

Lesson 5 Lecture
John 6:1-24
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In this day and age getting a handwritten letter or card is usually an event for our mailbox. Why? Electronic communication is faster. It takes time to sit and write and very often we don't finish it in one sitting. We maybe write a few lines and then pick it up later and add a few more lines before it's ready to be posted. For the reader, though, it is impossible to tell that several days or weeks had elapsed in the composition. So, it is with the beginning of today's lesson. John 6:1 says, "Sometime after this, Jesus crossed to the far shores of the Sea of Galilee."

Actually, there is a one-year span of time between John 5:47 and John 6:1. Up to this point John has dealt with the events which took place during the first year of Jesus' ministry; but now he omits the details of the second year of Jesus' ministry (perhaps because the other gospel writers covered them sufficiently). Nevertheless, it was during this second year of ministry that Jesus encountered wide public favor but received increasing antagonism from the religious leaders regarding the Sabbath observances. For this reason, the religious leaders sought how they might destroy Jesus, whether by character assassination or even physically. During this time Jesus focused almost entirely on the general populace of the Galilean region, meeting both their physical and spiritual needs.

A crucial event that occurred that second summer of ministry was the giving of the Sermon on the Mount. This was not given as a way of salvation, but to clarify forever the true nature of righteousness and God's kingdom. In it, Jesus struck a sharp distinction between mere hand rituals and heart righteousness. The Sermon on the Mount constituted a virtual "declaration of war" with the Pharisaic leaders. Many miracles established His Messianic credentials during this time – like raising the widow of Nain's son from the dead. Jesus' powers were castigated by the leaders as being Satan-inspired. So serious was this charge that Jesus altered His approach and commenced the disclosure of a new Kingdom program through the means of parables like those He gave by the sea concerning the Kingdom of Heaven. This reflected a change of turning His primary attention from the rejecting nation of Israel, as such, to receptive individuals who were responding to Him.

During His second year of ministry, Jesus:

- Stilled a raging sea
- Raised Jairus' daughter from the dead
- Healed the woman who touched His garment as well as the blind man and the dumb demonics
- Suffered a second rejection at Nazareth
- Sent His disciples out in pairs and received the news of the death of John the Baptist

Now, here in John 6:1, we have the beginning of the third and final year of Jesus' ministry. The disciples had returned from their mission in pairs and were in need of rest. So, Jesus took them across the Sea of Galilee to an area near Bethsaida. The Sea of Galilee is Israel's largest freshwater lake – it's approximately 33 miles in circumference, about 13 miles long and 8 miles wide. It is the lowest freshwater lake on Earth and the second-lowest lake in the world after the Dead Sea.

Since it is mentioned that the Jewish Passover Feast was near, this event occurred approximately 29 A.D. Thousands of intensely curious people gathered to see what miracles Jesus might perform. The Synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) tell us that Jesus had compassion on the multitudes and began teaching and healing the sick. The Synoptic gospels also record that the *disciples* took the initiative to draw attention to the need for food, whereas John records that *Jesus Himself* presented the need to

Philip. Does this mean the gospels contradict each other? No – it is just another perspective on the event – the event is the key point. This is the only miracle that is presented in all four gospels.

It doesn't take much imagination to picture the embarrassing plight of the disciples. I'm sure you had some good discussion in your groups on how you might have responded. Certainly, the disciples knew that Jesus was powerful enough to meet the need, yet they did not turn to Him for help. Instead, they took inventory of their limited treasury and the lad's meager food supply of five barley loaves and two small (sardine size) fish and couldn't see a solution to the problem. One person wrote, "We are all faced with a series of great opportunities, brilliantly disguised as unsolvable problems." Isn't that good? That's the motto the disciples needed to claim. It seemed an impossible problem.

But like an old song says, "little becomes much when you place it in the Master's hand." Jesus had the multitudes seat themselves in groups of 50 and 100. (God likes things done decently and in order.) He took the loaves, gave thanks and distributed it through the hands of His disciples. Everyone ate until they were full and twelve baskets were left over. (These were small lunch type baskets as versus the large baskets like the one big enough to hold Paul as he escaped from Damascus.) Dr. J. Vernon McGee does not see this as a garbage collection, but rather twelve baskets untouched because everyone was already full.

Here's what I hope is a helpful review of feeding the 5,000:

- **The Problem** – vs. 5; "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?"
- **The Probe** – vs. 6; He asked this only to test him.
- **The Prospects** – vs. 9; A boy with 5 loaves and two small fish
- **The Proposition** – vs. 10; Have the people sit down to eat (Elisha – 2 Kings 4)
- **The Program** – Food distributed to those seated who ate as much as they wanted
- **The Proof** – 12 baskets of food left
- **The Peril** – vs. 15; They intended to make Him a king by force

I think there are three ways we might look at in this familiar story to give us something we can apply to our lives.

