

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MARCH 18TH - 19TH, 2023 // GOSPEL OF JOHN

THE CROWD (JOHN 6:1-9)

The best guess of most scholars is that approximately six months have passed since the close of chapter 5.

- At the time when the Jewish Passover feast was near, Jesus is back in the region of Galilee, and John tells us that He crossed to the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee (vs. 1).
- Luke tells us that on this occasion Jesus was going to this deserted place to be alone (Lk. 9:10).

However, a great crowd (possibly 7,000–15,000 people, vs. 10) pursued Jesus.

- Why was this great crowd following Jesus?
- Because they had witnessed His healing power and presumably followed Him to the other side of the lake in order to see more miraculous signs.
- Jesus goes up to a mountain and sits with his disciples as they watch the crowd close in (vs. 3).

The Feast of Passover (vs. 4) is associated closely with the Exodus and God's sustenance of Israel in the wilderness.

- Soon Jesus will sustain the multitude of Israelites in this "wilderness" with bread from heaven—both literally and spiritually.
- The detail John includes about this sign occurring near the feast of Passover also connects the work of Jesus with the ministry of Moses.
- 1. Like Moses, Jesus is leading a crowd—Moses led a crowd of possibly 1–2 million out of Egypt.
- 2. The crowd is following Jesus because they saw the signs He did—the crowd followed Moses because they saw the signs he did in Egypt.
- 3. Jesus and His disciples went up to a mountain— after leading the people out of Egypt, Moses and his servant Joshua went up to Mt. Sinai to receive the law from God.

Like Moses, Jesus will lead His people out of their bondage and slavery to sin and death.

- Like Moses directed the people of Israel to God's provision of manna from heaven, Jesus will sustain and provide for His people.
- Every need we have—spiritually, physically, relationally, emotionally, etc.—Jesus is able and willing to meet. Sometimes we don't know how He will, but He can and He will.

"WHERE WILL WE BUY BREAD SO THAT THESE PEOPLE CAN EAT?" (VS. 5)

Jesus asks Phillip a question when He already had in mind what He was about to do (vs. 6).

- It's not hard to imagine a twinkle in Jesus' eye as He asks Phillip this question—He's testing him to give him the opportunity to acknowledge Jesus' ability to provide and do anything, no matter how impossible the situation may seem.

But Phillip is still learning the life of faith and trust in Jesus—he tells Jesus the stats on how impossible the situation that lies in front of them actually is.

- Two hundred denari, almost a year's wages, wouldn't even come close to being enough (vs. 7).
- The situation (humanly speaking) is hopeless—it'd be impossible to feed all these people.

IMPOSSIBLE SITUATIONS.

Often times the life of faith in following Jesus in obedience leads us to the edge of our own abilities and puts before us impossible situations.

- These situations are God designed so that we can learn what it means to live and work at the level of our own inadequacies.
- The life of faith is living in such a way that if the Lord doesn't show up to help, we'll fail miserably.

Andrew (Simon Peter's brother) comes up with a solution to the seemingly impossible situation: he's found some food!

- Andrew found a boy with five barley loaves and two small fish (vs. 9a).
- Barley was considered animal feed, and the two small fish ("opsarion") were roughly the size of sardines.
- Andrew knows it's not enough (vs. 9b).

When we find ourselves facing an impossible situation or in a time of need, we are to give all that we have to Jesus and let Him do the rest.

- We start with what we have—no matter how little or insignificant or unimpressive it may be—but we must be sure we're giving it all to Jesus.
- Seemingly useless and unimportant things can become powerful instruments to do great things in the hands of Jesus.

FEEDING THE 5,000 (JOHN 6:10-15)

There were 5,000 men present, so there might have been as many as 7,000–15,000 people.

- Jesus was in no hurry or panic—He simply instructed the people to sit down on the grass in an orderly fashion (vs. 10).
- It might be easy to miss the miracle of Jesus' miraculous provision if you're not paying attention.
- All Jesus does is give thanks for it (vs. 11).

Then Jesus began to distribute the bread and fish to everyone who was seated (vs. 11).

- Miraculously, there was enough for everyone to eat as much as they wanted until they got full (vs. 12).
- It's no coincidence that there were 12 leftover baskets—those were the provisions for the 12 working with Jesus to show compassion and God's provision to the crowd (vs. 13).

SCARCITY MINDSET VS. ABUNDANCE MINDSET

A scarcity mindset says, "there will never be enough," only see trouble and problems, views the glass half empty, and thinks small to avoid risks.

- An abundance mindset says, "there will always be more than enough," sees opportunities to bless others and be generous, views challenges as growth opportunities, and thinks big even when risk is involved.

