

INTRODUCTION

People of God, where is your favorite place to eat? Last week Ivette and I were in Davenport and we went to Texas Roadhouse. Unfortunately that must have been everyone else's favorite place to eat, because they told us it was going to be a 3 hour wait. So we went to the Italian Restaurant across the street - 1 hour wait. So we went back to the other side of the street and ate Chinese. And got in immediately.

And after we ate, we felt just as you want to feel after you eat - satisfied. We didn't eat too much, and we didn't feel like it wasn't enough. It was just the right amount, and the taste of the meal was just perfect. Everything lined up exactly as it should. The right sized portions with delicious taste. Satisfied customer.

This is in contrast to the dinner we had at Liberty Street Kitchen the week before for our anniversary. Where we both experimented with a new dish, and although we came away full, it was not satisfying at all. Ever had that feeling, like you just wasted a meal because it was not satisfying?

The story of the feeding of the 5000 is meant to teach **us about where we can find an eternally satisfying meal.** Which can only be found in the Lord Jesus Christ and his Word.

PROPHET LIKE MOSES

Now John brings us to this conclusion in a very interesting way. He does so by presenting Jesus as the Prophet like Moses. The people even recognize that he is th Prophet who is to come into world after they saw the sign he had done of feeding the 5000.

First, notice also the very Moses type stuff Jesus does here. The story begins and ends with Jesus **crossing the Sea**. The second sea crossing was even miraculous, as he walked on the sea, and they immediately made it safe to other side as soon as Jess got in the boat.

Secondly, a **large crowd** was following him.

Thirdly, the crowd was following him because they had seen **the signs** that he had been doing.

Fourth, Jesus goes up a **mountain** and there he sits down with his disciples.

Fifth, all this is around the time of the **Passover**.

If you have tuned your ears to it, you can clearly hear the Exodus story being retold with Jesus as a New Moses.

Deut. 18 is where the prophecy is that God would raise up a prophet like Moses. He says *“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from among your brothers – **it is to him you shall listen.**”*¹⁶ For this is what you asked of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, *“Let us **not hear the voice of the Lord our God** nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die.”*¹⁷ The Lord said to me: *“What they say is good.*

The Israelites were terrified of hearing God’s voice from out of the fire on the mountain. So they told Moses to go up the mountain instead of them. And God said, they were right to say this, because they would have died if they heard his voice come from the top of the fiery mountain. But God is not willing that any should perish, but that all would come to repentance and faith.

So, the people still needed to hear God's voice. So he spoke to Moses face to face to teach the people God's statutes and instructions and commandments and laws. But this did not benefit them, as God was displeased with most of them, because they refused to obey God, and they often grumbled against God and Moses.

But God is committed to saving his people, and so he planned on speaking to them in a way that wouldn't terrify them. So the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, with the expectation that God's people would hear him and listen to his words, as Deut. 18 says:

¹⁸I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him."

Thus Jesus is the prophet like Moses. Doing Moses type things, performing Moses type signs and wonders, leading the multitude across the sea like Moses, and taking them up on the mountain during the time of the Passover, and feeding them with miraculous bread, like Moses. And if He is the prophet, then the people have the obligation to listen to his message.

Jesus, is like Moses in another way, in that he is a good shepherd. He leads his sheep out to the green pastures to feed them. Remember Moses led the flocks to the foot of Mt. Horeb where he saw the burning bush and heard God speak from it. And then he led the flock of Israel to the foot of Mt. Horeb again where God spoke from the fiery mountain top. This is why John says there was much grass in that place. Jesus leads the multitude to a place where there is much grass and he has them all sit down, which of course

is to fulfill Psalm 23, which says, *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures.*

MOUNTAIN SIDE MEAL

The Prophet Isaiah spoke of this mountain side meal in a figure in Isa. 25:6-9:

⁶*On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare
a feast of rich food for all peoples,
a banquet of aged wine—
the best of meats and the finest of wines.*

⁷*On this mountain he will destroy
the shroud that enfolds all peoples,
the sheet that covers all nations;*

⁸*he will swallow up death forever.*

Here at this mountain side meal, the Shepherd of Israel will lead his sheep to a feast which endures to eternal life.

