**Jesus Came to Be Our God**

Based on [Matthew 14:13-21](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt14.13-21)

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Pastor Nathan Fuehrer

In his Large Catechism, Martin Luther writes about the first commandment which says “You shall have no other Gods.” He takes up the question: “What does it mean to have a God?” Answer: “A god means that from which we are to expect all good and in which we are to take refuge in all distress.” There is only one true God…Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and today’s gospel lesson shows us that Jesus Christ came down to heaven to be our god. For in him the whole fullness of God dwells bodily (Col. 2:9). Not only is he the one true God, but he is our God because he has compassion for all people; because we can turn to him in every need; and because his grace is sufficient to meet all our needs of body and soul.

First, Jesus is our God because he has compassion for all people. “**Now when Jesus heard this he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick**.” Notice here how perfectly Jesus keeps the law of God. The fifth commandment says, “You shall not murder”, but murder is not only taking another’s life. You are guilty of murder when you are angry with someone and desire them to suffer for their sins. When you take pleasure in the thought of their suffering, you murder them in your heart. And more than that, When you see someone in need, and you have the means to help them, but instead avoid them, go about your business and keep your goods to yourself, you are guilty of murder before the judgment seat of the almighty God. If you see someone bruised and beaten on the side of the road and do not help them but avoid them, it is no different than if you robbed them yourself.

Jesus saw the crowds, but he did not avoid them. He sought a desolate place to be alone with his disciples, but when he saw the crowds he had compassion on them. The word for compassion here in the original language, literally means something like his guts hurt. When Jesus saw the crowds seeking him and needing help his guts hurt. Mark says that when Jesus saw him his guts hurt, “because they were like sheep without a shepherd”. So Jesus not only did the right thing and helped them, and healed their sick. He did it, not out of the external compulsion of the law, but he did it from the heart…from the gut his Spirit had the desire to do what the law required, even though he had made other plans and sought seclusion.

So too we are to help our neighbor and give him what he needs, and here’s the really hard part, to do it from the heart. And what your neighbor needs even more than bread or a blanket is forgiveness. If your neighbor or your brother comes and asks for your forgiveness, you must give it and mean it. Jesus elsewhere tells a parable about a man whose master forgave his debts, but he would not forgive the debt of others. When his master saw it, he held the man to his debt once again and had him thrown in prison until he could pay it off. And Jesus said, “So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from the heart (Matt. 18:35).

Jesus Christ was born of a woman, born under the law, and he kept God’s law perfectly from the heart. He didn’t see the crowds and say “well I better keep the fifth commandment and help them.” No, he saw the crowds and because he knew no sin, it actually hurt him to see them suffering and was compelled by love to help them. Avoiding them was not an option, because once he saw them all he wanted to do was help them from the heart.

God gave us the Ten Commandments on account of our hardness of heart. We must learn them, write them on our hearts because our sinful nature is so curved inward that we see people suffering and don’t want to help them, because we have other plans and priorities. We need God’s law to remind us what we should do, but we never keep the law with the perfect love and compassion and selfless concern for our neighbor that Jesus had and showed. And for that we deserve to be thrown in prison until we right our wrongs and pay the last penny of our debts.

But the good news is this, Jesus saw the crowds in their physical need and he did not avoid them, but because he loved them from the heart, he helped them and healed them. So too, Jesus sees us in our spiritual need and he does not avoid us, but because he loves us from the heart, he helps us and heals us. He didn’t avoid the crowds, neither did he avoid the cross, but as the Scripture says that He “who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, scorning the shame, and is seated at the right hand of God.” Jesus takes joy in your salvation, he sees your poverty of spirit, your shame, your slavery to sin, your inability to free yourself….he sees that and he doesn’t pass you by because it hurts his guts to see your soul condemned. So he gladly pays the price you owe to God and gives you his own righteousness and through the washing of water and the word, gives you the confidence to stand before his Father and yours with a clear conscience, because the sin that once claimed you is no longer who you are. You are a new person in Christ, the old sinful self is just a disease, an appendage, a cancer that will kill you someday, but Christ will raise you sinless, the new you.

