

Sunday Morning Service 6-11

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Preached On: Monday, June 12, 2017

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The name of Jesus, not only beautiful but powerful. In fact, the Bible states very clearly one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. That's a day that's going to happen in each and every one of our lives, but today we have an incredible privilege and opportunity, for today as we come to the text of Scripture, as we come to the person of Jesus and we see what he shared some thousands of years ago and what he shares in our life today, today can be that day where our knee bows and our tongue confesses the powerful name of Jesus.

Let us pray together.

Lord, as we come to this time of being challenged and hopefully being convicted by your word, Lord, I pray that even though we are seated and even though, for the most part, we are quiet and, God, I pray that in our hearts our knee would bow and our tongue would confess the majestic, beautiful, powerful name of Jesus. God, I pray that you would make yourself very clearly known today and that we would respond appropriately. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

This morning, I'd like to encourage you to open your Bibles to the Gospel of John 6. As you're turning to John 6, you're turning to one of the most familiar passages in all of the Bible. In fact, whether you're in church for the first time or the 10,000th time, almost everybody in our culture has heard of this very famous story. It's known as the feeding of the 5,000. Now, I appreciate this passage for multiple reasons, one of which is kind of academic. The Gospel of John only contains 7% of the stories that are in the other three Gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke. Oftentimes we refer to them as the synoptics because of their similarity and the Gospel of John is very unique in its message, particularly the characters that are involved. We meet a man by the name of Nicodemus, a woman at the well, a woman caught in adultery, all of which are not mentioned in the other three but are distinct to the Gospel of John. However, of that 7%, the story we're going to read today in chapter 6 is not just found in the other Gospels, it's the only miracle of Jesus that's found in all four. It's the famous feeding of the 5,000.

Now, on a personal level, one of the reasons that I appreciate this passage, in fact, we're going to see in a moment in verses 5 and 6, is that Jesus, for lack of better terms, he's going to flip the script on the disciples today. In fact, when they see these people who are hungry, they see these people that are in need, they do what we typically do in the flesh

and in our own understanding, they see it as an obstacle, but Jesus is going to show us that it's an opportunity. And what we're struggling with today and what we're battling today in the problems and difficulties of our life, in the flesh, yes, they are an obstacle but what we're going to see today is all of those issues and struggles can be an opportunity for Jesus Christ to move in a mighty and powerful way in our life if we'll see the situation from his perspective rather than from ours.

Today in John 6, we're going to read verse 1 through 14, the famous story of the feeding of the 5,000. It says,

1 After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. 2 And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. 3 And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. 4 And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. 5 When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he said unto Philip, Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat? 6 And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. 7 Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth [or in our culture about 8 months' salary] of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said unto him, 9 There is a lad here, which has five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? 10 And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. 11 And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. 12 When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. 13 Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. 14 Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.

One of the most famous passages in all of Scripture, one of the most famous miracles of Jesus, so much so that it's mentioned in all four Gospels, and what the disciples saw as an obstacle, Jesus saw as an opportunity. But before we get to those two concepts, I want to kind of give us an overview here, kind of that 30,000 foot, what are we seeing take place in John 6.

Well, the first thing that is obvious to us is the crowd. Now the Bible makes very clear mention that there was about 5,000 men and hence we call it the feeding of the 5,000, but what's intriguing to me in this passage, it says very clearly that the Jews were gathered, they were traveling because the Passover was close at hand. Now, when you begin to look at the Jewish festivals and feasts, there was a festival known as the Feast of Tabernacles that only the men were to attend, but Passover was one of those of which the

entire family would gather round. In fact, we remember the story when Jesus was about 12 years of age, his family went back to the area of Galilee north of the Sea of Galilee, and when they went back to Nazareth, remember for about one day they did not know that Jesus was not among them, not only the extent of the family but the cousins, the extended family, and so when people would go to Passover, they didn't travel typically in singles or even in couples, they would travel as entire groups of people. You say, "Well, why is that significant?" Because when it says it was about 5,000 men, there are many that have postulated there could have been 20-25,000 people in totality.