And that is exactly Christ's intention here in John 6. But the bread is not the feast, it is a sign, just like the manna which God gave under Moses, which points to something else. Signs do not point to themselves, they point to other things.

God used the manna to point Israel to the Word of God. For what did Moses say? *"He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna...to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.*

So Jesus makes opportunity here to teach the Israelites that the real feast is his word, and even himself, the word of God made flesh. And because his words are living words, they need to feed on His word to have eternal life.

A NEW ARMY

John says that there are 5000 men that Jesus feeds. Matthew says, 5000 men, besides women and children. So probably somewhere around 15-20,000 people. But the reason the Gospels number the multitude according to the number of the men is most likely a military reference. The number of men in a Roman Legion was 5,000. So Jesus is ordering the people into a new legion.

In the Book of Numbers the tribes of Israel were arranged and ordered according to the number of military aged fighting men. And the tribes were then arranged in a cross formation, with the tabernacle in the middle of them as they march through the wilderness, feeding on manna.

Jesus is therefore presented here as the true tabernacle, and the people are arranged as a military unit around him like a Roman Legion, in the wilderness, eating the Bread of Heaven.

This all takes place during the time of the Passover. And these pilgrims are supposed to be going to Jerusalem during the Passover to feast in the presence of God, as the law said. But because Jesus is the true tabernacle and temple, the people are feasting in the presence of Jesus.

And so, like Moses, Jesus feeds the people miraculously, with five barley loaves and two fish. The reference to five loaves could be a symbolic number referring to the five book of Moses. For what he really feeds the people with is the Word of God.

But I think another connection is worth considering, and that is of King David. David fed his mighty men with five loaves of the Bread of the Presence which he received from Ahimelech the Priest

at Nob, as they were on the run from Saul. Jesus is the Shepherd King who feeds his mighty men with 5 loaves of bread, as he is on the run from the rulers who want to kill him.

EUCHARIST

We also see in this meal an image of the Eucharist. There is no Lord's Supper in John's Gospel, but all the ingredients for the Eucharist are present here in John 6. Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks ([eucharistēsas](#)), he distributed them to those who were seated.

Matthew says the distribution of the bread is performed by the disciples. But John says that Jesus distributed the bread to the people. Both are true. Jesus distributed the bread to people through His disciples. Which is of course a picture of the ministry of the church. Jesus is the one who distributes the Eucharistic Bread of Life from Heaven through his disciples, to feed the people the people. And so with the fish, until they were satisfied.

The miracle of the Eucharist is not how some people think the bread turns into the body of Christ. No, the real miracle is that Jesus gave, and gave, and gave, and as he gave, there was more to give, until they collected 12 baskets full of remaining fragments. Which teaches us that Jesus is always giving.

He gives his grace and mercy and love, and truly, he gives himself, in an over abundance to those who come to him hungry and thirsty for righteousness every week. There is always enough Jesus to go around. His love is infinite. His grace is everlasting. And he is always ready to be received in the mouths and hearts of his people. And as more people believe in Him, the more he seems to multiply. He gives and gives and keeps giving, because He never runs out.

COME TO JESUS

And the Lord is ready to give himself to you today as well. In abundance until your hearts and souls are satisfied in him. And it doesn't cost you anything to come to Jesus to be satisfied. Jesus asked Philip, "*Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?*" But this was a trick question. For we do not come to Jesus with money to buy from him. His word is priceless. His wisdom is above rubies. His life is of infinite worth. He is the treasure hidden in a field. He is the Pearl of great price. He is the satisfier and lover of your soul, and in the words of Third Day, nothing compares to the greatness of knowing His love.

