

## 51. The Gospel of John—6:1-9

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### *“With God Nothing is Impossible” Pt. 1*

(11/25/18)

As we come to chapter 6 of John’s gospel, we see Jesus perform a miracle—the only miracle He did that is recorded in all four gospels.

Now, that alone should tell us this was an extremely *important* miracle—so important that the Holy Spirit wanted it recorded four times!

We would all agree that, whatever the Holy Spirit records in Scripture is important.

If He records it twice and especially three times—we would all agree it is *incredibly* important and we need to take note.

But the Holy Spirit chose to record the feeding of the five-thousand—four times!

That means He wants us to really study this incident and to never forget the lessons He is teaching us thru it.

I think primarily, the Holy Spirit wants us to know that—impossible problems are God’s specialty!

Someone once said, *“We are all faced with a series of great opportunities disguised as impossible problems.”*

It's interesting to me why the Holy Spirit chose to record this miracle in all four gospels—when He chose to record the raising of Lazarus from the dead only once (John 11).

In my mind that was a much more *spectacular* miracle than the feeding of the five-thousand—I mean, Lazarus had been dead for four days before Jesus raised him and, as Martha put it, “*by this time he “stinketh”*” (John 11:39-KJV)

I think maybe it has to do with the fact that—while giving physical life back to Lazarus was a spectacular miracle—it takes a back-seat to Jesus giving spiritual life to people who partake of the ‘Bread of Life’ (which I believe is the spiritual lesson being taught thru the feeding of the five-thousand miracle).

Now as we take a composite look at the four gospels, we see that, about the time John 6 opens up—Jesus is withdrawing more and more from public ministry to spend time alone by Himself and with His disciples.

Let me stop and say this about John's gospel—he organized it in such a way that much of Jesus' ministry, recorded in the synoptic gospels, is left out.

As we look at the four gospels, we can see that three of them (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) are similar.

Because of that, they are known as the *synoptic* gospels (from a Greek word meaning “*to see together*” or “*to share a common point of view*”).

The synoptic gospels focus primarily on Jesus' *Galilean* ministry and *public* teachings.

John's gospel focuses mainly on Jesus' *Judean* ministry and His *private* teachings to His disciples.

Almost one half of John's entire gospel deals with the last week of Jesus' life—and half of that focuses on the last twelve to eighteen hours of His life before the cross.

This gives us a detailed look into the final hours of Jesus' life on earth in a way the other gospels do not.

Now, since John's gospel *is* selective (John 20:30–31), he does not record events in the life of Jesus that are superfluous to his purpose in writing his gospel—presenting Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God and Savior of the world.

And I say all of that so that you'll understand that John's gospel is more *topical* than it is *chronological*—and as such he skips over large amounts of Jesus' life and ministry.

For example, between the healing of the paralytic (John 5:1–15) and the feeding of the five-thousand, you have many events taking place—some of which are mentioned in Luke 6:1–9:10 and Mark 3:1–6:30.

During this period our Lord preached “the Sermon on the Mount” (Matt. 5–7) and gave the “7 Kingdom Parables” (Matt. 13) along with many other teachings and events that John skips over.

And so, as I just said, about the time John 6 opens up we are now in the final year of Jesus' life before His crucifixion—and so we see Him withdrawing more and more from public ministry to spend time alone by Himself and with His disciples.

There were several reasons for these withdrawals: 1. the growing hostility of His enemies toward Him (He didn't want to provoke them to move forward with His murder before the time had come) and; 2. the need for physical rest in preparation for the cross.

But primarily, they were times spent with His disciples preparing them to take over the ministry after His departure.

However, as we take a composite look at the other gospels, we see that another reason Jesus wanted to get alone with His disciples was because they had just returned from the preaching mission He had earlier given them to do and they needed some time to rest—

**Luke 9:1-2, 10 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. <sup>2</sup> He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick...  
<sup>10</sup> And the apostles, when they had returned, told Him all that they had done. Then He took them and went aside privately into a deserted place belonging to the city called Bethsaida.

Bethsaida was a Jewish city located on the northern shores of the Sea of Galilee—it was a fishing town, so much so, that the very name ‘Bethsaida’ means “*House of Fishing*”.

