

Sermon on John 6:1-15 prepared by Jonathan Shradar

Faith in Jesus is really enough.

From the resurrection to life! Here we are. Determined to live in the way of Jesus by the power of his Spirit.

To give you a sense of where we are headed in our Sunday sermons, in May we will have a short series on Body Life, what it means to be a church. Then following that we will turn to Galatians. But for the rest of April, we are taking a brief journey through John 6.

Why John 6? It is the longest chapter in the New Testament and it's length is full of Christian theology. On issues that people have trouble with when Paul writes about them, we hear them from the mouth of Jesus hear. He unpacks what it means to believe in him and hints at what living in the Way looks like.

And I need John 6. It roots us in Christ. Keeps us there in the crush of opposition, and brightens our eyes with hope. It proclaims what I want to understand and savor more about Jesus.

We will take it in three movements, with the first being a miraculous meal with eternal meaning.

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John 6:1–15 “After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. [2] And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. [3] Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. [4] Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. [5] Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?” [6] He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. [7] Philip answered him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little.” [8] One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, [9] “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?” [10] Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat

down, about five thousand in number. [11] Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. [12] And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost.” [13] So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. [14] When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!”

[15] Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.” (ESV)

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Most of us have heard this story before, many times! From all kinds of angles. Today we just want to sit before it and see what we can glean from this feast of abundance.

“After this...” indicates rightly that we are in the midst of ministry. Other things have been happening. Just before Jesus has been teaching about authority and who it is he obeys. He continues to perform miracles, healing the sick, restoring the broken. And with the clue that Passover is upon them, we know he is kicking off his third year of ministry - things will ramp up from here as he is headed to a fourth Passover, where he will give himself up on the cross.

The signs are witnesses of who Jesus is, as is Scripture, if the people have the eyes to see it. In the flesh, he desires those who encounter him to “believe him.”

And in this first movement of the chapter, Jesus meets together with his disciples and feeds the crowd that follows him.

Why would they come? Well it’s the signs. As he has been preaching the Kingdom’s arrival miracles have been happening and he is the site to see. There is an anticipation in the people of the region, a wonder over what he will say and do next.

And receiving the miraculous meal, they realize Jesus is something extra.

John 6:14 “When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!” (ESV)

There is a lot of embedded history in John 6. John is tying the ministry of Jesus back to Moses and in the people’s hope for a prophet, they are remembering the words of Moses. **Deuteronomy 18:15** “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—” (ESV)

There are five loaves, like the five books of Moses. The law which in chapter 5 Jesus said stood as an accuser as the people have misplaced hope. This is Jesus as the greater Moses.

And the people catch on, they start to believe because Jesus delivered.

This is how it goes down. He is not a teacher that stays far off in extravagance, Jesus is kind, he sits with his disciples and he sees the crowd coming toward him. Before anyone has a chance to say they are hungry Jesus wants to feed them.

And here is where we see what we have come for this morning.

Jesus asks Philip, one of his disciples, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?” And John clues us in in verse 6.

John 6:6 “He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do.” (ESV)

Jesus knows he is about to perform a miracle. One that generations of believers will recount and cherish. So he doesn’t actually want to know where he can get bread enough for the huge crowd. He wants his disciples to respond to the circumstance with faith. Complete trust or confidence in him.

He wants the crowd to respond with faith. He wants us to respond with faith. Jesus is stirring the pot of what we need. And you will be glad to know he does it through food!

"God wanted to develop and refine our faith, that those who are able to entrust their belly to God in physical life may also be able to entrust their soul to God in

eternal life. For those who are faithful in that which is least will also be faithful in that which is great." Johannes Brenz

So Philip, how can we get bread for these people? "Testing, testing..."

Philip answers that a ton of cash wouldn't be enough to buy just a bite for each person. He sees the situation as **too big of a problem**.

5,000 men, thanks patriarchy for just counting dudes. Likely 10,000 following after Jesus here. Huge crowd. So even if they had more resources it wouldn't cover the need.

Then Andrew, another disciple pipes up about what they do have. "There is a boy who has five barely loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?"

Andrew approaching the same issue sees that they don't have a **big enough solution**.

Neither of them respond in faith. They don't tap into their biblical memory of God's provision for his people. They can't see beyond the statistics and insurmountable odds.

Marvel fans? We are watching through the movies chronologically, and in Age of Ultron, there is an exchange that goes as I imagine this one could have. The Avengers are planning to take on Ultron and the question comes of how they will face the overwhelming number of Ultrons... Cap says "together." "And if we die?" Tony Stark replies, "then we will die together!"

Passing the test may have been "We've got two dimes Jesus but I am confident you will find a way to feed the hungry." Or Andrew could have said, "we have five loaves and two fish, do your Jesus math and multiply it!"

