

## Gospel of John

### Session # 9

Last week we looked at the story of the healing of the lame man at the pool of Bethzatha. And we looked at the Johannine discourse, where Jesus gets into a heated argument with the Jews. Not only did Jesus heal the lame man on the Sabbath, he makes the claim that he is God and therefore can do so. The outcome of Jesus life and the fulfillment of His Messianic mission is now a certainty. There is no turning back for either Jesus, or for the Jews. Jesus claims to be God and to have the authority from God to defy the 10 Commandments and to blaspheme God by claiming himself to be God. The course of salvation history is now set.

Today we pick it up with chapter 6 and the feeding of the 5,000. (Read 6:1-15). – We noted yet again John's disregard for any concern about geography and chronological time. Ch 5 – Jesus is in Jerusalem in the south. Ch. 6 he is in Galilee.

Vs. 2 – Jesus has a following because of the signs and miracles he is manifesting.

Vs. 3 – Jesus goes up on a mountain with his disciples

Vs. 4 - It is the Feast of Passover. Passover is the supreme feast of Judaism, comparable to Easter Sunday for Christians. At Passover, God freed the Hebrew people from the bondage of slavery in Egypt and led them to the promised land. They were spared from “the passing over” of the death angel, the last of the plagues against Pharaoh, because of the blood of the unblemished lamb sacrificed for their liberation.

It is noteworthy that the story of the feeding of the 5,000 is the only miracle of Jesus recorded in all 4 Gospels. The accounts are remarkably similar in all 4 of the Gospels. It is interesting that Luke and John have only one multiplication /feeding story in them, while Matthew and Mark add a second feeding story, the feeding of the 4,000. The fact that this story alone is included in all 4 gospels is known by scholars a “multiple attestation”, which verifies how important this story was believed to be. This is probably due to that fact that the feeding of the 5,000 fulfills one of the prophecies of the Old Testament about the Messiah. It was foretold that when the Messiah came, there would be food enough for all to eat. So the feeding of the 5,000 was seen by the Jews as a Messianic fulfillment.

Vs. 5 – Jesus, seeing that the throngs are coming to be with him and hear him teach and to witness his miracles, plays a little game with Philip. Jesus asks Philip – “how will we buy enough bread for this many people?”

Vs. 6 – John tells us that Jesus was testing Philip, because Jesus knew all along what he would do.

Vs. 7 – Philip tells Jesus, we only have 200 denari, not enough money to buy enough bread to feed 5,000 ( the real number of people was assuredly more because that count did not include women and children). One denarius = one day-s wage for a laborer.

Vs. 8 - Andrew tells Jesus, there is a young lad present who has 5 loaves and 2 fish. Andrew says: “But what are they among so many?”

Vs. 10 – Jesus tells the disciples to make the people sit down.

Vs. 11 – some scholars note that this scene has a Eucharistic feel to it. Jesus takes the loaves, gives thanks, and breaks the loaves and fish and distributes them to the people. John tells us the people got as much as they wanted, a statement about abundance and again, the fulfillment of the Messianic prophesy that when the Messiah came the people would receive abundantly. (Jesus says later, I have come that you might have life and have it abundantly – John 10:10)

Vs. 12 – When they had eaten their fill, Jesus tells the disciples to gather up the fragments left over, that nothing would be lost (again, a Eucharistic feel as when we are done with our sacred meal the priest consumes the bread crumbs and consecrated wine)

Vs. 13 – the disciples do so, gathering up 12 baskets ( a good apostolic number )

Vs. 14 - The people who witnessed this sign say: “This is the prophet who is to come into the world” Again, feeding in the eyes of the Jews fulfilled a Messianic expectation.

Vs. 15 – The people respond by wanting to make Jesus their King. They wanted him to lead a political uprising. The feeding of the 5,000 convinced them of who Jesus was based on their expectation of what the Messiah would do. But Jesus has a different way, the way of the cross to show his power in what to the world was apparent weakness. The people wanted the restoration of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. So they had seen enough of Jesus to think he was the long awaited one. Jesus does not have any interest in being a political king. He is God, eternal King and his Kingdom is not of this world.

