

## **The World's Largest Miracle**

(John 6:1-14)

(preached 9/9/18; Pine Grove BC Sun AM)

### **Introduction**

Though there is debate about it, most people think Abraham Lincoln uttered the famous line,..

“You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you can never fool all of the people all of the time.”

And the point of the quote is that deception is less successful as the crowd grows and as the frequency of the deception grows...

In other words, if a person is a con man in politics or a magician trying to fool an audience, it is best to practice their deception less frequently in smaller groups

This is why you rarely see a magician do a trick twice..

The reality is that people pick up on the deception.

Well, Jesus was no con man or magician when it came to the seemingly impossible things that he did.

Jesus didn't need to fool anyone with his miracles because they were actual miracles.

So he did that miracles in public and he did them quite frequently because there was nothing to hide..

His miracles weren't illusions that requires small crowds in certain settings..

Instead, Jesus perfumed them anywhere and everywhere.

HE turned water into wine at wedding in Cana.

HE healed a young boy from Capernaum.

He healed lame man in Jerusalem..

Jesus did miracles anywhere and everywhere the opportunity presents itself..

And as I said the past few weeks, no one challenged the reality of Jesus' miracles...

There is not one verse in the NT where someone claimed that a miracle of Jesus was fake or didn't occur..

But even outside the NT, there is no evidence of anyone who called Jesus a fraud or a phony miracle worker.

Now, they may have questioned his diety, but they never questioned his miracles..

Well, this morning we come to what could be called Jesus' greatest miracle...

Now, I don't want to get into ranking the miracles because all were incredible and supernatural and defied human abilities..

And nothing really rivals the miracle of the resurrection or the raising of the dead like Jesus did with Lazarus...

However, if we think of greatest in terms of the largest and most public miracle, it is clearly the miracle of John 6 and Jesus' feeding of the 5,000, which we know is just the number of men.

When you take into account women and children, the miracle could easily be called the feeding of the 20,000..

And this miracle is also unique because it is the only miracle other than the resurrection that is included in all 4 gospels.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all describe this miracle, and it is problem due to the sheer size of it and the amount of people who were touched by it and witnessed it.

Clearly, it would have been a well known miracle in all of Israel and the entire region because these 20,000 people would travel and talk about this event the rest of their lives..

As a result, God inspired its description in all 4 gospels because many readers of the gospels would have heard about it..

Now the miracle is recorded in John's gospel for one simple reason...

It is there to convince the reader that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and by believing in Him, John's readers can find eternal life..

That is the purpose of John's gospel and that is the purpose of John including it here...

Now how does this miracle help us today?

Well, first of all it gives us another proof of the deity of Christ...

Jesus makes bread and fish out of thin air.

Who can do that?

Only God can create something out of nothing, and since Jesus is God, he has the power to create..

Just like he made the entire universe out of nothing, he makes an entire meal for 20,000 out of nothing here.

But second of all, this miracle gives us more proof of how fallen man is...

Not only does the crowd that Jesus is feeding demonstrate man's sinfulness, the disciples also serve as an illustration of just how faithless people can be..

So, let's jump into this incredible miracle in verses 1-2 with what we can call...

## **I. The Shallowness of the Crowds (1-2)**

Let's begin in verse 1..

***1 After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias).***

As we arrive at verse 1 of chapter 6, John has moved forward in time from the end of chapter 5..

If you remember in chapter 5, Jesus was in southern Israel around Jerusalem for an annual feast..

It was at this feast that he healed a lame man on the Sabbath which led the Jews to confront him over breaking their Sabbath laws...

And it was during this confrontation that Jesus claimed to be God...

This led to more anger from the Jews, which led Jesus to defend his deity for the majority of the verses in John 5, which we looked at the past two weeks..

But now in chapter 6, we fast forward in time.

Jesus is back up north in Galilee...

If you look at a familiar map to us, you will see that Galilee is the northernmost region of Israel..

It is the region of Israel where Jesus has spent most of his life growing up in Nazareth..

It is the region of Israel where Jesus will do most of his ministry..

Now the central geographic feature of Galilee was the Sea of Galilee, which has multiple names in the Bible..

In the OT, it is called the Sea of Gennesaret or Chinneroth..

In the NT, it is called the Sea of Galilee, but since John wrote his gospel later than the other gospel writers, he includes a note that it was also called the sea of Tiberas...

Regardless of the name, this freshwater lake is mentioned frequently in the life and ministry of Christ.

Most of the time, the northern and western side of the lake is the focus but in John 6, Jesus and the disciples are headed to the eastern side of the lake.

As you can see from this next map of the region, there are no towns on the eastern side of the sea of Galilee, which made it a great place for Jesus and the disciples to get away from the crowds..

However, the crowds followed...

Verse 2.

***2 A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the [a]signs which He was performing on those who were sick.***

As we piece the other gospels together, we know that Jesus and the disciples were cutting across the top of the sea of Galilee in a boat..

But as he departed, the crowds followed along the shore in a attempt to meet Jesus and the disciples on the other side..

And people often look at this verse and think how wonderful is that..

All these people following Jesus..

