



### John 11:54-57

## Not Everyone Seeks Him for the Right Reasons

54 Therefore Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there into the country near the wilderness, to a city called Ephraim, and there remained with His disciples.

55 And the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went from the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves.

56 Then they sought Jesus, and spoke among themselves as they stood in the temple, "What do you think -- that He will not come to the feast?"

57 Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a command, that if anyone knew where He was, he should report it, that they might seize Him.

As I was reading these verses I was reminded of a sign you've probably seen at some point, "**Wise Men Still Seek Him**" and that is true of some, but its not just wise men who seek after Christ, is it?

Jerusalem was certainly very full of "seekers after Christ" at this moment in time. Jerusalem was very full because the time of the Passover was approaching, and the Passover was one of the three feasts that every adult male Jew was commanded to celebrate at the Temple in Jerusalem. So Jews were flocking from all over the world to Jerusalem. Josephus and a number of other Historians tell us that the population of Jerusalem, which was normally around 100,000 swelled to around One Million at the time of the Passover. And many who attended it arrived early. That was because they had become ceremonially unclean, for instance by contact with a dead bodies or gentiles, so they arrived early that they could go through the purification rituals outlined in Numbers 9 and still attend the feast.

It's ironic isn't it, that the city was filled with religious people who wanted to be ceremonially clean, and outwardly holy enough to keep the feast, but who manifestly weren't outraged that their leaders were trying to kill an innocent man? But more about that later....

This was the third and final Passover recorded in the gospel of John, and it lets us know the gospel story is coming to a climax. Jesus' public ministry which started in about AD 30 is coming to the end that was appointed for it from the very beginning. You remember that three years before these events, in chapter 1, John the Baptist had pointed to Jesus and said "**Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!**" But friends, as Hebrews 9:22 reminds us, "**without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness**" to take away our sins, and cause God's wrath to pass over us, Jesus, the true Passover Lamb that all of those other Passover sacrifices had pointed to had to be sacrificed for us.

Jesus knew from the beginning of His ministry that he would die on the cross to make atonement for sin, but His love is so great that although He knew from the very beginning that He would have to endure the most difficult and awful experience in history, He never turned away from that. It was to do this that He was born of a virgin in Bethlehem. What amazing love, especially when you consider that Jesus was not laying down his life for friends or good men, but for sinners. As Charles Wesley put it, "**Amazing love! How can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?**"

***So who were these “seekers” after Jesus that Jerusalem was filled with? And more importantly WHY were they seeking Him?*** Well first we have the High Priests and Pharisees, they were very eager to see Jesus, so eager in fact that they had issued a public command that if He came to the city that people should tell them so that they could seize Him. After Jesus’ recent raising of Lazarus after he had been dead for four days, they had decided that enough was enough, and that it was time to do away with Jesus before the people really started following Him in numbers. Now they would have been particularly anxious about that because during the feast Jerusalem was a powder-keg. If a rebellion against the Romans was going to break out this would be the perfect moment. The Roman Garrison numbered roughly a thousand men. So during the Passover there were a thousand Jews for every ONE of them. This made them “edgy” to say the least. So you can understand why the chief priests were particularly anxious not to cause a riot by attempting to arrest Jesus openly. So they sought Christ to judicially murder Him as quickly as possible.

**Then we had the ordinary people.** They were all looking for Jesus and talking about Him, speculating as to whether He would appear. Jesus had come up to Jerusalem for the past two Passovers, but they were putting odds on that He wouldn’t come this time what with the High Priests looking to kill him. From their point of view that would be foolhardy. But there was still great expectation and excitement that He might, and they wanted a ring-side seat for that conflict when it happened. I remember years ago in High School, and kids remember this is long before I became a Christian, I was having a conflict with this kid in art class, and finally I did the “alright we are going to settle this once and for all, behind the building after school.” So I get there and I am amazed there is like a hundred kids there, and I’m wondering what is going on? And then I realized they are here to *watch*. Spectators. And that is no doubt the motivation for many of these people as well. They just wanted to see how it all went down.

But at this point someone might rightly object, ok, but that wasn’t all of them. Surely SOME of them were honestly seeking Jesus. True. But why? Why were they seeking Him? Well we don’t have to speculate, the Word opens up the motivations for people seeking Jesus.

