

John 6 is a favorite chapter in John's gospel for many believers and many pastors and preachers, and I am certainly tempted to put myself in that category.

There's just so many rich and profound truths to consider in this chapter. Let's begin this morning by reading the text.

Beginning in John 6:1, **"After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias).² A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick.³ Then Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat down with His disciples.⁴ Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near.**

⁵Therefore 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?"⁶ This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do.⁷ Philip answered Him, "Two hundred ^[b]denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little."⁸ One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, *said to Him,⁹ "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?"

¹⁰Jesus said, "Have the people ^[c]sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men ^[d]sat down, in number about five thousand.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.¹² When they were filled, He *said to His disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost."¹³ 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.

¹⁴Therefore when the people saw the ^[e]sign which He had performed, they said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world."¹⁵ So Jesus, perceiving that they were ^[f]intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.

This is the account of the most popular miracle performed by the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the reasons we can say that with confidence is because this is the only miracle which appears in all four gospel accounts.

Assuming of course that we aren't counting the resurrection. But when it comes to Jesus' life and public ministry, *this* is the miracle which gets the most attention from all gospel writers.

You'll find the same event recorded in Matthew 14, Mark 6, and Luke 9. Each giving their own inspired account of this event.

None of them are identical to one another, as each biblical author, for his own unique purposes, adds certain details that others omit, and omit certain details that others include.

But remarkably, all 4 accounts of this event are completely consistent with one another.

As we consider a passage like this that has to do with one of the most prominent miracles of Jesus, it's good to remind ourselves that the primary purpose of miracles is not ultimately to provide the physical, earthly need.

In other words, it would be a mistake to consider this passage and the miraculous feeding of the 5,000, and walk away thinking that the main point is something like this:

Look at how compassionate Jesus was. He cared so much about the crowd and their empty stomachs, that even when He was exhausted, He took the time to miraculously feed so many people.

Granted, everything about that is true, but that is not the point of this passage, nor the ultimate purpose for this miracle.

What is a miracle? Author Michael Vlach has provided what I think is a helpful definition: "Miracles are God's direct supernatural interventions in the world where He *overrides* or *suspends* laws of nature to accomplish His purposes."

There is a divine agenda behind every miracle. An agenda or purpose that surely *benefits* man, but at the same time doesn't *terminate* on mere man and his physical needs.

And therefore, when 5,000 plus hungry people are miraculously fed, the purpose of this miracle was not ultimately to solve a problem of physical hunger.

Whatever earthly benefit was gained, like healing or feeding, that pragmatic benefit was never the primary purpose, it was of secondary importance.

And the same is true here in John 6. Jesus tells us the significance of this miracle later on in the very same chapter.

Look over for example at John 6:26 as Jesus addresses the very crowd that benefitted from His miraculous provision of food for them the day before.

John 6:26, "26 Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. 27 Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal."

Skip down to verse 32, "³² Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is ¹¹that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world." ³⁴ Then they said to Him, "Lord, always give us this bread." ³⁵ Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst."

This is ultimately what the miraculous feeding of the 5,000 is about. Just as bread, which is representing food, is essential to physical life. You cannot survive without food.

Jesus is saying, “I am the bread of life, I am essential for eternal life. You cannot survive apart from me, you will perish apart from me.”

The ultimate reason for this miracle is to point to Himself as the bread of heaven, the bread of life.

The very one who satisfied your physical hunger by miraculously providing bread, is the very one who you must receive and believe in for eternal life.

This the main theme we will be considering the next several weeks together in John 6.

And with these introductory matters in mind, before we get into our outline, let’s begin by considering the occasion for Jesus’ most prominent miracle in verses 1-4.

John 6:1, After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias).

That phrase there “After these things” is obviously a chronological indicator here in the text, but it is a pretty general reference.

For instance, the previous setting, in chapter 5, was in Jerusalem. Drawing your attention back to 5:1, **“After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.”**

What happened in Jerusalem in chapter 5? He healed a paralytic on the Sabbath. This invited the scrutiny and persecution of the Jewish leaders.

Which in turn prompted Jesus to give a sermon defending His actions on the Sabbath and defending His deity, His equality with the Father.

The next chronological indicator we have is 6:1, **“after these things.”** It’s a general reference, not necessarily indicating *immediately* after these things.