When we faithfully serve with the resources of God and the compassion of Christ to care for others God has called us to serve, we don't have to worry if our needs will be taken care of.

- God always takes care of us, and we're blessed in the process of being used by God to be a blessing to others.

- When you follow and obey Jesus, you never reach dead ends and there will always be enough. Moses predicted the coming of "the Prophet" who would miraculously provide for Israel just as he did (Deut. 18:15).

- Jesus had provided bread for this crowd in the wilderness, just as Moses had provided manna (Ex. 16:31; Deut. 8:16).
- The crowd began to connect the dots and saw the spiritual significance behind the sign Jesus had performed (vs. 14).

This crowd was so overcome with the excitement of Jesus being the "Prophet" that they began to plan to take matters into their own hands and force Jesus to be their king (vs. 15).

- What they were looking for in the moment was most likely a political leader to overthrow the Romans.
- But Jesus had come to bring more than just physical bread and to conquer a greater enemy than their political opponents.

The result of a large crowd taking such a rebellious action would have ended like so many other rebellions against the Romans—massive bloodshed and loss of life.

- Jesus departed again to a mountain by Himself alone: He wasn't impressed or seduced by the crowd that wanted to make Him king.
- He was more interested in being with His Father in prayer than in hearing the applause.

WALKING ON THE SEA (JOHN 6:16-21)

Matthew's and Mark's Gospels tell us that when evening came, Jesus compelled the disciples to get into a boat (Matt. 14:22; Mark 6:45) because He knew they were in danger.

- The Sea of Galilee is a freshwater lake that lies 600 feet below sea level, and often strong winds blow in from the west.
- As the disciples headed across the lake to Capernaum, a storm blew in (vs. 18).

It's completely dark, the water is churning, the wind is strong, and the disciples are rowing into the wind for a distance of 3–4 miles (vs. 19).

- Nature sometimes has a way of making us as human beings feel powerless and small.
- We so often live in the delusion of total and absolute control over our lives—but all it takes is one storm or natural disaster to remind us that we're not as strong as we think we are.

These disciples found themselves in a storm as a result of their obedience to Jesus—they were doing exactly what He told them to do!

- Mark 6:48 tells us that Jesus was watching the disciples as they rowed across the lake.
- They were in the will of Jesus and being watched by Jesus, yet they were working hard in frustration against a situation in which they felt completely powerless.

Suddenly the disciples look up and see Jesus walking on the surface of the water.

- Job 9 speaks of Yahweh, "treading on the waves of the sea," and the Psalmist in Psalm 89:9 writes of the Lord, "ruling over the surging sea."
- These men felt powerless and scared because of the natural forces of wind and the sea, until they look up and witness something that is far beyond what is natural.

They are confronted by the reality of a Being far more powerful than they can fathom who has complete authority over storms and seas.

- Their first response is fear!
- Above the roaring wind, they hear a familiar voice speaking to them, "I AM, no fear" (vs. 20).
- Not only is Jesus revealing His divinity by walking on water, but He also may be using the divine name of God to express His divinity.

When the disciples willingly received Jesus into the boat, something even more miraculous happened—the work that was so frustrating a few moments before suddenly was divinely accomplished (vs. 21).

- What had felt hopeless, helpless, and futile was accomplished in a moment as soon as Jesus entered the equation.
- Jesus' presence in our lives changes everything.

FRUSTRATING & IMPOSSIBLE SITUATIONS.

- In this life we will have trouble, and sometimes we will face difficult situations and seasons.
- Sometimes the frustrating and seemingly impossible situations we face are God designed and ordained.
- They're given to us so we can learn that we're not in control and what it means to operate at the level of our own inadequacies.

GIVING ALL WE HAVE TO JESUS.

- God doesn't need us, but He's invited us to join Him in His work and to use what we have.
- You may think your small sacrifices of time, energy, prayer, personal attention, or money won't go far to help anyone.
- Seemingly small things in the hands of Jesus can be used for great purposes.
- Have you given Him all you have?

INVITING JESUS INTO THE BOAT.

- It's human nature to want to power up, take control, have a plan, and "fix" situations that are frustrating and impossible—so often, we do all of this on our own strength.
- Eventually, we find ourselves tired, burnt out, angry, discouraged, frustrated, and like we've been rowing 3–4 miles into the wind.
- Jesus' presence in our lives changes everything.

ALWAYS ENOUGH & NO DEAD ENDS.

- Every need we have—spiritually, physically, relationally, emotionally, etc.—Jesus is able and willing to meet.
- Sometimes we don't know how He will, but He can and He will—we must trust Him.
- If we follow and obey Jesus as Lord, no situation we will ever face is a dead end.
- Deuteronomy 31:8
- Philippians 4:1