

JOHN 6:1-14
SPIRITUAL HUNGER?

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 6 as we continue our in-depth study of the Gospel of John.

We spent several weeks in John chapter 5, and I hope you were blessed because what we saw in John chapter 5 is an abundant amount of proof that Jesus is Almighty God. Not just through His witness, but through the witness of others as well as the Word of God and God the Father.

So to say that Jesus never said that He was Almighty God is a lie and yet, I have heard people try to tell me that. Read John chapter 5, there is no doubt what Jesus was saying and in reality, that is the whole point of the Gospel of John, showing that Jesus is Almighty God.

Folks, it is all about Jesus and we need to keep the main thing the main thing.

As John chapter 6 opens up there is some time that has passed by between these two chapters.

Let me fill in some of the details and that will lead us into our study this morning.

First of all, this miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 is recorded in all four Gospels. That tells me it must be important if the Holy Spirit goes over this four times for us. And I believe it is very important as we will see.

At this point in the ministry of Jesus, He is beginning to withdraw from His public ministry and is spending more time with His disciples, preparing them for the work that is ahead, after He is gone!

One of the main reasons for this withdrawal from the public was the growing hatred of Jesus by the Jewish religious leaders who were also steering the people down this road. And He did not want to provoke them to carry out His murder, not yet because it was not time!

Another reason that Jesus wanted to get alone with His men is that they just had come back from a preaching mission that Jesus had sent them on.

We read in Luke chapter 9, **“Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. . . . And the apostles, when they had returned, told Him all that they had done. Then He took them and went aside privately into a deserted place belonging to the city called Bethsaida.”** Luke 9:1-2, 10.

So this is the area that they were at, Bethsaida, which literally means *“house of fishing.”*

Also keep in mind that from the area of Capernaum to Bethsaida it is almost faster to walk than to take a boat about the 3-mile distance, especially if the wind was against you.

And according to Mark, that is what seems to be taking place. Jesus and His men are going by boat to Bethsaida and people started traveling by foot to get to Jesus.

In Mark 6:30-33, as the apostles returned from this mission trip, we are told, **“Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. And He said to them, ‘Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.’ For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat. So they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves. But the multitudes saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them and came together to Him.”**

So as the people saw Jesus departing and going to Bethsaida, they followed along. Keep in mind that Jesus and His men are in a boat and the people got there before Jesus and His men.

And you can imagine as they were traveling more and more people joined them.

“Hey, where is everyone going?”

“We are going to see Jesus!”

And more and more people joined them, upwards of some 20,000 people could have come to Bethsaida to see Jesus, specifically, 5,000 men!

Why did Jesus come to this area?

To give His men and Himself some rest.

Again, remember what we read in Mark, how busy they were, they did not even have time to eat.

And here they are, heading to this deserted place that will be filled with people!

I have called this study – ***SPIRITUAL HUNGER?***

And I put a question mark at the end, because I don't believe that these people were interested in their spiritual condition, but their physical condition. They needed healing, some of them, and as we will see, they are going to need food.

But before them is the Bread of Life and the physical outweighed the spiritual need that they had. And that is the problem, the spiritual need was of greater importance!

Think about that for a minute. A person is on their deathbed and of course, they need a miracle to be healed. The problem is they don't know Jesus. So what is more important, a physical healing or a spiritual healing, coming to Jesus? Of course it is a spiritual healing that is everlasting, a physical healing will last for a time but in the end, we all will die.

I have broken these verses we will be studying this morning into six main points, and they are,

DESPERATION – JOHN 6:1-2

COMPASSION – JOHN 6:3-6

THE PROBLEM – JOHN 6:7

WORLDLY SOLUTIONS – JOHN 6:8-9

JESUS SATISFIES – JOHN 6:10-13

THE RESULTS – JOHN 6:14

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in John chapter 6, starting in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us this morning as we study His Word and look at this topic –

SPIRITUAL HUNGER?

JOHN 6

VERSES 1-2

John starts out by telling us the timeframe, “**After these things . . .**”

After what things?

After the things that were recorded back in John chapter 5.

