

I. John 6: 1-14 – Feeding the 5000

- A. There are a number of good sermons, based on this story, that deal with God's gracious and dependable provision of our physical needs. And we God cares about our physical needs because of such Bible passages as Matthew 6:31-33, "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' [32] For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. [33] But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." Today, we will use the lessons in John 6:1-14 to look at God's gracious and faithful provision for our spiritual needs.
- B. Pray

II. Helpful information regarding this story

- A. John 6:1-2 . . . 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.
 1. This story about feeding 5000 is the only miracle by Jesus recorded in all four Gospels (Matt 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17).
 2. And as we see from vs 1, the Sea of Galilee (*Greek*) is also named Tiberias (*for the Roman Emperor*). In Luke 5:1, it is called Gennesaret (*Hebrew*), and in John 21:1, it is called the Sea of Tiberias.
- B. John 6:3-6 . . . 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. [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?" [6] This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do.
 1. The purpose of Vs 4 (*Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near*) is a bit of a mystery. The most probable explanation is that of those who came all the way around the Lake looking for Jesus, some were on their way to Jerusalem for the Passover – which means they would not be carrying sufficient supplies to feed themselves in this situation.
 2. Moving on to vs 5-6, it is probable that this story took place on the north-eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Therefore, it would have

been reasonable for Jesus to ask Philip about buying bread because he was from Bethsaida, a town near where they were. Yet whatever Jesus' reason was for asking Philip, His purpose was to test him.

C. This raises an important truth about God's testing in relation to the devil's temptations, the world's influences, and the sinful desires of our flesh that I want us to think about.

1. We are faced with three formidable foes that want to prevent us or distract us from knowing God, loving God, and living a godly life.
 - a. These three foes are the devil – who tempts us to chose self over God and sin over godliness.
 - b. Then there is the world – which seeks to influence our choices and behavior so that we will be like the world.
 - c. And finally, there is our greatest enemy of all, our flesh – which pressures us to gratify its desires, meet its perceived needs, calm its fears, feed its pride, justify its selfishness, and make it feel secure by whatever means available.
2. Opposite these three foes is God, who not only enables and empowers us for godly living, He also brings and allows things to come into our lives to train us, transform us, and also to test us. And as we learn from both the Old and New Testament, God's testings have a purpose.
 - a. For example, as God tested Abraham, so He tests us to see IF we trust Him, HOW STRONG our faith is, and HOW FAR we will go and HOW MUCH we will endure to obey Him (Genesis 22:1-2; Hebrews 11:17).
 - b. As God tested Israel, so He tests us to know what is in our heart, that is, to know how we think about Him and what we think about Him and His will, and what we think about doing His will (Deuteronomy 8:2; 2 Chronicles 32:30-31; James 1:2-4).
 - c. As God tested Israel, so He tests us to see if we will love Him above all else, which includes loving Him more than competing gods or interests– such as money, possessions, sensual pleasures, fame, and power (Deuteronomy 13:1-3).
 - d. God tests us, just as He tested Israel, to see if we will obey His commandments, live according to His godly principles, and walk in the truths He has made know to us in His word (Judges 3:1-4).
 - e. God tested Israel and now tests us to see if we will walk in the same truth and live the same godly lives that the godly believers who came before us lived. (Judges 2:21-22; 1 Corinthians 10:1-12; Hebrews 11).

