

The Memoirs of Peter
Pursuing Jesus for All the Wrong Reasons
Mark 6:53-56
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Tonight, I want us to go back to Mark's gospel, and Mark 6:53. You know it's interesting because as you look around us, Christian churches just keep getting larger. Last September Lifeway Research, connected to the Southern Baptist, issued its list of the 100 largest American churches of 2009. Number one, for the past four years, is Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas, its pastor is Joel Osteen with his stealth message of health, wealth, and prosperity. Lakewood's average attendance in 2009 was 43,500. Those top ten churches also include a number of self-proclaimed seeker sensitive churches, and you know, as I looked through that list and looked at the number of people that attend those churches, the question came to my mind, why are all of those people attending those churches?

Now, undoubtedly, there are genuine believers in those congregations, but when you look at several of those churches, and if you look beyond those churches at some of the things that have Christianity the label attached, which are attracting huge numbers of people like Christian television, religious television in all its forms, it becomes clear that many of the largest crowds who are at least loosely attached to Christianity, are looking for something altogether different than what you and I are looking for. The question is, what?

Well in the health, wealth and prosperity movement there's physical healing, there's material prosperity; in the seeker-sensitive movement there's better relationships, better marriages, better physical intimacy, better lives; in the emergent movement its social connections and a community of faith that's experiences. In the end, what many of the people who are attached to the Christian faith are primarily looking for, to borrow the words of Osteen's book, "... is their best life now."

Nothing has really changed since the first century in the ministry of Jesus, because that is exactly what He Himself encountered in the crowds that attached themselves to Him, and that was in spite of His thoroughly biblical ministry. We get a glimpse of this in Mark 6, and let me just read you these four verses; Mark 6:53.

When they had crossed over they came to land at Gennesaret, and moored to the shore. When they got out of the boat, immediately *the people* recognized Him, and ran about that whole country and began to carry here and there on their pallets those who were sick, to the place they heard He was. Wherever He entered

villages, or cities, or countryside, they were laying the sick in the market places, and imploring Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were being cured.

This brief paragraph makes a crucial point, and that is that many people pursue Jesus for the wrong reasons, and as a result they aren't truly His disciples at all. Are they seeking Jesus? Yes, but for all the wrong reasons.

Well, the first wrong reason that we see in this passage, and we're also going to look at some related passages in the same chronology to see some of these reasons. The first wrong reason comes in the same time period but in a different gospel, and so I want to move from Mark first to John 6, where we will see the first wrong reason which is, personal advancement. John 6; turn there with me, to John 6. Just a little more than 12 hours before the boat landed in Gennesaret, in that passage we just read, the evening before, Jesus had fed 5,000 men, plus women and children at Bethsaida. And that evening had ended with quite a surprise; look at verse 14.

After ... they gathered ... [the] baskets, ... [the] ... fragments ... [that remained], verse 13, Therefore when the people ... verse 14, ... saw the sign which He had performed, they said, 'This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.' [They said, "This is ... the one, this is the one Moses told us was coming, in Deuteronomy 18, this is the Messiah."]

So, Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.

They saw in Jesus' miracle someone with the power to get them what they wanted, and what this crowd wanted was life without Roman domination, life without Herod Antipas. Now, we can conjecture why exactly was it that these 5,000 Galileans wanted to throw off Rome's yoke. There are several reasons we can venture that I think come pretty close to home. One is pride; no one likes to be a slave of anyone else; they were slaves of the Romans, and they knew it, and so their pride called for them to be independent. They wanted self-rule; they didn't want Rome to be in charge. They wanted to determine their own destiny, to be the masters of their own fate. They wanted lower taxes. And who doesn't? They wanted the opportunity to hold positions of leadership and power.

If the Romans were there, none of those opportunities were available, but once their own people were in charge then there were those privileged opportunities. There might be others; this is

conjecture, but their desire to make Jesus king, this isn't conjecture, had very little to do with Jesus, and everything to do with fulfilling their own earthly desires.

