

John 6:1-15 Jesus Has the Answer! Pentecost 10 August 1, 2015

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Grace and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ our gracious source of help! God's Word to help us see that Jesus is always ready to provide in His way is written in John 6:1-15 These are Your Words, heavenly Father, to fill us and satisfy us with all we need! Your Word is truth!

Dear Christian Friends,

There are times when God finds unusual ways to provide for people. For the Children of Israel, God provided Manna, which was never seen before or after their time in the wilderness. God also provided for the prophet Elijah. When there was a famine, God sent Elijah to a town where a widow had just enough food for one meal. But God multiplied her flour and oil so that her family and Elijah ate for almost a year! Jesus usually didn't provide food through miracles. He had friends who would donate items He needed. Yet, from His miracle of feeding 5,000 and more people we can be sure:

Jesus has the answer!

First, He has the answer for our needs. We learn from the Gospel of Mark that Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee because His disciples needed rest, food and time to be alone with Him. But, according to God's plan, after only a brief rest, Jesus looked up and noticed a great crowd of people coming toward Him. (v.5) Jesus spent time with the people. He was concerned first about their spiritual needs so He spent the whole day preaching by Word and by miracle so people knew that God's Kingdom of judgment was coming. Their greatest need was for forgiveness from God who was angry because of their sins. They were like sheep. They needed guidance from God's Word so they wouldn't be led astray by the devil. Jesus took care of their spiritual needs first. He wants to do the same for us – to help us see our sins and the peril that we are in without Him. We don't want to be led astray by the devil or by our own sinful weaknesses. We need Christ to save us just as much as that crowd!

To get the point across to the disciples how much they needed Him, Jesus asked Philip, "*Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?*" Philip was originally from the area. He may have had some connections to consider how to get some quantities of food while Jesus teaching and doing miracles. But, in the end his conclusion was that it was impossible to gather enough food for the growing crowd of people. Philip answered, "*Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!*" It was obvious to him that they didn't have enough money buy it. Even if they had 8 months wages to buy food, it wouldn't satisfy them all. In his mind, Jesus was asking the impossible of them.

Second, Jesus has the answer despite our weaknesses and doubts. How many times haven't we been challenged by a difficulty or have had obstacles in our way and felt like giving up? But instead of letting obstacles dishearten us, we should trust in Jesus for the answer. Yet, like the disciples, we are prone to consider all the other options before calling on Jesus. Like Philip we think of all the angles for us to handle tasks on our own. Andrew was the same. He said, "*Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?*" (v.9) After searching all day, the only food that Andrew found was a small amount of bread and fish, a boy's lunch. That amount of food wouldn't even feed the 12 hungry disciples of Jesus, let alone the crowd of 1,000's. Why would Jesus put them in such a tight spot? John wrote, "*He asked this only to test [them], for [Jesus] already had in mind what He was going to do.*" (v.6)

Why does God put us in positions or give us responsibilities so we feel overwhelmed to do? Why does He make us weak at times or allow us to get sick? Why does He make us feel small when our challenge calls for us to be great? How many times haven't we sounded like Andrew questioning: "*How far will they go among so many?*" (v.6) How often do we look at ourselves and tell God what we don't have: God, I'm not that smart. I'm not outgoing. I don't have the talents You want or need or I don't have the time! He is testing us. It's not that He wants us to lose hope. The lesson He taught the disciples by the food shortage was that they needed to stop thinking about what they couldn't do and start trusting in what Jesus could do according to God's will. "*Seek first the Kingdom of God and all these things will be added to you!*" (Matt)

What do we learn from our verses? Andrew said, "*Here is a child*" with a few pieces of food. (v.6) The child, in a sense, became an instrument of God to bring blessings to many people. What if the boy had said, "I'm not giving up my lunch?" Jesus could have provided for the hungry crowd in another way. The boy would have missed an opportunity to be part of Jesus' answer. But, he gave up his food and the doubting disciples also became a part of His answer by distributing the multiplied food. God help us to be ready to serve Him despite our weaknesses so that we can be a part of His answer so others can trust in Him!

Third, Jesus has the answer in keeping us by His grace. What if Jesus had sent away everyone to get their own food? He could have filled their stomachs until they returned home. But, Jesus wanted to prove to the crowd and to the hungry disciples that He was the Savior. They all grew in understanding what it meant for Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God as they were fed. What if we were disciples and had seen Jesus do this miracle? Would it help us understand the abundant ways of Jesus? Yes! He not only fed 5,000 people with a few pieces of bread and fish, He had each disciple gather a basket full of leftovers!

Jesus didn't feed the crowd so generously because they were unusually good. He provided food because He is good! He loves people and wants them to be cared for in life and forever in heaven. But, our sinful nature rebels against His work. Like Israel in the wilderness who tired of eating Manna, our sinful nature moves us to take for granted God's many blessings, or, like many in the crowd, we're tempted to trust in the things He provides rather than in Him. Many of the people reacted to His miracle by saying, "Let's make Jesus our king, and have Him supply food for us always!" They missed the point!

Jesus did this miracle so that they would see Him as their gracious Savior. He had come not just to take away hunger, but to take away their sins. Helping them only with food would be like giving a condemned man a good meal before he was executed! Jesus was the one willing to be executed to pay for our sins and to offer to all people eternal life through faith in Him! The Bible states, "*[Jesus} is able to save completely those who come to God through him.*" (Hebrews 7:25)

We can approach Christ everyday as our gracious Savior and know that He has taken away our sins. We can pray to God directly, because Jesus our Savior has opened the door for us to speak to Him! Jesus' gracious forgiveness and love which we have received by faith in Him are much greater blessings for us than the miracle of feeding 5,000 with a few bread and fish!

We probably won't need a miracle to get fed today. God has provided in so many wonderful ways for us. Yet, we may be tested by tough circumstances or be tempted to look only to ourselves for our answer. When we feel overwhelmed, that is when we can grow in our faith by taking our needs to Jesus and seeing how He graciously answers. We pray: "*The eyes of all look to You, O Lord, And You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.*" Amen.