And the events recorded here in John chapter 6 happened some six months from the events in chapter 5 of John.

And at this point we are about one year from His crucifixion and John tells us the time of year this event took place, Passover was near!

Now, as I have said, Jesus traveled near His base camp area of Capernaum and is going to Bethsaida, on the Northwestern coast of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias.

And to get there they got into a boat and traveled the 3 miles or so, and it probably took them an hour or two to make it to their destination of Bethsaida.

And if this took place near Passover, that would make it the spring and the hills would be covered with grass and flowers, it was a beautiful time of year.

Keep in mind that Jesus and His men were trying to get away for some rest and relaxation as their schedule was very busy, so much so that we were told that they didn't even have time to eat!

And now we see these multitudes following after Jesus and they followed Him because of the miracles that He was doing!

But, to their dismay, Jesus and His men got into a boat and sailed away. Keep in mind that they did not travel far from shore so the people could see where He was going. And because there were so many people, they could not get into a boat and follow Him, so they did the next best thing, they traveled by foot to get to where Jesus was going.

You have to love their determination, even though the reason they were following was wrong, they were very determined!

In fact, remember what Mark 6:33 said, **“But the multitudes saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them and came together to Him.”**

They beat Jesus and His men to Bethsaida, and they were on foot! Yes, like I have said, they were very determined to be with Jesus!

In fact, John tells us the reason that they followed after Jesus, “**. . . because they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased.**” John 6:2.

Now it is easy to come down upon these people for coming after Jesus because of the miracles that He did, but keep in mind what I called these verses – ***DESPERATION!***

You see, they had family, friends, maybe even themselves, who were sick, and they needed a cure.

We look at medicine today and we have come a long way from the time of Jesus.

Something as simple as an infection could kill a person or cause them to lose a limb. An appendicitis would be deadly, and today, we don't think much about it. It is a routine surgery!

Make no mistake about it, these people were desperate and like I have said, as they traveled those three miles or so, I am sure they were picking up more and more people who were in desperate situations and needed the healing touch of Jesus in their lives!

Here was the problem. Yes, they were in desperate situations, and they needed the healing touch of Jesus, but they neglected who He is, Almighty God. Jesus did not just teach that in John chapter 5, throughout His ministry He was telling people who He was, but they ignored that and wanted a miracle!

Let's face it, life is filled with desperate situations that we find ourselves in. The death of a loved one. The loss of a job. A divorce. A life-threatening illness. And the list can go on and on.

What do you do when you find yourself in a desperate situation?

Do you become angry at God for what is happening in your life?

Do you become angry at others because of what you are going through?

Do you isolate yourself from people because you just don't want to be around anyone as you are going through this time?

Do you resort to drugs or alcohol to numb the pain you are going through?

This morning I want to show you that Jesus loves you too much to leave you in that condition.

Now I didn't say that He would do a miracle and heal you or your loved one. But He will bring healing to the situation you will face if you would only come to Him. You see, He loves you far too much to leave you angry, isolating yourself, trying to numb your pain! He will do everything possible to bring into your life true satisfaction that is not found in outward circumstance, but an inward reality!

Before we read on, keep in mind that Jesus and His men are trying to get some rest and relaxation but now these crowds have followed them, some 5,000 men according to Luke 9:14. That means that these crowds that are following Jesus could have been some 15,000 to 20,000 people!

How do you think Jesus is going to respond to these multitudes that have tracked Him down?

We don't have to guess because we are told. And that brings us to our next point, and we will see that Jesus will show them – ***COMPASSION!***

VERSES 3-6

Keep in mind Jesus came to give His men some rest, but there was ministry to do, and God will give them and us the strength for the work that is out there, He will meet the needs of the people.

Listen to what we are told about how Jesus felt about all these people coming after Him because we would think He would be mad at them. They came for the wrong reasons. Some were just thrill seekers wanting to see what Jesus would do. Others were desperate for a healing, to be touched by Jesus.

And yet, in spite of the wrong reasons that they came to Jesus, we see that Jesus had compassion on them.