Listen, do you understand? You can be attached to Jesus. You can be attached to Him for the wrong reason of personal advancement; that's why they wanted to be with Jesus. You can attach to the church, because it brings you some benefit; maybe because it's what you do in the Texas culture. Everybody belongs to a church, they may only go a couple of times a year, but everybody belongs. They may not even know who the pastor is, but it's their church. Maybe you attend church and associate with Christians because it's good for business. Or maybe it's just because you're pursuing a romantic relationship with someone who's in the church. Or maybe it's to keep your parents happy, or maybe it's to keep your spouse happy. And that's good for you, and so it's worth doing because it's good for you. So, you tolerate it, until you don't have to tolerate it anymore. It's a real temptation.

Folks, this is a temptation even for believers. Believers tragically can have this same attitude. They want to attach to Jesus for what they can get in personal advancement. If you doubt that, look at Matthew 20. This is the disciples. Matthew 20:20,

Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee [James and John] came to Jesus with her sons.... [This is an interesting picture;] ... bowing down and making a request of Him. And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left." ... Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They said ... "We are able." And He said to them, "My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father." I love verse 24,

And hearing *this*, the ten became indignant with the two brothers." Yeah, I'll bet.

What I want you to see is even among the disciples, they were leveraging their relationship to Jesus for personal advancement. One of the most disappointing verses in all the New Testament comes in Luke 22, when on the night before the crucifixion, the night of the betrayal, they are arguing about who's the greatest. This is something all of us can be tempted to do. To attach to Jesus for what it gets us.

Third John 9, there was someone in the church there, John says, "I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say." There

are always people who attach to the church or to Jesus to get something they want, that is for their own personal advantage; make sure that you aren't pursuing Jesus because of personal advancement.

There's a second wrong reason many people pursue Jesus, and this comes in Mark 6. Turn back there with me. In Mark 6; now remember that right after the feeding of the 5,000, and right after they try to make Jesus king, that we just read about, about six o'clock the previous night, Jesus had sent the disciples away in a boat, and He had gone into the nearby hills to pray. The disciples, you'll remember, got caught up in a huge windstorm, and were rowing for their lives, swept into the middle of the Sea of Galilee, and were rowing for their lives. About 9 to 12 hours later Jesus comes (somewhere between 3 and 6am) Jesus came to them walking on the surface of the water.

That night Jesus performed three miracles you remember? One was walking on the water, a second was calming the wind, (when He got into the boat it stopped), and thirdly by transporting the boat and its passengers to land. John 6:21 says, "So they were willing to receive Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going." They were out miles from sea John has told us, and immediately they are at the land. In other words, Jesus proved that night that He was sovereign over all creation, over matter, space and time. So, John says they were immediately at their destination; that's where Mark picks up.

It's now somewhere between 3am and 6am, probably near 6am and daybreak. Now notice what verse 53 says, "When they had crossed over they came to land at Gennesaret and moored to the shore." They took a really convoluted route. They were over on the eastern side of Bethsaida, on the Plains of Bethsaida. They left the Plains of Bethsaida with their destination being Capernaum. They would have stayed normally right along the shore and gone from one destination to the other, that was typical, but when the winds arose, they were swept out miles into the Sea of Galilee, the apostles tell us. John says, the winds had pushed them out into the middle of the lake, several miles from shore. When Jesus gets into the boat, they are immediately transported to the land, and the place was a place called Gennesaret. In Hebrew it's "Gennesar".

This is what that Plain looks like from the top of the Arbel cliff. You can see it's a beautiful, fertile plain. It's five miles long, two miles wide, its climate is very productive because it's 650 feet below sea level. Josephus described it as a fertile plain that produced produce ten months out of the year. The produce it produced was so good that the rabbis said they couldn't bring the

fruit from that plain to Jerusalem during the festival time, lest people come to the festivals just for the fruit. That's where they are.

The time is early the next morning, after Jesus had fed the 5,000, somewhere around daybreak. Apparently, Jesus and His disciples actually came to the city itself, the city of Gennesar, and its harbor, where they moored the boat. Here are several pictures of that fertile plain by the way. Now, there is the harbor where it appears they attached the boat that morning. This is what it looks like a little more closeup, and there you can see even some of the ancient harbor still stands.