Even willing to walk along the shore to be near him while he travelled, but what they forget is that very few if any in the crowd are following Jesus for the right reasons..

In fact, when Jesus is arrested, these same crowds will be calling for his crucifixion.

And on top of that, John lets us know why they are following...

They are following because they were hoping to be healed by Jesus..

Look at the end of verse 2..

***2 A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the [a]signs which He was performing on those who were sick.***

Look, people are so fallen and so shallow that they will look in the face of Jesus and follow Him not because He is God but because they want to see what they can get out of him.

In this case, they follow because they want to be healed..

Remember that doctors and medicine and hospitals are non-existent in this era of history..

When you got sick, you either recovered, were disabled for life, or died.

And when word gets out that Jesus is a miracle healer, the crowds come and won't leave...

Nothing has changed today.

People show up by the 1000s for con men like Benny Hinn and other supposed miracle healers of our day.

People send 1000s of dollars to TV preachers for healing scarves and miracle anointments that supposedly relieve their sicknesses....

And there false teachers and con men and workers of Satan laugh all the way to the bank...

If they were true healers, they would head to the hospitals and glorify God with their supposed “God-given” gifts...

But the reality is that they charge others to come to them..

And people fall for it hook, line, and sinker because people are too shallow and too biblically ignorant to know better..

The crowds in Jesus’ day were no different..

Now the difference is this.

Jesus was a supernatural healer.

However, he didn’t come to heal people physically but to save them spiritually..

He came to have the crowds follow him as sign of their love and obedience to Him..

He came to heal so that people would see Him as God and give their lives to Him..

The physical healings were only a means to an end...

The end was the spiritual health of those who came to Christ.

But the masses of people around Jesus didn't want to follow him out of love for Him..

They follow him because they love themselves and they want to get better physically while ignoring their spiritual health..

If you are here this morning looking for Jesus in hopes that he will heal your health problems, you better make sure that you are spiritually healthy first.

It would be a shame to go to hell with a healthy body but a sick heart...

Don't be shallow this morning in your view of Christ.

If you here hanging around Jesus and his people for any other reason than to grow in your love of Him and in

your obedience to Him, you are just as shallow as the people in the crowd right here in John 6.

Repent of your wrong view of Christ and follow him in love and obedience..

Sadly, the crowds are not the only disappointing people in this passage...

Let's now move to the forgetfulness of the disciples...

## **II. The Forgetfulness of the Disciples (3-9)**

Verse 3..

***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. 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.***

Once Jesus and the disciples arrive on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, they head up a mountain to spend some time alone but the crowds quickly arrive..

We know from the other gospel writers that Jesus was filled with compassion when he saw all the people..

And that really speaks to the grace of Jesus since he knew that they were all there for the wrong reasons...

But his mercy is not dependent upon the person but upon his own character.

So we know from the gospel of Matthew that he went down the mountain and healed and taught the crowd in hopes that they would come to faith in Him..

And that teaching and healing went on all day, but Jesus realizes that the crowds need to eat...

And he also knows that this area is remote and food is probably hard to come by...

Therefore in verse 5, he poses a question to Philip, one of his disciples..

Now clearly, Jesus knew what he was about to do...

In fact, John tells us that he only asked the question to gauge the answer that Philip gave..

So, let's listen to Philip's answer in verse 7...

***7 Philip answered Him, "Two hundred [b]denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little."***

Two hundred denarii would equal 200 days wages...

In other words, even a huge amount of money would not be enough to feed this group of 20,000 people...

Now we read that and think, what is wrong with that answer?

Philip is right.

It would take an incredible amount of money to feed every man and woman and child there..

Philip is giving a logical and factual answer, so why are we picking on Him?

Well, Philip has forgotten who he is standing beside...

Remember, Philip is one of the first disciples called in the gospel of John...

He has seen all the miracles of Jesus so far.

HE has witnessed the healing of the centurion's son.

He has witnessed Jesus clean out the temple with a whip.

He had witnessed the healing of the lame man at the pools of Bethesda.

And maybe more importantly, he has witnessed the miracle at the wedding in Cana where Jesus made water out of wine...

If Jesus can produce wine for an entire wedding reception, why does Philip doubt that he can produce a meal for an entire group of people here?

Yet Philip does doubt or else he would have answered Jesus question of where to buy bread by saying, “who needs money when we got you?”

And if you think we are being too hard on Philip, the rest of the disciples have forgotten the power of Christ as well..

Listen to verses 8-9...

***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?"***

The disciples move through the crowd and find little food even among the crowd...

And Andrew speaks for the group when he says that the 5 loaves and 2 fish are nowhere close to enough for such a huge crowd...

Obviously, all the disciples lack faith in Christ..

There is not only not enough money, there is not enough food even for the crowd to share a meal..

And this is the sad state of even those closest to Christ..

Even they lack faith in what Christ can do at times..

Here are these disciples that have been with Christ for close to a year now, and yet they still forget the power of Christ..

And isn't this so true of us at times?

We witness what the Lord has done for us, yet we doubt that he will do it again.

