

John 6.1-14
The Exponential And All-Satisfying Bread Of Life

Aim: to see that Jesus is the Bread of Life and to be satisfied in Him!

Scripture Reading: John 6.1-15

CONCLUSION:

As I finished **chapter 5** several weeks ago, I had two brothers at separate times come up to me to tell me what was coming next after **chapter 5**...which is? **John chapter 6**.

So we begin **chapter 6** this morning. I've mentioned a few times over the years some of my former decisions as a staff pastor/youth pastor and how much of what I had done before could be clothed with this title: All Hype and no Substance. You see, looking back I shouldn't have been given a leadership position in the church at 19 years old. But by God's providence I was and through many embarrassing moments I learned many humbling lessons, and even still learn humbling lessons today as well.

Over much of those early years of ministry I was geared to bring all the hype and excitement and entertainment that I was allowed to. It was all aimed to make my students enjoy my ministry and to fill up every chair with a teenage person. It was all about hype and excitement, because that is what feeds the soul of the american teenager. Well guess what? Those teenagers get older and as they get older they turn into adults, but as adults they don't leave the childish things behind. The soul of the former teenagers, now adults, still want their souls fed with excitement and hype. So what we have in our country are adults who are still trapped in childish desires. They just have bigger and more expensive toys that excite them and feed their soul's cravings.

The sad truth is we are all this way to some degree. We all have to fight the flesh and starve the flesh, so that our spirit and soul can be fed with the bread of life and the living water. It's truly a battle for me to deny those sinful tendencies that want to bite after the allurements from the world. It's a fight of faith. But we do fight!

This need for excitement and hype and thrill is nothing new to you and me. This has been going on for ages and will continue on for ages until Christ returns and we truly see Him for who He is and then the things of earth will not only grow strangely dim, but they will forever fade away. Jesus will then be our pure joy and pure hope. Don't you long for the day when this sinful flesh will be no more and you won't have to wage war against sin and temptation?

But until that day, is it really possible for you to be genuinely satisfied with Jesus? What I mean is...is it really possible for you, those of you who are in Christ, to not go after the things of the world and of the flesh and to pursue Christ? You see, I have to believe Scripture. Scripture teaches us that we have been given everything by God's divine power pertaining to life and godliness. You see, we lack nothing to choose holiness and righteousness over sin.

So why do we cower to temptation? Why do we cower to sin? If by God's divine power I've been given everything to achieve life in godliness, then why do I cower to sin? Because in those moments of temptation and decision, I don't see Jesus for who Jesus is. I don't see Him as more satisfying and more fulfilling than the sin that my flesh desires and I'm committing. So I cower to the pressure of the flesh, the world, and the devil to try and find the sin to be more enjoyable than the Savior who freed me from that sin.

But then there are also these moments, which may be even worse to God. Those moments when people only get excited in Jesus when they see in Jesus only what they want from Jesus. They get excited about Jesus because things are going really well for them and that's the kind of Jesus that they love, the kind of Jesus that gives them what they want. That may be the worse sin of the two.

And I say that, because if your excitement about Jesus only depends on what Jesus does for you and gives to you, then that's really not the Jesus of Scripture. And so in that sin, there is grave, eternal danger in loving that kind of Jesus, which is not the Jesus of the Bible.

Scripture teaches us that Jesus is the bread of life. Once again all throughout our lives God gives us physical illustrations of what God is like for us spiritually. Jesus is called in the gospel of John the bread of life. We all know what bread is and we all know what bread does.

Two weeks ago in Lusaka, Zambia I went to the grocery store with Bro. Misheck. He was the gentleman of the family that I was staying with. When we were in the grocery store he quickly hurried to the back to see if they had put out some fresh baked bread and they did. So he got like three loaves. We got home and we had that fresh, warm tender baked African bread for dinner. Man, it was good! It was so soft it would almost melt in your mouth without even chewing it. It was satisfying and filling, and it was good!

God gave us bread, so that we would know how good Jesus is for us. **John chapter 6** is all about bread. The miracle of exponential bread, the miracle of bread multiplying and feeding thousands of people. That's Jesus! The living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. That's Jesus! Jesus is the bread of life. We eat this bread and have true genuine life. This is what we hunger for; this is what we long for; we long for the true Jesus of Scripture...who is the bread of life!

Often times we just simply read and teach **John 6** as the miracle of feeding the five thousand and we do our best to be impressed with the miracle. But how many of you know by now that the miracle is simply a sign pointing to something greater than the miracle; that the miracle is pointing to something greater about Jesus? You see, Jesus IS the exponential, multiplying, all-satisfying and fulfilling bread of life. The bread is Jesus!