Think about what Jesus was seeing as He sat on that hill. Some 15,000 to 20,000 people gathering to be ministered to and as tired as Jesus was, he showed them compassion.

Now you may be thinking, *“How do you know He had compassion on them? The text doesn’t say that!”*

That is true, the text here in John doesn’t say it. But listen to what we are told in Matthew 14:14 regarding how Jesus felt about these people that had come to see Him. We are told, **“And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick.”**

We also see this mentioned in Mark 6:34 where we are told, **“And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things.”**

I love how the Lord cares for us, even when we don’t deserve it. As Jesus looked at this huge crowd, He saw them as lost, as wandering without a shepherd to guide them. He felt their pain, their loneliness, so He began to teach them the things of God.

They came to Jesus for the wrong reasons and yet Jesus did not hold back, He spoke the truth to them, He taught them because He loved them! Any pastor who is good will do no less, he will teach his people the Word of God!

I think that is a good lesson for us. Let's face it. We get tired, we get exhausted, and then we have people that are coming to us for help, for a need, for a shoulder to cry on, whatever the case.

And it can be tough. The spirit may be willing, but the flesh is weak. And that means we can't depend on our strength; we need to ask the Lord to strengthen us to accomplish the things that we need to do.

The Lord taught me this lesson years ago, when I first came up to Manitowoc to be pastor of this church. Not that I am done learning this lesson, not at all. But this was a big wake-up call for me.

When I first came up to be pastor of this church, I was working at the hospital 36 hours per week. I was also doing two studies a week here at Calvary.

Not only that, but I was and am married. I had two young children to care for who were involved in sports and other things.

So, I was busy, I was tired, and I had a set schedule. I had to get my studies done, plus some other things regarding the church.

And, if you can believe this, people in the church had the nerve to call me while I was studying. They were interrupting my study time with things that they were going through. The nerve! Okay, I am being sarcastic here.

You see, as I begin to complain, not to the people, but to the Lord, He basically told me, ***“Joe, isn't that why you are here, for the people?”***

And you know when the Lord has you, but you can try and say, ***“But . . . !”*** No, it doesn't work, believe me, I have tried!

Of course that was the reason I came up here to oversee this church, it was for the people.

And the wonderful thing was that as I took the time to minister to the people, the Lord helped me get all the studies I needed done. I have never missed a study because I was not prepared to teach!

What about your neighbor who may need a hand with their yardwork or maybe some housework?

What about a ministry at church that maybe you are not called to, but you see a need?

And there can be a list of so many different things. What I want you to be aware of is those around you, look out after them, care for them, reach out to them. And I know everyone is busy and we can have a lot of good excuses why we can't do something, I did! But the Lord showed me that if I take the time to care for people, He will take care of my time and He has and He will!

So you have here all these people and now it is getting late.

We are told in Matthew 14:15, **“When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, ‘This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.’”**

And in Mark 6:35-36 we are told, **“When the day was now far spent, His disciples came to Him and said, ‘This is a deserted place, and already the hour is late. Send them away, that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat.’”**

Keep in mind that Jesus has been teaching them all day and now it is late in the day and the people have no food to eat. It is not like they can go to the local store to buy some food.

Again, there is some 15,000 to 20,000 people there and they are getting hungry.

It is out of that we see that Jesus asks Philip a question that is going to blow his mind because he is going to try to figure out how to accomplish this task in the power of the flesh.

He asks Philip, “**Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?**” John 6:5.

Keep in mind we are talking about feeding some 15,000 to 20,000 people!

We also need to understand that Jesus did not ask the question because He did not know what to do. John points out that Jesus knew what He was going to do, He is just trying to stretch Philip’s faith, help him to grow.

And that leads us to the next point – ***THE PROBLEM!***

VERSE 7

Now we read the response of Philip here and we wonder what in the world is he thinking?

Jesus asked him a simple question, “**Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?**” John 6:5.

And Philip’s response is, “**Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little.**” John 6:6.

A Denarius was the ordinary pay for a day’s labor and thus, this would be about six month’s wages, but even that would not be enough to feed all these people!

