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Look Who's Staying for Dinner John 6:1-15

Intro: **John 6** brings us to one of the most important miracles of the Lord's earthly ministry: the feeding of the 5000. This miracle is important for a couple of reasons: 1) apart from the Resurrection, this is the only miracle of Jesus recorded in all 4 Gospels; 2) more than that, this miracle is important because of all that it signifies. Fortunately, the significance of feeding this multitude is spelled out more clearly in John than in any of the other Gospels.

Each of the Gospel writers brings out of the story the aspect that spoke to him the most. Matthew and Luke seem more interested in the miracle itself, because they tell it without much elaboration. Mark puts emphasis on the loving compassion of Jesus; it was out of His great compassion for the crowd that Jesus fed them. John's account of the miracle centers more on the historical significance of it (it was a time of testing and a turning point in Jesus' ministry) and the fact that Jesus Himself is the bread that satisfies men spiritually. Only in John is it mentioned that the miracle happened around Passover, that the loaves the little boy had were made of barley (the poorest kind), the reason for gathering up the fragments of bread that remained, and the ultimate effect that the miracle on the masses.

In light of all this, our study today will focus first on the overall spiritual significance of the miracle; we'll discuss a few of the characters in the story and then look at the results of the miracle on the crowd and Jesus' response to them.

1-6- Without discounting the accounts in the other Gospels, we already know why the miracle is recorded in John – to reveal Christ's glory! Because of this, we know that its purpose here is to teach some important Christian truth.

Sometime after the events of ch5, Jesus moved over to the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee where He's followed by a great multitude. It was the time of the Passover. It's possible some of these folks were heading to Jerusalem to observe it, but we can't know for sure. What we do know is

that they're following Jesus because they had seen the miracles He did. It's getting late and they've been listening to His teaching most of the day and they were hungry.

Now, it's clear from our text that Jesus anticipated this situation. Yet, He still turns to Philip and asks a question that, along with the answer, is recorded by John to bring out the primary point of the miracle. Jesus asks, "Where shall we buy bread that these may eat?" Philip never really answers that question, his mind's already moved way beyond the question of "where" and has faltered on "with what" and "how much!" It doesn't really matter where they sell bread if you don't have money to buy it. Even if you have 6 months of a laborer's salary, it wouldn't be enough for a snack!

In Philip's answer we have a confession of the failure of human resources within this situation. Likewise, we also have a very realistic illustration of the complete failure of human resources in the circumstances of our own lives.

From a doctrinal perspective, this is obviously one of John's main reasons for recording this story. He reveals in no uncertain terms that 1) Jesus alone is the One who can meet every human need at every level of need and, just as important; 2) there must always be a recognition of that need before there can ever be a real turning to Jesus for help. But, more than this, the point is also clearly evident from John's fleeting reference to the Passover.

No alert Jewish mind would come to this reference without thinking of the great significance of that event. Why was it significant to the Jews? The Passover marked the beginning of that period when Israel left the seeming security of Egypt and entered the wilderness where they were entirely dependent upon God. Things had been bad in Egypt, for sure. The Jews were slaves. They'd been treated cruelly. Still, with grit and a little humor a person could get by. The desert was different. The desert had vast extremes of temperature (from 140-160 degrees in the daytime to below freezing at night). There were no towns and thus, no stores to buy food in. Worse, there was no water. This is the picture John's painting in these opening verses and he'll reinforce it again by referring to the desert wandering later. It's a picture of the failure of human resources—not just in a physical sense but also in man's attempt to please God.

We don't need a lot of reinforcement of this truth on the physical level. We hear quite a bit today of the eventual failure of natural resources such as

fresh water, fossil fuels, food, etc. due to the rate at which we are consuming them. We understand the failure of emotional resources, such as nervous breakdowns, depression, uncontrolled temper, and the like. These failures are obvious. What's not so obvious is the failure of individuals to please God or to experience the life of God. This failure is invisible, yet it is no less real than the others and even more debilitating.

The 2nd point of this story is that Jesus is all-sufficient. This is especially important where human resources fail.

We should keep in mind that the figure of eating and drinking is widely used in the OT. It's a picture of prosperity in [Eccl 3:13](#), "every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labors—it is the gift of God" (and [5:18](#), [8:15](#)). It is often used to refer to the blessings Israel would enjoy in the Promise Land. It's described as "a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing" ([Deut 8:9a](#)) and a land where Israel could "eat its fruit and its bounty" ([Neh 9:36](#)). In contrast, having nothing to eat is a disaster ([Eccl 6:2](#))! The metaphor of eating is also used of spiritual blessing. The prophet Isaiah extends this promise of God to Israel when he says, "If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land" ([Is 1:19](#)). Still, disobedience will lead to the absence of satisfaction in eating ([Lev 26:23-26](#)). But the gracious invitation continued to be extended to all Israel and beyond. David wrote in [Ps 22:26](#) that, "The poor shall eat and be satisfied, those who seek Him will praise the Lord!"

