

# Sermons at First Church

**A Ministry of the Word**  
**July 25, 2021**

**First Presbyterian Church**  
**Clarksburg, WV**

**Rev. John F. Koerner**

**John 6:1-21**

*“Make the people sit down.” (John 6:10 N.R.S.V.)*

## **I Rush and Rush ‘Til Life’s No Fun**

The singing group “Alabama,” has a song with lyrics that say, “I am a hurry and don’t know why. I rush and rush ‘til life’s no fun.” In our story of the feeding of the 5,000 Jesus first has the people sit down. Only then did they receive the extravagant bounty that he was to give them. There is a reason that God created and commanded a Sabbath day for us. In our rush to get all the good things in life, we can rush right past the best things - the things that God has to give us. Only in God can we find true peace and joy in living.

There is an old joke about a man who was waiting on a bus to Pasadena. While he was waiting in the bus station, he noticed a sign next to a scale that said, “Your weight, height, and fortune for only one dollar.” So the man decided to give it a try. He put in his dollar and got on the scale.

The scale printed out a little piece of paper. It said, “You weigh 160 lbs., you are 5' 10" tall and you are waiting on a bus to Pasadena.” The man was impressed. But then he decided to see if he could fool the scale. So he went into the restroom and changed the way his hair was combed. He turned his shirt inside out, and stuffed it with toilet paper to make himself look bigger. He then put in another dollar and stepped on the scales again.

The scales printed out another little piece of paper. It said, “You still weigh 160 lbs and are 5' 10" tall. And while you were in the restroom messing around, you missed the bus to Pasadena.”

So many of us are so busy messing around and chasing “the more” in life that we miss out on what is really important. We miss out on the good things that God has in store for us. We simply miss the bus.

When I was going through confirmation class at the wonderful age of 12, we had to memorize several questions and answers from the Westminster Shorter Catechism. I can still remember the first question and answer.

The question was, “What is the chief end of man?”  
 And the answer was, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”

The question was another way of asking, “What is the purpose of life?” Or to be more exact, “What is God’s purpose for our lives?” And the answer is, “To glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.” Now the first part of that answer is probably not a surprise. We are to glorify God in all we do. But the second part of the answer is a bit of a surprise to many people. We are to enjoy God.

One of the great gifts that God wants to give us is joy in his presence. I was thinking about that as I reflected on this passage of the feeding of the 5,000. The people were tired and hungry. So Jesus said to the disciples, “Make the people sit down. Then he fed them.”

Listen, if you want to receive the good things God has in store for you, you need to quite rushing around ‘til life’s no fun. You need to sit down and spend time with God.

Resting and worshipping in God’s presence is one of the ten commandments. Let me read that to you, it comes from Exodus 20:

**8 Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work. 10 But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. 11 For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it.**

The Jewish people observed a day of Sabbath rest on Saturday, the last day of the week. As Christians because Jesus rose from the dead on Sunday and because we want to give to God first and not simply what is left over at the end, we observe a day of Sabbath rest on Sunday. Sunday is also called the Lord’s day.

You are to be commended for being here this morning in church or participating electronically in worship. For all too many people in our society, Sunday is just another day like any other day. Or to some, Sunday is a day to catch up on all of the things like laundry and house cleaning that didn’t get done during the other days of the week. One day blends into another in the mad rush to get “the more” that society promises will make us happy. We rush and rush ‘til life’s no fun.

I want you to note that this commandment to keep the Sabbath is not a suggestion. It is a commandment. The 10 commandments are not a list of best practices. This isn’t optional stuff. God knows how much we need this. So a day of rest and worship is commanded.

I also want you to note that when Jesus was about to feed the 5,000, he said, “Make the people sit down.” He didn’t say, “Invite the people to sit down?” Or “Suggest to the people that they sit down.” or “Entice the people to sit down.” He said, “Make the people sit down.” He knew it was that important. Of course, the people could have refused the command and perhaps some did just that. We are not told. But my point is that the gift of feeding came when the people

stopped what they were doing, and sat down.

In Psalm 46:10 God says, “Be still and know that I am God.” This is the same thought. In our rushing and doing, we can forget that it is not all up to us. It is not all on our shoulders. We are not God. “Be still and know that I am God.”

I saw a thing on Facebook the other day that pointed out that God designed us so that we have to sleep as a reminder that we are not God. We have to rest. Each day for about eight hours we have to sleep - for practical purposes we become just another clump of clay, and the world goes on without us.

Sabbath rest and daily quiet time with God is more than just resting though. It is spending deliberate time reconnecting with God and enjoying God’s presence. Some people think of this as a burden, but it is not intended to be that way at all. Time with God is not a burden. It is what we were made for. It is where we find our purpose, our center, our focus, and our joy.

God has good things to give us. But first we have to make time for God. We have to stop the mad rush, and sit down. Then we need to accept the gifts that God offers. The people on the hillside that day so long ago, not only sat down, they also ate the food that was offered.

Time with God is a gift that we sorely need. Dynamic Preaching Magazine has this quote for today, “We are so busy doing, so caught up in the rate race, so pressed for time, that we have cut out that which gives us the strength, the courage and the wisdom we need to strive successfully.”

Looking back at our text we note that after everyone was fed, the disciples collected 12 baskets of leftovers. At first this may seem like an odd thing to include in this story. But it has its purpose. It is a reminder that God is a giving God. God doesn’t just fulfill our basic needs. God gives abundantly. There is enough and to spare for the feeding of the 5,000. Psalms 23 reminds us that in God’s presence, “our cup overflows.”

Time and again scripture speaks about God’s generous giving. If we are not experiencing the good things from God, the problem may well be on our end. For God is a giving God. All too often we are like small children screaming that we are hungry. And God is like a parent pointing out that we haven’t even tasted the good food he has placed on our plates.

We rush and we rush, ‘til life’s no fun. There are so many people in our society who are cynical and fearful. People who do not trust God’s goodness. People who are afraid to be generous, because they have not taken the time to get to know the abundant, generous, God who longs to hold them and provide for them. One of my parishioners in my last church used to say, “No matter how generous we are, we cannot out give God.” That is so true.

Steven Vannoy, in his book “The 10 Greatest Gifts I Give My Children,” asked a group of children to describe what abundance means. Alison, age 7, said, “Abundance is an extra bowl of ice cream and getting to stay up late and laughing a lot.” Emily, age 9, said, “Abundance means I have as many books as I want to read and lots of warm clothes for the wintertime. And it means there’s always lots of love.” I really like what Brian, age 10, said. “Abundance means we have everything we need even though we don’t have everything we want yet. It makes me feel safe.”

God's abundance doesn't mean we will get all the shiny toys that catch our eye. But God does provide for our needs. In God are found the gifts of joy and abundance that matter the most. It may seem strange to you, but God wants to spend time with you. And God has great things he wants to give you.

So I encourage you, this week, allow yourself to slow down a bit. You do not have to be everywhere, you do not have to get everything done, your children do not have to be involved in every event that comes down the pike. There is more to life than rushing and rushing 'til life's no fun.

So sit, relax, receive. Take time to reconnect with God. It is not a burden to spend time in God's presence. It is the purpose for which we were created.

Amen.