I draw your attention to that because we do know from Matthew, Mark, and Luke that there were *other* events that happened here before He headed to this area.

But John’s burden isn’t to include those details, but rather to fast forward to what is happening right here.

And in 6:1, John tells us that Jesus departed, He went away from Jerusalem, eventually **“to the other side of the Sea of Galilee.”**

And so we can see here that upon returning to the region of Galilee, He has now gone back to northern Israel, where the majority of the gospel narratives find their setting.

If you remember from our earlier studies in John, Galilee was a large region, consisting of many cities in northern Israel.

It was the place of a flourishing fishing industry as it contained the only sizeable freshwater lake in the region. The Sea of Galilee.

Jesus Himself was from the region of Galilee, growing up in Nazareth, which is in the lower part of that region.

Notice how John adds an alternative description here of this region: The Sea of Galilee **or Tiberias**. Tiberias was the emperor of Rome from 14 to 37 AD.

There was a coastal town named after him, as time went on the entire region, including the Sea came to be known by that name – the Sea of Tiberias.

John includes it here because he is writing so many years later after Matthew, Mark, and Luke, that the Sea of Galilee had begun to take on an alternative name by that point.

What's interesting here is that Jesus goes to the *other side* of the Sea of Galilee. Which would be the eastern side.

He had spent time on the western side already. That's where Cana is located and Capernaum. We've already seen some of His ministry in those regions.

Most of the populous was on the west side. The eastern side was more rural and much less populated.

Although John doesn't give us the reason why, we know from the other gospel accounts the reason why Jesus went to the east side.

To get some rest and relaxation with His disciples. [[Mark 6:30ff]]

But His plan didn't exactly work. Notice John 6:2, **“A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick.”**

Now, just for a minute, we're going to turn over to Mark 6 so that we can appreciate just how exactly this large crowd followed Him to the other side of the sea.

Mark 6:30, **“The apostles *gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught.³¹ And He *said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while.” (For there were many *people* coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.)³² They went away *in the boat* to a secluded place by themselves.”**

So here we see that when John says that Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, we know from this passage in Mark that He is doing so *via a boat* with his disciples.

Notice verse 33, “***The people saw them going, and many recognized them and ran there together on foot from all the cities, and got there ahead of them.***”

And so the crowd knew their destination, or could tell where they were going. The destination couldn't have been across the widest part of the lake, otherwise this account would be impossible due to the distance.

So this would have been more of like diagonal approach from one part of the lake to the other.

This crowd ran there on foot from all the cities and got there ahead of them. No motor on the boat and so it is not inconceivable to understand how the crowd could have kept their eyes on the boat and kept up with them while still on land.

So imagine this scene: Jesus and the disciples get into the boat and start heading to the other side of the lake.

The crowd is moving along the coast of the Sea of Galilee, with their eyes on the boat. And we don't know the exact destination, but it would have been around 5 miles, give or take by land.

And verse 33 indicates that their pursuit was so determined that they beat Jesus and the disciples there. They got there ahead of them.

You can imagine how Jesus and the disciples felt about this – they leave to try to get some rest and seclusion, but as they are in the boat rowing to their destination, they see this ever-growing crowd chasing them down on the shoreline.

So much so that by the time they got to their destination, the large crowd was waiting for them.

Notice Mark 6:34, “**When Jesus went ashore, He 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.**”

Notice His burden there is ultimately about truth. His compassion for them was triggered by realizing they were like sheep without a shepherd, and thus *He began to teach them many things*.

So back to John 6, that is where the large crowd came from and how they arrived at the same destination.

What motivated this large crowd to take such drastic measures? Notice again John 6:2, “**A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick.**”

Jesus was healing those with physical afflictions.

And we have seen this language several times so far in John's gospel. We can't miss it because John makes it really easy to determine the spiritual state of this crowd.

Every time John uses language about following Jesus due to signs, it is never describing something positive.

The first and most prominent example would be back in 2:23, **“23 Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. 24 But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, 25 and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.”**

We find the language again in 4:45, **“45 So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they themselves also went to the feast.”**

But again, this is followed by an indictment in verse 48, **“So Jesus said to him, “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe.”**

So far in John’s gospel a theme continues to be brought out, that of pseudo followers of Jesus who are characterized by faithless enthusiasm.

