

A Man Like Moses John 6:1-15 www.bible-sermons.org August 31, 2008

In past sermons, we have learned that the Apostle John intentionally included accounts of the ministry of Jesus that were not included in the other gospels. In our passage today, however, we have one of the few stories that was included in all four of the gospels. John includes it for several reasons. It was the perfect bridge between Jesus' declaration that the Old Testament was about Him (John 5:39), and the bread of heaven declaration (John 6:51). John is showing us that Jesus is the fullness of what Moses was in part. In other words, the greatness of Moses was just a shadow of the true substance, Jesus.

¹ *Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias)...* Today, this body of water is called Lake Kinneret. It is 13 miles long and 8 miles wide. The name comes from its harp like shape. The region was called Galilee, and thus the name Sea of Galilee. The main city became Tiberius, and so it was also known by that name later in the first century. In Jesus' day, there were numerous ports with breakwaters and piers with moorings for ships. Recently it was discovered that Capernaum had such a port. The home where Jesus stayed with Peter was a few blocks from those docks. Jesus and the disciples got in their boat and sailed just a few miles away, but on the other side of the upper Jordan River, near Bethsaida. (Luke 9:10)

² *and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick.* The other gospel writers tell us of the healings that took place in Capernaum. At one time the whole town came to the door of Peter's house so that they or a family member might be healed. (Mark 1:33) News had spread and the crowds were growing. It was about six months after the last story of the healing at Bethesda during the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem. There were probably people that had just arrived in hopes of being healed. Others just wanted to watch the wonder of healings take place, and still others wanted to hear what this miracle worker had to say. Perhaps this was the long awaited leader that would restore David's kingdom and rid them of the Romans.

How did they follow, if Jesus left by boat? You can stand on the shore of Capernaum and watch a boat as it travels to Bethsaida. It is not out of the range of vision. Someone watched the disciples and Jesus as they sailed, saw where they went ashore, and told the crowd. I can't stress to you enough that these are real events in real places, places you can visit today.

³ *Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples.* ⁴ *The Jewish Passover Feast was near.* It looks like Jesus just wanted to get away and have some quiet time to teach His disciples. It was the same scenario when He taught the Sermon on the Mount. The Passover being near meant that it was Spring. The hills around the lake are yellow with mustard flowers and dotted with red poppies at that time of year. You can see it for yourself if you go with us in March.

⁵ *When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?"* ⁶ *He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.* Matthew tells us that

Commented [notes1]: 39 You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, John 5:39 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." John 6:51 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: Luke 9:10 (NIV) 10 When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida,

Commented [notes4]: 33 The whole town gathered at the door, Mark 1:33 (NIV)

Jesus was moved with compassion and healed their sick. (Matthew 14:14) Jesus didn't show His divinity by jumping off the height of the Temple or soaring around like superman, or levitating objects, or even by afflicting His enemies. He showed the heart of God in all His miracles by meeting needs. The water to wine was to help an embarrassed groom. Healings and deliverance were a demonstration of his heart for the hurting. This miracle was a display of compassion on the hungry crowd. All His miracles displayed God's compassionate heart for fallen man.

Commented [notes5]: 14 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.
Matt 14:14 (NIV)

He had gone there to rest and teach the disciples, and though the approaching crowd would give them no rest, they created a teaching opportunity. We sometimes get an idea and then get frustrated when it doesn't go like we planned. We come together on Sunday morning to worship in this place we call a sanctuary. Often there are distractions that aren't a part of the plan. We can get frustrated, or we can use them as a teaching opportunity, a chance to display compassion, or even to see God saying something to us we had not planned.

One time I was teaching in India at an evening worship service and the rain began to pour. The sheet metal roof intensified the sound so much that we could not hear one another. We all just had to wait. Some of the students were clowning around, but I was wondering what God was up to. He brought the song *Showers of Blessing* to mind. When the rain eventually let up, we sang the song and the words were exactly what the Lord was speaking to them. Then the message changed from what I had planned to one on the Providence of God. Jesus saw the approaching crowd not as a distraction from His plan, but as God revealing what the teaching was to be about. (Proverbs 19:21)

Commented [notes6]: 21 Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails.
Prov 19:21 (NIV)

Jesus asked the pragmatic Philip where they could buy food for that many people. Remember, Philip was from Bethsaida (John 1:44), so if anyone would know where to buy bread in that area, it would be Philip. It was a test for Philip and the rest of the disciples. Jesus knew what the Father was leading Him to do, but to make the lesson clearer, Jesus asked if there was any way that they might be able to feed that many people. What if you went to every bread shop within 5 miles? What if you had unlimited finances? Could you gather that much food in the next few hours?

Commented [notes7]: 44 Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida.
John 1:44 (NIV)

Philip's answer will help to drive home the lesson Jesus is teaching. ⁷ Philip answered him, "Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" Even if we had 200 denarii, it would only buy one bite per person. In other words, it's just not humanly possible. Jesus asks, "Where are we going to get enough bread for all these people." Philip's response was basically that it wasn't possible. Maybe if they took up a collection and bought all the bread in the surrounding towns everyone could get a bite.

