

Who is Jesus here for?

Who is the church here for?

Who are we, as the people of God here for?

There is no trick – the answer is the same for all of them.

**The purpose and mission of Jesus,
the church he established,
and the whole people of God baptized in Christ Jesus,
is one and the same:**

- To make disciples
- – to make people who encounter Jesus as the source of their life
- **in such a way that they shape their lives after him.**

Our purpose and mission – who Jesus and we are here for – is clear in the 5th chapter of Mark's Gospel.

Jesus is traveling back and forth across the Sea of Galilee.

The Sea of Galilee is not like Lake Redman, where to cross it means simply to go from one location in York County to another.

To cross the Sea of Galilee is to go from home territory to foreign territory.

From somewhere that speaks your language to somewhere that speaks a different language

From one culture to a very different culture.

It is more like crossing the ocean or the Rio Grande river.

On one side of the lake is Galilee – Jesus’ homeland,
Jewish land and culture and religion.

On the other side is the land of foreigners:

- Gentiles, Romans,
- pagans,
- unbelievers,
- people who dress differently,
- think differently, act differently
- speak different languages, and worship different gods.

For whom is Jesus here?

For whom is the church here?

For whom are we, as the people of God, here?

We may wish Jesus had just stayed on his side of the lake.

That he and his disciples had just worked between Galilee and Jerusalem, among their own people.

There was certainly enough there to do,

calling people to repentance

and reminding them of the covenant promises.

But that's not what Jesus did. It's not what Jesus does.

We may not like it,

but Jesus goes back and forth between these two groups of people to carry out his mission of disciple making.

- Between Family and foreigners
- People who are like us and people who are different from us
- People who share our culture and people who don't

Jesus puts up no barriers or boundaries between him and those to whom he gives life.

And he crosses existing boundaries to protect and restore human life.

We may not like it, but Jesus' healing and life-giving work could just as easily take place on the US Mexico border as on the border of Galilee and the Roman Decapolis.

For whom is Jesus here?

For whom is the church here?

For whom are we, as the people of God, here?

**Anyone who needs the life and salvation,
the mercy and grace of Jesus.**

Anyone.

After restoring life to the man possessed by demons on the foreign side of the border,

Jesus comes back across the lake to his homeland.

There he is again begged for life.

A desperate VIP in the religious community

– the kind of person most of us would be eager to please and loath to disappoint – his name is Jairus –

His daughter is dying.

And like the foreigner possessed of demons,

Jairus bows down at Jesus' feet,

grovels, and begs for Jesus to lay hands on her and restore her life.

From our 21st century perspective, we would expect Jesus to heal the child.

We would be horrified if he said no,

or at least deeply disappointed.

We know Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world....

But Jairus has no such expectations.

Hopes, yes.

But he does not take it for granted that Jesus will act on his behalf.

He only knows it is within Jesus' power to do so.

So he pleads his case,

beseeches, begs, and submits himself to the will of Jesus,
who has shown the power to give life.

And Jesus agrees to go and see his daughter.

But on the way, as the crowd is clamoring for Jesus' attention like a mob of fans clamoring for the autograph of a celebrity,

A poor, severely anemic woman grabs hold of the fringes of his garment.

These fringes represent God's covenant and are often handled during the hours of prayer.

So the woman's action is itself an act of prayer, of supplication,
and she must bow down to reach the fringes.

Without speaking, she pleads with God to heal her and submits to his will.

Her plea stops Jesus in his tracks.

He feels her prayer – feels his Father's response to her

as a transfer of life power

from his body to hers.

He doesn't know who she is

– whether she is VIP or lowly,

A big giver to the church or one who has but a penny,

He doesn't know if she is foreign or familiar

– **all he knows is that she has asked for – and received – God's life.**

She is one for whom Jesus is here.

Now for the twist – this unnamed woman is restored, but the VIP's daughter has died in the meantime.

Now what?

Does this mean God's answer to prayer is random?

Is God unreliable?

It sometimes seems that way, doesn't it?

We pray for healing and it seems that Jesus gets waylaid and death comes first.

Such is a time of temptation

– of saying with Jairus' friends

– “it's no use – why bother with Jesus anymore?”

Jesus knows our weakness and counters it with two words:

First -- “Stop being afraid and keep on believing.”

And second:

“The girl is not dead, but only sleeping.”

You see, there are 2 kinds of death in the Bible

– Death in unbelief – also known as perishing.

And death in faith – called sleeping.

The first is death from which one does not awaken.

It is total separation from God by human choice to reject God.

This is death caused by fear and misplaced hope.

Think of Eve and the serpent in the garden of Eden.

The second is death from which one awakens in resurrection

because **faith clings to Christ during trouble;**

Hope dares to fix on what cannot be seen;

And love never gives up.

Where Jesus is, there is life – even for those who have died.

The girl has not perished but sleeps in God’s presence.

She is one for whom Jesus is here.

And so Jesus commands her, “Resurrect! Arise!”

By his word, fear is vanquished, and life is restored.

For whom is Jesus here?

For whom is the church here?

For whom are we, as the people of God, here?

- For All who need life as God gives it
- Any who beg for the healing mercy of Jesus
- All who seek life instead of perishing
- Any who have given up on Jesus
- All who question God's power
- Any who reach out to touch Jesus

As the church, the body of Christ, and individually members of it,

We are the fringes of his garment,

that people might touch us to experience Jesus.

We are the hands of Jesus who reach out to heal and reconcile those who seek life.

We are the body of Christ who frees the foreigner,

stops the bleeding,

raises the dead,

and gives hope to people clamoring for God to act.

...

No one said following Jesus is easy.

It is a cross to bear;

it is a hike on the difficult path through the narrow gate.

It is suffering the loss of what we might consider “ours”
in order to possess all of what is God’s.

We may not like where Jesus leads us.

We may not like the people Jesus loves.

But Jesus has called us and commissioned us for this purpose.

- To make disciples
- – to make people who encounter Jesus as the source of their life
- **in such a way that they shape their lives after him.**

To neglect this commission is to perish.

To embrace it is to find everlasting joy in the eternal presence of Christ
our Lord.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Consider this:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sd4IEuPvQw8>