

52. The Gospel of John—6:10-14

“With God Nothing is Impossible” Pt. 2

(12/2/18)

As we come to John chapter six, we see Jesus perform a miracle—the only miracle of Jesus recorded in all *four* gospels.

Now, that alone should tell us this was an extremely *important* miracle—so important that the Holy Spirit wanted it recorded four times!

As I said last time, in my mind that means He wants us to really study this incident and never forget the lessons He is teaching us thru it.

I think primarily, the Holy Spirit wants us to know that—impossible problems are God’s specialty!

As we come to John chapter six, we have now entered into the final year of Jesus’ life before His crucifixion.

And as such we see Him withdrawing more and more from public ministry to spend time alone in communion with His Father and with His disciples.

There were several reasons for these withdrawals: 1. the growing hostility of His enemies toward Him (He didn’t want to provoke them to move forward with His murder before the appointed time) and; 2. the need for physical rest in preparation for the cross.

But primarily, these were times spent with His disciples preparing them to take over the ministry after His departure.

However, as we take a composite look at the other gospels, we see that the primary reason that Jesus wanted to get alone with His disciples prior to the feeding of the five-thousand miracle was because—they had just returned from the preaching mission He had earlier sent them on and they needed some time to rest—

Luke 9:1-2, 10 (NKJV)

¹ Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. ² He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick...
¹⁰ 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.

So, Jesus decided to withdraw with His disciples to a remote area on the northeast corner of the Sea of Galilee not far from Bethsaida—crossing to it from the western side by boat.

The plan was to spend some time resting with His disciples—but that’s not how things worked out—

Mark 6:32-33 (NKJV)

³² So they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves. ³³ 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.

The gospels tell us that this crowd contained five-thousand men beside women and children—upwards of twenty thousand people!

Now, it is true that many of these were nothing more than thrill seekers (John 2:23-25).

However, I believe the vast majority of these people were simply *desperate* to be healed, *desperate* to be made whole—which became the basis for the first main point in our outline:

I. The Desperation of the Multitudes—v.1-2

John 6:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is *the Sea of Tiberias*. ² Then a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased.

As we said last week, medical science back then was little more than home remedies and superstition.

And because the healing of serious diseases was almost non-existent—people were desperate for someone who could help them.

And since it's in the nature of God to show compassion to desperate, hurting people—the passage moves naturally from: **I. The Desperation of the Multitudes** to:

II. The Compassion of the Savior—v.3-5a

John 6:3-5 (NKJV)

³ And Jesus went up on the mountain [one of the bluffs overlooking the Sea of Galilee], and there He sat with His disciples. ⁴ Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. ⁵ Then Jesus lifted up *His* eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him...

Matthew 14:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick.

The word translated “**moved with compassion**” literally means “*to have one's inner being stirred*”—it is a stronger Greek word than *sympathy*.

Someone has said that the word ‘*compassion*’ comes from a root that means, ‘*to get into the skin of another*’—that’s exactly what the incarnation was all about.

God Almighty didn't just *feel* sorry for us when the human race fell, He had compassion on us—in other words, He did something, He climbed into our skin, becoming a man to die for the sins of mankind.

I. The Desperation of the Multitudes—v.1-2

II. The Compassion of the Savior—v.3-5a

III. The Preparation of the Disciples—v.5-14

A. They needed to learn a lesson in faith—v.5-6

John 6:5-6 (NKJV)

⁵ Then Jesus lifted up *His* eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" ⁶ But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.

By this point in His ministry (about a year from the cross), Jesus had already done many miracles, including healing incurable diseases, casting out demons and, as we studied in chapter two of John's gospel,—turning water into wine!

So, you'd think that by this time the disciples would have been walking in a little more faith than they were demonstrating here.

You'd think that by this time they would have looked over at Jesus and said something like, "*It's getting late and the people need to eat—what are You going to do Lord?*"

Instead their first impulse was to send these people away from the Lord to the 'world' for food.

The disciples needed some lessons in faith if they were going to continue the work that Jesus had begun when He returned back to His Father—and Jesus knew that.

Matthew 14:15-16 (NKJV)

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." ¹⁶ But Jesus said to them, "**They do not need to go away...**"

John 6:5-7 (NKJV)

⁵ ...He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" ⁶ But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do. ⁷ **Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little."**

A denarius was equivalent to a day's wage for a soldier and the average 'blue-collar' worker—and so two hundred denarii was about 7 months' pay for the average working man.

The reason that Philip said that two hundred denarii wouldn't be sufficient to buy enough food to give twenty-thousand hungry people even a little taste was because he knew that, that was all the money they had in the group treasury.

But then the Lord caught the disciples completely off guard by saying, "**They do not need to go away—you give them something to eat.**" (the Greek is emphatic—"You give them something to eat—I say you do it!")

The Lord assured them that there was no need to send the multitude away—why should the people leave the One who, as the psalmist said in Ps.145:6, "*opens His hand and supplies the desire of every living thing?*"

John 6:8 (NKJV)

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 small fish, but what are they among so many?"**

What indeed!? → Genesis 1:1 "**In the beginning God** [the Lord Jesus Christ] **created the heavens and the earth.**" ('created' is *bara*)—*'to bring into existence something out of nothing.'*

The Lord Jesus didn't need *'five atoms and two small molecules'* to create the entire universe—so nothing is too small or insignificant for Him to use to do something great thru seeing as He didn't need *anything* to create *everything* in the first place (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16).

Now, please understand that this was a *sack lunch* belonging to a young boy that had come to hear Jesus preach—a lunch that his mom had probably prepared for him consisting of five barley biscuits or crackers and two small pickled fish (like sardines). (Explain)

A small amount of food to be sure and certainly from a human perspective totally inadequate to feed so many people.

