it to be impressed with the stupendous if you don’t grasp the purpose of the miracle.

Jesus walking on the water is the sort of thing religious people of our age latch on to. Several years ago I read about a group that was trying to obtain the rights to build a concrete pier that extended out into the Sea of Galilee and rested about six inches below the surface of the water. The purpose of the structure was too allow tourists the experienced of “walking on the water.” Obviously they were planning to charge people to enjoy the experience. As with other hoaxes and “surface only religious experiences,” people might get a warm feeling in the process or even thinking “Jesus” kinds of thoughts. But after the experience or warm feeling, they will be no closer to salvation than they were they day they were born.

Instead of answering the people’s question about His mode of transportation, Jesus pointed out that the people responded wrongly to what they saw. In the feeding the day before, the people had witnessed a miraculous sign. They were impressed by Jesus’ ability to provide bread. But they missed the purpose of the miracle. The purpose was twofold: 1) To prove that Jesus is God; 2) To illustrate that Jesus is the Bread of life. That they missed these two truths is not surprising. What can we expect when even the 12 disciples missed the lessons. Mark wrote regarding the disciples, *And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened (Mark 6:52).*

People often flock to religion when it seems to offer something they think they need. They attend churches that provide fellowship, friendship, and a spiritual experience of some kind because it helps them feel better about themselves or about circumstances in general.

But while they are feeling mighty fine, they never see Jesus exalted for who He is – the Savior from sin. They might even read the Bible looking for solace or comfort in time of trouble. But they never discover the Savior from sin because they never realize their need for a Savior. Therefore, our world is satisfied to talk about religion and compare religious experience without coming to grips with their eternal need. Too many people are satisfied to have their passing, temporal needs and wants satisfied while ignoring the more important spiritual, eternal needs that only Jesus can satisfy.

Jesus challenged people like that to search for food that satisfies eternally. *“Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal”* (v.27). In this one sentence, Jesus laid out the whole matter in four points. First, people are guilty of laboring for that which perishes. *“Do not labor for the food that perishes,”* Jesus warned. More exactly Jesus said, *“Stop laboring for the wrong kind of food.”* The people were wrapped up in normal human pursuits. They had to labor for perishing food because God’s curse on sin requires such labor. *Then to Adam He said, . . . Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life* (Genesis 3:17). It is a good a right thing for us to provide the basic needs so that our families can survive (1 Tim. 5:8). The problem comes when we make this pursuit the most important thing in life. All that mattered to these people was that Jesus would provide food. All that matters to our peers is that Jesus provide them with a good job, a nice home, a nice car, nice vacations, and a good retirement. And Jesus said, *“Stop working yourself to death for things that are passing away.”*

People need to labor for food that endures to eternal life. Jesus told them to stop laboring for perishing food, *but for the food that endures to eternal life.* The verb *labor* must also apply to this clause. We pour our energies into that which is perishing (by necessity). We also need to pour our energies into gaining eternal life. Obviously, Jesus did not teach that a person can work enough to gain salvation. That is impossible in light of the truth that *He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,* (Titus 3:5). He had to save us by mercy because, *As it is written:*

“None is righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10). Therefore, compared to God’s holy righteousness, *We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away* (Isaiah 64:6).

That we have no ability to do righteous works that will gain salvation is clear. Be that as it may, God does require us to search for Him because He has made His divine character known. *For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse* (Romans 1:19-20). Then He tells us to search for Him and He will be found. Paul told the Greeks at Athens *that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us* (Acts 17:27). And Isaiah promised, *Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near* (Isaiah 55:6).

People who labor for eternal food will discover that only God the Son can give this satisfaction. It is eternal food *which the Son of Man will give to you.* So Jesus promised us, *“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you”* (Matthew 7:7).

People who are satisfied with that eternal food realize that Jesus of Nazareth is the only way to be reconciled to our Creator. *For on him God the Father has set his seal.* The purpose of Jesus’ works and teaching was to manifest the truth that He came from God to pay the price to cover sin. All the things the people marveled about was the seal of God’s approval. But in the face of overwhelming evidence, the people could not get their minds off the temporal and passing stuff.

The crowd was a bit confused at this point. Jesus told them that they needed to stop laboring for perishing food, but that they should labor for eternal food. What is that? Jesus taught that right labor is to believe God (vv.28-29). The lesson came in response to a good question . . . sort of. *Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?”* (v.28). On one hand, this question shows a preoccupation with need to do something to gain eternal life. The people were like the young ruler. *And behold, a man came up to him,*

saying, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” (Matthew 19:16).

They thought that God requires certain works in order to gain eternal life. If that were true, we don’t need God’s grace. Human nature is sunk in pride, a pride that really believes we can buy off God with our works and efforts. Imagine someone being so sure of himself that he is confident he can do whatever God requires for gaining eternal life! That kind of thinking will try to make God our genie, someone who follows us, approves our plans and yields to our control.

On the other hand, we must do something . . . we must trust God. Trusting is not a work. It is a yielding to God our desire to control our lives. That is the answer Jesus gives to people who wonder what they must do to gain salvation. It is an eternal answer. *Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent” (v.29).* What God requires is simple faith, which is not just a matter of believing something. The people in the crowd already believed that Jesus was special . . . but they weren’t saved! In contrast, God requires full trust regarding the Savior God sent to us.

Fully trusting the Savior means that we trust that Jesus of Nazareth was God in the flesh. It means we trust that Jesus perfectly fulfilled God’s law while He lived on earth, never breaking that law and completing it fully for over 30 years. It means we trust that the blood Jesus shed on the cross is the only acceptable payment for sin. It means we trust that we are in need of that payment because we are indeed sinners against our Creator. We trust that *if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).*

Seekers of Jesus must come to this conclusion. Jesus is God who paid the price for our sins, which price is ours simply by confessing our sins and embracing Christ’s finished work in our behalf. All of Jesus’ teaching and all His miracles on earth pointed to that truth. If you are a seeker, you must come to this end. If you work with seekers, you must bring them to this end.