Vs. 16-21 - Story of Jesus walking on the Sea of Galilee – Read it

This story takes place following the story of the feeding of the 5,000 and it reinforces the fact that Jesus did not come to establish a political kingship, rather than he is in charge of the elements of the entire Universe. He walks on water, He calms the seas. Only God can rule nature.

Vs. 16 – The disciples get into the boat to head to Capernaum, on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. A storm comes up and the waves become high.

Vs. 19 – They see Jesus coming to them. They are afraid.

Vs. 20 – Jesus says: “It is I, do not be afraid”

Vs. 21 – John tells us they were glad and take Jesus into their boat. They John says in a somewhat interesting and miraculous way: “immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going”. Perhaps this is John’s way of saying to us all, that when we are in stormy times in our lives, if we let Jesus enter into our boat (our hearts), we will find ourselves safely home.

Vs. 22-24 – theses versus tell us that the people who had experienced the feeding of the 5,000 must have been very excited about Jesus. They go to great lengths to figure out how to find Jesus and they get into their boats at Tiberias and head to Capernaum.

So we are witnessing two things happening with the Jews, simultaneously:

1. One group is out to kill Jesus for blasphemy and for healing on the Sabbath
2. A second group is seeking him out with the hope to make them their king, that he is the long awaited Messiah.

Vs. 25 -34 – Read them

Vs. 25 – So the crowds find Jesus - they address him: “**Rabbi**” which means “teacher” and they ask him: “When did you come here”?

Vs. 26 – Jesus says “you seek me not because of signs, but because you got your bellies filled”

Vs. 27 – Jesus tells them – do not labor for the physical food which perishes, but seek the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. God has set his seal upon him.

Vs. 28 - They ask Jesus – what must we do, to be doing the works of God?

Vs. 29 – Jesus responds: **“This is the work of God – that you believe in Him whom He has sent.”** God’s work is to bring us all to belief. Because it is belief that leads to eternal life.

These words defy what is commonly believed in our culture, namely the belief in Universalism. Universalism postulates that since God is love and also all powerful, therefore ultimately all people will go to heaven. It is not a Biblical teaching at all. How prevalent is Universalism? Well have you ever heard anyone at a funeral say it is too bad that Susie has gone to hell. No what you hear at funerals from people is that Susie is now at rest. The major reason it is important for the church to be evangelistic, is for the very reason that people who die without faith, are doomed to a life of eternal separation from God. That includes people who go to church on a regular basis who simply do not believe and respond to God’s invitation to accept Him into their lives. I am not anyone’s judge, but we trust that God is just. He has set up the path to salvation, and it is up to you and me to choose it. There are consequences to our choice. But the Bible is absolutely clear. It is belief alone that leads to eternal life.

So when asked by the crowd: what must we do to be doing the work of God? Jesus didn’t say feed the poor. He didn’t say pay your tithe. What he said was – believe. That is God’s work. His work and our work, is to share the message of His love with others, or to quote the collect in the Book of Common Prayer: “that all might come within the saving embrace of God”.

Vs. 30 – They ask Jesus – what sign do you give us that we may see and believe you? Our fathers ate manna in the wilderness. He gave us bread to eat.

Vs. 32 – Jesus says to them that it was not Moses who gave you the bread, it was my Father who gave it to you.

Vs. 33 - The bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world

Vs. 34 – The crowd says to Jesus : **“Lord, give us this bread always”**

It is very noteworthy, that something has happened to these people because they encountered Jesus. In vs. 25 they address Jesus as Rabbi. Now after being with Jesus, they address him as Lord. They have been changed!

Vs. 35 – Now that they acknowledge Jesus Lordship, Jesus makes one of His famous “I AM” statements: **“I am the bread of life, he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst”.**

Jesus openly is proclaiming to be the One who satisfies our deepest needs and hungers in life. This is one of the many claims of Jesus in John’s Gospel.

So the real question for you and for me is:

True or False - Messiah or Madman? As C. S. Lewis and John Stott would say, Jesus does not leave us any other choice. It is black and white. We must choose, but please no gray about this. He is either who he claims to be, or he is an imposter.