Some years ago, I had the opportunity, the privilege of going to what we know as the Holy Land or the Middle East, and I've been to that place where archaeologists believe, as they call it, the Mount of Multiplication took place. And when you go to this place on the western side of the Sea of Galilee, it's almost as if God himself just carved out with his finger what we would call an amphitheater there. It's perfect except that it's natural ground. I'll never forget that day that our group visited. We stood in the very back. Understand we're at the top and we're on the back row and our tour guide went all the way down to the Sea of Galilee, much where Jesus most likely would have taught from and preached from. He spoke in a normal voice and we all could hear him. It was this natural, God-made, God-given place where easily 20-25,000 people could sit. It's an amazingly huge massive yet easy to hear place.

The crowd was massive but the compassion of Jesus was large. Notice what Jesus says, he says, "But they are going to be hungry." You see, they are traveling on the way to Jerusalem and there are large groups of them and according to Luke 9, one of the parallel passages, they had been with Jesus all day. Now here's what I think is significant about that: not only was Jesus concerned about their physical well-being but the Bible, in fact Jesus is going to teach here in just a little bit in the Gospel of John, that he is the bread of life. And I've mentioned this in the past but I want you to think about it: there is no record of anybody in the presence of Jesus dying in the Gospels; there is also no mention of anybody being hungry or thirsty as well. It's almost as if whatever we feel as if we need or our flesh is compelled to have is completely satisfied in the presence of Jesus. In fact, you get to Revelation 21, there's a place called the New Jerusalem. There in eternity, it says there is no sun needed because Jesus is the light thereof.

So here you have thousands of people who have spent all day with Jesus, they've listened to him teach, they've listened to him preach, but Jesus says as soon as they get on the road, they're going to be hungry because not only is it a long journey but they're going to be out of the presence of the bread of life. And so we have this huge crowd, we have the compassion of Jesus, and then we have this challenge in verse 5 and 6. It says, "When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he said unto Philip, Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do." And when Jesus asked this question, he says, "Philip, how are we going to take care of these people?" In just a moment Andrew is going to chime in and the disciples are going to become part of the process and he's literally saying, "How are we going to do this?" What Jesus is doing in the lives of the apostles is oftentimes what we see happen in our own lives. We have a situation, we have

a scenario, we have something that is out of our control or beyond who we are and we can either look at it one of two ways: it's either an obstacle or it's an opportunity. And Jesus turns to Philip and he says, "What would you do?" And what we see happen in the life of Philip, what we see happen in the life of Andrew, is what happens in every one of our lives. Oftentimes it involves our health, sometimes it involves our finances, sometimes it involves our family, sometimes it involves our past and we see these situations as obstacles that our flesh cannot overcome, or maybe our resources cannot handle, and that's exactly what Philip says, it's exactly what Andrew said, he said, "How can we feed them? How can we afford it? We don't understand how this is going to work." But notice what verse 6 says, Jesus said he himself knew what he would do. And maybe that's your situation today because I know every one of us has problems and every one of us has struggles and every one of us has a past and every one of us is concerned about the future, and maybe just maybe what you think is an obstacle, Jesus thinks is an opportunity.