Attracted to Jesus merely by the same principles that attract any kind of crowd or following in the world.

Curiosity, a love of excitement, something new, something amazing. Throw in the ability to provide cure or relief from physical affliction, and it’s not difficult to get a sizable following.

It does not take the work of the Spirit of God in one’s heart to follow Jesus with the expectation that one’s earthly needs will be fulfilled and one’s suffering will be alleviated.

I’ve always loved MacArthur’s comment on this: “The prosperity gospel offers people the same thing the devil offers; they just do it in the name of Christ.”

And so the setting is a crowd of seekers, a crowd of faithless enthusiasts were following Jesus, because He represents the solution to all of their earthly needs and problems.

Verse 3, **“Then Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat down with His disciples.**

This mountain is not necessarily any particular mountain there in that region, it could simply mean hillside or hill country.

But certainly not isolated or hidden or high enough to not be found by the large crowd which was relentlessly following Him.

⁴ Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near.

That’s an interesting detail John provides because it is second Passover John has mentioned since the public ministry of Jesus began. [[John 2:13, 13:1]]

In fact, John mentions a total of 3 Passovers during Jesus' public ministry. This is one of the reasons why we consider His public ministry to be right around 3 years. 3 Passovers occur, and He is put to death during the last one.

Furthermore, the detail added here by John about the time of the Passover would mean that many pilgrims would be traveling.

So there would be that many more people out and about, adding to this large crowd which was attracted to Jesus.

This is the setting the occasion of the most prominent miracle of Jesus. That brings us now to the *insurmountable situation* in verse 5.

Verse 5, **“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?”**

Now, we know that Jesus knows the spiritual condition of this crowd. He knows when a crowd consists of superficial sign-seekers versus actual believers.

He knows this group consists of those with a superficial, self-terminating interest in Him. He knows how this very group is going to respond to His teaching after He performs this miracle.

If we fast forward to the end of this chapter, after Jesus is done teaching, all that's left from this crowd is His original group of disciples. Everyone else rejects His message and leaves Him.

And yet, knowing all of this, there is the compassion of Christ to take note of here. Even seeking to provide physical resources for this large crowd.

The same large crowd who would turn away from Him after He provides food for them because they are offended at His doctrine.

Even though an unworthy motive had drawn this crowd after Christ, He was not indifferent to their need.

And so He presents this seemingly insurmountable problem to Philip - **“where are we to buy bread so that these may eat?”**

Philip became a disciple back in 1:44. Interestingly, Philip was from Bethsaida, which is on the northeast shoreline of the Sea of Galilee.

That's not *exactly* where this is taking place, they are a little more east than that. But we do know it is in and around that same general region. [[see Mark 6:45ff]]

And so, it could be that Philip is singled out because he was a local resident to this area, and he would be the natural disciple to target for information on where to buy bread to feed this many people.

Now, this crowd is made up of 5,000 men plus women and children.

They are all on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is more rural and desolate.

All of these factors combined mean that there's no way to go locally to buy bread to feed this many people.

Jesus asks a question for which there is no solution. He presents an impossible situation to Philip.

That brings us secondly to the *intentional examination* in verses 6-9.

Verse 6, **“This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do.”**

What is a test? A test is *the means by which the genuineness of something is determined*. And God is in the business of testing His people.

God is in the business of bringing trials into our lives which reveal the genuineness or lack thereof, of our faith.

One of the more prominent examples of these kinds of tests would be Abraham in Genesis 22:1, **“Now it came about after these things, that God *tested* Abraham.”**

This test came in the form of calling Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac.

Against what made sense, against what felt right, against all human sensibilities, God commands Abraham to trust Him in the face of a providential difficulty that *seemed* to contradict the promises of God.

Abraham, in that case, passed the test as he was willing to go through with such an incredibly difficult command.

And the Lord responds in Genesis 22:12, **“now I know that you fear God.”** The genuineness of your loyalty and love for me was revealed in your willingness to follow through in this command.

The author of Hebrews, picks on this same language in Hebrews 11:17, **“By faith Abraham, *when he was tested*, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son;”**

That's the same word for “test” as in our passage back in John 6:6, **“this He was saying to test him.”**

Our Lord loves to put His people providentially in trials. Situations that are difficult for us, those circumstances in our lives that we desperately wish we could change, but are powerless to do so.