Verse 54 says that "When they got out of the boat, immediately *the people* recognized Him." This city and its harbor were only about four miles south of Capernaum, just a short walk from Jesus' hometown, and so it's not surprising that almost immediately someone recognized Him, and the word quickly spreads. Verse 55 says, "... and they ran about the whole country and began to carry here and there on their pallets those who were sick, to the place they heard He was."

The picture drawn by this sentence in both Greek and English is frenetic; people running here and there to tell others "He's here! The teacher is here, the healer is here; get your sick and come." In addition to long standing diseases of the time, this would have been right before Passover, the prime flu season. Without any antibiotics people would often have been at risk for pneumonia and even death and other complications from what today wouldn't be quite as pronounced a situation, and so they have many sick.

They load their sick the Scripture says "on pallets." These were thin, straw-filled mattresses, which the poor used on which to sleep, and so they put them on their little pallets, and they begin to carry them to find Jesus. They hurried to the last place where they heard Jesus was, but Jesus is on the move. He moored the boat there, but He's on the move to Capernaum where He's going to be in just a short time as we'll see. So, they chase Him down. Others don't have to search because Jesus came right through their town; look at verse 56. "Wherever He entered villages, or cities, or countryside, they were laying the sick in the market places and imploring Him that He might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were being ... [healed.]"

If this sounds familiar, it is. Back in chapter 5 you'll remember, Jesus was on His way to heal Jairus' daughter, when a woman with a long-standing hemorrhage touched the fringe of His cloak and was healed. Undoubtedly, the story of that woman who'd been healed had gotten around, and so now, wherever Jesus went they brought their sick; villages, that's small towns;

cities, it's the Greek word "polis", from which we get the word metropolis, an organized community with appointed leadership and services; countryside literally is "fields".

The three terms are all inclusive; wherever there were people, they were simply laying their sick in the market places. They simply deposited their sick on the pallets on which they had transported them, in the most public place in that village or city or even field, as they knew Jesus had landed at Gennesaret and was headed to Capernaum. And the sick, notice were "imploring"; that means to beg, to beseech, to entreat; they were pleading with Jesus, "... that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak."

As I've pointed out to you before, the typical Jewish man in the first century particularly in Galilee, wore five pieces of clothing; one of those was an outer garment. It was often just a large square or rectangle with a hole cut for the head, and it just sort of hung loose over the body, but on the four corners of that outer garment, that square, were blue and white tassels. They were there to remind them of the law of God they were commanded by God in Numbers 15 and Deuteronomy 22. Matthew and Luke tell us that the woman with the hemorrhage grabbed one of those tassels, those blue and white tassels hanging from the corner of the outer garment, and now that's what they ask to touch as well; "It worked for her, it'll work for me." Mark adds, "... and as many as touched it were being cured."

Here we see the compassion of Jesus Christ. Don't misunderstand what's going on here. It's not that all of these people have genuine faith in Christ, and He both heals them and saves them spiritually; that's not what's happening. Jesus is healing them, and they are going on to live their lives. Jesus healed others who at least at the time did not come to genuine faith; you remember in Luke 17 the story of the ten lepers? And nine of them left and never came back to thank Him. They went on with their lives. Only one of those lepers really came back and bowed at the feet of Jesus acknowledging his gratitude and the Lordship of Christ.

The man born blind; you remember in John 9? Jesus heals him. He doesn't see Jesus because he goes away to wash the thing that Jesus has anointed his eyes with, and so he never sees Jesus, but he basically gives testimony for Him before the council, and ends up getting thrown out of the synagogue, and then Jesus comes and finds him and opens his spiritual eyes. So, Jesus often would heal without bringing spiritual healing.

So, Mark's account then on the frenzy on the plains there on Gennesaret and the healings, were more about the compassion of Jesus than the people and their faith; they apparently, in most cases had none. In fact, most of these people were simply looking for Jesus for the wrong reason. All they wanted was to be healed so that they could carry on with their lives.

This has happened before. You remember what happened in Capernaum, earlier in the book? You remember after Jesus on that day in the synagogue and then when He went to Peter's home and healed his mother-in-law, word spread, and that night the whole city gathered at the door, and He healed many who were ill with various diseases, cast out many demons. I mean Jesus healed everybody who was sick, everybody who came in Capernaum that night, and yet later in His ministry, He said this to the citizens of Capernaum:

“And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have ... [repented] to this day. Nevertheless, I say to you it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in *the* day of judgment, than for you.”