Let's read the first several verses together...**John 6.1-5**.

Title: The Exponential And All-Satisfying Bread Of Life

Aim: to see that Jesus is the Bread of Life and to be satisfied in Him!

The first thing that we read in **John chapter 6** is...

Jesus Went Away To Be With His Disciples (v.1-4)

“After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias). A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick. Then Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat down with His disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near.”

Over and over again we must see the intimacy that Jesus had with **His disciples**. He stayed with them constantly. He desired to be with them constantly. There was an imparting of His life, His mind, His heart and His ministry into His followers. He loved them so dearly.

There was also a need for some rest. Most of you here this morning know that ministry can at times be exhausting and can sap you of your strength. The truth is we do need times of rest and seclusion with God to be refreshed in our soul and in our bodies in communion with God. He is our strength!

So the Apostle John says in **verse 1, after these things**. **The things** that had taken place in **chapter 5**, which was probably a period of time and not simply just the next day, Jesus **went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee**. In **chapter 5** Jesus was in Jerusalem and the religious leaders were harassing Him, persecuting Him and by the time **chapter 5** comes to a close they are now desiring all the more to kill Him. So in Jesus' infinite wisdom, He now decides that it's time to get **away** and be alone together with His people.

You'll notice in your bible **the Sea of Galilee** is also called the **Sea of Tiberias**. It had a few different names over different periods of time, but at this time in John's day it had come to be called the **Sea of Tiberias**, because of the city of **Tiberias** that was located on the western shore. It was renamed by Herod Antipas in honor of the Emperor **Tiberias**. So to John's non Jewish readers they would have known of **Tiberias**.

So as Jesus goes **away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee** we are told that **a large crowd followed Him**, but why did they follow Him?

The Motivation Of Those Who Followed Jesus (v.2)

In **verse 2** John discloses their motivation. **Because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick.**

I opened up my sermon talking about how my ministry used to be built on hype and trying to draw large crowds of teenagers. So you do what you must in order to draw the crowd. You amaze them and you create things that will impress them. As long as I kept the teenagers excited my ministry was considered strong. So I fed to the worldly cravings of these teenagers. I use this example of my ministry, because today only just a handful of those teenagers are actually following after Christ. That was 15-20 years ago and it still breaks my heart today that they are not followers of Jesus.

The truth is we cannot, as the body of Christ, and we must not pander to the worldly desires that people in the world have. The crowd in **John 6** are drawn to Jesus **because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick.** They were drawn to Jesus because most of the **crowd** just wanted more of the sparkle and the amazement of miracles. This is why they are drawn to Jesus. Jesus would later on in **John 6** say this about them...“you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.” So this **crowd** that is following Jesus in **verse 2** has as their motivation...their own stomach, their own appetite. But,

Jesus Still Pushes To Get Alone With His Men (v.3)

“Then Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat down with His disciples.

In **verse 4** it says, “**Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near.**” We may conclude that because **the Passover was near**, Jesus desired to get **away with His disciples**, because He wanted to consecrate this time together with them. He may have wanted to spend time in remembering God’s deliverance of the people of Israel from Egypt **with His disciples**.

This week I started studying through the book of Joshua and in Joshua chapter 3 Joshua tells the people to “**consecrate themselves for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.**”

Consecration is an act where we set ourselves apart for a particular purpose. The purpose for the people of Israel, in Joshua 3, was to prepare themselves, so that they would not miss the wonder of God in drying up the Jordan River.

In my mind, I can connect the consecration of Israel to behold the wonders of God with the consecration of Jesus in getting away with **His disciples** in preparing for **the Passover** in remembering the wonders of God, but also anticipating the wonders of God in His Son Jesus Christ as THE Passover Lamb that will soon be slaughtered for the sins of the world. Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you. Jesus consecrated this time **with His disciples** in order that they would all fix themselves Godward unto the LORD, because something wonderful is about to take place among them.

But we also read in **Matthew 14** of his account of the feeding of the five thousand, that right before the feeding, Jesus heard about John the Baptist’s death and when He had heard about his death Jesus withdrew from there in a boat to a secluded place by Himself and **His disciples** followed Him.

So not only does **verse 4** give us a reason for Jesus’ going **up on the mountain and sitting down with His disciples**, but **verse 4** may also give us a reason for what is going on in **verse 5**.