Situations that may even appear to have no answer. No solution. So insurmountable or so difficult that we sense the impossibility of something working out.

And in this particular case, it *was* an impossible situation. There were no resources. Phillip is presented with a problem, for which there doesn't appear to be any satisfactory solution.

But notice very importantly, who put Phillip and the disciples in this situation? Remember in verse 1 it was Jesus who went away to the other side.

Filling in the details from Mark 6, it was Jesus saying to the disciples, let us go to other side so that we rest. And so Jesus Himself puts them in this situation.

Furthermore, who articulated the problem to Philip? Who drew attention to the problem? It was Jesus Himself.

He put them in this situation and then presented the insurmountable problem to Philip.

But not because He didn't know how to solve it, or didn't know what He was going to do.

Notice that detail again in verse 6, **“for He Himself knew what He was intending to do.”**

So why did He didn't He just do what He was intending to do? Well, something need to get revealed in Philip's heart.

What got revealed? The same thing that is often revealed when the Lord sends tests into our lives - unbelief.

As evidenced in verse 7, **“Philip answered Him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little.”**

A denarius was a one-day wage for the average worker, or even a Roman soldier of that time. [[Matthew 20:2, 9, 10]]

And so, 200 denarii would be the amount of money paid to a typical laborer over the course of around 8 months. 3/4 of one's salary for the year.

Kind of a random number Phillip throws out and you can sense the sarcasm, even the condescension in his language.

3/4 of our annual salary wouldn't even put a dent in this problem. Even if we had that much money, it wouldn't even be enough for everyone here to have a single bite.

Philip does not point to a solution, but to an impossibility. And you always know unbelief is at work when you encounter trials that in your mind have no solution.

When you articulate your burdens or think about your burdens in such a way that there is no conceivable, satisfactory solution.

That is the language of unbelief. When your trust in the Lord and your optimism in life goes only as far your natural thinking can perceive.

Phillip is walking by sight, not by faith. All he could see was the big crowd, which was much bigger than God in his mind.

Also, he looked merely to what was humanly, or naturally possible to fix the problem and find a solution. And as a result came up empty.

That's unbelief. His faith went as far as he could understand, it went as far as he could perceive a reasonable solution.

Not to be left out, Andrew comes next. He's from the same region, a fellow fisherman. And so perhaps he feels a loyalty to Philip and a sense of responsibility to chime in and give his perspective.

So Andrew takes his stab at it in verse 8, **“One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, *said to Him, ⁹“There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish...**

Now, imagine if Andrew had stopped right here. This *could* be the language of faith. Because he could be saying, “here is what we have Lord, we don't know how, but you will provide what we need with just this.”

“We're offering to you what we have to work with. Now please do with it as you please Lord.”

But unfortunately, he doesn't stop there, end of verse 9, **“but what are these for so many people?”**

It's the same attitude as Phillip. It's impossible. This is futile. Nothing but hopeless, human speculation.

By the way, only John in this gospel specifies that these were *barley* loaves – which indicates that they were the *inexpensive bread* of the poorer classes.

Perhaps the reason that detail is included is to demonstrate that this boy was carrying his own personal portion.

These were not large loaves of bread and large fish. These were small, hand size cakes, and the fish were small. The fish were just used to give the bread some flavoring.

And so the equivalent of this is what your middle school child would pack for a school lunch, if you were living in a state of poverty.

In either case, you can see that both Phillip and Andrew were hopeless. Neither of them offer any solution, but only a dead end of mere human hopelessness.

Jesus tested them and they flunked the test as what got revealed was unbelief.

What makes this unbelief even more remarkable is to consider what these disciples have already witnessed and experienced with Jesus.

By this time, they've been with Jesus almost two years. Which means they've seen a few things, they've experienced a few things.

The miraculous transformation of water into wine at the wedding in Cana. Look back at 2:11,

“11 This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.”

The end of chapter 2 indicates that Jesus did several more miracles during the Passover Feast in Jerusalem. The disciples would have been witnesses of those miracles as well.

In chapter 5, Jesus heals the paralytic in Jerusalem on the Sabbath.