In spite of Jesus' miracles, most of the people in Capernaum and most of the people in the Plains of Gennesaret that day, did not believe in Him. They simply showed up in droves to see Jesus. Why? Because like so many in our day, they were there just after Jesus for what they could get from Him; heal their friends, heal their family, or heal them.

Folks, understand this: churches are filled today, and millions of televisions are tuned to religious programming because of people who are, like these people, looking for Jesus to improve their physical circumstances. They look like they're pursuing Jesus, but they're really after physical healing, or they want Jesus to fix their marriage, or solve their financial problem, or help them get over some habit, or improve their self-esteem. In Gennesaret that morning, Jesus knew that's why they were there; that's what makes His compassion for them all the more compelling. He was being used, and He knew it, but He just can't help being moved with compassion for these people and the condition in which they find themselves – in spite of their selfish motives.

So, we see the genuine compassion of Jesus Christ, but we also see those who are happy to have Jesus as their kind of “genie in a bottle” who provides for all of their perceived needs, but who refuse to own Him as Lord.

Can I ask you tonight, to honestly examine your own heart; what are you hoping to get out of Jesus? Are you just after physical well-being, the improvement of your physical circumstances? Do you want Jesus to fix something for you, so that you can get on with life, business as usual? Listen, Jesus is amazingly compassionate, and He will often intervene to help as He did here, but don't mistake His intervention with genuine faith or a genuine relationship with Him. Are you just one of those pursuing Jesus in hopes that He'll fix your physical circumstances?

So, one flawed reason to come to Jesus is personal advancement. Another is an improvement of your physical circumstances.

A third wrong reason to come to Jesus, or to pursue Him, is material prosperity. This is what part of the crowd of the 5,000 that Jesus had fed were after.

Turn to John 6 again, because the story continues after Mark closes it out. John 6, some of the 5,000 that had probably followed Jesus' instructions the night before and gone home, but some of them had stayed; many of them still were determined to find Jesus. And so in John 6:22, notice what happens, "The next day ..." [the next morning now,] "... the crowd ..." [again not all of them, some of them had left, some of them had gone to find lodging in various towns, but some of the 5,000 are still there, and when they] "... stood on the other side of the sea they saw that there was no other small boat there, except one, and that Jesus had not entered with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples had gone away alone."

So, with the morning light the crowd that's left, of the 5,000, had come to three conclusions. There had only been one small boat, the disciples had left in it, and Jesus had not. So, their natural conclusion was what? Jesus must still be in the area; He must still be nearby. I mean after all they'd seen Him walk up into the hills around sunset. Verse 23 adds another little factor, "There came other small boats from Tiberias ..." That's the absolute opposite end of the lake, on the southwest corner of the lake, "... from Tiberias near to the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks." So, this small armada of boats arrived from the opposite corner of the lake, probably opportunistic businessmen who had somehow gotten word that a large number of people had travelled from Capernaum, the eight miles by foot, to Bethsaida, across the Jordan head waters, and they assumed, rightly, that many of that crowd would be interested in an easy boat ride home. So, they come to help.

Verse 24, "So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats, and they came to Capernaum seeking Jesus." [They understandably conclude that Jesus has probably returned home to Capernaum; they don't know how, they don't know how He slipped away, but He has, and so they go there as well. Notice the last two words of verse 24; they "came ... seeking Jesus." Here are seekers. Let's see how Jesus responds.]

Now according to verse 59 of John 6, what Jesus is about to say in His interaction with them, happens in the synagogue in Capernaum. So, they track Him down at the synagogue; it may have been on the Sabbath, or the synagogue was kind of like a civic center, used for various things; they may have gone there during the week, we're not sure what day it is, but regardless, what's about to transpire happens at the synagogue there in Capernaum, Jesus' hometown.

Verse 25, once they finally catch up to Him, When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, “Rabbi, when did You get here?”