1) Some were looking to be amazed and entertained by miracles. That included Herod Antipas for instance. We read in Luke 23:8 ***“Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him.”*** Oh goody, he’s finally here! Do something, do a miracle, do that one you do with the water into wine. Ultimately Herod is disappointed, Jesus has not come to do miracle working shows. It wasn’t just Herod who wanted to be entertained, many of the people sought Jesus and followed Him for a time hoping to see miracles. As Jesus had complained in John 4:48 Then Jesus said to him, ***“Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe.”***

*Now let me ask the kids: Is that the right reason to seek Jesus? Because you want Miracles, Signs & Wonders? No.*

2) Some sought Him for even more mundane reasons than that. They had hard lives, they often went hungry, they wanted food. Jesus had *fed the multitude with loaves and fishes*, and so they hoped He would keep providing them with food. Jesus disappointed them as well, you’ll remember he said in John 6:26-27 ***“Jesus answered them and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.”***

Pretending to be interested in someone or something just so you can get food from them? Who would do that? *I did*. At University, and again kids this more bad behavior, before I became a Christian. (example of LDP meetings)

*Now let me ask the kids again: is that the Right reason to seek Jesus? Because you want your belly full?*  
NO

3) Some sought Him because they were thinking HE can be our KING! This man can do miracles so finally we can get rid of the Roman Oppressors and all these collaborators and immoral people and be our own nation again. We can get our PRIDE back. Jesus though did not come to be their earthly king, or to deal with the Roman problem. He came to deal with a far more serious problem than Caesar. He came to defeat their greatest oppressor, *the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience*, He came to defeat the DEVIL and set men free from the chains of SIN. So whenever they tried to make Him king He would slip away.

Still a large number still had hopes that is what he would be, that is why so many were willing to greet Him as He rode into Jerusalem saying **“Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' The King of Israel!”** and He is the King. The King of Kings. But what they wanted from a King was very different from What Jesus came to bring them. And that is why those same crowds when they saw Him just a week later, captive and beaten and scourged and mocked and led before the hated Romans didn't shout HOSANA or THE KING OF ISRAEL they shouted CRUCIFY and AWAY WITH THIS MAN! He disappointed them, and they hated Him for it.

*Now again kids: Is hoping for an earthly king and national pride the right reason to seek Jesus? No*

Well then what is the right reason to seek Jesus? Before I answer that, let me say, all of those wrong reasons still exist today.

**Some seek Jesus to Persecute and Do Away With Him:** Think of all those people who spend their time seeking after any reference to Christ in public in order to expunge it. Those who persecute and imprison His followers. Some so-called churches work overtime to attempt to blot out the Jesus of the bible and replace Him with a merely human philosopher or simple unbelief.

**Some seek Jesus to be entertained by him,** to see signs and wonders: Has there ever been a time in the history of Christianity when the faith of so many was not in Jesus but in tongues, and healing ministries, and prayer cloths, and miraculous prayers and shrines.

**Some seek Jesus to be fed by Him:** Networking, Social Club, the millions of phone calls looking for merely earthly assistance, looking not for the bread of heaven but “your best life now” HEALTH and WEALTH.

**Some seek Jesus because they want order, and morals and a strong nation:** I've met people who seek Christs as a way of getting back to mythical time when America was all moral. They seem to forget that Religion in America was at a VERY low ebb at precisely the time when this nation was formed. Deism prevailed, the continental army was famous for the same bad behaviors that soldiers have been afflicted with for centuries. And incidentally, now that the attempt to build a Christian America is collapsing many of them are being pragmatic and breaking left.

None of those are the right reasons to seek and follow Jesus:

Why then should we seek after Jesus? Because we are sinners and He is the lamb of God who takes away the Sins of the World. He is the only answer to our real problem, and He is the only key to eternal life. The apostles, by God's grace recognized that. Which is why when so many who were following Him for the wrong reasons, be it bread or kingship or miracles turned back. They did not:

***John 6:66 From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.***

***67 Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?"***

***68 But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.***

That is why Jesus came to bring you life, abundant life, and that not be doing good works or great deeds, but by believing in HIM:

John 6:40 "And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

That is why John wrote this gospel -

John 20:30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book;

31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

But before you will do that you have to realize your need of Him. Men do not come because they don't even know what their real need is. What do you need most we ask? Food, Good Government, Fun. So on, because we don't see ourselves as we are – enemies of God weighed down by our sins on a broad path leading to death and judgment.

Matt. 11:28 "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

30 "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Following Jesus will not be easy, he tells us this, we must count the cost.

Matthew 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

25 "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

I have to tell you, if you love Jesus men, even your old friends and family will mock you and persecute you, **2 Tim. 3:12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**

**But Jesus promises:**

**Luke 18:29 So He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God,**

**30 "who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life."**

*Are you seeking Him? Are you seeking Him for the right reasons?*