How many times do we face situations where we know the solution is way beyond our means? We don't have the cash. Even if we did, it wouldn't solve all the problems. Philip couldn't see how to go and purchase that much and get it back in time to meet the need. We see the situation as impossible, but we know God doesn't want us just to accept things as they are. What do we do? (Proverbs 16:9)

Commented [notes8]: 9 In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.
Prov 16:9 (NIV)

⁸ Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, ⁹ "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" Another local, Andrew, mentions the donation of a lunch, but adds his doubt that it wouldn't go very far. Perhaps the boy's mother sent it as a contribution to Jesus' need.

¹⁰ Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. 5000 men! That means if you counted women and children, there would have been 15,000 to 20,000 people or more! No wonder Philip and Andrew didn't have much hope to feed such a crowd. Even today it would be a monumental task to try to throw together lunch for that size of a crowd without a lot of advanced planning.

Today we will have our Labor Day barbeque. We guessed about how many people would come, and figured out how much meat to buy. Yesterday, we drove to the store and got the meat and buns. Then Mariko prepared it for cooking. Nancy went over the sign up list and made sure there was enough of everything. Connie and Terry volunteered to cook and others will help with set up. All that and more went into the preparation for a crowd of less than 100. Imagine the effort that would go into feeding our whole town! Jesus is about to teach a profound lesson.

¹¹ Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. Jesus thanked the Father and had the disciples distribute it. (Luke 9:16) Note that little phrase, "as much as they wanted". I imagine that Jesus broke the bread reaching down into those 12 baskets that they later used to collect the leftovers. At first, the disciples reached into the baskets and were probably asking the people to be conservative because there were a lot of people to feed. But than as they started to realize what was happening, that the baskets just never got any emptier, they might have said, "Are you sure you got enough. Go ahead, take a little more."

When the Old Testament prophet Elisha set 20 loaves of barley before 100 men it was considered a miracle that they all ate their fill and had leftovers. (2Kings 4:42-44) What do you call 5 small loaves and a few little fish for 15,000 or more?

¹² When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." ¹³ So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. When everyone ate all they wanted, Jesus had the disciples clean up the leftovers. They ended up with the amount with which Jesus started them. When God provides abundantly, it doesn't mean we can take the provision for granted and waste it. He doesn't give us too much. There is some need for it somewhere.

Not so long ago, we had a big surplus of cash. I had a sense that the Lord wanted us to give it instead of hoard it. I asked the elders to pray about presenting to the congregation a distribution of \$100,000 to various ministries that needed support. Someone heard about the idea and mentioned that if we give it away, there is no more as we have no other property to sell. I responded that everything comes from the Lord for a reason. The very next day, we received a check for \$100,000. We,

Commented [notes9]: Luke 9:16 (NIV)

16 Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to set before the people.

Commented [notes10]: 2 Kings 4:42-44 (NIV)

42 A man came from Baal Shalishah, bringing the man of God twenty loaves of barley bread baked from the first ripe grain, along with some heads of new grain. "Give it to the people to eat," Elisha said.

43 "How can I set this before a hundred men?" his servant asked. But Elisha answered, "Give it to the people to eat. For this is what the LORD says: 'They will eat and have some left over.'"

44 Then he set it before them, and they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the LORD.

too, ended up with the amount with which we started. What do you think the Lord was trying to tell us? (Philippians 4:19) What we have comes from the Lord. There is not too much or too little. It's just enough for what He has planned. We need to trust Him to lead us in where it needs to go. Pick up the leftovers and let nothing be wasted. If we don't know what it's for, we wait until He shows us. May God help us discern His purposes! The deeper spiritual lesson is that giving never depletes you. Jesus gave 100% of Himself to us but was never decreased. Give and it shall be given to you! There is that which spreads abroad and yet increases.

Commented [notes11]: 19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.
Phil 4:19 (NIV)

¹⁴ After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." Now we are getting to John's main point for including this story. This comment comes only in John. Remember our last passage ended with Jesus telling His opponents that Moses wrote about Him. (John 5:46-47) Now, here at the end the passage that followed that declaration, we are seeing one example of that. The feeding of the 5000 was another in John's list of miraculous signs. When they saw this sign... This sign was one of particular meaning to them. The last time God provided miraculous bread for so many was with Moses in the wilderness. (Exodus 16:4) Now, in another deserted place, Jesus is showing that He is the source of miraculous bread for the multitudes. The miraculous provision was happening again!

Commented [notes12]: 46 If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. 47 But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"
John 5:46-47 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: 4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions."
Ex 16:4 (NIV)

They said, "Surely this is the Prophet..." "The Prophet" is the one Moses predicted would come. ¹⁵ The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. Deuteronomy 18:15 (NIV) Moses said the prophet to come would be like him. Moses led the people as God provided bread from heaven, and now Jesus is providing them bread to eat. The people were seeing that particular passage being fulfilled in Jesus. So what did Moses tell them to do when The Prophet came? "Listen to him!" Moses said, "Listen to Him." God said, "Listen to Him!" Jesus said, "He who hears my words and believes on Him who sent me has passed from death to life." John 5:24 But that is not what they are going to do.