1. Application for solving life's problems
2. Recognizing the value of little things
3. A reminder of a great scarcity, a great Savior, and a great satisfaction

Let's look at each one.

As for the steps to take to solve life's problems, we should:

- A. Take inventory of the situation. Refuse to worry – keep your emotions under control – pray for guidance.
 - a. Examine the gifts and abilities God has given you.
 - b. Recognize your limitations -Like the prayer "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference."
- B. Give it all to Jesus - and not on the end of a yo-yo string.
- C. Give God time to work in the situation. Be willing to obey what He commands (love unconditionally, forgive, give thanks in all things, and let others help you bear the burden (no false pride) and recognize that Christ may be using the situation to build your faith).

- D. Receive the bread - in faith appropriate the provision that the Lord has made for the occasion. He will never leave us.
- E. Waste not the lesson you learn - gather it into your spiritual storehouse – It will strengthen you again later and it will strengthen others. You got through it once, you will again.

We need to remember little things mean a lot.

- A. A little child's contribution counted. Like Andrew we need to seek out the *good* things children have to offer. Whether it's little children in the family or "babes in Christ" in the church family, often pearls of wisdom come from such as these. They say, "if you want the truth, ask an old person or a little child. They tell it like it is."
- B. A multitude can receive blessing from the hands of a few who are willing to serve. The disciples took what they had received from Jesus and fed others. You can and should be doing the same thing.
- C. You can't out give God. One lunch equals a fed multitude with 12 extra baskets. No matter what you give up for the kingdom of God, it comes back multiplied.

There was a Great Scarcity, a Great Savior, and a Great Satisfaction.

- A. Good "food" these days is getting harder and harder to find. Many people were hungry for a meal. You and I both know that many today are hungry for the Word of God – it's our daily Bread.
- B. Get to know the Source of this food. Jesus will tell us soon the He is the bread of life – the Word of God. If we are willing to distribute it, as the disciples did, Jesus will bless both us and our hearers; them with salvation and us with a soul-winner's crown in heaven.
- C. Know the satiation of the soul. They ate and were satisfied (at least for the moment until their stomachs grew hungry again).

The ultimate satisfaction comes when we have a tasted of the heavenly glory and have a harvest of peace with God, a peace that surpasses all understanding as it says in Philippians 4:7.

Well, Jesus provided a miraculous meal – the people loved it! Here was a man who could do anything! What a magnificent king He would make. However, they were not interested in what He said. They had no desire to know what He required of them. Sin, repentance, holiness and the God's will were never considered. They were sure this prophet was all they required to bring heaven to earth and make life a picnic. They did not want to worship and obey; they wanted to use Him to achieve their political and social, and personal goals.

Yet, despite knowing all this already, what did Jesus do? He took care of the people. That's what He does for us when we're not exactly living in the Spirit – He takes care of us because He loves us even when we're not very lovable. Soon they were to hear His sermons at the Passover feast, soon they were to feel the cutting edge of the Word of God. Soon they were to cry aloud "Crucify Him!" Jesus knew their motives. This was the same temptation presented to Jesus by Satan himself in the wilderness and Jesus withdrew to the hills to pray.

Jesus was also concerned for His disciples. First, that they do not fall into the crowd's conspiracy plans; and second, He knew they were tired and overtaxed. He sent them on ahead in advance. If we can learn a lesson on how to solve life's problems from the feeding of the 5,000, what lesson can we learn on how to handle *temptation* from these verses? Simple . . . resist the devil (flee) and pray, pray, pray!

Jesus' disciples were in trouble and all because they had their boat pointed in the direction Jesus told them to go. This storm was no simple storm squall, such as had been the case in Mark 4:39 where Jesus was sleeping in the boat in the midst of a storm and quieted the waves. No, this was a tiring, continuous headwind, necessitating steady, back-breaking rowing. Experience teaches us that sometimes there are far greater storms within human hearts than ever blew on Galilee, tiring and constant struggles. Nevertheless, two truths are evident in this Scripture: One – foreknowledge and Two – fore planning.

First, Jesus knew the lake would soon be lashed to fury by high winds and yet He sent His disciples on to the other side. They were safer in the storm in God's will than back on land with the crowds out of God's will. As we read our Bibles, we discover that there are two kinds of storms: 1) storms of correction, when God disciplines us; and 2) storms of perfection, when God helps us to grow. Jonah was in a storm because he disobeyed God and had to be corrected. The disciples were in a storm because they obeyed Christ and had to be perfected.