And this is the fulfilling of God’s Law, love that issues from a pure heart (1 Tim. 1:5). You need forgiveness often, because you sin often. And when you receive absolution you are free--not free to sin--but free to follow the new holy desires that are in you because Christ has given you his spirit. And his Spirit produces in you the love of God and a compassion which makes your gut hurt to see others in need, so that you too wish to help them (1 John 3:17) in every physical and spiritual need. This does not only mean feeding the belly. Your gut may hurt when you see starving children, it should hurt even more when you see someone who denies Jesus Christ.

The scriptures say that god desires all to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. Scripture says that the reason Jesus has not yet come again in glory is because God is being patient, waiting for the full number of his elect to repent. His gut hurts to see people exchange his truth for lies; so too your gut should hurt until you have given the gospel of Jesus to those who don’t have it. They may refuse it; as many beggars ask for money but refuse bread. But you have what they need, offer to them the salvation Christ has given you.

Second, Jesus is our God because we can turn to him for help in every need. Jesus own disciples saw that the crowds whom he had just healed were in need of food. So they say to him, “**This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves.”** They see the crowds in need and their advice to Jesus is to send them away. But Jesus has come to be their God…he came down from heaven to be *the one from which they are to expect all good and in which they are to take refuge in all distress*. He is God enough to heal the sick; he is also God enough to feed the hungry.

The disciples would murder them, send them away hungry when they had the means at their disposal to help. They would say to the hungry crowds, “Go be fed” without giving them what they need. So Jesus speaks to them a word of Law, “You give them something to eat.” And the disciples respond the way every sinful heart responds to the Law, “I can’t.” God says, “Love your neighbor”, man says, “You can’t ask me to do that God, you know I’m a sinner and I can’t.” But God’s law is uncompromising, he asks of us what he knows we can’t deliver ourselves. But what we so often forget, and what the disciples forget, is that we have the right to bend the ear of Jesus anytime anywhere in prayer. We pray to a Jesus who is ascended and invisible, and he intercedes for us, delivers our prayer to His Father who always listens to the Son and grants whatever is asked in his name. These disciples have Jesus visibly present with them, and they don’t think to ask him to help. They follow Jesus wherever he goes, see his miracles, touch his glory and yet when daily bread is lacking, neglect to turn to him for help. O ye of little faith.

Jesus says “You give them something to eat.” All of our daily bread comes not from towns, or supermarkets, not from money or even from crops. It all comes from God, and you who believe in Jesus Christ and trust in his name, always have God with you. You may not have the ways and means to help everyone you see but you have God, you have Jesus and you can ask him for anything. And his invitation never expires, “Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden”, “Ask anything in my name and I will give it”, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

Third, Jesus is our God because his grace is sufficient to meet all our needs of body and soul. Notice that the disciples are anxious because they only have five loaves of bread and two fish, hardly enough to feed all twelve of them. Jesus multiplies it into enough food that not only feeds five thousand plus women and children, but with twelve baskets full of leftovers.

We can never ask too much of God. He may not always grant what we ask for, but it’s never because we ask too much of him. It’s only because he knows what we need better than we do. But his grace knows know bounds. The problem is we neglect to ask. James writes to the church, “You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions” (James 4:2-3).

God’s grace knows no limit. And it really is amazing that, in our church, we receive the forgiveness of sins in the Lord’s Supper and we have leftovers. In this spiritual food, god feeds you body and soul so that you have the life of Christ in you, the bread of life Himself. There are countless thousands, millions, even billions who refuse to come and take and eat the free forgiveness of sins, because they refuse to repent, or do not recognize their desparate need of forgiveness. This is the time to remember what great gift we have that we are able to receive his sacrament, and to receive it as a testimony of God’s gracious will and love toward us. We must remember to pray for those who don’t receive it, that they may knock, seek and find the one and only true God to be their God in whom they may expect all good and in which they are to take refuge in all distress.

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