What does all this mean? Real spiritual prosperity is only found in God. You can't find it on the human level. You'll never find the abundant life by indulging yourself in all that life has to offer. You'll never find happiness by pursuing it. You can't create satisfaction. These great blessings only come from God. You must feed on God as He is presented to you in the person of Jesus Christ. Do you feed on Him? Do you come to Him expecting to be fed?

That's the coolest part of this story. From a human perspective, the need of the crowd was great and the amount of available resources was ridiculously sparse. But when it was all said and done, there's more than enough: the supply outstripped the demand! There were 12 baskets of food leftover – food in abundance! It's always like that with God. In the great haggling episode of Abraham and God over Sodom, God didn't stop granting until

Abe stopped asking. Take the case of the widow's oil in Elisha's day. As long as there were empty vessels, the oil did not cease.

This is how Jesus is with all His people. He is constantly extending grace to us and yet the supply of grace is never depleted. If we find ourselves in dire straights, it's in ourselves, not in Him. If we find ourselves poor and weak or tried and tempted, it's not that we can't be helped but we're not helped because we draw so little on the resources of Jesus Christ. He desires to supply all your need according to His riches in glory (Phil 4:19) but you must turn to Him in your need. Whatever your circumstance, whatever your need, Jesus is sufficient for it! Turn to Him, ask Him. He is the source of all comfort it would be wise to ask Him for everything you stand in *need* of. He can and will provide!

7-13- Now, besides doctrine and spiritual truth, this story also gives us a great example of good management which is simply: getting the right things done through other people. Jesus fed a massive amount of people but He didn't do it all by Himself. Sure, He was the source of the miracle, He provided for the great need but He also used this as an opportunity to work through others. The disciples, the lad – they helped. The job was done through others. Which?

Philip: 1st person Jesus turned to. He was from Bethsaida, which was nearby, so he'd naturally know better than anyone else what food was available. But that was the problem; Philip got caught up in his knowledge! Maybe he was proud that he knew the lay of the land and that there was no place to buy that much food. Whatever the reason, he forgot what he knew about Jesus and forgot to turn the matter over to Him. John straight up tells us that Jesus asked Philip about the food in order to test him and the implication is – Philip failed the test.

Philip was faced with a difficult situation, just as we often are. Sadly, his response was the same as ours often is. What do we do when we face an impossible situation? Well, we worry of course. Then we rack our brains for a good solution. Then we cinch up our belts, put the nose to the grindstone and just grind it out. Why? Maybe we're proud of our own knowledge too. What's so ironic with Philip is that in showing off his knowledge, he actually revealed his ignorance. Knowledge can be a blessing, but it can also be a handicap to trusting the Lord. When placed in the Lord's hands, it's a

valuable thing. When trusted in itself, it's not. A Christian has learned a great deal about walking with the Lord when they are able to present each and every difficulty to Him as they come along.

Another possible reason for Philip's failure was that he had a head for figures and this led him to trust in money. When Jesus asked His question, Philip began to calculate. He counted heads, calculated price of bread X amount they'd need / 12...carry the 1..."Even if we had 6 months of wages, it wouldn't be enough." Philip's math was correct but he failed because he forgot to factor Jesus into his calculation.

One of the greatest detriments to modern Christianity is the false idea that we can accomplish God's work primarily by means of money. Don't get me wrong, just as knowledge is good when it's placed in Jesus' hands, so too is money. Money can be well used but it can also exacerbate an existing spiritual problem. It can be very debilitating. Also, it limits our vision. Too often, we think money is the answer to every need but it's not – but Jesus is. What should we do? Let's use our knowledge and our money. Let's use anything else God gives to us. But most of all, let's look to God Himself for the solution. Philip had seen other miracles and we all have seen God work miracles in our own lives as well as the lives of others. We should allow that knowledge to constantly lead us to trust in the Lord.

Andrew: I don't want to throw any shade on him because, out of the 12, he's the only one who did anything. He found the boy and brought him to Jesus! But, in describing the boys lunch, he had to admit, "What are these among so many?" apparently, all the disciples were as equally bewildered as Philip. Jesus knew it was a misunderstanding on their part and yet, not only does He not verbally rebuke them for, He doesn't acknowledge their answers at all. The rebuke will come later in a subtle but effective way – each disciple will have to carry off a basket full of bread.

Lad: what about him? The original language points to a small boy: older than a toddler, younger than a pre-teen. We know he was poor. Barley was the cheapest of all bread and was contemptible to most. Very young and very poor means this boy was insignificant. But, as insignificant as he was, he did something that set him apart from all the other boys in the crowd that day. He gave his lunch, poor as it was, to Jesus! That lunch was as insignificant as it could be, as insignificant as the boy. But the point of this

part of the story is that the insignificant from the hands of the insignificant became sufficient and significant when placed in the hands of Jesus.

