**WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU FIND JESUS**

**(Matthew 15:29-39)**

How much time a day do you spend searching for things? Do you ever find yourself looking for your car keys? What are some other things you look for during typical day?

* Something to wear; so, you look through your closet.
* Something to eat; so, you look through the fridge.
* Something to watch; so, you use the remote.
* You might look for your homework, or the needed paperwork, or the newspaper, or a phone number, or an address, or a recipe, or it could be 1001 things, and that is why God created the Internet and Google—to help us find the information for which we are looking.

Sometimes we find things without ever actually looking for them. We walk outside after a rainstorm, we look up, and there stretched across the sky is a beautiful rainbow. You didn’t go outside to look for a rainbow, but you found one.

I was minding my business one day when Ruth Ann walked into my life. I wasn’t looking for a wife, but I found one, and the Bible says in Proverbs 18:22, “He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor front the LORD.”

**Often, the best things in life are found when you aren’t even looking for them.**

There is a word for that—*Serendipity.* Serendipity means, “finding valuable or agreeable things not sought for.”

Today, we are going to look at a group of people who were minding their business one day when Jesus just showed up. They had heard about Jesus. They knew about Jesus, but they weren’t really looking for Jesus. Even though they weren’t looking for Him, they found Him walking along the eastern shore of Lake Galilee. They watched Him walk up the hilly terrain close to the beach, and they followed Him. Our text is Matthew 15:29-39. As we look at that passage, we will learn, “What to Do When You Find Jesus.”

Before we tackle that, let’s take a moment to see where Jesus is and how He got there. Matthew doesn’t give us much help as to where Jesus was other than to say that He was walking on the shore of Lake Galilee. That is not a big lake. It only has 33 miles of shoreline. By contrast, Grand Lake, where I used to live has over 1300 miles of shoreline. It has numerous fingers spreading out all over.

Lake Galilee didn’t have any fingers. It was 8 miles wide at its widest point, and it was 12 miles long from north to south. Another interesting feature of the lake is that it is 700 below sea level making it the lowest fresh water lake in the world.

Mark gives us more help as to where Jesus was on the lake. We read in Mark 7:31 that Jesus left the region of Tyre and Sidon and went to the Sea of Galilee in the region of the Decapolis. That would put Him on the southeastern side of the lake in a distinctly Gentile area. The Decapolis was a region boasting 10 cities, 9 of which were east of the Jordan River. Of course, the Jordan River runs from the southern tip of the lake and empties into the Dead Sea. The distance between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea is 65 miles but because the river meanders, it runs for 135 miles before entering into the lowest body of water on planet earth. The Dead Sea is 1400 feet below sea level.

What I find interesting is that Jesus leaves a distinctly pagan area northwest of Galilee, stays north of where the Jews lived and among whom He often ministered. He then comes down to a distinctly Greek area where very few Jews lived. Last week we looked at a passage in which Jesus told a Gentile woman, “I didn’t come for people like you. I came to the Jewish people.” Jesus’ announcement didn’t deter her. She kept on asking Jesus to heal her daughter, and Jesus did so.

In today’s text, there are clear clues that what Jesus did for the Jews on the north side of the lake, He is now doing for the Gentiles on the southeast side of the lake.

Let me give you a couple of those clues. Look at the last words of v. 31, “and they glorified the God of Israel.” If Jesus had been among Jews, the verse would have read, “and they glorified God.” By saying “the God of Israel,” Matthew is telling us that the people were worshiping the God that had not been historically theirs. It was Israel’s God they chose to worship.

In vv. 32-39 we have another miracle in which Jesus feeds a multitude. As we read it, the story seems to be a bit redundant. It’s almost like we are having a *déjà vu* experience. We think, “Haven’t I seen this or heard this before?”

There would be no purpose in rehashing a similar event if that event was composed of a similar audience. However, if what we have is Jesus first feeding a principally Jewish audience, and then we see Him doing the same thing for a mainly Gentile audience, we have a clear indication of the kind of Savior Jesus intends to be. Jesus doesn’t just care for Jewish people. He cares for and loves all people.

This is just the kind of Savior we read about in Isaiah 9. It is Isaiah 9:6 that we often hear and see at Christmas time. That verse tells us, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” I want you to notice what we find earlier in that chapter. We read in vv. 1-2, “In the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.”

A final indication that we are dealing with a Gentile crowd is the word we translate as *basket.* In this story, the disciples picked up seven baskets full of leftovers. In the feeding of the 5000 story, found in Matthew 14, the disciples pick up 12 baskets full of leftovers. The interesting thing is that there are two different words that are both translated as *basket.* In the Matthew 14 story, the word for basket refers to the smaller basket that Jews most often used, something akin to a picnic basket. The basket referred to in Matthew 15 was much larger, more like a hamper. It is the same word that is used in Acts 9:25 that tells us how Paul was lowered over the city wall at night in a basket so that he could escape those who were seeking to kill him.

It is clear that we have a different cultural setting. The Jewish Savior who was prophesied in the Jewish Scripture has come to be a Savior for all.