Now, implied in that question is both when, and how. Now think about it for a moment, imagine just how impressed this crowd would have been if Jesus had really told them how He got there. “I walked across the lake in the middle of that windstorm last night, and then I got in the boat, and I transported it several miles to land in a moment’s time.” But Jesus didn’t tell them any of that. He didn’t even answer their question. They’d already seen plenty miracles, they’d seen Him take two fish and five loaves and feed a crowd of 5,000 men plus women and children; they didn’t need any more miracles, that wasn’t the problem.

Here are seekers; let’s see how Jesus responds to them, verse 26.

Jesus answered them and said, ... [Now notice He really doesn’t answer them; that’s not what John is saying. He’s answering them with His own response which is to call their motives into question.] Jesus answered them and said [to them], “Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.” [Jesus questions their motives for seeking Him. These people had seen the miracle, but what they had failed to see is what the miracle pointed to, the true nature of Jesus Christ.] Now look at verse 27.

“Do not work for the food which perishes ...” [Don’t be after food which is going to go away, it’s going to turn bad,] “... but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.” [Jesus is saying, “You’re laboring for food that’s going to turn bad. Don’t do that.” Well, they take the labor work part of it and misunderstand and assume they need to do something, so their question now is,] verse 28, Therefore they said to Him, “What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?” [And Jesus sets them straight in verse 29, He] ... said, ... “This is the work of God ... believe in Him whom He has sent.” [The only work you need to do is put your faith in Me. You don’t need to do any work at all.] Verse 30, So they said to Him, “[Really, well then] What ... do You do for a sign, so that we may see and believe You? What work do you perform?”

You say, “Wait a minute, wasn’t that like, less than 24 hours, less than 18 hours before?” Yes, it was. But here’s what’s going on: The rabbis taught, that when Messiah came, He would perform greater works than Moses, and one of the works He would perform is that He would

cause manna to come down from heaven even as Moses did, but with greater provision for God's people. And so, they essentially respond to say, "Okay, if you're the Messiah," verse 31,

"Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'HE GAVE THEM BREAD OUT OF HEAVEN TO EAT.'" ["Why don't you do that? If you want to prove to us that our faith ought to be in You, that You're the One from God, why don't You bring manna down from heaven?"] Verse 32, Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven." [He says, First of all, you've got it wrong; Moses didn't have anything to do with bringing that manna out of heaven, God, My Father did. Secondly, I am the true manna.] Verse 33, "For the bread of God is that which comes down ... [from] heaven, and gives life to the world." ... [And] they said, [Oh great,] "... give us this bread."

They're all wrong. What you have here in the verses I've just read for you is a call from Jesus to these people who were chasing Him, seeking Him, to reject their materialism and believe in Him. They respond by asking for a sign, specifically this manna that the Messiah would bring; to that, Jesus has this amazing response. Look at verse 35, "Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread ...' 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.'"

You know what Jesus was saying? "I am the One who gives spiritual life and sustains spiritual life." In essence Jesus was saying this to them: "I, Myself, am all you need, to give you spiritual life, to sustain that life; so stop pursuing the stuff that perishes with this life, and start pursuing Me, not for that stuff, but start pursuing Me for Me! I alone am all you need."

But that's not why they were seeking Jesus. They wanted the bread; they wanted in essence material prosperity – materialism. James Edwards, one commentator writing on this passage says,

The compassion of Jesus has fed, satisfied, and healed the crowds, but the blessing of His compassion raised the ultimate question, whether those who experience them will enter further into Jesus' saving purpose. [In other words, the fact that they enjoyed that from Jesus doesn't mean they're actually saved.] The physical blessings of Jesus ... [he goes on,] are not an end in themselves, but a fork in the road, one branch of which leads to Jesus' saving purpose, the other to

a false understanding of Jesus as simply a wonder worker.” [And they took the wrong fork.]

You know there’s really a serious warning here, for all who say, “I’m following Jesus. I’m seeking pursuing Jesus.” How can we know if we’re following Jesus for the right reasons, or for all the wrong reasons? Well, based on the passages that we’ve studied tonight, let me give you a little test. Let’s give us all a little test; we all need to test our motives.

Here’s the first question on the test: are we pursuing Jesus for external prosperity, or internal prosperity? Are we hoping for material things, or for the prosperity of our souls? What are you after from Jesus? True followers of Christ understand that what He really provides is everything we need spiritually, and they’re not after the stuff that comes with Jesus.