The Prerogative Of Jesus To Test His Disciple(s) (v.5-9)

“Therefore Jesus, lifting up His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him, said to Philip, ‘Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?’ This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do.

Because **the Passover was near** (verse 4) we now have all of Israel who are now congregating together. So there are many of these people who want to see Jesus. So after getting **away** with His **disciples Jesus lifting up His eyes** from teaching them **on the mountain He sees that a large crowd was coming to Him.**

In Mark’s gospel he says, “Jesus saw a large crowd, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things. In Matthew’s gospel he says that Jesus “felt compassion for them and healed their sick.” In Luke’s gospel he says, “Jesus began speaking to them about the kingdom of God...”

So even though the **crowd’s** motivation would be their stomach, Jesus in His common grace and common mercy feels compassion for these people who are like sheep without a shepherd. So Jesus teaches them, speaks to them about the kingdom of God, He heals them, and He cures those who had need of healing. And now, in John’s gospel we read in **verse 5** that He desires to feed them, so in **verse 5 Jesus says to Philip, ‘Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?’ This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do.”**

Jesus in His sovereign prerogative, to common grace those who need to eat, now **tests** his **disciple Philip**. In Colossians 1.18 we learn that **Jesus** is the head of the body and as the head of the body of Christ Jesus has absolute sovereignty and prerogative to do anything He so desires to do with the body. So here He **tests His disciple Philip**. Why **Philip**? Perhaps, because he was the one from the town that they were now in on the other side of the Sea, which was believed to be Bethsaida. Perhaps, because **Philip** was the one who was in charge of the meals each day. We do not know exactly why it was **Philip** who was **tested**, but nevertheless, it was **Philip** who was **tested**.

What does a sovereign **test** by the Master accomplish? We know that all **tests** of faith produce endurance and stronger faith. **James 1.2** says,

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

All the various trials and **tests** that we face in Christ and for Christ are for a stronger faith to believe in Christ. Listen, there is no moment, no trial, no **test**, no question from God that is ever wasted for the believer in Christ. All is for this purpose; your enduring faith in Jesus!

So here in **John 6.5-6**, for **Philip’s** faith and even for the rest of the **disciples** who are listening in, there faith is being **tested** and even strengthened in Christ. For **Philip**, his faith was found lacking for he answers Jesus’ question in **verse 7**, **“Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little.”** You see, **Philip’s** mind went immediately to money. **Two hundred denarii** would have been worth about eight month’s of wages, but would have still be insufficient to feed the **five thousand** plus people. But this is what Philip’s mind went to and rested in...money!

I would like to pause here for a second and think of **Philip** and his lack of faith because of the lack of money. Have you ever been challenged in your faith to believe Christ, because of your lack of money? Listen, this is no small matter and not one that is unique to **Philip**. We all at times, if not even every day for some of us, have been **tested** in our faith to trust in the sufficiency of Christ over and above the sum of money in our bank account. It is Jesus’ sufficiency we trust in not the sum of our money. We must look to Him in those moments where we are **tested** in our faith. It is to Him we must quickly look to to believe in. **Philip** answered Jesus’ question by looking to the bank account. **Philip** should have answered the question by looking to the Benefactor of all good things.

Even **Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother** chimes in and says in **verse 8**, **“There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?”**

Andrew too exhibited lack of faith in the sufficiency of Christ. **Philip** looked to the small amount in the bank account, **Andrew** was looking to the small amount in the lunch box.

But there is no room here to demean their faith. Jesus is perfecting their faith. He is the Author of their faith, so He is writing out their faith every single day. This is the prerogative of the Sovereign Lord and Master to **test** them and then to display to them Who and What their faith should rest in. Maybe in Jesus' question and **test**, He is consecrating them, so that they will behold the wonder of God that is about to happen before them.

So Jesus takes the lads bread and fish and puts on display for them where their faith should rest in. Consecrate yourselves, for the LORD will do wonders among you.

Jesus Commands The Disciples & The Wonder Of God (v.10-13)

“Jesus said, ‘Have the people sit down.’ Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. Jesus then took the loaves, and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted. When they were filled, He said to His disciples, ‘Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost.’ So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten.”

Although the **disciples**, at least **Philip** and **Andrew**, were lacking in faith in regards to the feeding of these people, they did NOT however lack in obedience to Jesus. They obeyed Jesus' command and **the men sat down, in number about five thousand**. If you add women and children the total number of people could have been anywhere from 15-20 thousand people.

There being **much grass in the place** helps us to know that it was the spring time right before **the Passover** when this sign and **feeding** of the multitude is taking place. It was ripe and fresh for the wonders of God to take place! So what does Jesus do next?

