

## Which Jesus are you seeking?

### John 6:22-27

This is the second week of a sermon series  
where we are taking an in-depth look at John ch 6.  
A chapter which describes Jesus as *the bread of life*,

And if you look at the screen,  
this is where the action of John 6  
takes place.  
We read last week that Jesus went  
across to the far side of the lake  
and sat down to teach on top of a  
mountain.  
From the satellite view we see  
that the mountains on the far  
side start about half way down,  
so this is where the feeding of  
the 5000 happened.

Then in the evening the disciples  
headed to Capernaum in boats,  
but after they had gone only 3 or  
4 miles they got into trouble,  
Jesus then met them as he  
walked out to them on the water,  
and we are told that as he got  
into the boat  
they immediately reached shore (which is a miracle all on its own).



Today we begin with the crowd left on the far side of Lake Galilee.

The next day we read in verse 22 the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone. <sup>23</sup> Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks.

So here's Tiberias, and these boats would have sailed straight across,  
And then as soon as these boats landed, John tells us in v 24  
they were commandeered by the crowd  
who headed off to Capernaum in pursuit of Jesus.

It's a hectic few verses with this boat chase across the water,  
It's a scene where some paparazzi wouldn't be out of place,  
Maybe on the back of a jet ski high-tailing it across the waters  
Hunting down the man of the moment,  
Seeking to capture the news story of the hour.

Jesus is a very popular figure,  
 people are interested in what's he's doing,  
 he's drawing a crowd,  
 he's the subject of the local headlines.  
 And what's even more remarkable  
 is that he's still capable of eliciting the same response today.

Here's the latest edition of *National Geographic*,  
 The basic idea of a magazine cover is to arrest  
 people's attention so that they stop and pick the  
 magazine up.  
 Now the editors of this secular magazine are not  
 stupid; they know that people are interested in  
 Jesus, and that people today are asking the same  
 question that the very first disciples were asking:  
 "Who is this guy?"  
 "In search of the real Jesus" is the title;  
 "Who is this man?"



Now as people focus their attention on Jesus  
 they often formulate an answer to this question;  
 after observing Jesus they work out  
 that Jesus is a man worth claiming for their own,  
 he's a man worth recruiting for your cause.

If you remember last week,  
 after Jesus had displayed his power with the feeding of the 5000,  
 the crowd had wanted to make Jesus their own King by force.  
 "Ahhhhh, he's the man we want!"  
 Imagine if all that power could be harnessed for us!"

And when people observe Jesus today there's a similar thought process.  
 People see the social power that Jesus still has,  
 and they seek to harness that for themselves.  
 Do you remember Donald Trump's presidential campaign,  
 when he declared that the Bible was his favourite book?  
 What was that all about? Maybe I'm being too cynical, maybe,  
 but I suspect it was about a prospective President  
 harnessing Christ's ability to draw followers for his own ends.

So it's the same today as it was in the time of Christ,  
 there's a lot of excitement around him,  
 and people are wanting to claim him for their own.

But here's today's question: have we claimed the right Jesus?  
 Is the Jesus we admire and associate with the real Jesus,

or is he a Jesus that we have created in our minds?

It's an important question to ask  
 because lots of partnerships start off with high hopes—  
 you form a new relationship,  
 you hire a new employee,  
 you find a new doctor or some other professional—  
 and the initial signs are great  
 but then reality sets in and sometimes you end up disappointed.

What we hear in verses 26 and 27 is Jesus saying basically  
 "It's nice that you want me for your own,  
 but do you really know me? Do you really know what's on offer?"  
 And as we hear Jesus confront the crowd's faulty perception,  
 it's a chance for us to recalibrate our own opinion of Jesus  
 and our own understanding of what he actually has on offer.

And so in verse 26 we hear Jesus challenge the reasoning  
 behind the crowd's pursuit of him. Reading from verse 25:  
 When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" <sup>26</sup> Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.

At a number of points in his Gospel,  
 John makes sure to note the capacity Jesus has  
 to know exactly what people are thinking, even if they remain silent.  
 In Psalm 139, King David says of God:  
 You have searched me, LORD, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar ... Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely.  
 And so here is Jesus, enacting this divine capacity  
 to know what lies within a person's heart.

And what does Jesus discern?  
 These people have understood Jesus capacity to do wondrous works  
 alright—these are not people who are in denial of Jesus power—but Jesus  
 knows they're wanting this power for their own ends, to have a full stomach  
 and a satisfied hunger.

