

John 6:1-15

¹ After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias.

1 This is one of the few stories in John that is in the other Gospels, but John has a different emphasis. Today the lake is called Kinneret, Hebrew for harp, because of its harp like shape. It is 13 miles long and 8 miles wide at the widest point. In Jesus day there were many ports on the lake. Capernaum had such a port and Peter's home was just a few blocks away. The other side means the other side of the Jordan. They were only sailing a few miles toward Bethsaida.

² And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick.

2 Jesus had done many healings in Capernaum and was getting away by themselves (Mark 6:32). The people who had come to be healed or listen to His preaching could see the boat as it sailed and follow along the shore to where it was headed (Matthew 14:13,14). The healing signs were those predicted in the prophets that the Messiah would perform, so they were thinking He might be the long-awaited Messiah.

³ Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. ⁴ Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand.

3,4 It was springtime and the hills around this area would have been covered with yellow mustard flowers and red poppies. The days are nice, but the nights can be cold.

⁵ Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" ⁶ He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do.

5,6 Philip is from Bethsaida. Jesus is testing Philip and teaching him with a question. Jesus' question helps Philip see the impossibility before them. That is when God must step in. Does Philip believe Jesus is Jehovah Jireh, the God who provides?

⁷ Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little."

7 The natural solution is even insufficient. Philip did what we all usually do. He looked at the natural and was ready to give up. They didn't have the money even if they could find that much bread for sale.

⁸ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, ⁹ "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?"

8,9 But Andrew, the quiet disciple who introduces people to Jesus, says, "At least we have this little lunch a boy gave us." Was he thinking of sharing it with Jesus and the

disciples? The two small fish are little salted fish that are like a condiment to go with the barley loaves.

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

10 Another gospel tells us they were seated in groups. 5000 is the number of men! There may have been 15,000 or more if you count the women and children. This is the kind of crowd that would gather if someone really could heal all sicknesses. Word would spread and every desperate soul would run to wherever the person was.

¹¹ Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted.

11 Imagine the disciples asking the first group to be conservative as they just had twelve baskets. But when the basket came back, it was as full as when they started. Eventually they would be saying, "Take all you want!" In 2 Kings 4:42-44 Elisha the prophet fed 100 men with 20 barley loaves. That was considered a miracle as when we talk about loaves, we are talking about muffin size. How about five for 15,000! Everyone ate their fill of bread AND fish! Do you think the disciples then realize Jesus is Jehovah Jireh?

¹² And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost." ¹³ So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten.

12,13 Value what has been given and don't take it for granted even if there is an abundance. There is a need for it somewhere. They ended up with what they started with. You can bet many of the people stuffed their pouches with bread too. In those days you didn't let food go to waste. Even today any leftover bread in Israel gets hung outside the front door for anyone who is hungry.

¹⁴ When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"

14 Here is why it was a sign. Moses asked God for manna and fed the multitude. In that way Jesus was the prophet Moses predicted would be like him (Dt 18:15). "The Prophet" was an expression for the Messiah. Remember in 5:46,47 Jesus had just said Moses wrote of Him. Verse 14 is not in the other Gospels but John included it because of the link with the previous passage.

¹⁵ Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

15 Jesus would later tell Pilate that His kingdom was not of this world (Jn 18:36). It is in the hearts of men and women. They wanted free fish sandwiches for life. Jesus wanted their hearts to be set free and know His love and compassion for them.

Jesus signs always revealed the heart of God. God has compassion on the sick, the hungry, and those who are grieving. Jesus never did a gratuitous miracle. Every miracle taught a lesson or revealed God's heart towards our pain.

Jesus got away from the crowd to be alone with His Father (Matthew 14:22,23). Something we need to do often. But He will soon have to come down and rescue the disciples from a demonic attack. The obedient life is often filled with service. God does provide rest, and He knows we need it, but there are some marathon sprints in-between. The world is filled with need and God wants to meet much of that need through us.

While this passage could be a lesson on how Jesus can use the little that we have, John is trying to get us to see that Jesus is our Provider, our Messiah, and all that we need. The world is spiritually hungry, and we have the Bread of Life (see verse 35).

Questions:

Why did the crowds follow Jesus?

Why did Jesus ask Philip where to get enough food?

Do you tend to think like Philip?

What do you think Andrew was thinking?

How much did each person eat? Lesson?

Is Jesus Jehovah Jireh to you?

What was the sign?

Why wouldn't Jesus let them make Him king?

What do Jesus' miracles show us about God?

What later expression of Jesus connects with this account? Lesson?