1. **WHEN YOU FIND JESUS, DON’T GO TO HIM ALONE.**

Look at v. 30 to see what these non-Jewish people did when they discovered that Jesus was among them. They came to Jesus, but they didn’t come alone. They brought to Him the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others. They had a concern that went beyond themselves.

I have a bone to pick with American Christianity. We are far too individualistic. This shows up in how we speak about salvation. For instance, one person might ask another, “Have you asked Jesus to be your personal Savior?”

Nowhere in the Bible is Jesus ever described as being a personal Savior. In fact, in the Book of Acts, it often speaks of how someone and his household came to faith.

In their book, *Adventures in Missing the Point,* authors McLaren and Campolo ask some hard-hitting questions:

Are our churches and broadcasts and books and organizations merely creating religious consumers of religious products and programs? Are we creating a self-isolating, self-serving, self-perpetuating, self-centered sub-culture instead of a world-penetrating, world-serving, world-transforming, God-centered counter-culture?

I hate to bust your self-absorbed bubble, but Jesus didn’t die on the cross for you; He died on the cross for His Bride, the Church. Jesus is not coming back for you personally; He is coming back for His Bride, the Church. By His grace, we who trust Christ are part of the Church, the body of Christ in this world and the Bride of Christ.

It’s not about us. Life is about Him. Because it is, we want to bring others into His orbit. Who do you know who needs Him?

Those folks on the eastern shore of Lake Galilee had heard about Jesus, the wonder-worker, the miracle-maker. Some of them might have heard about Jesus from one of their own. Mark tells us in chapter 5 of His gospel about a time that Jesus traveled to the eastern side of the lake where He and His disciples were met by a demon-possessed man. He was a raving lunatic who make his home in the local cemetery. He had super-human strength. He was actually possessed by a horde of demons. They called themselves *Legion* for they were many, Mark tells us.

Jesus cast the demons out of the man and into the pigs who were grazing nearby. The man was returned to his right mind. He asked Jesus for permission to go with Him. Jesus refused. Instead, He said, “Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how He has hade mercy on you” (5:19).

In the very next verse we read, “And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.”

Now, Jesus is back, and people aren’t just going to Jesus by themselves for personal salvation. They are bringing to Jesus those who have great need.

You may not realize it, but Jesus is right here in Enid, OK. You don’t have to wait for Him to come someday. He is here. He is at your place of work. He is here in this church. He is at your school. He is in your neighborhood.

Who do you know who needs Him? Do you care enough to bring them to where Jesus is?

When Joseph Stowell was the President of Moody Bible Institute, he recalled a time that he was in England. He learned that the British have a different name for tow trucks than we do. We have a nickname for tow trucks. We call them wreckers. If my car dies on the side of the road, “I am going to call my insurance company and have them contact a wrecker service.

Stowell said:

When I was in England, I noticed their tow trucks all have one big word on them: RECOVERY. When I saw that, I thought, Same vehicle, same instruments, same mission — totally different perspective. We say, “There goes a wrecker.” They say, “Here comes recovery.”

Jesus Christ doesn’t operate a wrecker service; He is on a recovery mission. Whose life do you know that looks wrecked? Jesus specializes in recovering wrecked lives. He wants to use you in His work of recovery. In Stowell’s words, you can be “a middleman in a compassion transaction” between God and those who need Him.

That is what those Gentiles on the Galilean coast were being. They were being middlemen. They were bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and others who needed a compassion transaction.

That is what we need to do, and that is what we get to do when we find Jesus.

1. **WHEN YOU FIND JESUS, GLORIFY HIS FATHER.**

What did Jesus do with these wrecked lives who were placed at His feet? Did He give them a lecture? Did He give them a good talking to, a tongue lashing? Did He blame them? Did He ignore them and talk over their heads as if they weren’t even there?

The last four words of v. 30 in my version read, “and He healed them.” The last seven words of v. 31 tells us the response of the crowd, “And they glorified the God of Israel.”

Sometimes we are so familiar with the Scripture that we read over a passage without really thinking about what it is saying. I think this is the case when we read vv. 30-31. In his account, Matthew lists the maladies that were brought to Jesus and that Jesus healed them. It is enough that a formerly blind person now sees, how a person who would not walk or use his arms now can, that a person who was unable to speak is now fluent in speech, but what really gets me is the word that my version translates as *crippled.* Other versions use the word *maimed.* A maimed person is one who is missing a limb, an arm or a leg, a hand or a foot.

Verse 31 tells us what the person became after Jesus healed him or her. My version uses the phrase *the crippled healthy.* That seems to me a very weak way of saying what happened. The KJV uses the phrase, *the maimed made whole*.

Consider what we are being told. Here is a man who is missing an arm, but Jesus restores that man to complete wholeness. Where there was once a stub, now there is a fully functioning arm. Here is man who is missing half of a leg. After Jesus heals him, the lost limb is completely restored. The man now needs a sandal for the foot that was missing.

