

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
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Seven Miraculous Signs of Jesus from the Gospel of John
The Feeding of the Five Thousand
John 6:1-15

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How many times have you said something like this: “I thought I understood what was happening.” or “The math does not work.” or “I have no idea what to do.”

Have you ever had a moment where all of those were true at the same time? If you have ever parented triplets, I know you have. There was one moment in mine and Amy’s life where all of those phrases came together. It was a December day in a cul-de-sac in Lakeland, Florida. The triplets had just received their first bikes for Christmas. We were such naive first-time parents. We pictured one little push, three happy kids, and a memory we could frame.

And then the scene quickly became hysterical chaos. Picture this: Amy and I in flip-flops, all three kids on bikes, and immediately they go in opposite directions. Tanner became Evel Knievel on training wheels. McKenna was determined to conquer the bike. And Blake sat still, calculating every risk before the first pedal was pushed. Amy and I quickly realized the math did not work. There were two of us in flip-flops. Three of them on wheels.

We thought we understood the situation. We did not. We just wanted to return the bikes and try again next Christmas. And I tell that story because this morning we come to the fourth sign in John’s Gospel, the feeding of the five thousand.

And this passage brings us into a moment where: The crowd misunderstood. The disciples couldn’t make the math add up. And there was only one who knew what to do.

And by the end of the chapter, Jesus will show us that the miracle was never meant to stop with bread in their hands. The bread was a sign. And this fourth sign, like all the signs, was meant to lead us to believe in who Jesus is, not merely marvel at what He can do.

So, turn with me to John 6, and let’s read the opening of John’s account of the feeding of the five thousand.

John 6:1-10

After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. 2 And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. 3 Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. 4 Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. 5 Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?” 6 He said this to test him, for he himself knew

what he would do. 7 Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little." 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 9 "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?" 10 Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number.

THE WONDER

The bread keeps coming. The fish keep coming. Everyone is fed and satisfied. And John does not want us to feel less wonder. He wants us to feel the right wonder. Because this sign is not only showing us what Jesus can do. It is revealing to us who Jesus is.

Notice what John wants us to see from the beginning. The crowd does not bring Him the problem. It is Jesus who sees the crowd and names the need. The disciples cannot solve the crisis. It is Jesus who already knows what He is going to do. Jesus is not anxious, reacting, or uncertain of what can be done.

Looking at the loaves and fish, Andrew asks the question everybody can feel, "What are they for so many?" And he is right. They are not enough. Not in Philip's hands or Andrew's hands.

Jesus says, "Have the people sit down." There is calm authority in that command. He seats the people under His provision. And what was not enough in their hands becomes more than enough in His hands. It is a sign meant to lead us to believe who Jesus is.

John 6:11–15

Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. 12 And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost." 13 So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. 14 When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!" 15 Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

THE DANGER

This sign reveals Jesus for who He is, and the sign also reveals the hearts of the crowd. Look again at verse 14. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"

Now before we criticize the crowd, we need to understand their first instinct is to call Jesus, "The Prophet." John told us Passover was near. That means: Moses is in their memory. Manna is in the background. The idea of deliverance is in the air.

So when Jesus feeds the multitude in this wilderness-like place, the crowd can only see Jesus through their understanding of Passover. They are thinking, "This must be the Prophet, the One like Moses, the Deliverer we have been waiting for."

And in one sense, they are seeing something true. But verse 15 shows us the danger. They want the Prophet. They want the bread. They want the kingdom. But they are still missing Him.

So, Jesus withdraws from their plans of unbelief. Their deepest need was not another meal, another Moses, or a king on their terms. Their deepest need was a Savior whose name was Jesus.

Before we move to hearing Jesus explain the sign, we need to let their response search our hearts. Because this is not only their danger. This is ours. Let me put four mirrors in front of us.

First, we can chase Jesus for what He can do while missing who He is. The crowd is following Jesus and genuinely interested in Him. But Jesus will later say to them in John 6:26, Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. That verse makes me pause and look in the mirror. I confess that my heart knows all too well how to seek Jesus only for an outcome I desire. Healing. Relief. An answer. And listen, those needs are real. And those prayers are not wrong. Jesus does not shame those needs or close His ears to those prayers. But when the provision comes, or if the answer isn't the one I wanted to hear, what does it expose in me? Do I worship Him only when He does what I want? Or is my faith in Him as the One who was, is, and is to come, no matter His plan?

Second, we can see physical need while remaining blind to spiritual need. The crowd needed bread. Once Jesus named it, the disciples could see it. But what they couldn't see was the greater hunger within. Every Monday, hundreds of people from our community come to the end of our street needing food. And church, I love that we care and provide. We should. But may God help us not see only their physical hunger and miss their spiritual hunger. Only Jesus is the Bread who satisfies forever.

Third, we can turn the blessings from God into wrong expectations of God. This crowd tasted the abundance of Jesus. They ate as much as they wanted and were filled. And they formed wrong conclusions which created wrong expectations. "He must be the next Moses. Let's make Him king, but on our terms." And that is the dangerous thing the heart can do with God's blessing. We can take what God gives and begin to treat the gift like the goal. His blessing is never meant to become our idol.

Fourth, we can say right sounding words and our heart still not believe. The crowd said, "This is truly the Prophet." They were seeing something true. But they were still missing Him. And that is the warning. A person can say true things about Jesus and still resist Jesus as He reveals Himself. That is why right words are not enough. John is after belief.

John 20:31

These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name."