We can understand easily that Philip and Andrew are not the heroes of this story. Maybe you have even heard that the boy was the hero for giving up his lunch... but friends, the hero here, the One we are to have faith in, is Jesus.

Jesus doesn't rail against the absence of faith, he just feeds the people.

He takes the bread, gives thanks for it, then hands it out to those who were seated. I hadn't noticed this before this week, but Jesus himself distributes the meal.

In this moment it is not their faith, or the absence of it that directs the outcome. It's the object of faith, Jesus.

And it is a miracle. He feeds upwards of ten thousand people with five loaves of barley bread and two fish (even if they were record catches he multiplied the meal).

If you ever hear someone, especially a pastor, say something along the lines of, 'well everyone had their own lunch and he is pooling them all together.' Tell them to sit down and stop speaking. This is a miracle. Unexplainable.

And it's not just barely enough to appetize the crowd, They got "as much as they wanted. Until they had eaten their fill." This is the all-you-can-eat miracle.

Even so the disciples gather up twelve baskets of fragments so that nothing may be lost. An overabundance.

Jesus, out of care for the people feeds them. Those gathering to him like chicks running up to a mother hen. "And let us not doubt that there will always be that same love for us if we are disciples of Christ, such that he sits and rests among us, feeding us by his Spirit, no differently than when he sat and rested among his disciples and fed them." Wolfgang Musculus

Oh how we need to recognize this. He still does miracles. Even when we don't have faith to see them.

It is far too easy to be lost to the size of our problems, our circumstances as individuals and as a people. We can be beat down by the lack of solution. Falling under the accusation of the law... stuck doing better, getting up earlier, strategizing in our own strength, pooling resources but leaving Jesus out of it.

We then don't approach him for the meal, we don't see a need for miracles because we have lost faith in them. It is a winding road that leads to even the questioning of salvation - "can he really do it?" "Maybe I should be better first..."

And when we do involve Jesus we too often try to get him to behave how we want...

John 6:15 “Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.” (ESV)

"We can't make Jesus do what we think he ought to do. We can't make him conform to our ideals of how he should rule. He is indeed King, but the way he rules is not our way." EP

Jesus didn't respond to the doubts with more strategy or a campaign to raise the funds needed. He said, “have the people sit down.”

There is all kinds of refining going on in the church in our day, and like John 6, those with with faith, abiding trust in Jesus, those clinging to him, sitting at his feet, will be the ones that stick around.

And they are the ones that see the bread and the fish for what it is... miraculous provision open to all who believe.

Ben Greene... In seminary, Stacy and I were invited along with another couple to a professor's home for dinner. During the conversation at the table, Ben was sharing about his day and how God had provided for him (money from a stranger to pay for his wife's prescription). But he knew this professor was a cessationist, meaning he didn't believe miracles were for today. So he said, “you might say God really cared for me through the circumstances of the day.” And I, not known to be the quiet type, butted in and said, “those weren't circumstances, that was a miracle!”

Listen, miracles are happening. Jesus is still feeding his people with scraps that become a feast. If we will sit with him we will see it.

This week I read about Lukow, Poland and how in a town with zero believers, after steady discipleship, after six years of no response, the Spirit moves and in 12 months seven new believers have received Christ in faith. A 700% increase in the church. We hear the small numbers, but the angels in heaven rejoiced over each miracle of salvation and Jesus isn't done feeding his people yet.

We have prayed for healing for those that were sick, with no solution in site, and the Lord has restored them. Jesus is appearing in the dreams of neighbors of our dear friends in North Africa, calling people to himself. And he is not done feeding his people.

We like those seated before Jesus - receiving faith in him. That we would realize it is enough. It is the way into his grace for the forgiveness of sin and the new life he grants us. It is the way to live obediently before him. It is the way to kill sin in our lives. It is the way to serve the least among us.

John 6:29 “Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” (ESV) To have faith. His miraculous meal leads us here.

His provision in our lives is an overabundance, he provides, he is still working for his glory and our good.

This is what this story is - an invitation to faith - to believe and see miracles. To trust Jesus... he is more than a prophet!

Faith in Jesus is really enough.

Have Faith - Believe in Jesus. That your disregard of God, your rejection of his way is solved by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus for you. That you can belong, have a new identity as a child of God, justified before God and made more like Jesus as you sit with him.

Live with Faith - Surrender the statistics. The half-empty glasses. Find hope again in Jesus and his Spirit. Be fed by him, receive faith and see how he might work miracles in our lives.

This is all I want, I pray it is so with you, more of Jesus, faith in him, because it is really enough.

"As we hear the gospel, we give thanks to God for his benefits, etc. This miracle was recorded; we should preach it in Christendom. And we should listen to it, grasp it and learn from it. Certainly it happened so that we might believe... This passage should remind us and rouse us to say: "Because Christ did this here, he

will do it again. Therefore, since I believe, our Lord God will say I will have food to eat." Martin Luther

May it be so with us.