

Weekly Gospel Readings The 1st Sunday of Meshir

I Am the Bread of Life

On this Sunday (02/11/24), the first Sunday of Meshir, the Church reads from [John 6:22-27](#). Despite its brevity, this Gospel passage reveals many important lessons worthy of contemplation. We will focus on three lessons: genuinely seeking Jesus, uncovering our intentions behind believing in God, and laboring for the food that endures to everlasting life.

Following the miraculous feeding of the five thousand men (not counting women and children) and the disciples witnessing Jesus walking on water, crowds pursue Jesus. St John the Evangelist writes, “When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they also got into boats and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus” ([Jn 6:24](#)). Notice that when the people didn’t find Jesus, they got into their boats and sought Him elsewhere, more specifically in Capernaum (village of consolation or comfort). We can understand this verse allegorically, focusing on how the people actively sought Jesus when they couldn’t find Him in the place they were looking.

The truth is we often look for Jesus in places where He wouldn’t be, yet, unlike the crowd in this passage, we persist in looking for Him in those ‘wrong’ places. God readily makes Himself available for us, and He is eagerly waiting for us. This is evident in multiple verses in Scripture, including [James 4:8](#) and [Jeremiah 29:13](#). However, we are at fault as we are the ones who look for Him in dry and desolate places. In the Old Testament, God makes Himself known in high places such as Mount Sinai and Mount Horeb, meaning that we must ascend, elevate our minds, and focus on the heavenly things to find Him. God is also found on the Cross on Golgotha, meaning that we must crucify our own fleshly desires to be with Him. God is found in many other places as well, like the sound of a low whisper ([1 Kings 19:12](#)), a fragrant garden ([Song of Songs 6:2](#)), or in Solomon’s temple ([2 Chronicles 7:1-3](#)). The point is that God can be sought and found in many different ways; however, are we seeking Him out in the right place? Are we prepared to meet Him? Are we ready to forgo our own desires to seek Him? Do we truly even want to meet Him in the first place?

Let’s return to the passage. Next, the people find Him on the other side of the sea and ask Him, “Rabbi, when did You come here?”. Jesus replies, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.” Here, Jesus, in His omniscience, unveils their intentions before them, telling them that they only seek Him because they were filled from all the loaves and fish, He had given them earlier.

God knows our true intentions in everything we do, despite us not knowing our own intentions. It is of paramount importance that we question the intentions behind our faith. Are we truly seeking

God for who He is, or are we seeking Him for who we want to be? In this passage, God reveals that their hearts were seeking Him for material satisfaction, which can only make us reflect on our intentions. Do we seek Him only so that we can receive ‘blessings’ in the form of success, status, financial security, etc.? Let us ask God to make our intentions known and constantly purify them.

The last part of the passage that we will focus on is when Jesus tells the people, “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.” The Apostolic Constitutions refers to this verse in explaining how we should go about conducting our lives: “Follow therefore your trades as by the by, for your maintenance, but make the worship of God your main business; as also our Lord said: Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that which endures unto everlasting life.” Indeed, our main goal, primary purpose, and entire being is to worship God.

But how do we labor for everlasting life? It is simple. We are to love God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind ([Mt 22:37](#)). But how is loving God a type of laboring? St John Chrysostom explains in his commentary on [1 Thessalonians 1:3](#): “Merely to love is no labor at all. But to love genuinely is great labor. For tell me, when a thousand things are stirred up that would draw us from love, and we hold out against them all, is it not labor?”

May we seek God with pure intentions and labor for the food that endures.

Sources:

- Bible, English Standard Version
- Catena Bible, Commentary on John
- Catena Bible, Commentary on 1 Thessalonians