Think about the question that Jesus asked Philip, the cost to provide food for 15,000 to 20,000 people would be outrageous let alone thinking about where you would find enough food to feed all those people.

That means the question that Jesus was asking Philip was to draw out his faith and not come up with the solution to this problem on a physical level.

And we do see this over and over again in the New Testament where people are focused on the physical and Jesus wants them to think on the spiritual level.

And you have to love Jesus because He does not get mad or angry, but He works with the individual to draw out their faith. And sometimes they see it, and sometimes they don't, or they refuse to see it. But Jesus gives them the opportunity and then it is up to them!

Again, Philip is looking in the physical realm and when you look to man instead of the Master, you will always come up short!

And like I have said, for Philip, they not only didn't have the resources to buy the bread and to feed the multitude, but even if they had enough money, who would have enough food to feed all these people?

The reality was that the answer was right before them. ***JESUS!*** And for us, no matter what we are going through, the answer is still right before us, ***JESUS!***

I will give you an example of how a person can look to worldly ways instead of the Lord.

Maybe some twenty years or so we were putting on a Christian concert and teaching in Washington Park. And we had bands that were coming out, I had the teaching that I was going to do.

That morning, as we were setting up, things did not look good. The skies were dark. There was some rain that morning before we started to set up and it just did not look good. It was early afternoon and Chris, one of our elders and I looked at the situation and the clouds were getting darker and darker.

We were wondering if we should set up all the equipment because, as you know, electronics and water don't mix. Not at all!

So Chris and I decided to go to his house and look at the radar on his computer. Keep in mind that back then, the internet was not that great, and things were pretty slow.

Before we left, I told everyone to stop setting things up until we got back. I did not want things to get wet and the clouds were growing darker and darker!

So there we are, Chris and I, in his basement looking at the weather report and looking at the radar and it looked bad. Rain all around us and not just a little.

And we said, ***“Maybe we need to cancel the concert!”***

So, great men of faith that we were, left his house to go back to Washington Park and when we arrived the sun was shining. In fact, when we got out of his basement looking at that nasty radar that showed we were going to get dumped on with rain, the sun was shining. God has a great sense of humor. And by the time we got back to Washington Park, which was just a few blocks away, they had everything set up and they were ready to practice!

And then it hit me. I was looking to what the worldly report was saying, I was looking at what my eyes could see, and I came to the wrong conclusion, to cancel the concert!

I should have been seeking the Lord, asking direction from Him. Yes, from a worldly standpoint it was bad, the skies were dark, they were threatening, rain was all around us, but the God who created us knew that and blew those clouds away and the rain away and the concert went on.

My point is, Jesus was not looking for an earthly answer because He was the answer!

One writer put it like this in regard to Philip's faith. He wrote what Philip should have said, *"Master, I don't know where the food is to feed this crowd but You are greater than Moses whom God used to feed a multitude everyday in the wilderness, and God can certainly do a lesser work through a Greater Servant. You are greater than Elisha, whom God used to feed many sons of the prophets through little food. What is more, the Scriptures say that man shall not live by bread alone, and You are great enough to fill this multitude from the words of your mouth."* (David Guzik)

And let me say this just in case you are discouraged this morning with your faith. God does not give up on us, I am living proof of that as you can see. He will continue to draw out our faith, having us to look to Him as the answer to our problems, our solutions to the things that are happening in our lives.

And for Philip, he knew that they could not sufficiently feed all these people and thus, he lowered the standard you might say and came to the conclusion that if they could feed all these people just a little, not too much because they did not have much, but just a little, we may be able to accomplish it. But even that seemed impossible!

Jesus wanted the people to eat not nibble on a few pieces of food but in Philip's mind, that was the best he could do, that is all he could do and even that seemed impossible for **ALL** these people!

Here's the thing. I don't care how big – **THE PROBLEM** is, Jesus is the solution!

But, how often we come up with our own solutions and that is what we see next, a – **WORLDLY SOLUTION!**

VERSES 8-9

Now John does not give us this information, but the other Gospel's do. And that information is the solution that they came up with to deal with this problem. You see, it was getting late, and the people had no food.