3. As Proverbs 17:3 says, “The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests hearts (*to purify each heart just as the refining pot and the furnace provide the heat to purify silver and gold*).”
 - a. Admittedly, there are times when God’s testing feels like the devil’s temptations, or the world’s influences, or the pull of our flesh to gratify its desires.
 - b. However, God’s testings are motivated by His love for us, and their purpose is to further teach us about God’s character, to reveal more of God’s ways of dealing with us, and to deepen our understanding of the truths contained in God’s word.
 - c. In addition, God’s testings are intended to teach us about ourselves, especially in relation to such things as
 - (1) who we actually trust and who we love the most when something we want or even need is not forthcoming,
 - (2) what we fear and what we hope for,
 - (3) how serious and persistent we are in pursuing God and godliness, especially in the midst of trials or tribulations,
 - (4) and whether we will obey when obedience costs us more than we have previously been willing to pay.
 4. So though God tests us, and though it may feel – at times – like temptation or tribulation, it is always for our spiritual benefit and eternal good.
- D. John 6:7 . . . Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, [that is,] for everyone to receive a little."
1. In that day, 200 denarii was equivalent to 8 months of wages.
 2. For me, this is a reminder of how common it is for us to look first for solutions in the ways and means of the world, rather than God.
 3. And though it is true that God uses many of the world's ways and means to solve our problems or meet our needs, there is a significant difference between our all-wise God deciding how a matter should be handled or a problem solved, and you or me deciding – on our own and according to our limited human wisdom – what the best course of action should be.
- E. John 6:8-10 . . . 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?" [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.

1. We know from Matthew's account that Jesus fed more than 5000 men, for as Matthew wrote, it was 5000 men plus women and children (Matthew 14:21).
 2. As to the five loaves and two fish, I am not certain what Andrew was doing by pointing out the absurd, but Jesus did not waste these five loaves and two fish. He used them to feed everyone. And without question, using the absurd is a wonderful example of God's power and creativity.
 3. However, I do want to caution us against exalting the absurd, as if doing something absurd for God makes you or what you are doing more spiritual. Simply loving your neighbor as yourself is an equally wonderful demonstration of the power and work of God in you.
 4. My point is that both the absurd and common are equally spiritual when used for the glory of God.
- F. John 6:11-13 . . . 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.
1. I want us to consider the words, "as much as they wanted." And in considering them, I want to ask, "Who determined when each one had as much as he wanted?" And the answer is, the one eating.
 2. This is an important principle, for the same God who gave the 5000 as much as they wanted, and who gives us everything we need for life and godliness, is the same God who gives us as much as we want for sanctification, spiritual growth, and godly living.
 3. And when I think of God's gracious provision for spiritual growth and godly living, Paul's words come to mind from Ephesians 3:20-21, "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, [21] to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen."
- G. John 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."
1. This is where John's story ends, and it reminds us that the Jews would have known about the Prophet foretold in Deuteronomy 18:15-16, and referred to in John 1:21. And it is this recognition by the people John uses to confirm, once again, that Jesus is God in human flesh.

III. God abundantly provides all that is necessary to live a godly life.

- A. 2 Peter 1:2-4 . . . Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; [3] seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. [4] For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.
 - 1. In spite of our human weaknesses, God has provided us with everything we need to live a godly life in this sinful, selfish, prideful, foolish world.
 - 2. And God has made promises, which if we rely on them, will enable us to grow spiritually, mentally, and emotionally to the place where we actually partake of His divine nature while still in this world.
 - 3. Finally, as we search, ponder, and apply God's word to how we live, we will come to an accurate knowledge of His character, His attributes, and His purposes for us.

- B. God, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and through our baptism into Christ, breaks the enslaving power of sin over us so that we can live a new life of godliness (Romans 6:1-11).

- C. God will not allow us to be tempted in any way or with anything that is beyond our current ability to resist. In addition, God provides a way to escape each time we are tempted. Therefore, we are never faced with any temptation that is irresistible, and we are never trapped in a tempting situation (I Corinthians 10:13; II Thessalonians 3:3).

- D. Because God came to earth and lived as one of us, He understands the weakness of our flesh, the power of worldly influences, the tricks and schemes of the devil, and the strength of temptation. In addition, He dealt with followers who were more interested in using Him for their own ends than learning from Him how to live a godly life. He faced authorities from His own religion who hounded Him in an effort to find a fault that would justify killing Him. He experienced unjust criticism, anger, and rejection. He endured hostility, abusive words, physical torture, and a horrible death – all of which were motivated by such things as jealousy, religious hypocrisy, and deliberate injustice. And yet He did not sin.
 - 1. Therefore, He knows how to remain godly while going through life's most challenging temptations, tribulations, injustice, and suffering.