So what are the obstacles, or shall I say what are the perceived obstacles because we perceive them as an obstacle but Jesus knows them as an opportunity? Now, in this story there is not enough food, there are not enough volunteers, there is not enough money and what I want to share with you are the excuses that we use. When we come up to one of these situations in life, one of these obstacles in life, these are the words we often say to ourselves. The first one is this: can we just get rid of it? I mean, if I were to wake up tomorrow, how many of you have prayed this prayer, you've got a struggle, an issue, a problem and say, "Lord, it would be really nice if when I wake up tomorrow it's just gone." Or maybe you're dealing with a struggle with a person and you say, "Lord, it may be nice if tomorrow I woke up and they're just not there." Whatever it may be. We've prayed that prayer, "God, if you could just get rid of it." Now the reason this is important is because one of the other parallel passages to this story in Mark 6:35-36, when Jesus asks Philip, "What do you think we ought to do?" I love Philip's response, "Um, let's just send them home." In other words, "Let's just get rid of them." If somehow the problem is out of sight, then it is out of mind. How many times in our flesh when we're up against issues and struggles and difficulties in life the obstacle is so much we say, "I just wish it was gone"? Yet you and I know that David in a Psalm said this, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death." It is the difficulties, it is the struggles of life that God brings us through that makes the mountaintop so sweet though the valley be so difficult. And one of our natural responses to the obstacle is maybe it could just go away.

The second one is: maybe I just need a little more. I just need a little more help. Maybe if there were more volunteers, maybe if there were more people who understood my position, maybe if I wasn't in the statistical minority. Notice what Andrew says, he said, "How are we going to pull this off?" I mean, in verse 9 he says, "All we have is this one kid. All we have is this one sack lunch. We don't have enough to solve this issue." I don't know about you but there are days in my life where I pray this prayer, "God, I know there's only 24 hours but could you possibly give me 28 today?" Or maybe you've said, "God, I know that they're working on this whole cloning thing, do you think you could clone me because there needs to be two of me?" We think if we could just add to it or

have more, that whatever struggle, if I could just be in two places at one time, if I could just multiply myself or if I just had more help or more resources, more this or more that.

You see, oftentimes with the struggles and the issues of life either A, we wish we'd just get rid of it, or B, we wish we just had more something to help us out, and then finally, we love to throw money at it. You see, in our culture, particularly Western civilization, we are under this false pretense that an abundance of money solves everything. You see, it doesn't solve anything, it just puts more money in your account though you still have the issue, the problem or the struggle. And I want you to notice what Philip says. He tells him very clearly, he says, "Do you not understand," in verse 7 he says, eight months' salary worth of finances cannot solve it. Can you imagine going to a restaurant and that's your bill? I think we've all had that experience at times where we end up in a place that's a little more expensive than we thought it would be and we finally get the bill and go, "Oh my." Can you imagine whatever your annual income is, can you imagine going to dinner one night and the bill is 8-9 months of your annual salary? And what we see Philip do is naturally say, "Do you know what, Jesus? When you get down to it, if we just had some more money, we could solve this problem."

I want you to hear the fallacy of this issue. Did you know that over the last 50 years our culture, our Western civilization, particularly here in North America, we have thrown over 25 trillion dollars at social issues, 25 trillion dollars. And you and I would all have to admit that the issues and the struggles and the difficulties of life that people are experiencing, they're not better off now than they were 25 years ago. We still have an abundance of problems because we're under the false precept if we'll just throw money at it, that'll solve it.

It doesn't solve it. In fact, what I want to share with you as we kind of turn the tide in this passage, is oftentimes we just wish it would go away, sometimes we just wish we had more help or more of us, and sometimes we say, "Just throw money at it, that'll solve it." But you notice that none of those answers that oftentimes we're guilty of giving, none of them involved the name of Jesus. And Jesus says, "Okay, let me share with you what the game plan is. I want you to take everybody, I want you to divide them up, and I want you to bring me the meal and watch what happens when I'm in the middle of your obstacle." Do you see what happens here? They had all the solutions that humanity naturally responds but Jesus says, "Okay, that's what you've offered. Put me in the middle of it and watch what occurs."

I want you to see the opportunity that Jesus demonstrates, not just the disciples then but us today. The first is the product that he used. Notice how he performs this miracle, the one that's mentioned in all four Gospels. He takes the sack lunch that was designed to feed probably one young man or maybe he and his brother, and he takes it and feeds between 20-25,000 people. It proves the point that God can do more with a little than you could ever do with a lot.

