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**Title:** Searching for Jesus

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**Scripture:** [Philippians 3:7-14](#)

**Text:** [Mark 1:29-39](#)

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Here we are on one of the holiest days of 2018, Super Bowl Sunday. I confess that when I was called into the ministry, I had no idea that the Super Bowl would be a major holiday around which the church would manage.

More than 110 million people are expected to watch the Super Bowl. Of course, not even half will actually watch the game, just 43%. Equal to that number is a group that says they only watch it for the commercials. The remainder say that watch the half-time show. This year Justin Timberlake is back for the first time since his big reveal in 2004. Whatever the reason for watching, one-third of the American population will be crowded around the television with the goal of searching for entertainment.

The Super Bowl is the leading party day in America, beating out New Year's Eve with the average crowd at parties being 17. A staggering amount of food is consumed including 1.33 billion chicken wings, 11 million pizza slices, and 1 million avocados whipped into guacamole, not to mention a stunning if not frightening amount of alcohol, 2.25 billion dollars' worth, which is why so many call in sick on Monday. Super Bowl Sunday is the second leading food and drink consumption day, next only to Thanksgiving. Whatever your favorite is, there is always a big crowd searching to be filled around the Super Bowl table.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, there is the game itself. Tom Brady and the New England Patriots (no booing now) are searching for a 6<sup>th</sup> Super Bowl title while the Eagles are searching for revenge, given their 2004 trip to the super bowl revealed a loss to none other than the Patriots. There is lots of searching going on, searching for food, fame, fortune, and fun. What are you searching for today?

Crowds and searching people are important to the Super Bowl and they are important to the mission of Jesus. Over the last few weeks, we've looked at

the beginning moments of Jesus ministry in the gospel of Mark. It's crowded and it gets more and more crowded throughout his gospel as we see people searching for Jesus.

By way of review, last week Jesus came to the Sabbath and because he was a devout Jew and because he was tired and in need of spiritual renewal, he went to the synagogue to worship. In the midst of a busy life, Jesus modeled a commitment to worship, demonstrating the importance of renewal in worship. We noted that if it was important for Jesus, it ought to be important for us.

In that service, a wild thing happens. A crazy man stood up in worship and shouted at Jesus. We don't know what his craziness was; we are only told that it was an unclean spirit. We also don't know what he was searching for or whether even understood that Jesus was the answer for him. But an even crazier thing happens. Right then and there, Jesus looked him the eye and heals him. He likely spent a lifetime searching to be released from whatever possessed him. It happens simply by the authority of Jesus teaching. And, "At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee" (Mark 1: 28). Word is out that Jesus has the power to heal so it's not surprising what happens next.

They leave the synagogue and head to the home of Simon and Andrew. In the home is Simon Peter's mother-in-law who is in bed with a fever. Do you ever stop to think of the disciples having families, as Peter being married? Obviously, he was. I wonder how his wife felt about him giving up everything to follow Jesus. I wonder if she was okay with it and if she understood what Peter was searching for. Was it a source of conflict? I hear this you know, a concern about having time to serve Jesus. We have too many family responsibilities, we are too busy. I bet Jesus heard that excuse too. <sup>2</sup>

We don't know the source of the fever. You might think it was the flu given the epidemic going on around us. In Biblical times, a fever was serious, dangerous. Given what they saw in worship, it's not surprising that Simon and Andrew told Jesus about her. After seeing what Jesus did in the temple, they were searching for Jesus to do the same, heal Simon's mother-in-law.

Mark, in his usually terse way of writing his gospel, leaves out who is in the room with Jesus and Simon's mother-in-law. There's clearly no crowd. You might even argue that they are there alone. We don't have much information. Jesus doesn't say anything. "He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them." (Mark 1:31)... which is exactly how it should be, right? Don't read

this as sexist at all. Don't think, "Now that you are well mother-in-law, get in the kitchen where you belong." Even though it was a patriarchal society like none we can imagine, Mark wants us to understand that this is the type of power and healing that Jesus offers. It is a full, total, complete, holistic healing of body and soul which empowers her to be like Jesus, to serve. It's a sign of what Jesus has come to offer, what you can find when you are searching for Jesus.

And a lot of people are searching. Mark says, "That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door." (Mark 32-33). Think of that, "The whole town was gathered at the door..." Capernaum was a big place for the first century; probably 1,500 people. It's the first century equivalent of a flash mob. They didn't communicate on Facebook or Twitter or Instagram. They had to do it the old-fashioned way, person to person. One guy told his story about what he saw in the synagogue. Another person told what he'd witnessed. Maybe one of the neighbors of Simon's mother-in-law said, "She was sick in bed with a fever and all he did was give her hand." However it happened, by sundown, the whole town gathered at the door. Everyone was searching for Jesus. What were they searching for? I suppose the answer is as varied as it might be here. What we are told is "they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons....And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons...(Mark 1:32a-34a.)"

It's hard to imagine that all 1500 people of Capernaum were at the door. It's equally hard to imagine that they were all diseased and possessed with demons unless we go back to last week's message when I suggested that we are all crazy and possessed, all in need of healing. You are and I am; we all have burdens that we need to be lifted, possessions and problems that rob us for the life that God hopes and intends for us to have. Just like us, on that evening, the whole crowd showed up, searching for Jesus in hopes that they can discover an authority and truth to manage if not overcome the craziness of their lives.