This has always been how God works. What's more insignificant than dust? You can't even grow crops on it. But in the hands of the Creator, it became man. A donkey's jawbone is insignificant but God put one in Sampson's hand and he killed 1000 Philistines. A shepherd's rod became powerful when God put it in Moses' hand. A sling in a boy's hand brought down a giant. What's as insignificant as a poor, virgin girl in the backwaters of the Roman Empire? But God took such a girl; a girl named Mary, and used her to bring forth the Redeemer of all mankind.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that what you have to offer God is insignificant and thus, useless. What makes a gift great in God's service? It's certainly not the magnitude of the gift but rather the hands in which the gift is placed! If you take what you have, no matter how small or great it is, and put it in the Master's hands, you'll find that it is actually more than sufficient for whatever task He sets before you.

14-15- The reaction of the crowd was not completely unperceptive. The idea of a coming Messiah was prominent in the Jewish religion. They knew from the Torah that God promised Moses that He would one day raise up a leader like him (**Deut 18:18**). The crowd considered this promise, then filtered it through their own desires and concluded that Jesus was the Messiah. The problem was they didn't know their Bible as well as they should have and so made a big mistake. They knew the Messiah was to be a great prophet and that he was to be a great king. But they failed to see that in between being a great prophet and a great king, He also had to be a great priest. In this role, He was to offer up Himself for the sins of the people. Jesus was a prophet, of course. He spoke for the Father. He would also one day be King. But, before Jesus could be king He had to die. He must give His life as "a ransom for many"

Tho the reaction of the people was partially scriptural, it wasn't completely noble. For one thing, it seems the crowd willingly supported Jesus as long as He gave them what they wanted, meaning: their support was for selfish reasons. Their loyalty appears to have been bought; they were possessed of a lively sense of favors still to come.

While this mercenary attitude may repel us, we must also be honest enough to see if we are any different. When we want comfort, strength or peace, there's no one as wonderful as Jesus. We open our hearts to Him and enjoy sweet fellowship. But, when He comes to us with a demand for sacrifice, a challenge or offers us a cross to bear, then we want nothing to do with Him. We're maybe a little too quick to turn a deaf ear to His requests. This is why the Bible speaks so plainly and so often of the need to deny the flesh and its desires. Jesus offers us abundant life but the cross comes before the crown. There must be a death to self before there can be an abundance of spiritual blessing.

This means we must say no to anything that lies outside of God's will for our lives. We must be willing to say no to our own plans and personal desires so that God's will is accomplished and not our own. How do we know when we've really said no? When we stop complaining! The Bible calls this murmuring: the expression of rebellion against something by mumbling under your breath. Why do Christians murmur? Because they really don't want to do what God wants them to do. When you finally get to the place where you stop murmuring and just say, "Yes, Lord. You know best," only then will you be truly happy and fulfilled in your Christian walk, because He really does know best!

Another reason why the crowd was wrong in the support they gave Jesus: they wanted to use Him instead of allowing Him to use them and mold them into the kind of people He wanted them to be. See, the Jews had a big problem: Rome. Now, Rome brought a measure of law, civilization and infrastructure wherever it went and most of the conquered people recognized this. But the Jews chafed under Roman rules and longed to be rid of it.

Their desire was understandable and their reasoning was logical. If this was the 2nd Moses, surely He would do for them what the 1st Moses had done for their ancestors; namely: deliver them from oppression. Jesus had previously shown His power to banish disease, now He shows His power to banish hunger. If only He would now show His power to liberate His people – nothing could stand in His way! If we could just get Him on our side, Rome is toast!

5K men constitute a ready made guerilla force for anyone willing to become their leader. Vs15 suggests that a leader was just what they were looking

for.

What is Jesus' response to the desires of the crowd? He leaves. This offer by the crowd to make Him their king was no different than Satan's offer to grant Him all the kingdoms of this world when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness. Jesus rejected this new offer as decisively as the first.

You may be looking only at your littleness, instead of looking at God's greatness. You may be disappointed that your talents or opportunities are not great. You may be discouraged because your talents do not seem up to the tasks set before you. If this is true for you, just remember that God used a little slave girl to bring the leper Naaman in touch with His healing power. He used a widow to provide the necessities of life for the prophet Elisha. Joseph was only a slave, but God used him to save both Egypt and Israel. We have already seen in this Gospel how God used the woman of Samaria, a prostitute, to save a whole town.

You need to ask God to clarify your gift so you will understand what exactly He's given you. Then, you need to place it in His wonderful and capable hands.

What does Jesus want us to be? Just like Him. He wants us to become like Him so that there might be billions of Christs on this earth, where before there was just one. This wonderful thing can be done in each one of us no matter what our situation is: young or old, rich or poor, male or female, etc. Besides, it's only when we allow Jesus to accomplish this in our lives that we actually achieve any kind of importance in His kingdom. 😊