The crowd see this display of raw power coupled with utter compassion, and they know there is nothing in their religion that can explain what they have witnessed. They praise the God of Israel.

I think it is both ironic and tragic that when they Jewish leaders saw and heard about Jesus’ miracles, they said He had a demon, and they eventually wanted to kill Him. When the pagans, however, saw Jesus do miracles, they praised the God of Israel.

When we see Jesus do His work of recovery in the lives of wrecked individuals, we are to praise the God of heaven.

This past Tuesday evening, Ruth Ann and I went to an associational event for pastors and their wives. At the dinner, the man who leads Celebrate Recovery at Emmanuel Enid spoke. He told about his wrecked life. It began early for him. He was both physically and sexually abused as a child. For 50 years he was afflicted by violent tendencies and chronic depression. He had unsuccessfully attempted suicide seven times. When his depression got so bad that he could no longer work and rarely left his house, his wife convinced him to see a pastor. That led down a path where he eventually trusted Christ and got involved in Celebrate Recovery. God changed his life. God rescued him, and now he is thrilled to be used by God in the rescue of others.

What causes you to praise God? Do you praise God when your team wins, when all is well in your life and with your family? Praise God when He wins a victory in the lives of those who have been defeated by life.

1. **WHEN YOU FIND JESUS, MAKE HIM YOUR PRIORITY.**

Look at v. 32. When Jesus showed up, these folks put their lives on hold for three days. He was more important than their job. He was more important the social circles in which they ran. He was more important than their hobbies. He was even more important than food. They preferred being in His presence having not eaten than leaving Him to go get food.

Have you ever gotten so excited about what you were reading in the Bible or so enamored about being in His presence that you simply forgot to eat, and even though you missed a meal, you didn’t really miss it?

When the worship service goes long (whatever long is to you), do you get antsy, look at your watch, tune out, and wonder when it’s going to be over?

What takes priority over your faith? What exerts a greater pull on your soul than the things of God?

*People* magazine published its first issue 45 years ago. The magazine enjoys enormous success. *People* focuses on the lives of celebrities. The secret to their success is really no secret. They have millions of readers because people just love to read about the lives of celebrities.

*People* editor Richard Stolley created a set of rules for a successful, magazine cover:

* Young is better than old.
* Pretty is better than ugly.
* Rich is better than poor.
* TV is better than music.
* Music is better than movies.
* Movies are better than sports.
* Anything is better than politics.
* And nothing is better than a celebrity who has just died.

That is both an accurate and a disappointing description of what most people in our culture value.

Earlier in Matthew’s gospel, Jesus told us what we are to value. He said, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33).

Let’s put first things first.

1. **WHEN YOU FIND JESUS, LET HIM TAKE CARE OF YOU.**

While chapter 14 of Matthew speaks of the feeding of the 5000, chapter 15 deals with the feeding of the 4000. There are both similarities and differences between the two. Both of those numbers represent just the men who were present. It was Jesus’ compassion that led Him to choose to feed both groups. In both stories, Jesus uses the little that was available. In both stories, Jesus took, blessed, broke, and gave the food to the disciples for them to distribute it to the people.

There are minor differences. The sizes of the crowds are different. The racial makeup of the crowds is different. The number of bread and fish before the miracle and what was left over are different, and even the baskets used are different.

When you boil it all down, this passage teaches that Jesus knows what you need, and He will provide what you need.

One of my favorite passages is 1 Peter 5:6-7 in which the call goes forth, “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you.” What a wonderful promise.

Commenting on this passage, Steve May said:

Here’s a hard lesson to learn: He knows what you really need and when you need it. Sometimes we think we have a financial need, but what we really need is to learn to live on less. Sometimes we think we need companionship, but what we really need is to develop intimacy in our relationship to Christ. Sometimes we think we need healing, but what we really need is to learn compassion and mercy for those who are suffering. Many times, we think we need this when, in reality, we need that. The great thing about knowing Jesus is that when we [really do] need that, He gives us that! He takes care of us. He gives us what we really need.

We have been looking at what we are to do when we find Jesus, but I want to end this message with a completely different thought. The fact of the matter is that we don’t really find Jesus; He finds us.

In Luke 15, Jesus told three different parables about something that was lost and then found. First, the shepherd went out and found a lost sheep. One of his 100 sheep wandered away, but the shepherd went out and found it and brought it back.

Then, there was the woman who lost 1 of her 10 precious coins. She completely swept her house until she found that 1 coin. Her neighbors came and rejoiced with her.

Finally, through no fault of his own, a father lost one of his two sons. The younger son took his share of the father’s estate and ran off. When he lost it all and was in want, he returned. He came back with the intent of being a servant in the father’s house, but the father received him back as a son. A great party ensued.

You are not the shepherd; you are the lost sheep.

You are not the woman; you are the lost coin.

You are not the father; you are the younger son. Some of you are the elder son, but that is a different sermon for another time.

When God finds you, help Him find someone else.

When God finds you, give Him much glory.

When God finds you, make Him your priority.

When God finds you, you know He will care for you. So, let Him.