Verse 11...“Jesus then took the loaves, and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted.”

D.A. Carson writes, “If Jesus used the common form of Jewish thanksgiving, he said something like this: ‘Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.’ Jesus ‘blesses’ God.

In Matthew, Mark, and Luke we are told that Jesus then **distributes** the **bread** through the **disciples** to those who were seated. MacArthur says, “Jesus, of course, did not need to use them; He could just as easily have **distributed** the food to the crowd by supernatural means, God, however, often works through weak, fallible humans.”

Are you not thankful that God uses the weak of the world to do His mighty work? Are you not thankful that God uses the foolish of the world to speak and teach of His wisdom? What we see in this sign; in this miracle of God’s power of exponentially multiplying **bread** and **fish** is that Jesus uses men who may at times be weak in faith, but are obedient when the Lord commands them. God uses those who submit themselves to Him and it is through their obedience and submission to Him where their faith is then made strong.

So Jesus continues to break more and more and more **bread** and then He **distributes** it to **the disciples** and the disciples give it to the crowd. It is by the hand of God where we are fed the **bread** of life. J.C. Ryle says, “As fast as he broke the **loaves** and **the disciples** carried them away to **distribute** them, so fast did the **loaves** multiply under His hands. It was in the act of **breaking and distributing to the disciples** that the miraculous multiplication took place.”

Which is a sweet picture to us that it is from God where we are fed! He is the source!

We read in **verse 11-12...They all had as much as they wanted and were filled!**

They **were filled!** **Filled** means to to take one’s fill of, to satisfy, to fill in. There was no more room left in their bellies for more **fish** or **bread**. They were **filled!**

When they were **all filled** what then does Jesus command **the disciples** to do in **verse 12**? “**To gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost.**”

None of God’s blessings are ever lost or wasted. Even in the overflow of God’s blessings, **twelve baskets were filled with fragments from the five barley loaves of bread which were left over by those who had eaten.** So each of **the disciples** now had each a basket full of **bread** to eat the next day. This was unlike the manna in the wilderness where they were told not to store it up.

Folks, this miracle, this sign points us all to the Lord who declares in Jeremiah that “My people will be filled with My bounty.” Jesus is **the bread** that is exponential, that multiplies, that fills, and that satisfies us. It is to Jesus that we look to who is sufficient. We do not look to money; we do not look to man; and we do not look to what we have in our supply. We look to Jesus when our faith is **tested**. We look to Jesus when the trials have come. We look to Jesus even in the abundance of our resources, lest we forget where that has come from.

Jesus is the distributor of all good things to us, His people. If Jesus does this for those who are not His, then how much more will He do for you who are His? We must eat of His **bread**. The food in which He distributes. And that food is what satisfies and fills His people.

John 6 and the miracle of the exponential, multiplying and all-satisfying **bread and fish** was written, so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ and that believing you might have life in His name. Do you believe? Do you have life in Jesus? Do you satisfy yourselves in Him over the things of the world? Are you even fighting that fight of faith or have you coward to the lust of the flesh, the desires of the world, and to the delicacies of the devil?

Do you eat every morning and all day long from the Bread of Life? Or do you waste your appetite on the spoiled scraps of the world? Following after Jesus isn't merely about seeing His signs and wonders and wanting to have your eyes fancied with more signs. Following after Jesus is obeying Him even when your faith may not be very strong. It is obeying Him and looking to Him before and even more so than what's in your bank account or what's in your lunch box.

God is consecrating you this morning, so that you may behold the wonders of God in His Son Jesus Christ. He is consecrating your mind, your thoughts Godward. He is consecrating your heart, your affections, your loves, your desires Godward. He is consecrating your life, your hands, your feet, Godward. All of us should long for the Bread of Life and we should feast upon the Bread of Life.

Jesus miraculously and exponentially multiplies and makes more **bread and fish** so that all who would behold Him will believe in Him and have life in Him and that will come to know that He can and will forever satisfy the longings of every human soul.

Are you that person who truly believes in Him or do you just want to be entertained by Him and have your eyes fancied on His miracles and follow after Him only on your terms?

You see your terms of following after Jesus are just that...yours! They are not His terms. Being a disciple is about obeying and following what Jesus says you are to do and not simply what you desire to do. This **crowd** of people are about to be shocked and awed by Jesus and His teaching a little later in **John 6**. Which **crowd** will you be in when Jesus gives the hard teachings?

Those who follow after Christ or those who follow their own rules?