**Text: Mark 6:45-56**

What Do We Want From God?

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. What do you want? This does this question actually have an answer? Do we really know? It’s such a nebulous question really. There are so many different subjects that could be covered by that question. The most often way I’ve heard that question asked is when it comes to food. What do you want to eat? Where do you want to go? In my experience the first answer is usually “I dunno”. Have you ever asked someone where they want to eat or what they want to eat and have them say they don’t know or don’t care? Have you ever answered that question in that way? What about once it’s time to eat, have those people or you ever complained about it after previously stating your disinterest in choosing? Last week we saw the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000. Those people didn’t get asked what they wanted to eat. Rather they had the choice, to eat or not to eat. I don’t know about you, but when I was a child dinner was not something I had any control over. I didn’t even have control over when I left the table. I could only leave once my plate had a level of cleanliness that was satisfactory to my parents. This often meant that all vegetables, no matter how much I hated them, had to be eaten before I could leave the table. Now that’s no problem, and in fact I find it humorous that things like green beans and broccoli used to be considered disgusting. However, I have met very few toddlers that would rather eat cooked carrots as opposed to ice cream or literally any other dessert. Not only could I not have dessert before I finished my vegetables, but I couldn’t even watch TV or play with my toys until they were gone. It was also a rule, that if your dinner wasn’t finished by bedtime, you ate the rest of your dinner for breakfast. That only happened to me once. But I didn’t have a choice then, I had to eat what was put in front of me. Now I do have the choice, and still, there are many times where I stand there and I don’t know what I want. We actually rarely know exactly what we want. Just think about your life for a second, what is it that you want out of life? The answer to that question changes all the time. If you had asked me a year ago, what I wanted most in the world, my answer would’ve been, “I don’t want to go back to school.” If you asked me now, my answer would be, “I want football season to get here.” Tomorrow it might be something different. The same might be true for you.

Adam and Eve thought they knew what they wanted. But that changed didn’t it. One day they are perfectly fine living in the garden as they were. But then, just a couple of words from the snake, and suddenly they wanted to change everything. We are no different from them. Often times we give into temptation impulsively rather than through a long, drawn out thought process, in the spur of the moment as it were. Yet we seek to combat our impulsiveness by teaching kids to think before they speak. Yet who here among us has not spoken out of turn. Who here has always, no matter what, always, under every circumstance, carefully considered their words before they were spoken? What about our thoughts? Can we even put a filter on that which enters our brains seemingly arbitrarily? The fact of the matter is that human beings are impulsive creatures. Just look at a normal news cycle and how quickly a story will change or suddenly become of no interest. We don’t just do it with our news, but the next time you watch a movie, try to pay attention to how many times they cut to a different camera angle during a scene. Or how about this, how long do you think I could preach up here before you start to lose interest? Based on what I know about my own attention span I have no doubt that I may have lost the interest of some of you already. This is how our brain works. We don’t want to sit here and listen to someone drone on for 45 minutes. In our Gospel lesson, at the beginning it seems as though the disciples do not want to leave Jesus’ side. After all, they had just witnessed his divine power.

They were captivated by him and the work that he had just done in feeding 5,000 people from 5 loaves and 2 fish. It was truly a great miracle and they did not want to leave his presence. Yet the first words from our Gospel lesson are, “**Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him…**” He didn’t ask them, he told them what they needed to do, they needed to go on without him, at least for now. And what was it that these disciples encountered without Jesus? Well they encountered a headwind. Our text says, “**He saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them.**” What’s more is that our text says that Jesus waited until the 4th watch of the night, roughly 3 am, to address their plight. Now to be clear this was not the same instance as what we previously heard where waves were breaking over the bow and flooding the boat. They were not in peril when Jesus went to them on the water. But life certainly was not easy for them and I think it is an important thing to address, the fact that Jesus didn’t jump in and save them right away. Instead Jesus let them struggle and toil while he watched them from afar. He didn’t even plan on getting into the boat with them as our text says, “**…he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost…**” It wasn’t until they misidentified him that he spoke to them. Our English translation says he told them, “**Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.**” In Greek this saying loses a bit of it’s softness as the word Jesus is more along the lines of “Ok settle down.” Our text even says “**they did not understand the about the loaves but their hearts were hardened**” referencing Jesus’ previous miracle. After all, they had just witnessed the divine glory of Jesus at the feeding of the 5,000. Suddenly he comes to them on the water and they seem to forget who he was. They weren’t comforted when they saw him walking on the water, a small feat compared to what they had previously witnessed. Instead they saw him as a threat, they were terrified that he was a ghost. Instead of seeing him as the Son of God, they thought he was something else. They missed the whole point and just considered it a miracle instead. The crowds were the same way, for they did not come to hear his words, rather they came so that he could heal the sick. They didn’t want to hear his proclamations, they wanted to see results.

I think that the disciples lack of understanding of Jesus is something for us to look at, because in a way I think it is a reflection of ourselves. We often don’t understand the way in which God is working in our lives. Much like the disciples, we sometimes struggle against a headwind. This headwind could be a lack of financial security, health issues, family problems you name it. Anything that prevents our lives from being calm and predictable. Do you think there are times that God lets us struggle? My friends he absolutely does. He lets us struggle and toil and sweat and you know what, it isn’t fun. I personally don’t enjoy the struggles of life. I wish everything was easy. But that is not the way God operates. God allows us to struggle through life because it helps us to realize who is truly in control. It helps us to understand the true nature of God. For when the disciples were terrified Jesus got in the boat with them. When they got ashore, he didn’t turn away the sick, but he healed them. When we are truly in peril, when we are struggling, we often times go to God expecting a loaves and fishes type of miracle. We ask God to relieve us, to immediately fix our situation.

My friends our God does fix our situation. He may not heal our diseases in the fashion we like or put money into our bank accounts. But our God does fix us. Through the power of the Holy Spirit our God grants us the faith necessary to believe in his promises. He gives us the faith to have an understanding of Jesus, the man who died upon the cross for our sins. He gives us the ability to come to repentance, to bow before our God and confess that we are miserable sinners in desperate need of aid. That is what we are doing here. The words may have become routine to us now, but our confession is our true realization of where we are in life. We are at the bottom, deserving of temporal and eternal punishment, as we have stated here today. We are not deserving of the forgiveness we receive. But that is the definition of grace. That is the definition of mercy. In reality, while we look for a miracle to save us from our struggles, we overlook this forgiveness that we receive, for that is a true miracle. It is a miracle that God would reconcile his relationship with us. It is a miracle that our God wants to have a relationship with us. It is a miracle that God’s presence comes to us here and now. We spend so much time hoping for relief in our own lives that, much like the disciples, we don’t understand the loaves. We don’t understand the great work that Christ has done, what his death and resurrection truly mean, because that miracle works in our lives every minute of every day. Every minute of every day you are a baptized child of God, your sins are forgiven, and you are an heir to everlasting life. That, truly is the greatest miracle of them all, and it’s one that happens in our lives every single day now and forever. Amen. Now may the peace of God which surpasses our understanding keep and guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus now and forever. Amen.