As Isa. 55 says – *Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, **buy and eat! Come buy wine and milk without money and without price.** Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in rich food. Incline your ear to me, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my steadfast love promised to David.*

This is the greatest feast of all, this is the Love Feast in which God feeds and satisfies our souls in the love of God in Jesus Christ. Do you long for that love? Do you desire to have your thirst quenched with that living water? Are your sins starving you of spiritual life? Does the hunger pains of your soul cry out to be fed with the richest of food? Then come to Jesus Christ? Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied, he said. For you shall find your satisfaction in Christ alone.

NOTHING LOST

After the people ate and were satisfied in the bread, Jesus instructed his disciples to gather up the leftover fragments, **so that nothing may be lost**. And there were 12 baskets of scraps remaining.

Jesus uses a similar phrase again about not losing anything, later in the chapter. He says “*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.*”

The gathering of the Twelve baskets of fragments of bread is an object lesson that all those who come to Jesus to eat and be satisfied in him, he will gather and lose none of them. Which is confirmed when he says: “*whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst...All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me **I will never cast out.***”

Do you believe this? All those who come to Jesus, with mouth wide open, with hearts and soul hungry and thirsty, looking to be satisfied will not be sent away hungry, and will not be cast out. But to truly come to Jesus you have hunger and thirst for more than just regular bread.

MISSING THE SIGNS

Which is what Christ said to the crowds afterwards. He said, “*Truly, truly I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves of bread.*” In other words, they didn’t see what the sign pointed to, which was Christ and His word. And instead, they focused only on the sign itself, and sought

their satisfaction in the loaves. Just as Israel of old sought their satisfaction in the manna and the quail, and not in the word of God.

But Jesus says, *“Do not work for food that perishes, but for food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.”*

Then, in response to Jesus talking about doing work, they ask, *“what must we be doing to do the works of God?”* And by asking this, they want to know what work they are to do to have eternal life. And so he says to them, *“This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom he has sent.”*

But then they ask, in 6:30 – *“What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What work do you perform? Our father ate manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from Heaven to eat.’”*

And here is where it all comes back around again. The request that Jesus do a sign was not really a request for a sign. He had already been performing signs, that is why they started following him. But the last sign they partook of themselves – the feeding of the 5000, they missed what the sign pointed to.

GRUMBLE AND DIE

These comments reveal that they were just like Israel of old, thinking with their stomach and not their heart. They knew Jesus was the Prophet like Moses, and true to form, they are going to treat him just as the congregation of Israel treated Moses. Jews

seeks for sign. And they are going to grumble and complain and test God until they get bread from heaven and maybe some quail. But they forgot that God gave it to their fathers in wrath, until it came out their noses, because they were not satisfied in God.

So like Romans 1 says, because they did not give thanks to God, God gave them over to their cravings. *And while the meat was still in their teeth, before it was consumed, the anger of the Lord broke out against the people, and the Lord struck down the people with a very great plague.*

Israel of old, and Israel at the time of Christ simply did not have the spiritual understanding that the manna and the quail, and the bread and the fish, was not the true meal. It was not the bread from Heaven. *The True Bread of God, Jesus says, is he who comes down from Heaven and gives life to the world.*

Upon hearing this, the people respond saying: “*Give us this bread always.*” But again, this was not a real request for the Bread of God. Like the Samaritan woman at the well who said, “*Give me some of that water, so that I don’t have to come here and draw water.*” This is only a request that Jesus keep feeding the people with physical bread. And that revealed that their hearts were not satisfied in Him and His word.

ANOTHER WORLD

Just as the Manna was a sign to teach Israel that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, so was the bread from the feeding of the 5000 a sign to teach them that the hunger that Christ really came to satisfy was their

spiritual hunger; and the bread they ate was only a sign which pointed beyond itself to the only who can truly satisfy the hungry soul.

Which is also true of your own hunger and thirst, and your other passions and desires as well. They are mere signs that point beyond themselves to Jesus Christ.

As C.S. Lewis said, *“If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world.”*

Thus Jesus says, *“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”*

Just as he told the Samaritan woman at the well, *“Everyone who drinks from this water (referring to the well) will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”*

And in her unbelief she said, *Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.”*

But Jesus did give her the water, and she was taught of God, and knew that he was the Messiah and her heart was filled with rivers of living water.