You know, one of my favorite characters in Scripture is a man by the name of Samson. Now Samson in the Old Testament was this guy that he was known for his strength. In

fact, oftentimes I think we mean well but we're just a little misguided, we often picture Samson as having this huge, boisterous, like muscles in his ears kind of guy, but you remember the story that nobody knew why he was strong? And if nobody knows why you're strong, surely you didn't have big muscles because they couldn't figure it out. But as you take the like of Samson, you get to the book of Judges 16 and we find a man who has killed a thousand men with a jawbone of a donkey; we find a man who has eradicated an entire community by tying the tails of foxes together and setting them on fire. I mean, this guy has done some incredible feats of strength and nobody knows why until we meet a young lady by the name of Delilah. Now, I'm sure there are some Delilah's out there that are fabulous, wonderful, God-loving, Jesus-saved people, but I tell my boys, "If you ever meet a Delilah, run the other way!" Because when Delilah comes into the picture, and I know she's just one character, don't take the namesake, she continues to badger Samson. She says, "Tell me, please, if you love me," oh, those are dangerous words, "if you love me, tell me where your strength comes from."

Well, every night and night after night, he twists the story and he turns it a little bit and every morning the Philistines come upon him and he shows his great strength. Then there is this place in the middle of the story where Delilah says, "If you love me, please, please, Samson, tell me." The Bible records this phrase, it's a very unique phrase, it says, "She nagged him to the point of death." Now, guys, I'm just going to let that settle in for a few moments. And finally he said, "Alright, if you will shave my head." It was a part of his Nazarite vow. "If you shave my head where it's completely shaven, my strength will depart from me."

The next morning he wakes up, his head is shaven and one of the saddest stories in all of Scripture, he says he went out to fight the Philistines and he did not yet know that the power of God had departed from him. The Philistines come upon him, they literally chain him to the pillars of a false god temple. The Bible records that they, to the best of our understanding they remove his ability to see. The Bible says they make sport with him. They abused him. They beat him. They took his body and they ravaged it and mocked it in front of their entire community. But in verse 22 of Judges 16 it says, "Howbeit," listen to this, "Samson's hair began to grow back." Now, when you look back at the life of Samson and people who are a lot smarter than I am have said that about the longest that human hair can get is about 7 feet. So here was a guy who had...can you imagine this guy walking around with 7 feet of dreadlocks? I mean, he's just walking all throughout the community and all of a sudden now he's got what we would call a buzz cut. Maybe a half an inch, maybe at the most the normal picture of a man's hair in our culture, at the most. But did you know that's the only time in Samson's life where he cries out to God. He says, "God, avenge me in my death." And he breaks down the pillars of that false god temple and the Bible records that in that last act, he did more than in all the other acts combined.

I want you to think about that. That means a man whose strength was in his hair did more with a half an inch buzz cut calling out to God than 7 feet doing it in his own strength. You see, what we see in this story, the feeding of the 5,000, God can do more with one basket of food given in his hands than an entire restaurant in our own endeavors.

Let me make this real practical for a moment. You know, one of the struggles that we have in life is the obedience through giving and giving of our tithes and our offerings, and I've had conversation after conversation with folks and one of the things I try to communicate is this: God can do more with your little than you could ever do with your a lot. Think about this: God can do more with your 10% than you can do with your 100% and when we trust him with a little, look at what he does with these loaves and fish, a dinner that was designed for one or two at the most multiplied thousands of times over. So the product, what Jesus shows us here, the opportunity is if we will give him a little, he can do more with that little than we could ever do with a lot.

Then there's the process and this is the part of the story that I love to think about because we're going to have to be creative this morning when we start to talk about, "Well, how did the food get distributed?" We know he sat them down in companies and we know the disciples took the food, what we do not know is this: we cannot answer it conclusively, your answer is as good as my answer which is as good as somebody else's answer, all we know is somehow thousands and thousands of people got fed from 12 baskets of food. Jesus takes the bread and the fish, he blesses them, he puts it in the basket of the disciples and then they go out into the crowd, and when they come back, everybody has received not just a meal but their fill and there's 12 baskets left over.

