

The Rev. Randall R. Shirley
August 1, 2021
Ephesians 4:1-6, John 6:24-35
Sermon – “Am I Doing The Work Of God?”

This morning we find ourselves in John’s Gospel, and within this passage Jesus reveals God’s divine answer to that one question that so many, if not all seekers and believers, come to ask. The question of, “What is the Work of God?” For many of us, this is a burning question of, “Am I doing the Work of God?”

I used to think of God’s work as acting morally or doing evangelism. Even praise and worship would come to mind. As important as all these are within the Christian life, I wasn’t sure if I was doing the work of God. But here in this passage, Jesus goes to the heart of the matter when asked, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God.”

It’s a question that Jesus responds to with such a simple and yet profound answer. But to fully understand the answer, we must first put our reading into context, to know the backstory. To know that this Chapter begins with the largest Public Miracle of Jesus’ ministry. Jesus feeding the five thousand with five loaves of bread and two fish; and the crowd is amazed.

In a time when many went hungry, where having enough to eat to survive was hard labor, Jesus feeds thousands of people. And not only are they fully fed, but there’s also food left over! By verse 15 of this chapter, we understand that the people want to make Jesus their King. They want to break away from under Roman Rule; they want Jesus to make their lives easier. And now come to our Gospel passage.

It’s been a few days, and the people want Jesus to feed them again. Look with me in verse 26. Jesus calls out to the crowd, “You’re seeking me, not because you saw signs, not because you see me as the one who has come down from heaven – No, you seek me only because you ate your fill of bread, and now all you want from me is to satisfy your belly-hunger again. Jesus is calling them out.

The people had witnessed a feeding miracle, but their attention is not on the divine nature of Jesus. It’s on the opportunity to fill their stomachs. Think about that. Think about People who come to Jesus simply for what they can get out of him. It’s a call-out to all of us –it’s a warning to all who seek Jesus today. Because too many Christians give the impression that they are more motivated by, and they live for their self-interests...

According to a Gallup study, of those Adults attending religious services at least twice a month only 42% stated the primary reason they go to church is to worship God. That’s only 42% claiming a true belief in The Faith. All the others, more than half who attend church at least twice a month, stated these primary reasons for going to church: Because of family tradition

and obligation; for moral guidance; or, just to feel good about themselves. These are good reasons to go to church, but they are not the Primary Reason for church!

My friends, we as the faithful remnant need to know this when witnessing to other. That when we witness to those seeking Jesus that they'll know Jesus is much more than feeding empty bellies for the here and now. The truth is Jesus is more about feeding our souls. And what we find is that Jesus is all about abundant and everlasting life!

In verse 27, Jesus redirects our attention to this when He says, "Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures." Jesus is pointing towards a greater truth. Jesus is telling us that there's a food - a food that endures to eternal life. Unlike the manna in the wilderness that did not last long - that only nourished the physical bodies of the Israelites - there's a bread that doesn't rot. A food that nourishes real life, divine life, a life that continues forever.

Here Jesus is repeating what He had earlier told the Samaritan woman at the well. Earlier in John 4, Jesus says, "The water I give - will be a water welling-up to eternal life. And what's significant for us to understand is the Greek word for life in these passages. The Greeks have two words to our one for life. The first being *Bios*, referring to our physical life. The second word is *Zoe*, referring to the divine life, life of quality and abundance. This is the word that is used by Jesus in these passages.

Three times, in our Gospel passage, verses 27, 33, and 35, Jesus calls our attention to this life. This life of *Zoe* - the Life we receive when we feed on Jesus. You know, Jesus is the Greatest Teacher. Using bread as the metaphor for His life and Teaching. Knowing that Bread and Water are common to every one of us. For we all Hunger and Thirst, and we all want to be Satisfied. But all too often, because of our sinful nature, we feed on food that rots.

Like all of us, Saint Augustine Struggled with this. In his book, *Confessions*, considered as the first autobiography ever written in 400 AD, Augustine identifies his constant hunger and thirst, for the things of this world. And like all of us, this hunger and thirst, stems from his restless heart. Augustine writes, "God made us for Himself, and our hearts are restless until they find peace in Him."

Augustine acknowledging that his restlessness, would never be satisfied by the material possessions of this world. Augustine pointing to this passage where Jesus says, "I am the bread of life. All who come to Me shall not hunger, and who believes in Me shall never thirst." Jesus saying, "Feed on me and be satisfied." Only when we believe in Jesus and Feed on Him, only then will we have the Fullness of Life.

This is the Gospel Message that comes to us this morning, and this is THE ANSWER to that question, "what is the Work of God?" I want you to see the answer clearly in our passage. In verse 28, the people ask, "What must we do to be doing the works of God?" The Works, the *Erga* in Greek is the plural use of the word. Works, here, is referring to the Old Testament legal

system. The Son of God, Our Lord and Savior, Jesus, answers them saying “that the (*Ergon*,) one work of God is to believe in Jesus whom the Father has sent.” Jesus in point to himself that they are to feed on Him. “For the bread of God is He (Jesus) who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

Please hear this: Jesus, is giving us the connection between divine food and doing The Will of God. Yes, the answer is simple. The work of God is to believe in Jesus - to feed on Him. And yet, it's a message that's so hard for many people to get. So hard because many only want what they want from Jesus, and many substituting the true bread from heaven to feed on the material things of this world. Sadly, they miss out. They fall short, fall away from the ZOE, the abundant life, that God wants us to have. God wants us to have that quality and abundance of life. To have that divine life - here and now. Don't we all want that? I do! And I know you do? So how do we feed on Jesus?

I'm going to share three ways when braided together brings us to fully feed on the bread of life. The First is Being in The Word. Reading our Bible is one way to feed on Jesus. This is so important to our Christian health that coming this Fall, we'll add a fourth Adult Sunday School Class dedicated to being in The Word. Sunday School here at St. Michael's Church is for the purpose of feeding on Jesus.

The Second way to feed on Jesus is through Prayer. As Billy Graham said, “Prayer is not merely an act, but it's an attitude of life... a two-way conversation between you and God flowing from and to our hearts.” Prayer is important to feeding on Christ and it's why we have prayer ministers to pray with you after this service. As Paul says in Ephesians 4, “Pray always!”

And thirdly, woven into our reading the Bible and praying is our nearing to Jesus, our abiding in Christ. Allowing God's Word to fill our minds, His Holy Spirit directing our actions, living Christ-like. You see, when we truly seek Jesus and feed on Him, we are profoundly changed. We no longer have the same desires we had before accepting Him as Lord and Savior. That's transformation, and it's a sign of being born again!

This is the truth! Jesus has come for you to have abundant and everlasting life. When you believe and feed on Him, this truth takes place within you.

Are you doing the Work of God?

Let us pray.