GRUMBLING PART 2

Then the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, I am the bread that came down from Heaven.”

Jesus rebukes them saying, *“Do not grumble among yourselves...It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone*

who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me...Truly I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your father's ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that came down from Heaven. If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever.

The people have a difficult time understanding Jesus' figurative use of language, and so they themselves ask, *How can this man give us his flesh to eat?* But he already told us - whoever believes in him has eternal life. And the figure of speech that he uses to communicate that, is, to eat his flesh and drink his blood.

We feed upon Christ's flesh and blood, not by eating bread and drinking wine, but in our hearts by faith. And as we swallow in faith, God himself swallows up death for us forever.

Jesus told them what will happen if they don't see beyond the sign to the thing signified. They will die. The fathers died in the wilderness. They died because of unbelief. They died because they did not listen to the Word of God. They died because they grumbled and complained and refused to obey the word by faith and they did not look to the one the signs pointed to.

And just as the wilderness generation died, so Jesus warns that generation that they are also going to die if they do not eat his flesh and drink his blood, and seek their hearts satisfaction in Him.

And Jesus likewise warns us. We who are given a million things, a million distraction, trinkets galore, music, films, images, food, sex, drugs, and are never satisfied with any of them. We are like them, asking Jesus, give us this bread always. Give us the water. But we want it, so we have more to spend on ourselves, and satisfy our earthly hunger and thirst and lusts and passions and pleasures. But the pleasures of God transcend any mortal satisfaction.

IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES

So many people are looking to be satisfied in the things of this world, but they are looking in all the wrong places. They are all like sheep without a shepherd to guide them to green pastures, and to feed them the Bread of Life from Heaven – the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Prophet Jeremiah said, *My people have committed two evils: They rejected me, the fountain of living water, and they have hewn out for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.*

Notice then, that after the whole conversation of John 6 happens, many disciples who had followed Jesus turned back and no longer walked with him. What Jesus said is just too difficult.

So He says to the Twelve – *“Do you want to go away as well?”* Simon Peter answered him, *“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.”* Jesus answered them, *“Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet, one of you is a devil.”* He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray him.”

The reason Judas betrayed Jesus is that he did not seek his satisfaction in Christ. He sought to satisfy his soul in worldly riches and wealth. He didn't come to Jesus looking for something beyond what this world could offer.

And today so many people are likewise seeking to satisfy an eternal hunger by feeding on the temporal things of this world. And they can never satisfy themselves, and like Judas, they kill themselves.

St. Augustine said, *Our Hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee.*

But instead they seek satisfaction in the approval of men and women, they seek satisfaction in beer, wine, and whiskey. They seek satisfaction in mind altering drugs. They seek satisfaction in gender affirming surgeries, or in the latest trends and fads. And more often than not, in our own narcissistic age, people try to find satisfaction in themselves and in their perfect image they craft of themselves on the internet. But like the rest of mankind, they are never satisfied.

And maybe you are not satisfied today? Maybe you are starving for more that the world can offer. More sex, more food, more drink, more clothes, more consumption, more information, more exercise, more danger, more speed, more pills, more thrills, more images. But it will never prove enough. As Proverbs says: *Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.*

And as one of the poets said:

*Sight will never satisfy the eye in all that men seek to find,
Sound will never fill the air with all that men strains to hear,
And a rose will never please the nose with all that men hopes to love,
And wealth will never touch what all men's fingers seek to clutch.*

And that is the message that Christ wants us to listen diligently to today. It is this – As Psalm 81 says: *Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it; But he would feed you with the finest of wheat; eat what is good, and delight yourself in rich food, by inclining your ear to him and come to him, hear him, that your soul may live. He has the words of eternal life. He is the Bread of God which gives life to the world. Satisfy your soul in Him, and only him. For nothing else will truly satisfy the eternal hunger of your soul. Amen.*