

Why Jesus?

Opening Image

- A certain minister - "Six-Year-Old Theology Questions" from his wife
 - She taught very young children for many years, this pastor recognized that his wife was better equipped to respond to the questions of little kids.
 - One day, a first-grader brought in a drawing of a skeleton where she teaches English as a second language. On top of the drawing it read, "Inside of Me."
 - The drawing was supposed to help the kids understand there is a skeleton inside each of them.
 - One little girl from India was surprised and pressed the issue a little farther.
 - The girl said to the teacher, "Do you have one of those too?"
 - The teacher replied, "Yes, I have one too."
 - The next question was the theological one.
 - A child asked, "Even God got one inside of him?"
 - Now in a class made up of children from many different countries, cultures, and religious backgrounds (most of them not Christians), you can imagine that this question had the potential for major theological debate.
 - I doubt if I'd have had the presence of mind to give the answer the teacher did; but, as usual, her expertise in six-year-old theology saved the day.
 - "If God needs a skeleton, I'm sure he has one," she replied. "God has everything he needs."
 - This apparently satisfied the theological curiosity of the class, and they went on with the lesson.
 - **Asking questions is an essential part of learning.**
 - If we don't know something, we look for someone who does and we ask.
 - Asking questions also help us describe what we know in way that we can tell others.
 - We often ask the big questions of our faith, and we also have little questions of faith.
 - A little question may be exploring a difference between translations in one particular verse with subtle differences.
 - A big question looks at the bigger picture of our faith in Christ.
 - For the month of October, we are going to explore some big questions of faith.

Upcoming Preaching Schedule in October

- Sunday, **October 5** - Why Jesus?
- Sunday, **October 12** - Why the Bible?
- Sunday, **October 19** - Homecoming (Rev. Roy Walker)
- Sunday, **October 26** - Why the Church?

Read the Text - John 5:16-30, NLT

- **16** So the Jewish leaders began harassing^[a] Jesus for breaking the Sabbath rules. **17** But Jesus replied, “My Father is always working, and so am I.” **18** So the Jewish leaders tried all the harder to find a way to kill him. For he not only broke the Sabbath, he called God his Father, thereby making himself equal with God. **19** So Jesus explained, “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does. **20** For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he is doing. In fact, the Father will show him how to do even greater works than healing this man. Then you will truly be astonished. **21** For just as the Father gives life to those he raises from the dead, so the Son gives life to anyone he wants. **22** In addition, the Father judges no one. Instead, he has given the Son absolute authority to judge, **23** so that everyone will honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Anyone who does not honor the Son is certainly not honoring the Father who sent him. **24** “I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life. **25** “And I assure you that the time is coming, indeed it’s here now, when the dead will hear my voice—the voice of the Son of God. And those who listen will live. **26** The Father has life in himself, and he has granted that same life-giving power to his Son. **27** And he has given him authority to judge everyone because he is the Son of Man.^[b] **28** Don’t be so surprised! Indeed, the time is coming when all the dead in their graves will hear the voice of God’s Son, **29** and they will rise again. Those who have done good will rise to experience eternal life, and those who have continued in evil will rise to experience judgment. **30** I can do nothing on my own. I judge as God tells me. Therefore, my judgment is just, because I carry out the will of the one who sent me, not my own will.

The Text - John 5:16-30, NLT

- **Jesus had a unique relationship with the Father.**
 - This is one of the texts that help us understand Jesus’ relationship with the Father.
 - **v. 18** - Jesus calls God his father and implies that he is equal with God.
 - **This is why Jesus? - Because Jesus is equal with God; Jesus is God.**
 - In the 1st century, God chose to reveal himself to the world through Jesus.
 - Today, in the 21st century, God chooses to continue revealing himself through Jesus.
 - If we want to get a picture of who God is and what God does, we look at the person of Jesus Christ.
 - Beginning in the Gospel stories and then throughout the New Testament leading unto today.
 - We also look back into the Old Testament to fully understand God’s work and life through Jesus among the people of Israel throughout the histories of both testaments.
 - **v. 19** - Jesus does nothing apart from the Father, so he is utterly dependent upon God.
 - **Later in Church History, this thought would develop into the Doctrine of the Trinity.**
 - Theologians and preachers try to explain, but we also admit the mystery of God revealed as Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit.
 - We respond to what God already did through Jesus and what God continues to do through Jesus.