2. Therefore, we can confidently come to Him in times of temptation, tribulation, sorrow, pain or persecution and draw on His loving, wise, gracious, and all-powerful help (Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:15-16).
- E. God says that if we resist the devil, he will flee. This does not mean that we can resist the devil once and never be bothered by him again. The reality is, he will tempt us many times. But when we resist we are showing the devil that his efforts with us are futile – and so in time he will give up (James 4:7; I Peter 5:8-9; Luke 4:1-13; II Peter 2:9).
1. However, from James 4:8 we see that resisting the devil does not stand alone. It goes hand-in-hand with drawing near to God.
 2. Therefore, I urge you to unite resisting the devil with drawing near to God. When tempted, take specific action to resist the devil. Then take specific action to draw near to God. What helps me most in keeping both sides together is to memorize one or two scriptures that remind me of both actions, and then call them to mind when tempted.
- F. If and when we sin, God forgives us when we confess to Him we have sinned (I John 1:9, 2:1-2). In my opinion, confessing sin to God includes four things. First, it includes acknowledging that what we have done is wrong, and we have no justifying excuse for having done it. Second, it requires making things right with God and whomever else we hurt. Third, it requires a humble acceptance of the consequences for having done what we did. Fourth, it requires taking serious action, for as long as it takes, to put an end to that kind of sinful behavior.
- G. God uses persecution, difficult times, disappointments, sorrows, the pains of life, irritating people, and difficult relationships to strengthen our faith, increase our perseverance, grow us in godliness, and draw us deeper into intimacy with Him (Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-4; I Peter 1:6-9). Therefore, do not become discouraged, bitter, depressed, or angry when people, relationships, or circumstances go sour. Instead, rejoice that you are in a situation whose outcome includes becoming more Christ-like.
- H. God has made it possible for us to confidently come to Him in prayer, any time, any where, and ask for what we believe we need to remain faithful and/or grow further in godliness in any situation (Matthew 7:7-8; James 4:3; I John 5:14-15).

- I. God has given us the Holy Scriptures – which He inspired, and which He caused to be living and active and sharp enough to pierce us deep enough to expose and judge our thoughts and intentions. Therefore, the Word of God is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness so that the we can become spiritually mature and equipped for every good work (Hebrews 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- J. God has given us the Holy Spirit to teach us, lead us, guide us, convict us, comfort us, enlighten us concerning what is written in the Bible, pray for us – when needed, and assure us we are children of God.
- K. God gives us wisdom, if we ask for it. This means we can have all the wisdom we request, with one condition. He requires us to act on the wisdom given before He gives more. Therefore, ask God for wisdom, often, and in extraordinary amounts. Than live according to the wisdom given. I am confident you will never regret it (James 1:5-8).
- L. There is more that God does to feed us, not only what we need, but all that we want, in order for us to live a godly life. However, for the sake of time, I will end with just two more.
 - 1. We can confidently trust God to faithfully work within us and with us until Jesus returns – for the purpose of bringing us to the fullest state of Christian perfection that we willingly and intentionally hunger for and submit to (Matthew 5:6; Philippians 1:6).
 - 2. God is the only one able to keep you from stumbling – into distrust, selfishness, and sin. And God is the only one able to make you ultimately stand in His presence – blameless and with great joy that you have lived a truly godly life while here in this world. Therefore, look to Him, trust in Him, submit to Him, wait on Him, pray to Him, study His Holy Scriptures, ask Him for wisdom in apply His word to your life in the most practical ways possible, and live up to what He has taught you so far (Jude 1:24-25).

IV. Conclusion

- A. The same God who gave the 5000 as much bread and fish as they wanted, is the same God who will give you as much as you want for sanctification, spiritual growth, godly living, inner peace, joy, and intimacy with Him. May we be among those who trust in Him to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think (Ephesians 3:20-21).