You know, I picture what in the Old Testament is known as manna. You probably remember the story. In the Old Testament, the Israelites are in the wilderness for 40 years and they're wandering and they wake up one morning and they say, "Moses, how are we gonna eat? We're hungry." He calls out to God and says, "God, what are we going to do?" God says, "Don't worry about this. I've got it. Tomorrow morning when you wake up, go out and on the dew there is going to be an item of food," and they called it manna which means the food of or angel's food. And God gives them very explicit directions. He says, "When you go out, get all that you can eat." Now, folks, I don't know and I know technically we didn't have Baptists back then but they had to be Baptists in the wilderness. When he said, "Take anything you want to eat," and then he says that their clothes didn't wear out which means they didn't gain weight, wow, what an experience. You're eating all you want to eat, you're not gaining weight but here's what God says, "Do not hold any over for the next day for the next day if you hold it over, it will grow worms and it will grow moldy."

Do you see what the Lord was teaching them in the wilderness? "Just allow me to," what he said in what we know as the Lord's prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread." The picture that we get when the disciples are going through the crowd is that their baskets are full of food and the people are taking the food or the food is being distributed, but it's not running out. I mean, can you imagine the look on their faces when a family such as mine is being served? I have three young men in my home. I have some teenagers and I have all of them that think they're teenagers but there is one thing I know about my three boys is they can eat. One of the things that my wife loves, she loves going to a buffet and getting our money's worth, if you know what I mean. Can you imagine coming by the Meyers group and there are my three, big, strong, sweaty, teenage boys? I'll tell you

what, I've seen a picnic basket and my boys could have eaten through that picnic basket no problem and can you imagine them just cleaning out, distributing and looking back and it's already full again?

You see, we don't know exactly the manner in which it happened but we do know this: that as it was being distributed, just like the manna in the wilderness, whatever was taken was immediately replenished. Now let me picture this for your life. We have struggles, sometimes it's our family, sometimes it's our finances, sometimes it's what will I do tomorrow or how will I deal with yesterday, how many times do we take that situation or that scenario and we hold onto it with a vice grip of our mind and we're not going to let it go or we're not going to let anybody know? And what we do is we end up stifling it just like manna in the wilderness. If they held onto it one day too many, it would grow worms and grow moldy but yet if we hold our hand out and we say, "Okay, God, I'm not going to hold onto it," he may just like the food being distributed, he may remove it from but what did he do in this story? He replenished it immediately with more.

You see, one of the struggles that we have much like Philip and Andrew, is we want to take the issues and the struggles and say, "God, I've got this," and what Jesus is saying is, "Hey, just let go. I've got this." How were they going to come up with all that money? How were they going to come up with all that food? How were they going to have time to go get it and bring it back? It would have been physically impossible until a small little amount of food is put in the hands of Jesus and he takes it and by the way of the process, whatever was needed was immediately replenished. Ah, which brings us to the possibility. Remember verses 5 and 6. Jesus said, "What do you think we ought to do?" For he knew what he would do. When everybody is dismissed, I don't think it's by accident, I think it's by providence, that means God orchestrated, there are 12 baskets full, one for every individual who questioned whether Jesus could pull this off; one for every person who said, "I don't know how we're gonna do this"; one for every person who said, "We just need more money or we just need more resources or we just need to get rid of them." One for every single one of them.

You see, maybe that possibility is your reality. You know, maybe you're that person today that has had an issue, a struggle, an addiction, a worry, a fear, a whatever it may be, and you've spent way too many nights up late at night, you've spent too many days and too many years holding on wondering how you're going to solve this issue, and what Jesus shows these guys is, "If you'll just give me a little, I can send you away with so much more."

