

May 8, 2005
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

“What God Wants Us To Do”

John 6:26-29 (NIV)

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. 27 Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."

28 Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?"

29 Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

Jesus tells a crowd of people who were looking for Him, that they were searching for Him because He fed them. He was referring to the incident in the beginning of chapter 6 when Jesus fed over 5,000 people with just five barley loaves of bread and two fish. And they were searching for Him not because they saw a miraculous sign but because their stomachs were filled and now it's the next morning and they want Him to feed them again.

Notice that Jesus says, "you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs." The word used here is a different word than *miracle* thus it is interpreted as *miraculous signs*. The miracle Jesus performed to feed over 5,000 with just five barley loaves and two fish was a *sign* that pointed to the fact that Jesus was God the Messiah. So, they were not searching for Jesus because all signs pointed to Him being the Messiah, rather they were searching for Him because they wanted breakfast! They wanted a full stomach...Jesus wanted to give them a full heart! Jesus wants to supply all our material needs if we put Him first and He can fill the deeper need of an empty heart.

So Jesus tells them (v27) "do not work for food that spoils...don't be so concerned about perishable things like food. Instead," Jesus says, "Work for food that endures to eternal life...(in other words) Spend your energy seeking the eternal life that I can give you." We are more concerned about our material needs than our spiritual needs. We work harder to get material things and spiritual concerns are secondary. Material things are only for this life, they are things that will spoil, decay, they are temporary. Jesus wants to give eternal life.

Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Obviously they are thinking of laws they have to keep and other works or requirements they would have to perform in order to please God. That was what they were used to in their religion. Laws, regulations, rituals, that had to be strictly kept to have and maintain peace with God.

Notice that they say what *works* does God require, plural. What things must we do to do all the works God requires? When I was a kid my relationship with God was all about

the works God required. It was a religion of guilt and works. God, I believed, was always keeping a lookout for me to mess up so He could then pour on the guilt. I felt God was angry with me most times and I had to do things to appease Him or watch out! I was afraid of what He might do to me. Everything was a sin. If I cursed it was a sin; if I didn't curse but wanted to it was a sin. If I didn't go to church it was a sin; if I went to church but wasn't paying attending it was a sin. I remember one time it was a holy day (not a Sunday but a holy day) that required us to be in church...and I didn't go. I felt so guilty about it that I promised I would say a certain prayer...10 times, every night...for the rest of my life. What a burden! Then some nights I would forget or was too tired to pray. The next night I'd have to pray the prayer 20 times to make up for the night before...isn't this exhausting? I eventually gave up on my promise and decided it would be easier to just feel guilty for the rest of my life.

Jesus wants to give us a full and satisfying life. Jesus can give us (v27) eternal life. For God the Father sent Him for that very purpose and the miraculous signs He did pointed to the fact that, "On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." Remember the old commercials when a product would say it had the "Good House Keeping seal of approval." Good House Keeping would check out these products and affix to the product their seal of approval. Good House Keeping was a source you could trust (supposedly). Jesus had the Father's seal of approval and the things He did were signs of this approval. The most important sign was that He was raised from the dead three days after being tortured, killed and buried in a tomb. This proved that Jesus was the Messiah of God; the Savior of the world who could forgive sins and give eternal life. We work so hard for the things that will not last, shouldn't also work for the things that will endure to eternal life?

(v28) Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" and (v29) Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." Notice again they used works – plural, Jesus used work – singular. There are not many works required by God there is just one "work" – there is just one thing God wants you to do: "believe in the One He has sent."

On the one hand this is "work"...why? because to believe means to trust in Jesus for all things. To trust in Jesus means we must mistrust everything that is against what Jesus wants. That's work! To say no to ourselves, to say no to the things we use to trust in to say no to the philosophies of the world and choose to trust God instead, is work.

On the other hand it is not "work" it's not our effort that gives us a life of knowing God. Eternal life of having a personal relationship with God that brings satisfaction to our souls is gift from God, given when we believe in the One He sent...Jesus. This is good news! God loves us and wants to give us life abundant, free and eternal not because we deserve it, earn it or can work for it...He just loves us. You don't have to be proper and pious as a matter of fact He came for all people including the alcoholic, the down and out, the outcast, the weak, to the vilest beings, us, He says, "Come." When we walk through the dark valley of a meaningless and empty life, when the longing for perfection does not appear, when old habits continue to be a struggle and have been for decades,

when despair destroys joy and courage hear a small voice saying, “you are accepted and you are loved.” Accept the fact that you are accepted. Believe in the one God sent, Jesus and believe that He was sent for you and accept that He loves you. Whatever your failings may be, you need not lower your eyes in the presence of Jesus. You need not think what should I do to make it up to God. Jesus does not come to the super spiritual, working hard to do the works God requires, He comes to the wobbly, weak-kneed one who knows they don’t have it all together and who are not proud to accept a handout of amazing grace. Morton Kelsey wrote, “The church is not a museum of saints but a hospital for sinners.” The church must constantly be aware that we consist of sinful men and women who don’t have it all together. And although we want to say no to sin there is no excuse for not accepting sinners, sharing with them the joyous awareness of forgiveness. For here we are those who want to be faithful but at times have been defeated, those who want to be holy but are sometimes soiled by life, those who wanted to remain strong but sometimes failed at our trials, but through it all clung to faith. We exist not because we do all the works God requires but because we do one thing...believe in the One God sent.