Notice also the detail we already saw in verse 2, **“2 A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick.”**

There were many signs, many miracles that John doesn't choose to highlight and specify, but all of which were seen by the disciples.

Based on this, an appropriate question to ask is this: How could they fail to trust the Lord after all of the signs, the supernatural displays of His power?

How could they not have a calm and confident trust in the Lord when He has already proven Himself reliable again and again in their experience?

And we might even be tempted to think: C'mon guys, you have seen the Lord Jesus come through time and time again.

You've seen Him demonstrate His power and His faithfulness. How could you be so fickle and faithless in this circumstance?

But yet, no sooner do we hear those words come out of our mouths than we recognize, that's *us*.

Can you see yourself in Phillip there in verse 7?

The Lord brings the providential difficulty into our lives. It's not by chance, it's not random. He knows exactly what He is going to do. He knows exactly how it's going to turn out.

But He brings the difficulty into our lives *to test us*. To reveal the strength or weakness of our faith.

And to our shame, just like Philip, our first instinct is often to look within, at our own resources, in our wisdom, as we frantically and anxiously rack our minds trying to figure out how everything is going to turn out the way we want it to.

Just like Phillip and Andrew, ignoring the Lord as we try desperately to solve it in our own strength or our own wisdom.

Instead of looking to the Lord and saying, “I have no idea how this is going to work out, but I trust that you do. And your plan and provision is always better than anything I could manufacture anyway.”

And this is our typical response, even though the Lord Jesus has demonstrated Himself faithful time and time again in our lives, over and over and over.

Even though we can say with the hymnwriter, “how oft in grief has he not brought you relief.”

And yet, the very next time grief comes, the very next difficult circumstance, we faithlessly forget all of His past gracious dealings with us, and treat Him as if He must prove Himself to us all over again!

AW Pink speaks with convicting clarity here: “But alas! what self-centered, skeptical, sinful creatures we are at best!”

“God may lavish upon us the riches of His grace—He may have opened for us many a dry path through the waters of difficult circumstances—He may have delivered us with His outstretched arm in six troubles, yet, when the seventh comes along, instead of resting on Him, we are distrustful, full of doubts and fears, *just as if we had never known Him.*”

Let us be mindful to never criticize and condemn the immature and weak faith of the disciples because in so doing we are criticizing and condemning ourselves.

How many tests have we wasted in our lives? How many tests have we utterly flunked?

How many times has the Lord brought circumstances into our lives where we don’t see any way out?

And our first and maybe even prolonged response is, “what are we going to do, there’s no way out, there’s no answer.”

And instead of simple faith in the Lord, there is fear and frustration with our seemingly insurmountable circumstances?

Well, despite our weakness, the Lord is compassionate and so patient with us, and continues to treat us infinitely better than our fickle faith deserves.

We've seen the insurmountable situation, the intentional examination, now thirdly the inexplicable provision.

This is what we see next in verse 10, **“¹⁰ 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.”**

That same language about Jesus having the crowd *sit down* appears in all 4 gospel accounts, as well as the number of men being that of 5,000.

We do know that the total number of people was certainly more than that. Because the other accounts indicate that 5,000 men plus women and children were present.

But remember, this was a crowd that could move and travel long distances on foot in a pretty quick manner.

They had chased down Jesus's boat as they pursued him on the shoreline, which even would have involved crossing the Jordan river at the north end of the Sea of Galilee to get to east side where Jesus was going.

And so, all that to say, yes, the group is larger than 5,000 men, and yes there were children and women present.

But it would be limited to those who could travel that kind of distance in such a short time.

In either case, Jesus has all the people sit down. With this large of a group there is the need for structure and order.

Sitting down in groups prevented chaos and confusion, and preserved order. There were organized in groups of hundreds and fifties according to Mark 6:40.

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.**

This is classic John in stating a miracle but not providing the details that our minds would naturally be curious about.

There is no doubt that *something* miraculous happened in verse 11 because everyone ate as much as they wanted.

But John doesn't detail for us *how* it happened. What did this look like? At what *point* and in what *manner* did the new bread and new fish appear?

All we can tell is that He took the two loaves, he thanked God, and He distributed to those who were seated. By the way, the disciples aided in that distribution, as we find out in the other gospel accounts.

