

Jesus went up on a mountain, sitting down with his disciples. No sooner had they gotten situated, Jesus looks up and sees *'a large crowd coming toward him.'* [Jn. 6:5] Jesus turns to his disciple Philip and asks: *'Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?'* Philip estimates that not even 6-months' wages would be enough to provide all in the crowd even a little bit. Andrew, another disciple and the brother of Simon Peter, tells Jesus that they do have on hand a young boy's lunch consisting of 5 barley loaves and 2 fish...Andrew also acknowledges that this small amount of food is a *'drop in the bucket'* in the face of this hungry crowd. Well, this story concludes: Jesus receives the boy's lunch, offers a word of prayer, has the disciples distribute the food, everyone eats their fill, and the disciples gather up 12 baskets of leftover fish and bread.

That evening, after dark, Jesus' disciples cross the Sea of Galilee by boat and a strong storm blows up and the waters become rough. They struggle to row 3-4 miles and, then, they see *'Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat.'* Jesus identifies himself, tells his disciples *'do not be afraid'*, and *'immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.'* [Jn. 6:21] The well-fed-crowd had observed the disciples sailing into the sunset and noticed Jesus was not in the boat with them. Finding Jesus and his disciples on the other side of the Sea, they asked: *'Rabbi, when did you come here?'* [6:25] This is where our Gospel lesson begins this morning.

Jesus, as he so often did and continues now to do, doesn't answer the question being asked of him. Instead, Jesus addresses a deeper and unmentioned truth of the crowd, as read in The Message: *'You came looking for me not because you saw God in my actions, but because I fed you, filled your stomachs---and for free.'* Jesus' response to these food-seekers results in the sermon title today: Why

Are **We** Looking? Are we here because of what Jesus had done or because we want Jesus to do something more? Do we seek Jesus because, in him, our every need is satisfied or because our wants are insatiable? In the form of a contemporary question, are we asking of Jesus: “What have you done for me, *lately?*”

Jesus instructs people of every generation not to invest time, talent, and treasures into acquiring ‘*food that spoils*’...material, worldly, and at best things of temporary-value. Jesus instructs us to spend or invest our lives in matters that bear eternal significance... precisely what ‘*the Son of Man will give you.*’ How sad that we so often spend so much on things we soon don’t want, while all along we are unwilling to accept the true values that Jesus wants to give us!

People then, and now, remain confused, asking: ‘*What must we do to do the works God requires?*’^[6:28] Jesus seldom made a more concise statement in his response: ‘*The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.*’ Still obstinate, still ignorant, the people request some present proof, some ‘*sign...that we may see it and believe you.*’ We dare not miss this subtle difference! Jesus wants people to ‘*believe in*’ him, yet countless people say ‘We need just one more bit of proof before well ‘*believe you*’.

Do we still find Jesus difficult to believe? Do we still live exhausting days and restless nights in some insatiable quest to acquire what we don’t really need or value? The devil is only too happy to keep our hearts and minds focused on things other than ‘*the bread from heaven.*’ God gives us Jesus and Jesus calls himself ‘*the bread of life.*’ When our needs are met by God Himself, we will never again know earthly hunger and thirst. We experience a contentment that this world cannot provide, but, actually, seeks to steal away.

Jesus is, as the saying goes, *the gift that keeps on giving*. So, we are looking for Jesus...not to fill our stomachs, but to redeem our souls--and cleanse our hearts--and provide meaning to our lives--and to apply victory over death! Our lives of discipleship are, actually, lives of stewardship...being richly blessed day to day and committing ourselves to blessing others in all variety of ways. That, I contend, is why we are looking for Jesus!

Amen.