

John 6:24–35 When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus. ²⁵When they found him on the other side of the sea, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?”

²⁶Jesus answered them, “Amen, Amen, I tell you: **You are not looking for me because you saw the miraculous signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled.** ²⁷**Do not continue to work for the food that spoils, but for the 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.**”

³⁵**“I am the Bread of Life,” Jesus told them. “The one who comes to me will never be hungry, and the one who believes in me will never be thirsty.”**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, if you could have God do one thing for you, what would it be? Anything at all that you wanted or thought you needed, what would it be? A million dollars? A bigger house? A better car? Health? Success? Fulfillment? Love? The question really gets to the heart of another question — Why are you here? Why are you a follower of Christ? Why are you a child of God? Why are you here, at church, this morning? What did you hope to find? What do you hope to get?

“Why are you here?” is a question Jesus was really wanting the people who followed him all the way to the other side of the sea of Galilee to think about. And he answered it for them too. **“You are here because you ate some bread and were full.”** Was it a miracle? Yes. Was it amazing? Of course. Can we blame the people for following Jesus after witnessing such power, only to want to see the same power again? No. Food was probably number one on their list of daily concerns. For the most part, you and I simply walk to the fridge or pantry, or take a quick trip to the grocery store when we run out, they didn’t have it so easy. Theirs was a constant, daily struggle to be fed and feed their families. It’s what they thought about when they woke up in the morning and when they went to bed again, thinking about the next day. So to have a man there who could meet this daily need, this great concern at a moment’s notice was a pretty big deal. Worth traveling to the other side of the Sea of Galilee — or farther — to find him and follow him, and never have to worry about food again.

They were missing the big picture of what Jesus had to offer — really, the only picture, and Jesus didn’t waste any time showing them this. They got to the other side of the lake and said, Jesus, when did you get here? And he ignored their question and got to the heart of what he wanted them to

consider — **You are not looking for me because you saw the miraculous signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled. Do not continue to work for the food that spoils.**” Jesus had much more to offer.

Why are you here? Are you here for the quick fixes to life’s temporary problems? Are you here because you think regular church attendance is the key to getting what you want from God? Have you ever let God know about how you feel about his perceived lack of blessings, especially since *you* go to church? Why are you here? Your sinful nature is asking the same question of you every week. Why are you here? Why are you going to church? You’ve tried it long enough. It hasn’t panned out into an easier life. You still struggle, still suffer. The people out there have it better than you...Why are you here?

The Israelites in our first reading this morning thought the same thing. **“If only we had died by the LORD’s hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat around pots of meat and ate as much food as we wanted, but now you have brought us out into this wilderness to have this whole community die of hunger.”** I think our patience would have run out: “Fine! Go back to your pots of meat and all the food you wanted! If that’s all you want out of life then you will be slaves to a much more cruel master than Pharaoh.”

In our sinfulness we are constantly, even within these walls, working for the food that spoils. Throwing aside the true treasures and blessings of God that surround us, just waiting to fill our souls, so we can fill our stomachs with things far less valuable, and much more fleeting.

If that’s all we want out of life, if we continue to strive after the desires of our sinful flesh that sees material blessings as the be all end all from the hand of God, material blessings, here and now, quick fixes, and easy life, eat drink and be merry, then we too will become slaves, slaves again to sin, the death, to hell, to the devil.

Jesus said it elsewhere: **What good is it for a man to gain the whole world and yet forfeit his soul?** Why are you here? Are you here for food that spoils or food that lasts? Are you here for a quick feel good message that has no substance, no lasting power out there in the world, or the true message of the Bible that has withstood the test of time and has been the refuge of God’s people throughout every age? Are you here for a quick fix for the temporary problems of this life, or for the solution to your greatest need making all the problems of this life fade away, fade into the brightness of the eternal life that’s waiting for us?

Because that is what we have here. The words, the promises, the faithfulness of our God who will never leave us or forsake us. The words of our God that remind us who we are — sinners broken by sin and battered by a sinful world, separated from God and left utterly empty. Shells of people desperately hungry for any kind of hope when it comes to our eternal future and relationship with God. Here we have the promises of our God that fill the empty pit in our souls, not with material wealth, not with financial freedom, or freedom from sickness and disease, but with the Gospel. The good news of Jesus, that his life, death and resurrection have won for us freedom from the price of sin and freedom from an eternity in hell. Freedom from the sickness of our sin that secretly tries to destroy everything we touch. We have here every Sunday, as we come in from that cold dark world where we can feel so alone, the reminder of how our God is faithful no matter what, and is with us, and will see us through.

We saw the soul-filling words, promises, and faithfulness of our God in our Old Testament Reading. Where you or I would have lost our patience and sent the Israelites back to slavery in Egypt, God provided for their needs out of his grace. And we saw the spiritual reality of that truth in our second reading. God doesn't send us away, to the fires of hell, but has provided us with a new spirit, **one of righteousness and true holiness**.

This is why you are here. Not for food that spoils, but for this food that lasts! To take that faith that the Holy Spirit deposited in your heart at your baptism and have it fed and nourished and strengthened as we gather around the Word, as we receive the Lord's Supper, as our sins are forgiven, as our hope is restored and made certain. This is why you are here — to gather together with your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ and know that even if everything is not ok in your life today, your eternal life is set. And then to know that if everything in your eternal life is already set, then we can come back to this life and know that everything is going to be ok.

Food that spoils is ok — Jesus used his power to give it to the people. We use it here during our time on earth. Material wealth, material blessings, But it's not why we are here. As much as the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh want us to focus on all that, that's not why we are here. We're here to escape all that, to refocus on what really matters. Christ for us. Christ in us. To the glory of God so that on the last day, as we are taken to our heavenly home, we will see so clearly the vast gulf between the treasures of this world and the treasures our God has bestowed upon us.

Until then, may we see the difference clearly through the eyes of faith. To take a question like “If you could have God do one thing for you,” and see it for what it is — a foolish chasing after the food that spoils. What more can God do for us than he has already done? What more can God give us than he's already given? He's given his Son, taken away our sins. Suffered and died in our place, rose again as a guarantee, defeated sin, death, hell, and the devil. Eternal life awaits.

May these things alone be our focus and always the answer to why we are here. In Jesus' name, Amen!