And what was their worldly solution?

A couple verses we looked at already but listen again and then I will respond.

First of all, we are told in Matthew 14:15, "**When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.'**"

In other words, their solution was to send the people away, let them go and find food for themselves!

We also see this Mark 6:35-36 where are told, "**When the day was now far spent, His disciples came to Him and said, 'This is a deserted place, and already the hour is late. Send them away, that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat.'**"

Again, send them away and let them take care of themselves!

We read that and we are outraged that they would want to do something like that!

Are you kidding me! Churches and Christians turn people away all the time and they send them to the world for help!

J. Vernon McGee, who has been home with the Lord for some thirty-three years, warned the church of this kind of behavior, something he was seeing in his day and what we see as normal today.

He wrote,

“Right now [church leaders] . . . are saying that we need to send the multitudes away, that there are natural ways of caring for their needs. We send them to the psychiatrist for emotional help and to the government for physical relief . . . the thing which is lacking is the power of the Lord Jesus. If we only had that power, we wouldn’t need to send the multitudes away. We fail to realize that the solutions today are not in government nor in human imaginations but in God.”

Let me share this to show you where we have come. Jim Owen wrote,

Once we were told we could do nothing without Christ. Now we almost hear that Christ can do nothing in us or for us without the help of ‘Christian’ psychology. Even the Holy Spirit is pictured ineffectual without the right counseling methods . . .

- Jim Owen, Christian Psychology’s War on God’s Word, pp. 7-8

May we not do that, send people away but love them, care for them, help them with their needs. Will it take time, effort, resources on our part? You bet it will!

Now, in response to what they said to Jesus, Jesus said something that probably blew them away. He said, **“ . . . They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.”**
Matthew 14:16.

And please understand that this is not a suggestion by Jesus. In the Greek it is emphatic, and it is basically saying, ***“You give them something to eat – I say you do it!”***

And so the first worldly solution was to – ***SEND THEM AWAY!***

But Jesus tells them to give them something to eat and to do it!

And as Andrew looks at the situation, he sees a young lad who had five barely crackers, which are basically grain for animals, and the poor would eat it because that is what they could afford.

Also, he had two small, pickled fish. These were probably to be eaten with the crackers, but something just for this young lad!

And in the world's eyes, this is worthless. And think about it. How in the world can this help feed all these people?

You see, that is our problem many times, God has given us things to use for His glory, to minister to people, and we object or become discouraged when we look at what we have compared to the situation and we say, "**what are they among so many?**"

Keep in mind that, "*Small things are not always contemptible. It all depends on the hands in which they are.*" (Taylor)

What did the Lord tell them?

You feed them and that tells me what this young lad had was plenty, not through worldly eyes but through eyes of faith!

In Psalm 145:16 we are told, "**You constantly satisfy the hunger and thirst of every living thing.**" (The Living Bible)

In other words, don't send them away, God will provide!

And this is the thing we often forget. Yes, with men it is impossible but with God, all things are possible. We need to get our eyes off ourselves, off what we can do, off what resources we have, and look to the Lord to use us to the fullest and He will! We were created for good works! (Ephesians 2:10)

If God has called you to do something, don't you think He will equip you to do the work He called you to do? Of course He will and of course He does.

We are told in Jeremiah 32:27, "**Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?**"

That is something we have to come to grips with, especially when things get tough. Is there anything too hard for the Lord and the reality is, no there is not.

He is God, He has created the heavens and the earth and all life and thus, He can work in me and through me just as easily as creating the heavens and the earth!

Maybe one of the reasons we don't see God working in our lives as much as we should is because we are not coming before the Lord and giving Him our resources.

What do I mean by that?

“He’s not talking about my money, is he?”

Relax, I am speaking of your time, the gifts that God has given to you, the talents that you have, and yes, your money.

And in regard to those things, maybe some of you are thinking, ***“How can I help? I don’t have much to give. How can God do anything with what I have? How can He even use me?”***

And I think it is easy to develop that mentality, but have you been listening to what we have read so far?