We see his power to help us make it through a sickness, but we doubt his power to help us through the next one.

We experience his help during a tough financial period but we doubt his help the next time money gets tight.

We are blessed by his grace when a relationship is strained but we don't think his grace will be enough next time.

Look, these men around Jesus were looking at the lack of money and the lack of food, but none of them had ever gone hungry and lacked money when Jesus was around..

Now all of this sets the stage for what Jesus is about to do...

There is a huge and hungry crowd.

There is not enough money to buy food.

There is not enough food among the crowd.

There is no place to go to get food.

And all of this makes it abundantly clear that it is impossible to feed this crowd of 20,000 people..

Yet, what is impossible is possible with God..

That leads us to the third point of the morning...

### **III. The Uniqueness of Jesus (10-13)**

Let's read verse 10...

***10 Jesus 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.***

We know this story..

Jesus had everyone sit on the grassy hillside...

That would accomplish a couple things..

There would be less confusion and more order so that the meal could be easily distributed.

But even more than that, with everyone sitting down, it would be clear that Jesus didn't have a huge hot bar that he was serving from.

Instead, he simply created a meal out of nothing and continued to create until everyone was fed..

Verse 11..

***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.***

Couple quick notes to make here..

First, this wasn't a light snack.

Notice that Jesus created bread and fish according to how much everyone wanted..

In other words, you could go back to the miraculous food line..

And because of that, also note that the entire crowd was therefore “filled” according to verse 12..

Then the disciples collected the leftover and those 12 baskets were for those 12 disciples..

In other words, when Jesus makes meal out of nothing, he makes enough for everyone to be full but also for none to be leftover..

That is what makes Christ so unique.

Who else can cook and have no leftovers..

But better yet, who else can cook without having to go to the grocery store?

Only Christ has the power to create a meal out of nothing, yet this should come as no surprise since He made the entire universe out of nothing..

This is the uniqueness of Jesus.

Muhammad doesn't have the power to create and neither does Buddha..

Jesus alone is the source of creation and life..

Need legs to replace your lame ones?

Well, Jesus can create some for you out of thin air.

Need some wine for your wedding?

Jesus can make some out of water.

Need a meal for 20,000?

Jesus can make bread and fish to feed them all until they are full, yet not waste one slice of bread or have one fish too many..

This is the unmatched glory of Christ..

There are none like Him before or after...

And if you are sitting here this morning needing a new life, He can give you one if you simply ask.

The testimony of Jesus is that he can give you a new life if you will repent of your sin and trust fully in Him..

Jesus loves to make something out of nothing, and he can do the same for you..

One more thing to see, and sadly we have to end with more shallowness from the crowd...

We will call this...

#### **IV. The Selfishness of Society (14-15)**

***14 Therefore 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.***

The sad reality of life is that people just don't get it at times..

The love of sin and self often blinds people to the truth.

Jesus did the miracle of feeding the crowd on this day first of all due to his compassion for them..

He also did the miracle to point to his nature as God..

Yet the crowd missed the point.

He didn't perform the miracle so that they would elect him king..

He did the miracle so that they would make him Lord of their lives.

Christ didn't come the first time to be King over the world...

Christ came to die so that the world might be saved through him..

The miracle wasn't performed for political purposes, it was performed for a spiritual purpose.

Yet, most people can't see past earthly politics.

IF you heal their diseases and feed their bellies, they will make you their king for life..

Most people want a welfare state but what they need is Savior from sin.

Jesus didn't come to make all the wrongs on earth right.

Jesus came to make sinner right with God.

Sadly, the crowds didn't get it.

They could care less about their sin.

They only wanted their bellies full, but Jesus wanted no part of that.

So he slipped quietly away to the nearby mountains..

You see, selfish people only care about their physical needs being met...

But people who truly see their sin realize that their spiritual needs are far greater than their physical needs..

IT is better to hunger for forgiveness than for more bread and fish...

Unfortunately, most people only worry about their bellies instead of their souls...

Don't let be true of you today..

## **Conclusion**

Michelangelo was an incredible artist.

One day, he was near a group of people who were admiring a sculpture he had created.

They didn't recognize Michelangelo who standing only a few feet away, but worse yet, one of the men in the group who was very impressed with the sculpture, told other in the group that he had no idea who created it.

To make matters even worse, a lady standing near the group spoke up and told them that the sculpture was the work of another artist..

According to Michelangelo, it took much restraint not to speak up.

However, that night, he came to the statue under the cover of darkness and carved his signature in it so that none one would make the same mistake in the future.

Let me tel you something.

Jesus' equality with God is carved all over the pages of John's gospel.

To be sure, Jesus is clearly equal to and one with God.

He claimed that truth.

He lived that truth..

And he demonstrated that truth over and over miracle after miracle.

Jesus is not a politician..

Jesus is not just good teacher..

Jesus is not someone who came to make your belly full and your life healthy.

Jesus came to save your soul from the sin that infects you.

Jesus came to not to feed you, but to forgive you.

And if you desire to be saved, you better recognize Jesus as Savior and Lord by repenting of your sins and putting all your trust in Him in all things.

Let us pray.