Second part of the test: are we pursuing Jesus to enjoy our best human life now, or are we after eternal life? As we continue our journey through this wonderful gospel, we’re going to discover Jesus asks that very question of His disciples. He says, “You’re going to give up everything here, but you’re going to get Me, and you’re going to get eternal life.” That’s what matters to the true Christian.

The third question is perhaps the most insightful question of all and the most determinative of where our heart really is.

The third question is: are we pursuing Christ Himself, or what He might provide for us in this life? Here’s the question: are you pursuing Christ as the bread, as the personal satisfaction of your every need, or are you pursuing Christ for something you want from Him, something you believe He can deliver in this life?

I want you to turn to one passage as we finish our time together that really wraps this all up: Matthew 13. Look at Matthew 13; two identical parables, by that I mean their message is identical. The parable of the treasure hidden in the field and the parable of the pearl. Look at Matthew 13:44. Jesus says,

The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in field, which a man found and hid *again*; and from joy over ... [that treasure] he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Ultimately, He's talking about getting into the kingdom of God, but specifically, as many commentators do, I would say that the treasure here is more than just the kingdom, the treasure is Christ Himself. In one case the treasure is buried, the person stumbles across it, apparently, doesn't seem like he's looking for it. In the other case the merchant is seeking fine pearls and finds one pearl of great value. So there're some differences, but in the end, the story's the same. In both cases, these two men are willing to sell everything else to get what they found, to get the treasure, to get the pearl.

That's how it is for true Christians. When you see Him and understand who He is, He's such a treasure, that you're willing to give up everything else to get Him. Is that how you feel about Jesus Christ? Are you willing to give up everything else, everything else, if it assures you that you get Christ? Is Jesus Himself the treasure you seek? Is Jesus Himself the pearl of incomparable value to you? Are you willing to sell everything else you have, your own advancement, your physical circumstances, your personal prosperity, any relationship that keeps you from Christ, so you can have Him?

Paul understood this, you remember in Philippians 3? Paul said that when he really saw Jesus, everything else that he once thought valuable, became like dung, like excrement, compared to Jesus, and compared to knowing Him. That's the attitude of a true Christian.

How did you do with the test? Why are you seeking and pursuing Jesus? Are you after the prosperity of your soul? Are you after eternal life? Are you after Christ Himself as the greatest and most valuable thing in the universe to you? Then that's a sign that you're pursuing Christ for the right reasons, and not for all the wrong ones.

If you're here tonight, and you honestly have to say you didn't do so well on the test, then I plead with you, examine your heart before the Lord. Go home tonight, find a quiet place, and pour out your heart to God. Ask Him to make Christ the most valuable thing in the world to you because that's the attitude and heart of a true Christian.

Let's pray together.

Father, we thank You for these difficult passages. Lord, they're not easy for us to read, not easy for us to study, because it's hard to imagine people who were seeking Jesus and thought they were really seeking Jesus, but really weren't; they really were seeking all that He could provide, in this life now, material prosperity, physical health and comfort and better circumstances, personal advancement.

Father, I pray that You would help us to be honest before You tonight. I pray for those who have passed the test, those whose hearts really do want most of all, Christ, and they're willing to give up anything in the world to have Him. Lord, encourage their hearts, strengthen them, remind them that that means You are at work in their hearts and lives. Lord, may You only strengthen that resolve, may He become sweeter and more precious as the days pass.

Father, I pray for those here tonight who are here, who are seeking Christ perhaps for the wrong reasons, and they've had to acknowledge that tonight; maybe it's for their own personal advancement or for something they hope to get from Christ, other than Himself, other than their soul's eternal salvation. Father, I pray that You would help them to see themselves in the crowd that followed Jesus all over Galilee, looking for that stuff, and who one day will stand before Him and hear, "Depart from Me." Lord, may this be the night when You help them to see the beauty of Jesus Christ, when You help them to see that He is the treasure, that He is the pearl of incomparable value, and may they be willing to let everything else go, if You should so choose, to get Him. Do your work O God, in their hearts, in all our hearts.

We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.