But again, just where exactly did all of the food come from?

It's very similar to what happened at the wedding in Cana with the transformation of the water into wine.

There was no visible, outward action. We have no details about Jesus touching the waterpots, crying out "wine" or commanded the water to change its qualities.

And the same is true here – the implication that He simply willed it to take place and once the loaves were placed in the hands of Christ, they became abundantly sufficient for all who were present.

The people were miraculously provided for with *bread that was never baked* and *fish that were never caught*. It just kept coming into existence.

Again, there is no doubt that a miraculous provision occurred because the people ate *as much as they wanted*. And there was still some left over.

Notice verse 12, "**When they were filled, He *said to His disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost."**

Now, it was interesting studying this passage and encountering more than one commentator try to make the case here that the reason Jesus instructed them to gather up the leftovers is because He hates wasting food.

Along with the application for us is that we should always clean our plates and never throw away edible food because Jesus hates it when we do so.

Granted, there may be some biblical principles that relate to those things, is that what's happening here?

Are we being given insight into the Lord's attitude toward wastefulness when it comes to food?

That's not the case at all because of what we see in verse 13, "**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."**

Again, another clear evidence that miracle had taken place. More is left over than what they had to begin with. They filled twelve baskets after everyone had eaten.

And the number of baskets is by no means random.

One of the reasons we know that is because all four gospel accounts draw attention to the number 12.

That is a significant detail because it just happens to be the number of disciples.

That's why Jesus is concerned about it and instructs them to pick up the leftovers. He's got something to teach them by having them gather up these leftovers into 12 baskets.

In fact, when we consider this word for "basket" we are going to see the value of word studies.

In this case it is identifying words which in English appear the same, but in the Greek are two completely different words.

Think of our English word for *love* but the Greek words for *agape* and *phileo*. That's one example.

Well, a similar thing happens here with this word for *basket*. If you were to search this word for "basket" you would find that it is only used in the NT in the parallel accounts of this same miracle.

But you're also aware that there is a very similar miracle Jesus performs in the feeding of the 4,000.

After that miracle, there were leftovers as well. Except in that case, 7 baskets were filled up afterward, and it's a different word for "basket."

In the feeding of the 4,000 the word for "basket" is the same word used in Acts 9:25 where Paul was let down out of window *in a basket*.

A basket large enough to support a grown man. We might think of a hamper as something comparable.

But the word for "basket" here in our text and in parallel accounts of the feeding of 5,000 is a word referring to a small, personal basket.

What we think of as an adult lunch box. Or the type of basket your children might have for their Easter candy.

And so, with that in mind, what is the significance of leftovers which are gathered up in 12 personal baskets by the disciples?

Well, let me show you one passage where all it comes together, turn over to Mark 8.

It's important to keep in mind that this is after the feeding of the 5,000 and after the feeding of the 4,000.

Jesus and the disciples were once again leaving one area and going via boat to the other side of the sea.

Pick it up in Mark 8:14, **“And they had forgotten to take bread, and did not have more than one loaf in the boat with them. 15 And He was giving orders to them, saying, “Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.” 16 They began to discuss with one another the fact that they had no bread.**

Notice that: they are so preoccupied with their physical well-being, their immediate, earthly needs are at the center of their life.

Here is Jesus teaching a valuable truth, a valuable lesson, and they are so focused on their own self-preservation and physical well-being, so concerned about their physical needs being provided for that *they can't see past them, they can't see beyond their immediate predicament.*

They're doing the opposite of Matthew 6:33, **“seek *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”**

But what's our tendency? Seek first these temporal things that we perceive we need more than anything, and whatever is left over we will devote to the kingdom of God.

The disciples are fixated on their predicament. One loaf is not enough for all of us.

Again, this is only a short time after the feeding of the 5,000 and an even shorter time after the feeding of the 4,000.

Verse 17, **“And Jesus, aware of this, *said to them, “Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread?” Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart? 18 Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear?”**

Now notice this, here is where it all comes together: **“And do you not remember, 19 when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces you picked up?” They *said to Him, “Twelve.”**

What's He saying there? My provision is exact, it's precise. It's personal to exactly what each of you need.