But folks, that's the whole point of the story—the whole point the Holy Spirit wants to communicate to us thru this miracle that—*“with men it would be impossible—but with God all things are possible.”*

There's a couple of very important principles the Holy Spirit wants to teach us thru this story—

1.) *Fight the temptation to look at your situation thru eyes of flesh, and not thru the eyes of faith. (2Kings 6:8-17)*

2.) *Give to God first and He will provide everything you need to live. (1Kings 17:8-16)*

Matthew 6:33 (NKJV)

³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Proverbs 11:24-25 (NKJV)

²⁴ There is *one* who scatters, yet increases more; And there is *one* who withholds more than is right, But it *leads* to poverty. ²⁵ The generous soul will be made rich, And he who waters will also be watered himself.

And so, when it came to Jesus preparing His disciples to take over the ministry upon His returning to the Father, first of all—

A. They needed to learn a lesson in faith—v.5-6

B. They needed to learn the sufficiency of Jesus to meet needs

Matthew 14:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ He said, "Bring them [the five loaves and two fish] here to Me."

I'm convinced that the reason we don't see more in the way of miracles happening today is because we're not bringing to the Lord and giving Him our resources (time, talents, money) to use for His glory.

"But I don't have much to give Him—how can He do anything with it?"

What did this young boy have to give to Jesus—a small sack-lunch.

Was the Lord able to use it in a great way? Yes!

One pastor put it well—

"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 didn't have much—only a sling and a rock—but David offered them to God and He used them to bring down a giant and give victory to His people.

Moses didn't have much when God sent him to deliver Israel from Egypt—God said to him, *"what's in your hand?"* Moses responded, *"A staff"*—God said, *"that's what I'll use to deliver My people"*.

Again, it's not what we don't have to offer God that keeps us from being used—it's what we do have and don't offer that keeps us from being used by Him."

John 6:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Then Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

It was Passover time which meant it was the spring of the year—a time in Israel when green grass and wild flowers are abundant.

Here Jesus, the Good Shepherd, makes the ‘sheep’ sit down (the Greek is literally ‘recline’—“*to lie down reclining on one side*”) in green pastures as He fed them and satisfied them. (Ps.23:2)

Mark tells us that He commanded His disciples to make the people recline in groups—this would facilitate the disciples moving between groups of people distributing the food Jesus was about to make.

John 6:10-12a (NKJV)

¹⁰ Then Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. ¹¹ **And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed *them* to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted.** ¹² **So when they were filled...**

It’s interesting to see the cooperation between Jesus and His disciples—*He manufactured* the food—*they distributed* it to the multitudes—don’t ever forget that.

What people need we can’t manufacture (bread equals life)—only the Lord can do that, only He can work the miracle (ultimately the miracle of new life).

But then, He allows us to help in the work by giving to others what He has given to us—the Bread of Life.

Don’t ever forget—we are not in the ‘*manufacturing business*’—we are in the ‘*distribution business*’.

Today, many churches are feeding their people on the manufactured ‘wisdom of men’ instead of simply distributing to them the Word of God to feed on.

The word “*filled*” in the Greek means *glutted*—they were stuffed like I was last Thanksgiving!

John 6:12-13 (NKJV)

¹² So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost." ¹³ Therefore they gathered *them* up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten.

Did you ever wonder why twelve baskets were filled with the fragments—not eleven or thirteen but twelve?

Well, there were twelve baskets because there were twelve doubting apostles who didn't believe Jesus could do anything to feed so many and encouraged Him to send the multitudes away.

But Jesus responded to their doubts by taking a small offering of food and multiplied it so that everyone ate—as much as they wanted!

And now they were glutted, and twelve baskets were filled with the fragments—one for each apostle.

This was not only a lesson in God's power but also in His sufficiency—a lesson Jesus reinforced to His disciples by making each of them carry around a basket of surplus food from what He had multiplied from a little boy's sack-lunch.

It was a great lesson for the next few days as they ate the leftovers and were reminded of the sufficiency of Jesus to meet every need and solve every problem!

Warren Wiersbe—

“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”.

On a practical level, one of the main reasons for this miracle was to prepare the disciples for the kind of ministry they would be involved in after Jesus' departure.

They would be involved in God's food distribution program—feeding hungry people—not with physical food but with spiritual food—by giving them Jesus, the Bread of Life.

John 6:14 (NKJV)

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."

The Prophet they were referring to was the one Moses promised was coming someday—*"The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.* (Deuteronomy 18:15)

One author summed up the situation accurately when 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)."

This then, sets the stage for next week's study.

Let me end by saying once again that this miracle of the feeding of the five-thousand was recorded by the Holy Spirit in all four gospels because—He never wants us to forget the lessons He is teaching us thru it.

Lessons in faith that we will need to live our Christian lives and to serve our God—and first on the list is that with our God nothing is impossible!

Jeremiah 32:27 (NKJV)

²⁷ "Behold, I *am* the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?"

Mark 9:23 (NKJV)

²³ Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things *are* possible to him who believes."

However, we also read in Scripture—

Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV)

⁶ But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*...

Matthew 13:58 (NKJV)

⁵⁸ Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

Henry Blackaby—“*Evangelicals today are conservative in their theology but are practical atheists.*” (Comment)

I don't know what you're all going thru or how impossible it is by humans standards but remember this Christmas season that—“**with God nothing is impossible**”. (Luke 1:37)

Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)

¹ Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Hebrews 11:1 (AMP)

¹ NOW FAITH is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things [we] hope for...

Faith is believing that you already own what God has promised in His Word even if you can't yet see it with your eyes or touch it with your hands.

So what do we do?

We pray and thank God (John 6:11)—and then the miracle will come!