

Imagine waking up, and going to look for Jesus. However, when you look where he was the day before, he is gone. So you load up a bag and take off across the Sea of Galilee. When you get to Capernaum, you find Jesus. You run up to him, and tell him about how far you came just to find him. And then he turns around, and says, "Why did you come after me?" Wouldn't you be upset? What did he mean why did we come? Forget our reason for coming, shouldn't our effort in getting here be enough. Jesus says that it not enough just to come after him. He says that we must come for the right reason.

Indeed this is just what happened to a bunch of Israelites who woke up the morning after the feeding of the five thousand. They went looking for Jesus, and eventually, after quite a bit of trouble, they found him. But as soon as they did Jesus spoke these words, "'Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.'" Wow, what a downer for these people who had sought Jesus. Come all this way and then told that they shouldn't have come at all, because they came for the wrong reason.

In Jesus day, bread was the food of the day. While they did have some other things like cheese and maybe some figs, the diet revolved around bread. In fact generally all other food were wrapped up in bread both for traveling and for eating. So when these people had seen five thousand men, not to mention the women and children eat bread to their full, even though seconds before only five little barley loaves had been present, that was something else. Yes, they witnessed Jesus sustaining their life, feeding to them what was in their society life itself, bread! This was a guy you wanted to hang around.

You see, especially for the women of Jesus day, bread making and baking took up a good portion of their day. There was no going to the store for a bread mix, and coming home and placing it in the bread maker. First, the grain has to be made into flour, or at least something

close to it. So the women would get out a mortar and pestle and grind away. Then that had to be mixed with water, which of course had to be retrieved from the town well, and a little salt. Yeast was added. And then it had to be kneaded by hand. Finally, loaves were formed, and then if they were lucky, they could take those to the town baker to finish up the process. But for most, they have to start a fire, warm up the clayware oven they had, and bake the bread as well.

If you have ever made bread from scratch, you know how long it takes even with all of our modern helps. So you can imagine, that for these people, finding someone who could make bread appear in an instant, that was quite a find. So you can't totally blame them for trying to find Jesus. Yes, they went seeking more bread. But this was a bad reason to come Jesus told them. He told them that they should have come for the signs. They should have come because they were hungry for the bread maker, not the bread.

These people though wouldn't be swayed that easily. They came for bread and didn't want to leave without it. They were hungry. So if Jesus wasn't just going to give them bread, they would have to go to plan B. Jesus had told them that they should have come because of the signs. So they decided to ask for a sign. Maybe that was the way to wrestle some bread out of Jesus. After all, just as we heard in our Old Testament readings for today, even their ancestors when traveling through the barren desert were given bread called manna when they asked for it. Moses had made it rain down from heaven every morning. What a deal that was! No grinding, no kneading, no baking, just wake up and bread to your fill right outside your door. Surely if this Jesus was worth believing in, he could at least do that for them. After all, Moses did.

Jesus had to do a little correcting. It wasn't Moses after all that gave the wandering Israelites bread, it was God. And if they wanted the best bread ever, it would come from God also. This bread would come down out of heaven and give life to the world. What a deal, it

sounded like manna but maybe even better. So they told Jesus, "We'll take it." Just tell us where to get it. Then Jesus threw them for a loop. He said, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst." Yes, they came seeking a miracle of free bread, but they found the true miracle, the bread maker who was life-giving bread himself.

What about us? Why did you come seeking Jesus today in his house? Did you come because your family comes? Did you come because it is just what you do on Sunday? Perhaps you came because you want to be a good Christian so that God will continue to provide for all your needs, you know bread and the like. After all, should God really care why you came, as long as you are here? After all you woke up early, you got the family ready, and you drove out here to the country. Shouldn't he be impressed with your efforts? Well Jesus today, just like he did back then demands that you come for the right reason. And what is that right reason? It is that you come to be in the presence of the bread maker who is himself living-giving bread. We should come because we love Jesus with our whole hearts, minds, and souls for what he did for us.

You know, those people in our text didn't come for the right reason, and maybe for some of us here today didn't come for the right reason either. But thanks be to God, regardless of why they came, and regardless of why we came, they met and we meet today the true Bread of life. We meet the bread of life who forgives our wrong reasons for coming and fill us up with himself. He feeds us with his word and he stuffs us with his supper. Yes, he feeds us with himself. And having been fed, we hunger no longer, neither do we thirst. For the bread of life has sought us out. He has made the effort to cross over from heaven to earth and find us in our sin. And thankfully, he came for all the right reasons. He came to die on a cross in our place.

He came to rise that death might no longer enslave us. He came to assure us of new life right now and eternal life to come. We are fed. And having tasted again the bread of life, we can speak the words of our introit with new vigor, "Oh taste and see, the Lord is good!" Amen.