“There is a little boy here, who has [with him] five barley loaves, and two small fish; but what are they among so many people?” (John 6:9, The Amplified Bible)

This was a small sack lunch and how in the world can this feed some 15,000 to 20,000 people?

I like the faith of this young lad. He didn't know how this was going to be accomplished but he was willing to give what he had to Jesus!

One pastor put it like this. He wrote, “Listen carefully - it’s not what we *don’t* have to give to God that’s the problem - it’s what we *do* have but refuse to give to Him to use for His kingdom that’s the problem. ***“But I don’t have much—how can God use it?”*** This little boy didn’t have much but what he did have he was willing to give to the Lord for Him to use - and Jesus multiplied it and fed thousands.”

David had a sling and five stones to go against the Philistine giant, Goliath! And God used that to bring down that giant!

When we look at the work that is before us. When we look at the hurting people. When we look the resources that we don’t have and the resources that the enemy has, they are like giants, and we are like grasshoppers. In fact, they are ready to squish us.

All we have is like David, something small and insignificant and God is telling us, ***“Go and minister to the people!”***

You see, it’s not what we don’t have to offer God that keeps us from being used. Not at all!

But it truly is what we do have and don’t offer that keeps us from being used by Him.

Worldly solutions won’t work but whatever we have to give to God, He will use, He will multiply, and the work will be accomplished.

But how can that be?

Even Andrew said, **“... but what are they among so many?”** John 6:9. He did not believe that these few items of food could feed all these people!

That brings us to our next point – ***JESUS SATISFIES!***

VERSES 10-13

Remember that we were told that it was getting closer to the time of Passover and thus, that places the timeframe of these events in the spring.

That means that the hills were bursting forth with beautiful wildflowers and the grass was green, not brown like it would be in the heat of the summer.

And Jesus has the people sit down in this green grass. And not just sitting down but they were in groups of 100's and 50's.

Why did He do that?

Because He is a God of order and not disorder.

Also, how much easier was it going to be for His men to go through the crowd to feed all these people. If they were scattered all over the place it would be a mess, but again, our God is a God of order, not disorder.

Now as I read this, as you read this, what does it remind you of?

For me, it reminds me of Psalm 23, a Psalm of the Good Shepherd Jesus Christ.

Remember what our Good Shepherd does, just as a shepherd in the fields would do with their sheep. He makes his sheep lie down so he can feed them and our Lord does the same with us!

That is what David said in Psalm 23:1-2, "**The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.**"

Don't be too busy to lie down in His green pastures to receive from Him, ***THE BREAD OF LIFE!***

But, as we have seen in many churches today, they are feeding their people on the manufactured "*wisdom of men*" the "*philosophies of the world*" instead of simply distributing to them the Word of God to feed on.

Not only are we adding fluff to the sermons, but we are entertaining the people, and the sermons are short and getting shorter!

Way back in 1741, Jonathan Edwards preached his famous sermon, "***Sinners in the Hands of An Angry God!***" and it lasted for about one hour!

Today, well, in mainline Protestant churches, the average length of a sermon is 25 minutes. That is my introduction!

And for the evangelical church, it is not much better. The average length of their sermons is 35 minutes.

Think about that one for a minute. We will watch a movie for 2 to 3 hours. A television show for an hour. You Tube, well who knows, hour after hour as they hook us in. And Facebook, people again spend hours and hours on that.

But when it comes to the teaching of God's Word, the new thought is, shorter is better!

We can spend all that time in the world and get worldly ideas and when it comes to the Word of God, we can't even be excited about it.

For me, I look forward to hearing what God has for me on Sunday mornings and Thursday evenings. I look forward to Men's study to see what the Lord is going to show us.

I know, you are thinking, "***I think Pastor Joe has lost it. He is doing the study. He knows what is in the study. And he is excited to see what God has for him?***"

You bet I am!

Yes, as I am putting the study together God is showing me things and then as I teach it, it is like God is opening up my heart and showing me things that I need to do, or comforting me in this area, or whatever I need, my Good Shepherd is there to teach me!