Commented [notes14]: 24 "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."
John 5:24 (NIV)

¹⁵ Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself. The people were about to announce a rebellion against Rome and proclaim Jesus as their new king. What a disaster that would have been! It certainly wasn't listening to Jesus. Jesus snuck away up the mountain to be alone and pray. (Matthew 14:22-23)

Commented [notes15]: 22 Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. 23 After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone,
Matt 14:22-23 (NIV)

Sometimes when we think we have stumbled onto a God thing, we can get carried away with our idea. Maybe the little bit we heard at first was correct. Jesus was the prophet that Moses predicted. But then, instead of listening, we take into our own hands and set about applying our vision to what began with God. (Isaiah 30:21) It no longer has God's blessing. In fact, God can't bless it because we are trying to do something contrary to His will.

Commented [notes16]: 21 Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."
Isaiah 30:21 (NIV)

John included this story that the other Gospel writers included because it illustrated the point that Moses was a picture of the Christ. The crowd saw that to some extent. The disciples did to a greater extent. John already said that the Law came through Moses, but grace and truth through Jesus Christ. (John 1:17) Just as Moses

Commented [notes17]: 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
John 1:17 (NIV)

ushered in a whole new era for Israel, so Jesus is ushering in a whole new era in their relationship with God. As Moses led the people out of captivity in Egypt, so Jesus was leading the children of God out from the captivity of the Law and the carnal nature. Moses gave them water in the wilderness from the rock. Jesus was the rock and the living water that quenches our spiritual thirst. (1Corinthians 10:4) God gave them manna to eat, just as Jesus fed the multitude in our passage today. As Moses interceded for the Children of Israel again and again, so Jesus ever lives to make intercession for us. (Hebrews 7:25) As Moses was willing to lay down His life for the people (Exodus 32:32), so Jesus did lay down His life for us. As Moses led them to the Promised Land, so Jesus leads us to the true and eternal Promised Land. (Hebrews 3:5-6)

The story of Moses is a prophetic picture of Jesus. In saying that the Prophet God would raise up would be like him, Moses was telling us to look at his life for hints of what the Messiah would do.

Later in this chapter, John will tell us that Jesus makes another analogy to the Moses story, telling them it is really ultimately about Him. He is the One that feeds our souls with Himself. (John 6:35) He is the true nourishment. He is the One that quenches our spiritual thirst with Himself. The world is hungry. Physical hunger is a problem in a few places of the world today, but spiritual hunger is everywhere. There is a famine for hearing the Word of the Lord. (Amos 8:11) The answer can only come from Jesus, because He is the only real food for the soul.

What the disciples learned that day was that the answer to impossible situations is not good thinking, or our best efforts, but Jesus Himself. (John 15:5) When they would later sit in prisons, chained to guards, knowing there was nothing they could do, they would remember that Jesus can take on any situation and be the answer to our need. (Acts 16:25)

Looking back, after Jesus' post resurrection Bible study, they would see that all along Jesus was trying to help them see that all the Scriptures are about Him. They would see He is the substance of which Moses was just a prophetic shadow. They would see the manna in the wilderness and the bread on that hillside as just a picture of Jesus laying down His body in our place, a picture of the communion element the saints around the world have celebrated for 2000 years. (John 6:33)

I know the typical sermon on this passage is that Jesus can take our little gifts and talents and multiply them if we'll just put it in His hands. That is fine for the other gospel accounts. That was what I preached when we went over this story in Matthew. (see the sermon *All I Need*) John was taking the story to a deeper level.

Jesus is the story! Scripture is all about Him. All our need, our spiritual hunger and thirst, is met in Him. He is the great teacher. Moses brought the Law, but Jesus brings us to the spirit of the Law so that we understand the heart of God. Moses delivered the children of Israel from Egypt, but Jesus is the Deliverer of the world from the bondage of sin. As there was more than enough manna and bread on the mountain, so Jesus gives Himself for the spiritual hunger of the world, and He is more than enough. He is all in all. (Revelation 22:13) That calls for our worship, our

Commented [notes18]: 4 and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.
1 Cor 10:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes19]: 25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.
Heb 7:25 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: 32 But now, please forgive their sin--but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written."
Ex 32:32 (NIV)

Commented [notes21]: 5 Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future.
6 But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.
Heb 3:5-6 (NIV)

Commented [notes22]: 35 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."
John 6:35 (NIV)

Commented [notes23]: 11 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD:
Amos 8:11 (KJV)

Commented [notes24]: 5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."
John 15:5 (NIV)

Commented [notes25]: 25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.
Acts 16:25 (NIV)

Commented [notes26]: 33 For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."
John 6:33 (NIV)

Commented [notes27]: 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.
Rev 22:13 (NIV)

praise, our adoration, and for the surrender of our lives to Him. Will you hear what John is saying to us and receive it?