Think of that power and wisdom on display where the Lord can miraculously create bread for 5,000 plus, knowing exactly how much each of them would eat in order to be satisfied, so that what just happens to be leftover is *precisely* the amount each disciple would need.

Remember in that miraculous account, the crowd didn't eat everything and then Jesus miraculously created a little more at the end for the disciples.

No, He had the disciples go out into the crowd and collect the leftovers of what had already been made.

Which means, Jesus had perfect foresight and accounted for every detail imaginable to ensure they would each have exactly what they needed.

You have to love verse 19, **“how many baskets full of broken pieces you picked up?” They *said to Him, “Twelve.”**

Notice verse 20, **“When I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?” And they *said to Him, “Seven.”**

Not only is my power precise, 12 baskets is precise, exactly what you need, 7 large baskets would be communicating an abundance, or even that of perfection, completion.

21 And He was saying to them, “Do you not yet understand?”

And again we’re tempted to have the same reaction – wait a minute, the disciples witnessed and benefitted from the miraculously feeding of the 5,000, then the 4,000.

And the very next time they were in a desolate location and didn’t have enough bread, they were fearful and doubting. How can that be?

Notice what Jesus says in verse 17 again, **Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart? 18 Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear?” “do you not yet see or understand?”**

What’s He saying? Unbelief, spiritual blindness is the issue.

That’s our problem. It’s spiritual blindness. We don’t see or understand as we ought when we are stuck in a habitual cycle of fear and doubt when trials come.

Why do we get stuck in that cycle? Because we care more about our physical well-being than the glory and purposes of Christ.

If we’re truly seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, trials are no threat to that agenda. Trials are a threat to the kingdom of self.

That’s what gets revealed in our difficulties. That’s why our trials so hard. Because we have our own self-will battling against God’s will and His purposes. And it’s hard to put self to death.

Back to John 6. **We’ve seen the impossible situation, the intentional examination, the inexplicable provision, and now lastly the ill-informed fanaticism.**

6:14, **“Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.”**

This is not a wrong assessment as far as it goes. Referring most likely to the promise in Deuteronomy 18:15, where God promises the people of Israel that He will raise up for you a prophet like Moses from among you.

And this One would be an ultimate prophet because God would put His Words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. 19 It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.”

So to hear this prophet was to hear God Himself.

Peter in his sermon in Acts 3:22, quotes this passage in Deuteronomy and identifies this prophet as Christ Jesus.

So verse 14 is not wrong in and of itself. The problem is, verse 14 appears right before verse 15. And in verse 15 Jesus’ response to their assessment is not exactly favorable.

Verse 15, “¹⁵ **So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.**”

The issue isn’t that He wasn’t the promised prophet and the promised king of Israel. The issue was that the faithless crowd wanted a prophet and king *without truth*, on their own terms.

A prophet and king as *they defined Him*. A prophet and king who would deliver them from what they perceived to be their greatest enemy – Gentile rulers in the form of the Romans.

A prophet and king who would provide for them what they perceived to be their greatest need – physical health and provision of physical needs, like food.

They wanted what we would call today *a social gospel Jesus*. A Jesus whose kingdom is of this world and answers the needs of this world. They wanted what one author called, “the ultimate welfare state.”

Notice, they don’t want the truth, they don’t want His teaching. They identify Him as the prophet but no one is saying, “please teach us, tell us truth from God.”

Like many Americans, they were far more concerned about the tyranny of a Roman government than the tyranny of sin.

And we can contrast this response to the response of the Samaritans in 4:42, “**This is indeed the Savior of the world.**”

That’s our ultimate need. We need to be saved from sin, from the wrath of God. But the Jews didn’t think they needed a Savior from sin.

They processed Jesus through the lens of what they perceived their greatest need to be: protection from our enemies and provision of our earthly needs, relief from our physical ailments.

It's an ill-informed fanaticism.

What is the response of Jesus to such ill-informed fanaticism? End of verse 15, "**He withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.**"

He is compassionate and gracious, but not at the expense of truth.

If they wanted the truth, He wouldn't go anywhere. He would have taught them right then and there.

Their unbelieving state will be further confirmed in their opposition to the doctrine He will teach them the very next day. We'll see this as we continue in John 6 next week.

We saw the insurmountable situation.

The intentional examination.

The inexplicable provision.

The ill-informed fanaticism.