Maybe you're here today and you've questioned, you've doubted, you've speculated on the goodness of God in your life, the grace and the mercy of God moving in your life. You see, the possibility is when we stop doing it in our own strength and when we turn it over to him, he can do and will do what Ephesians 3:20, he can do abundantly more than we ever think or ask. Maybe today is that day where we take that closed fist and we open it up. Maybe today is that day we say, "Okay, God, I'm going to quit fighting in my strength and I'm going to trust you in this situation, I'm going to trust you with this scenario, I'm going to trust you with this relationship, I'm going to trust you finally to take care of my

past or to 'guide my future.'" You see, the possibility is he can do more than you could ever imagine if you'll just let him take whatever it is and let it not longer be in your own strength.

Let's pray together with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. You know, maybe you're that individual today, in fact maybe you're that person that has spent years and years and years arguing with and fighting God. Maybe you're one of those individuals who thought, "Well, if I just do enough good, or if I just give away enough money, or maybe if I just stop doing this for a certain amount of time, then maybe somehow in some way in God's economy I will be seen as righteous and justified and forgiven." What we've seen this morning is there is no amount of your works, there is no amount of your labor, there is no amount of your goodness or your lack of badness that can solve that issue. You see, what you need to do with your life is what happened in this little boy's sack lunch, you just need to turn it over to Jesus and let him take care of it.

Maybe you're that person today, maybe you've been here a thousand times, maybe today you're here for the very first time and you realize how desperately you need Jesus to have your life. Let me encourage you just have a conversation with him. You don't need to say anything out loud, you don't have to say the same thing I would say, you don't need to get out and take a bunch of classes and jump through religious hoops, but maybe this is the conversation you need to have, "God, today I realize that all of my best efforts will fall woefully short when I realize there is nothing that I can do in my own strength that can somehow absolve me of my rebellion to you, my sinfulness to you so, Lord, today instead of holding on to what I think I can accomplish, I'm going to let go and I'm going to ask you, Jesus, to be my Savior. I'm going to ask you to forgive me of my sins. I'm going to ask you to save me. God, today I come very honestly. I don't know all the answers to all the world's problems but I do know that Jesus is the answer to my sin problem. In the best way I know how, I'm asking you to forgive me, I'm asking you to save me, and I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, maybe you're that person today. We'd love to have a conversation with you, in fact, we'd love to celebrate whatever God is doing in your life. As we come to this time of response, my prayer is going to be whatever God has done in your heart will somehow translate into your feet. Will you pray with me?

Lord, as we come to this time of response, Lord, how grateful we are you haven't given up on us. Lord, with all of our excuses and all of our self-justification, from a fleshly perspective you have every reason in the world to say you're done but you're saying just the opposite, you want to begin, you want to give us a new life, you want to give us a new hope, you want to give us a new future through the blood of Jesus Christ and, God, to that we cannot say thank you enough. So I do pray as we have this opportunity, some of us for a second chance, others for a third or fourth or we've lost count chance, God, I pray this would be our day that we respond appropriately. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

I'm going to ask that you stand with me as Brian leads us. Whatever decision, I'm going to be here at the front. We'd love to celebrate with you.

"You were the Word at the beginning
One with God the Lord Most High
Your hidden glory in creation
Now revealed in You our Christ.

"What a beautiful Name it is
What a beautiful Name it is
The Name of Jesus Christ my King.

"What a beautiful Name it is
Nothing compares to this
What a beautiful Name it is
The Name of Jesus."

Church, if you would for just a moment be seated. We've got an exciting announcement to share with you but before that, we want you to be aware of some of the significant events that are happening in the life of our church, one huge event happening this next week as what we know as Vacation Bible School. And so if you're not actively participating in it, we want to encourage you to do so and if not, as you're driving by this week and you see hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of young people and adults that are flocked to our campus, don't worry, everything is going to be okay. We know how to repair sheet rock around here and it's going to be fine. But we want to encourage you to be a part of next week. Here are our video announcements and Mike's got an exciting announcement to share with you.