I pray you feel the same way because God's Word is living, and it is powerful, and it will transform your life if you allow it to!

You see, as a pastor we are not in the manufacturing business where we are putting forth the manufactured wisdom of man.

No, a pastor is in the distribution business as he is distributing God's Word to the people that God has entrusted to him!

Remember the words that Paul spoke to that young pastor, probably in his 40's, named Timothy. He wrote to him and said, "**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom. Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. *But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*" II Timothy 3:16-4:5.**

The Bible, reading it, teaching it, studying it, is there for our growth, our maturity, to correct us, to make us complete!

But as we water it down, as we make it junk food instead of bread from heaven, as we decrease the time we share the Word of God, we will reap what we have sown, our lives will reflect that, and we see that today!

May pastors distribute the Word of God to their people just as the disciples were distributing the food to the people here in John chapter 6!

Now as we read what took place here, we need to understand that what we think as insignificant, God can use and multiply as we see here. All this young lad had to do was to give what he had to Jesus and Jesus took it and fed all these people.

Look at what Jesus did as He received these five barley crackers and two pickled fish.
“Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the multitude.” Luke 9:16.

And I get the idea here that as Jesus blessed this food, that the disciples kept coming and coming and distributing it until everyone ate and was filled! God multiplied the food for them!

Now there is something else that we need to remember.

Think about this for a minute. His disciples have been with Him for some two years.

They have seen all the miracles that He did. They went out with the Good News and God worked miracles through them.

And yet, in spite of all that, none thought to ask Jesus, ***“Lord, can you provide food for them?”***

Now before we are too harsh on them, how often do we see an impossible situation and throw our hands in the air and say, ***“I guess nothing can be done!”***

Maybe we should think about saying, ***“Lord, can you provide food for them?”***

And then see the salvation that the Lord will bring to the situation!

And this was a true miracle because these people were filled with food! You see, the word **“filled”** speaks of being stuffed like you are after a Thanksgiving meal!

In fact, they were not only filled but they had 12 large baskets of leftovers!

Now why in the world were there twelve baskets of leftovers? Everyone was filled, satisfied and yet, we have twelve baskets of leftovers?

It could represent the twelve tribes of Israel as this miracle was primarily for them.

But I think there is more to it than that.

How many apostles were with Jesus that were doubting, that didn't believe Jesus could do anything to meet the needs of these people?

There were twelve apostles who doubted, who wanted the people to go away and get food for themselves.

And Jesus not only supplied the people with enough food to satisfy themselves, but now these twelve baskets of leftovers, one for each apostle to show them that God has the power to meet our needs.

Not only that, but whatever we give to the Lord, however small it may be, like this sandwich lunch that this young lad had, God can use it and multiply it to help others, to meet the needs of others!

What a great lesson for us to learn and apply to our lives as well. Jesus is sufficient to meet every need and to solve every problem we are going through, if we would only look to Him and believe!

One writer put it like this. He wrote, *“Jesus still has compassion on the hungry multitudes, and He still says to His church: ‘Give them something to eat.’ How easy it is for us to send people away, to make excuses, to plead a lack of resources. Jesus asks that we give Him all that we have and let Him use it as He sees fit. A hungry world is feeding on empty substitutes while we deprive them of the Bread of Life. When we give Christ what we have, we never lose. We always end up with more blessing than when we started.”*

Absolutely. That is the wonderful thing with our Lord. He wants to use us, we just need to walk accordingly, follow the Good Shepherd!

Now let me say this. There are some commentators who feel that this story is just symbolic, that it didn't really happen.

Others say that the miracle was seen in the people watching this young lad give of what he had and share it with others and they in turn gave what they had of their food and began to share it with the other people.

William Barclay, in his commentary on John, leans in this direction, that it was a miracle in them sharing food not multiplying food! He does list the other possibilities but then says,

There may be another and very lovely explanation. It is scarcely to be thought that the crowd left on a nine-mile expedition without making any preparations at all. If there were pilgrims with them, they would certainly possess supplies for the way. But it may be that none would produce what he had, for he selfishly – and very humanly – wished to keep it all for himself.