Do people in today's church approach Jesus in the same way?  
 I think sometimes they do.  
 At a previous church where I worked at  
 we had a couple approach us seeking baptism for their child.  
 This family were strangers to us, we'd never met them before,  
 but we were their local church  
 and I'm happy to baptize local children whether we know them or not.  
 and so we did the baptism  
 and afterwards I handed the mother the baptism certificate,

and she says "Aha! Yes! This is what we need!  
 Private schools will often ask for the baptism certificate!"  
 And after that we didn't see them again.  
 What was the need? Private schooling.  
 How do we get it? Well, if we can harness the power of baptism in the name  
 of Jesus, then that might just do the trick.

I presume that many of us here at church want to be associated with Jesus;  
 many of us are claiming Jesus as our own. But what are we hoping to gain?

Jesus points out the problem with this type of thinking at the beginning of verse 27:

Do not work for food that spoils  
 The problem with many of our ambitions, or rather,  
 the problem with the ambitions that we wish to recruit Jesus to fulfill  
 is that none of them will last.

After Christmas I went to check out the local sales,  
 and I found the pair of canvas shoes that I wanted, but they weren't on sale!  
 And so I thought to myself  
 "I don't care, I'm going to pay full price and buy them anyway  
 because it's what I want"  
 And so that afternoon I was walking around my house in my new shoes  
 and I thought "The grass needs watering. I can do that in my new shoes"  
 and so I walked over to the tap,  
 pointed the nozzle of the hose well away from my shoes  
 and I flipped on the tap full pelt only to discover  
 that the other end of the hose was not attached to the tap  
 and it only took about .5 of a second to completely drench my shoes  
 and to have the colour run,  
 and to mark them as my own with some water stains.  
 I had them for like, five minutes!

But that's the way it is with the desires of this world. They don't last!

Are we recruiting Jesus to satisfy us with things that are merely temporal,  
 things that we enjoy for a time but are guaranteed to fade away?  
 What's tragic about this approach is not only its futility,  
 But it's that we miss what Jesus actually has on offer,  
 and what he wants to give is so much better than what we often desire.

Verse 27 again: Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life,  
 which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of  
 approval."  
 On one level, of course there's nothing wrong with wanting a good meal.  
 God has created us with a need for food; hungers are designed to be satisfied.  
 There's nothing wrong with wanting good things for your children.  
 The issue is that we can become obsessed with the things of *this* world

when Jesus offers us something that can take us beyond it.

The crowd wants Jesus to bring them a meal  
but Jesus is offering them a life that literally lasts forever.  
A life where they'll never be hungry again,  
a life where they'll never get sick,  
a life where relationships will be rich and fulfilling,  
a life where peace will reign and where death will be a memory.

It's a life where the following occupations will no longer be needed:  
Police officer, judge, paramedic, doctor, prisonguard, bodyguard, soldier,  
gun-maker, lawyer, preacher, undertaker, gravedigger.  
Maybe the bakers, chefs and cooks might have an ongoing role,  
given Jesus describes the next world as a *banquet*.  
But Jesus says this is what he has come to give us, free entry into this world.

Nevertheless, people don't seem to really want this;  
they're happy with smaller things.  
There's a great quote by CS Lewis about this phenomenon of  
ignoring the age to come in preference for this world  
in an essay he wrote entitled the *Weight of Glory*.  
He says We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition  
when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in  
a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are  
far too easily pleased.

He's basically saying the problem is not that we want too much,  
It's that our ambitions are actually too small.  
There's so much more that Jesus is willing to give,  
yet when it's presented before us,  
like the people in the crowd around Jesus,  
all we can think about is our next immediate desire.  
Not that those desires are necessarily wrong,  
it's just that they're temporary and not eternal.

Why is it that we have so much trouble being satisfied with this eternal gift?  
On paper it seems like a no-brainer,  
but in reality we love those worldly blessings don't we?  
The desires of this world are so strong and some are so easily satisfied,  
but the blessings Jesus would have us focus on seem so distant and costly.  
Eternal life sounds great, but we have to wait for it,  
and in the meantime we have to sign up as one of Jesus followers  
which means exercising some discipline over our worldly desires.  
Is it worth it?

In this chapter Jesus describes himself as the bread of life.

We have to decide whether we really want to eat it  
or whether we're going to settle for some cheap substitute  
which tastes nice when it's fresh and is really easy to eat ,  
but is also full of preservatives and which really isn't that good for you  
and which leaves you hungry again soon after you've finished it.

Take up the bread that Jesus offers,  
learn to appreciate the benefits of what he has baked for us,  
and in the end the real Jesus will satisfy you  
and you'll lose your taste for the false Jesus,  
the Jesus you have constructed in your own mind  
to satisfy your own desires.

Which is just as well, because false Jesus won't do anything much for you at all.