

John 6:1-15 Jesus Has a Perfect Plan! Pentecost 10 July 29-30, 2018

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Grace and peace are yours from God our Father and from our powerful providing Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. God's Word is our Gospel lesson from John 6:1-15

These are Your Words heavenly Father. Fill us and satisfy us with all we need! Your Word is truth! Amen.

Dear Friends, in Christ,

The feeding of the 5,000 people is a familiar story. It is similar to 2 Old Testament stories that describe how God provided food in a miraculous way. He provided Manna through Moses for up to 2 million people daily for 40 years in the wilderness. That's about 110 railroad box cars loaded with food each day! Later the prophet Elijah had 20 small pieces of flat bread and 100 hungry men who had to be fed. As God predicted, all 100 men ate until they were full and there were leftovers. With the feeding of over 5,000 people, they should have known that Jesus was more than a prophet like Moses or Elijah. This miraculous sign showed Him to be God's Son. As Lord of heaven and earth, He not only continues to provide for us:

Jesus has a perfect plan!

First, His plan fits our needs. Each of us is unique, yet we have common needs. We learned last week that Jesus went to the other side of the lake because His disciples needed rest and time with Him. But, according to God's plan, after a brief rest, Jesus saw a large crowd coming toward Him. (v.5). Then *Jesus "said to Philip, 'Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?' He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. (v.5-6).* Jesus knew exactly what the people and His disciples needed. He wanted them to see that money was not enough to provide nor were their talents or resources enough to help. They were learning that only Jesus could provide what they truly needed! I'm sure as the disciples were looking over the crowd of over 5,000 people, they must have been thinking, "Why did Jesus let this happen to us? We're not prepared for this! How God can bring blessing in what appears to be an impossible situation? The disciples had food for a few, but what would the other 4,990 people say?

Jesus was teaching them through this difficulty and He teaches us, too. Jesus has a plan for our needs! God's Word tells us that we're not just a number on a list to God. He knows us so well, He has numbered the hairs on our heads! (Luke 12:7) God's Word tells us Jesus' power so we realize He truly can help us! He allows suffering or trouble to help us know our need for Him to provide for us. We need help to not be overcome by our grudges and sinful pride. He will help us against all forces, even the last enemy, the power of death!

Second, Jesus will accomplish His plan despite our weaknesses. He asked Philip, "*Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?*" He answered, "*Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!*" (v.6-7). Jesus made it obvious that they didn't have enough money. Even 8 months wages couldn't buy enough food to satisfy their hunger. Whenever we are challenged by a difficulty or an obstacle, we immediately should trust that Jesus has a plan and an answer. But, like Philip we think of how we can use our resources so we can overcome our problems and challenges on our own. Andrew also failed Jesus' test. 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). The amount of food that Andrew found didn't seem significant for what they needed. If there had been a McDonalds or Culvers in the area and they made a quick trip to the drive-through, to make sure that everyone was full, they would have needed to order 10,000 burgers and 5,000 fries. That would take days to prepare! If you were catering a meal for 5,000 it's estimated that you would need 15,000 pounds of food or 7 ½ tons!

Since Jesus knew that the two disciples were weak and not ready to seek His help, why did He ask them? We could ask the same. Why does God put us in positions or give us tasks so we feel overwhelmed? Why does He make us weak at times or allow us to get sick when a challenge demands that we be at our best? How many times haven't we sounded like Andrew questioning: How far will our resources go for so great a

task? (v.6). How often do we look at ourselves and tell God: I'm not smart enough. I'm not outgoing. I don't have the talents or the time! But God has a plan! When Moses summed up what happened to the people of Israel in the wilderness he said, *"Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart...."* (Deuteronomy 8:2)

God doesn't want us to lose faith. He wants us to trust His plan to provide. He wants us to call on Him for in all situations. As we pray to Him, we will realize that He is in charge and that His plan will work out everything for our good. He will answer our prayers in the best way! Jesus promised, *"Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you!"* (Matthew 6:33)

Despite the disciple's sins of doubt, Jesus worked through them. They became His instruments to bless the people. Jesus had the disciples seat the crowd in groups to distribute the food. He said a prayer to bless the bread and fish and then He handed the food to the disciples to give to all the people until they were filled.

Third, Jesus plan is in keeping with His grace. What if Jesus had sent away everyone to get their own food? He could have filled their stomachs without the bread and fish. But, Jesus wanted to prove to the crowd and to the disciples by this miracle of feeding 5,000 that He was the Savior. We learn later in John 6 that the Jews of Jesus' time credited Moses with the doing the miracle along with God. In the same way, many wanted to praise Jesus, but not as God, only as a great prophet like Moses or Elijah. But, that was too small! This miracle showed that He was the Christ, the Son of God. What if we had seen Jesus do this miracle? Would it help us understand the abundant ways of Jesus? Yes! But, it takes more than seeing a miracle or even having 12 baskets full of leftovers! It takes the Word of God to reveal the full truth. That is what we need the most!

Jesus didn't feed the crowd so generously because they were so good or earned it. He provided for them because He is good! He loves people and wants them to be cared for now 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 make a wrong use of God's many blessings. Like many in the crowd, we're tempted to trust in the gifts rather than the Giver. Many of the people reacted to the miracle by saying, *"Let's make Jesus our king, and have Him serve us the way we want."* (v.15). They missed the point! Rather than tell Jesus what great things He had to do, they needed to acknowledge that He is God who deserves our praise, our listening, and obedience!

Jesus did this miracle so that people could see Him as their gracious Savior. He had come not just to take away hunger, but to give full forgiveness of their sins. Helping them only with food would be like giving a condemned man a good meal before he dies! But by God's plan, Jesus was the one to be executed to pay for our sins and to offer to all people eternal life by trusting 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 daily as our gracious Savior. We can pray to God as our heavenly Father because of Jesus' sacrifice. As we trust in Jesus' forgiveness, we see that eternal life is the greatest blessing far above a miracle of feeding over 5,000 people with a few pieces of bread and fish! We won't need a miracle to get fed like Israel in the wilderness. God has provided in so many ways just what we need already. We can be confident that Jesus will accomplish what is good despite our weaknesses. We can take all our concerns to Jesus and know that our gracious Savior will hear us! Amen.