It may then be that Jesus, with that rare smile of his, produced the little store that he and his disciples had; with sunny faith he thanked God for it and shared it out. Moved by his example, everyone who had anything did the same; and in the end there was enough, more than enough, for all.

It may be that this is a miracle in which the presence of Jesus turned a crowd of selfish men and women into a fellowship of sharers. It may be that this story represents the biggest miracle of all – one which changed not loaves and fishes, but men and women.

- William Barclay, *The Gospel of John Volume 1*, p. 204

Now you read something like that, and you may be thinking, *“Wow, they shared their food with each other! That was the miracle! That is what happened here!”*

As good as that may sound, and it does not sound good to me. Let’s take a minute and think about it.

If everyone had food to eat, why were they hungry and looking like they needed to eat. In fact, if they all had food to eat, then why in the world would they even need to share?

You see the foolishness of that? I hope so.

And let me make this clear. I don’t agree with either of those ideas, that this was just symbolic, it didn’t happen, or they shared their food, for that is not what John is saying here.

God did a miracle and fed all these people with just five barley crackers and two small fish, and we will see that confirmed as we read on and look at the last point – ***THE RESULTS!***

VERSE 14

As you can see, this was not a bunch of people sharing their food, but it was a miracle! Look again at what we are told here in John 6:14, **“Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, ‘This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.’”**

You see, if all they did was share their food, why did this impact them so much that they see Jesus as **“the Prophet who is to come into the world”**?

The people saw this miracle, this bread from heaven you might say, and I am sure they remembered what Moses said in Deuteronomy 18:15, **“The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.”**

Jesus was like Moses, whom they thought fed their ancestors in the wilderness for those forty years, but it was really God who was doing that.

But they felt this must be the Messiah because of what He was doing.

Not only that, but this Messiah will also lead them out of this Roman bondage just as Moses led them out of their Egyptian bondage!

So, in their excitement, they wanted to make Him King, as we see in John 6:15, but Jesus withdrew. Why? Because the crowds were willing to support Jesus as long as He gave them what they wanted, and that is what many do today! God didn't accept it back then and He won't today. If you refuse to make Him Lord and Savior of your life, He will depart!

Also, it was not time to usher Him in as King. That is still about one year down the road when He will ride through Jerusalem as Messiah the King as we read in Daniel chapter 9.

In fact, it is the exact day that Daniel said this event would take place. So, He withdrew because it was not time yet!

I pray that you come away from this study knowing that God will supply you with what you need to fulfill the task that is before you. Yes, there are many hurting people out there and you are just one person. But also remember you have a God who created the heaven and earth, and He can use us to do great things.

I like the way that one writer put it, he said “***You do what you can do; I'll do what I can do; and God will do what we cannot do.***”

Amen to that!

What is your spiritual hunger for? What are you seeking after? I pray it is the Lord and for His will for your life. I pray that you are not seeking Him for what He can give you but because you love Him, and it is out of that love that He will use you.

But for these people, we will see Jesus rebuke them in this chapter because they were seeking Him for what He was giving out, physical things instead of spiritual.

I like the way one writer put it. He said, *“The crowd’s statement, made immediately after Jesus had healed their sick and filled their stomachs, revealed what the people were really looking for in a messiah. They wanted an earthly deliverer, one who would meet all their physical needs - and food and health were at the top of the list, as well as freeing them from the hated yoke of Roman oppression. Thus, they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king. With Him as their provider, they would never want for food, and would have the potential to be healed of every illness. They could march to Jerusalem, overthrow the Romans, and establish the ultimate social welfare state. Jesus, however, refused to be forcibly made king on their selfish (and unrepentant) terms. Therefore, He sent the disciples away by boat (Matt. 14:22; Mark 6:45), dispersed the crowd (Matt. 14:23; Mark 6:45–46), and withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone (John 6:15).”*

And we will dig into that next time!

Let me close with this, from Psalm 73:25-26, which says, **“Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”** (ESV)