The Meaning Jesus Gives the Sign

The crowds were following Jesus, came near to Him and were interested in Him. But Jesus says to them, "You are seeking Me for the bread." And here is the mercy of Jesus. He does not leave them with full stomachs and blind hearts. He begins to interpret the sign. And as He does, He shows us the work of God. He reveals the will of God. And then He says plainly, "I am the Bread of Life."

1. This is the work of God.

Look at verse 27. *"Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on Him God the Father has set His seal."*

Jesus is not saying physical bread does not matter. He just fed them. Their need was real. His compassion was real. But Jesus is saying, do not make perishing bread the thing you live for. Do not let temporary provision become the center of your pursuit. Do not chase Me only for what I can put in your hands.

Church, does that convict your heart? What are you living for? At the end of the day, does it endure for eternity or does it spoil and perish? So they ask Him in verse 28: *"What must we do, to be doing the works of God?"* That sounds like a familiar question. Maybe you have asked it in your own way "What religious standard do I need to meet?", "What can I do to get your approval?", or "God, what do You want from me?"

And Jesus gives His answer in verse 29. *"This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."* Do you hear what Jesus does? They ask about works. Plural. Jesus speaks of one work. They ask for a task. Jesus calls for trust, "Believe in the One the Father sent."

Faith is not the work that earns the Bread. Faith is the empty hand that receives the Bread. And even that empty hand has been opened by the grace of God. So the work of God is this: Believe in the One He sent.

2. This is the will of God.

But the crowd keeps pressing. They say in verse 34: *"Sir, give us this bread always."* Jesus says, *"You have seen Me and yet do not believe."* John 6:36. And that matters because this crowd wanted Jesus, but only according to their will. They wanted Him to serve their desire and keep the bread coming.

But Jesus continues: *"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will but the will of Him who sent Me."* John 6:38

And what is the Father's will? Listen to verses 39 and 40. *"And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that I should lose nothing of all that He has given Me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."*

That is the Father's will. Look to Jesus. Believe in Jesus. Have eternal life in Jesus. And be raised up by Jesus on the last day.

So the work of God is to believe in the One He sent. The will of God is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life. And now we are ready for the key verse that reveals the meaning and substance of the sign.

3. This is the Bread of Life.

John 6:35: Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to Me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in Me shall never thirst."

There it is. That is the reason for the sign. Jesus is not merely the giver of bread. Jesus is the Bread. He is greater than Moses and greater than the Prophet they expected. Jesus is the Son sent from the Father. He is the Bread from heaven who gives life to the world.

Do not miss how personal John 6:35 is. He does not say, "Come to the miracle." He says, "Come to Me." He does not say, "Believe in what I can put in your hands." He says, "Believe in Me."

And from here, Jesus unfolds what it means that He is the true Bread.

- The true Bread comes from heaven.
Jesus says in verses 32 and 33: *"Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."* Not bread from the earth. Not bread from man's hands. The true Bread comes down from heaven. Sent by the Father.
- The true Bread gives eternal life.
Jesus says in verses 47 and 48: *"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life." That is not bread earned by works. That is bread received by faith. That is eternal life that only Jesus can give.*
- The true Bread does not lose those who come to Him.
Jesus said after the 5000 were fed, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost." No fragment from the meal was lost. And then Jesus says in verse 39: *"This is the will of Him who sent Me, that I should lose nothing of all that He has given Me, but raise it up on the last day."* Not one who looks to the Son will be forsaken. Not one who believes in Him will be rejected. Jesus will keep each believing heart whom the Father has given Him. He will raise them up on the last day.
- The true Bread gives His flesh for the world.
John told us Passover was near. At Passover, Israel remembered deliverance: the lamb, the blood, the rescue. And here stands Jesus, at Passover, giving bread in the wilderness. Then He says in verse 51: *"I am the living bread that came down*

from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is My flesh."

Now we can see where the sign was always pointing. The loaves were broken and given to thousands of hungry people. But the body of Christ would be given to fill hungry souls for eternity. The broken loaves were an echo. Christ crucified is the provision. Not just for the five thousand. But for the world.

This is the Bread of Life. Jesus Himself. Sent by the Father. Given for the world. Received by faith. Able to keep all who belong to Him until the last day.

So do not stop with the bread He gives. Come to Jesus Himself. The bread in their hands was mercy. But the Bread standing before them was life.

THE RESPONSE

After the miracle, after the bread, after the teaching, after Jesus says, "I am the Bread of Life," You might expect everyone to believe. But that is not what happens. John 6 ends with many of Jesus' followers leaving Him. They heard what Jesus said and answered, *"This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?"*

And verse 66 says: *"After this many of His disciples turned back and no longer walked with Him."* That is not only what happened then. And the danger is not only for the people of the first century. Because whenever Jesus reveals Himself as He truly is, some will say, "This is too hard." Some will love their own life too much to follow Him. Some will choose the bread that perishes over the Bread who gives eternal life.

But that wasn't the only response. After many disciples left, Jesus turns to the Twelve and asks. *"Do you want to go away as well?" John 6:67.* And Peter answers: *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that You are the Holy One of God." John 6:68-69*

This morning we stand before the same Christ. Will we turn away in unbelief? Or will Peter's confession become ours? Lord, we follow You for who You are, not merely for what You can do. Lord, open our eyes to the hunger only You can satisfy. Lord, let Your gifts lead us to worship. Lord, make our confession more than words; make it true faith in You.

So where else would we go? You have the words of eternal life. So, if you do not know Jesus, come to Him today. And if you know Him, abide in Him. Believe in the One the Father sent. Look to the Son and live. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.