- **v. 26** - We find life in God and Jesus shares that life with us.
 - **v. 21** - The father gives life to those he raises from the dead, and the Son gives life to anyone he wants.
 - **John Chapter 4** - the people thought the official's son was going to die, but Jesus heals him (without evening seeing the boy) - distance does not prevent God's healing power to happen.
 - **As a church, we proclaim Christ because it is through Christ that we find life.**
 - Stories throughout the scriptures portray this.
 - Stories throughout our community portray this.
 - And stories throughout the people of this church portray this.
- **v. 30** - Jesus judges as God tells him and Jesus does not follow his own will but the will of the Father who sent him.
 - **We surrender our lives to Christ because it is through Christ that God's will is revealed and done.**
 - And the Early Church had to wrestle with this new understanding and reality.
 - Today, we have heard this reality so much that we overlook its new radical understanding.
 - **Still, we also struggle to live in this reality at moments in our lives.**
 - Which leads us to a question:

Transition Thought

- In asking Why Jesus?, we are also asking for moments that cannot be explained apart from Christ.
- **So we ask - When is the last time you have done something beyond yourself - Beyond your abilities and insights?**
 - That you had to solely rely on God's strength and sustaining presence.
 - **If you are having difficulty answering this question, then you are having difficulty living the full life that Christ offers.**

Reuben P. Job and Norman Shawchuck, eds. *Visions of a World Hungry*. Nashville, TN: The Upper Room, 1979.

- Thomas Pettepiece was a Methodist pastor and a political prisoner, a prisoner of conscience among 10,000 prisoners.
 - It was one Easter morning, and they wanted to celebrate communion.
 - They had no cup for communion.
 - They had no wine for communion.
 - Nor did they have any bread or a plate to celebrate for communion.
 - So a group of them had The Communion of Empty Hands.
 - **The Communion of Empty Hands**
 - "This meal in which we take part," Pettepiece said, "reminds us of the imprisonment, the torture, the death and final victory of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The bread is the body which he gave for humanity. The fact that we have none represents very well the lack of bread in the hunger of so many millions of human beings. The wine, which we don't have today, is his blood, and represents our dream of a united humanity, of a just society, without difference of race or class."

- The pastor held out his empty hand to the person on his right and passed on an imaginary loaf of bread.
 - Each took a piece and passed it on, saying, **“Take, eat, this is my body, which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”** And together they all ate the imaginary bread, trying to imagine tasting it.
 - After a moment they passed around the non-existent chalice, each imagining he was drinking from it saying, **“Take, drink, this is the blood of Christ which was shed for you ... Let us give thanks, sure that Christ is here with us, strengthening us.”**
 - They gave thanks to God and then stood up and embraced each other.
 - And a while later, one of the non-Christian prisoners came up to them and said,
 - *“You people have something special, which I would like to have.”*
 - And the father of a girl who had died came up to Pettepiece and said,
 - *“Pastor, this was a real experience. I believe that today I discovered what faith is ...”*

Holy Communion - **Go Down: Remove Cloth from Communion Table**

- Each Quarter - We celebrate communion.
 - We do something beyond ourselves and beyond our abilities and insights.
 - We take in this little piece of bread and drink this little cup of juice.
 - And proclaim Christ’s presence in us.
 - We remember Christ’s body broken for us and his blood shed for us.
 - We take Christ into our lives and ask for God to open our eyes and soul unto himself this morning and the days to come.

Read the Text - John 6:47-51, NLT

- **47** “I tell you the truth, anyone who believes has eternal life. **48** Yes, I am the bread of life! **49** Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, but they all died. **50** Anyone who eats the bread from heaven, however, will never die. **51** I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and this bread, which I will offer so the world may live, is my flesh.”

The Text - John 6:47-51, NLT

- We receive Christ as the Bread of Life each day, depending on how we act.
 - We can live in a way that points others to Christ as the Bread of Life.
 - Or we can live in a way that does not.
 - Gathering at this table today, reminds us of the days we have not and prepares us to:
 - Ask for forgiveness
 - Receive God’s mercy
 - And be Empowered to live in Christ as the Bread of Life.

Closing Story

- We take communion in a way that honors God by coming to the Lord's table without thinking too much of our selves.
 - Without looking down on anyone else and recognize we each are equally God's welcome guests.
- **There is a story about King George IV learning this truth one particular day.**
 - The King wanted to take Communion and sent a servant to bring the Bishop to him.
 - The servant brought the Bishop to the King later than the King expected.
 - Out of frustration, the King fired the servant on the spot.
 - And he turns to the Bishop for communion.
 - Then the Bishop refused to proceed.
 - While the King was first angry, he recognized the Bishop was right.
 - The King brought back the servant, apologized, and restored his job.
 - Only then could communion proceed.
 - As we have been forgiven and welcomed by God, let us forgive and welcome each other.

Holy Communion

- **Taking of the Bread and Cup (Gluten Free and All are Welcome)**
 - *Prayer*
 - **Taking of the Bread**
 - *Prayer*
 - **Taking of the Cup**

Closing Prayer