Jesus had tested them in a storm before when He was in the boat with them (Matthew 8:23-27). But now He tested them by being out of the boat. Many Christians have the mistaken idea that obedience to God's will produces "smooth sailing." **But this is not true.** "In this world you shall have tribulation," Jesus promised in John 16:33. In today's homework, we were asked to read an excerpt from Psalm 107, "Some went out on the sea in ships; they were merchants on the mighty waters. They saw the works of the LORD, his wonderful deeds in the deep. For he spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves. They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths; in their peril their courage melted away. They reeled and staggered like drunkards; they were at their wits' end. Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed." When we find ourselves in the storm because we have obeyed the Lord, we must remember that He brought us here, and He can care for us.

Just as Jesus foreknew in the first place the disciples were headed into a storm, so secondly, He fore planned what He would do for the safety of those He loved. Often, we feel like Jesus has deserted us when we are going through the hard times of life. In the Psalms, David complained that God seemed far away and unconcerned. Yet, he knew that God would eventually rescue him. Jesus always comes to us in the storms of life. "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you . . . (Isaiah 43:2)." He may not come at the time we think He should come, because He knows when we will need Him the most. He waited until the ship was as far from land as possible, so that all human hope was gone. He was testing the disciples' faith, and this meant removing every human prop.

Why did they not recognize Jesus? Because they were not looking for Him. Had they been waiting by faith; they would have known Him immediately. Instead, they jumped to the false conclusion that the appearance was that of a ghost. Fear and faith cannot live in the same heart, for fear always blinds the eyes to the presence of the Lord. This was the whole purpose of the storm, to help the disciples grow in faith. After all, Jesus would one day leave them, and they would have to face many storms in their ministries. They had to learn to trust Him even though He was not present with them, and even though it looked like He did not care.

If we're honest with ourselves, we all have fears. Some of these fears may be simplistic while some may be very complex. Simple or complex, fear causes a wide range of problems and can make us feel out of control and powerless. I believe that God allows ungodly fear to draw us close to Him and to learn how to trust Him. We need to notice that once again the Lord used the expression, "I AM" in the sentence we have translated, "It is I, don't be afraid." I AM is God's name, and each time it was used by the Lord, amazing power was liberated to accomplish the impossible. Even the waves were hushed before Him and John related immediately the ship was at the land.

We had you read the story of Peter stepping out of the boat to walk to Jesus so that you would get the total picture of this event. It was not an elaborate event, Peter just had faith to step out onto the water and take a few steps. Importantly, even though Peter failed to make much progress due to fear, others believed. Those steps of faith brought Jesus into the boat.

Well, realizing that Jesus had departed, the crowds went to Capernaum in search of Jesus. The boat landed at Gennesaret, near Capernaum and Bethsaida, and Jesus healed many people. Did these people know He had come through a storm to meet their needs? Do we remember that He endured the storm of judgment to save our souls? He endured the storm for us that we might never have to face the judgment of God. Are you going through some storms of life? Jesus sees you, and you can rejoice that His understanding help in on the way. Expect Him to come to you in the darkest part of the night, and do not ignore or reject Him when He comes.

Be open to the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. If convicted of sin, confess it. If clean just focus on Jesus and let Him get into the boat with you. Your storm may be uncertainly on the job (so many can relate to that), unemployment, or financial worries (there's another familiar one to us today). It may be conflict in your home, or emotional insecurity. It may be conflict with other believers, or an ethical dilemma. Be still – Be confident – The storms WILL cease. He WILL provide His answers for you.

Annie Johnson Flint has a poem titled “What God Hath Promised.”

God hath not promised
Skies always blue.
Flower- strewn pathways
All our lives through;
God hath not promised
Sun without rain,
Joy without sorrow,
Peace without pain.
But God hath promised
Strength for the day,
Rest for the labor,
Light for the way,
Grace for the trials,
Help from above,
Unfailing sympathy,
Undying love.

In impossible situations: take inventory of the situation, give it to Jesus, wait, feed on the Word, waste not the lessons learned. In the storms of life: you may be fully in God's will for correction or perfection. Your steps of faith will witness to others, what you fear most may be the staircase for Jesus to reach you. As you serve the Lord, you can be encouraged that He is aware of any and all problems you may have. You should expect conflict but rejoice because you know Jesus is willing and eager to help. When Peter saw the Lord walking on water, he wanted to do likewise. This was a supernatural thing, and he did walk on water as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus. But even when he became distracted by the wind and violent storm, the Lord was there to help him.

The Christian life is a supernatural life. You are expected to live a holy life, a life that is different from the world. But by yourself you can't live that life any more than you can walk on water. The good news is that the Lord wants to help you, and He will help you live victoriously as long as you walk in faith depending on Him. Let's pray.