Jesus readily accepts all who are searching for him, not just about people who are ill. That's important. When we zone in on Jesus being the miracle worker, we miss that point. We see Jesus healing all of these people and ask, "Why doesn't that happen now?" We'll think of someone who is fighting cancer or struggling with a disability and will say, "Jesus could make this go all away." When we jump to a problem-solving interpretation of scripture, we miss what of this story. Jesus is inviting everyone to search for him because he is searching for them. Jesus is searching for us. That's the message of his kingdom and he reinforces this on the next day.

What happens? While it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place to pray. That's important. No matter how pressing his calendar, no matter how many people were searching for him, Jesus took to pray. Jesus is modeling behavior again. If it is important to Jesus it is important for us. When Simon and the other disciples awake, they go searching for him and "When they found him, they said to him, 'Everyone is searching for you'" (Mark 1:37).

Of course, they are. Everyone is searching for Jesus. You know that, don't you? Deep down all people everywhere are searching for Jesus, searching for a Savior. They may not know his name or they might use religious symbols or terminology that are different from what you and I use, but deep down inside everyone is searching. Within everyone, there is a longing, a desire, a hardwired need. Everyone needs something to believe in, something to guide them. Otherwise, they wake up one day and realize that nothing in life makes sense. Life is simply one thing after another then you die!

The renowned preacher and storyteller Fred Craddock liked to tell a story to illustrate this. Like many of Fred's stories, it was whimsical but filled with truth. He said he was visiting in a home of one of his former students after graduation, and after a great dinner, the young parents excused themselves and hustled the kids off to bed, leaving Fred in the living room with the family pet--a large, sleek greyhound. Earlier in the evening, Fred had watched the kids roll on the floor playing with the greyhound.

"That's a full-blooded greyhound there," the father of the kids had told Fred. "He once raced professionally in Florida. Then we got him. Great dog with the kids, that greyhound."

So there was Fred sitting there alone with this large dog. The dog turned to Fred and asked, "This your first visit to Connecticut?"

"No," Fred answered. "I went to school up here a long time ago."

"Well, I guess you heard. I came up here from Miami," said the greyhound.

"Oh, yeah, you retired?" Fred asked.

"No," said the greyhound, "is that what they told you? No, no, I didn't retire. I tell you, I spent 10 years as a professional, racing greyhound. That means 10 years of running around that track day after day, seven days a week with others chasing that rabbit. Well, one day, I got up close; I got a good look at

that rabbit. It was a fake! I had spent my whole life chasing a fake rabbit! Hey, I didn't retire; I quit!"<sup>3</sup>

I don't blame him. Who wants to spend a whole life chasing fake rabbits? Not me, even though I venture there to guess that there are some here, if not all of us, who can relate. At the very least, we can look around and see a number of people searching for fake rabbits, things that, if in their mind, if caught, will make all of the difference in the world, will mean that they've arrived, that they've won. In a way, so much of today could be seen in that light, chasing the fake rabbits of successful, entertainment, food and excess drink, thinking that this is where a meaningful and fulfilling life is found. But we know it's not.

In order to have a satisfying life, we must have meaning, purpose, and mission. His disciples came to Jesus and said, "Everyone is searching for you?" Of course, they are. Whether they knew it or not, the disciples were stating the obvious. Everyone is searching for Jesus. He is the way, the truth, the life. "Everyone is searching for you." He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do" (Mark 1:38).

Why did Jesus come? He came to share his message of love and forgiveness with the world. Jesus came on a search and rescue mission to address our longing and desires, to help us stop searching in all the wrong places. He came to offer the good news that life does have meaning and purpose. He didn't come to be a miracle worker but work a miracle in your life, to save you from meaninglessness and give you purpose and hope. He does so by offering his grace. To get all of these things, to experience all of that Jesus has to offer, you have to seek him out, and you have to be searching for Jesus.

That's our goal, our trophy, found in the search for Jesus. Paul describes it as "to know Christ and the power of his resurrection ... becoming like him in his death....not that I have already....reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own (Philippians 3:10, 12)

That's what searching for Jesus is about. It's discovering his love for all of us. He is the light that shines in the darkness, the hope that never fails, and the life that never ends. He came searching for us and when we search for him, when we join our lives with his, we find everything we need for a complete and full life.

At the end of the day, there is nothing better than this. A Super Bowl victory can't compare. Food, drink, entertainment can't come close. All the chasing of fake rabbits can't compare. Even hoisting the Lombardi trophy doesn't come close. So, just what are you searching for? May I answer for you? Jesus. You are searching for Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://woodtv.com/2018/01/30/we-eat-how-much-super-bowl-food-by-the-numbers/>

<sup>2</sup> Everyone Is Looking for You, King Duncan, retrieved by subscriptions at sermons.com

<sup>3</sup> Fred B. Craddock; Mike Graves; Richard F. Ward. Craddock Stories (Kindle Locations 1548-1550). Kindle Edition.