**John 6:1 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> **After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is *the Sea of Tiberias*.**

The Sea of Galilee was also known as the Sea of Tiberias, because the city of Tiberias was located on its western bank.

This city was the capital of the Roman province of Galilee and was named after the Roman Emperor Tiberius.

So, Jesus decided to withdraw with His disciples to a remote area on the northeast corner of the Sea of Galilee not far from Bethsaida—crossing to it from the western side by boat.

The plan was to spend some time resting with His disciples—

**Mark 6:30-31 (NKJV)**

<sup>30</sup> Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. <sup>31</sup> And He said to them, "Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.

At the northern end of the Sea of Galilee from the area of Capernaum—it’s just about as fast to go around the upper end of the sea by foot as it is to go across by boat.

And if the wind is blowing against the boat you're rowing—it's faster to jog around the northern end of the lake which is only about two or three miles.

Now this seems to be exactly what happened because Mark tells us that—

**Mark 6:32-33 (NKJV)**

<sup>32</sup> So they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves. <sup>33</sup> But the multitudes saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them and came together to Him.

And so, the people began to jog around the upper part of the Sea of Galilee and as they were jogging through the villages the people were asking, *“What’s happening, where are you going?”*

The crowds responded, *“Jesus is going to land over here.”*

And so, as the people jogged around the northern part of the Sea of Galilee, more and more people joined them (like a snowball rolling downhill), so that by the time Jesus and His disciples reached the shore—there were five-thousand men beside women and children waiting for Him (upwards of twenty thousand people).

Not the best way to start a vacation!

Often the crowds followed Jesus and kept Him from being alone with His disciples—but He never ignored or rebuked them.

Instead, He would unselfishly minister to their needs in spite of His own need for rest and solitude.

Now, it is true that many of these people were nothing more than thrill seekers (John 2:23-25)—however, many others were simply *desperate* to be healed, *desperate* to be made whole—and that actually brings us to our first main point:

## I. The Desperation of the Multitudes—v.1-2

**John 6:1-2 (NKJV)**

**<sup>1</sup> After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is *the Sea of Tiberias*. <sup>2</sup> Then a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased.**

We live at a time when medical science has far surpassed anything they knew in Jesus' day.

Many diseases and ailments that are easily treated today—were terminal back then.

We visited historic Williamsburg some years ago and as we visited the barber shop (barbers also performed surgery back then—hence the white and red striped barbers pole out front).

But as we visited the barber shop, the guide told us that what we consider as relatively simple medical problems today, like treating an appendicitis, back in colonial days was usually fatal.

And that was seventeen-hundred years after the time of Jesus—medical science back then was little more home remedies and superstition.

And because of it, since the healing of serious diseases was almost non-existent—people were desperate for someone who could help them.

You see this desperation come through in various passages—like the woman who had been hemorrhaging for twelve years and had spent all her money on doctors but got worse. (Explain)

There is something about being desperate before God that causes Him to hear our prayers, have compassion on us and act on our behalf.

And I believe the reason why is because at that point we've exhausted all of our resources and strength—in other words, we have come to the end of ourselves and have abandoned all self-effort, self-confidence and self-reliance in the situation to embrace, by faith, the power and sufficiency of Almighty God (2Cor.12:10).

**Psalm 53:2 (AMP)**

<sup>2</sup> God looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any who understood, who sought (inquired after and desperately required) God.

**Jeremiah 29:13 (NKJV)**

<sup>13</sup> And you will seek Me and find *Me*, when you search for Me with all your heart [implying a sense of urgency and desperation]

Now, not even desperate faith and prayer will *guarantee* that God will work a healing or a miracle on your behalf—but stay desperate, believing and praying which is the best place to be if you're going to see God work.

So once again, it seems that the Lord is especially compassionate to desperate, hurting people—which brings us to our next main point:

## **II. The Compassion of the Savior—v.3-5a**

**John 6:3-5 (NKJV)**

<sup>3</sup> And Jesus went up on the mountain [one of the bluffs overlooking the Sea of Galilee], and there He sat with His disciples. <sup>4</sup> Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. <sup>5</sup> Then Jesus lifted up *His* eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him...

At this point the other gospels add—

**Matthew 14:14 (NKJV)**

<sup>14</sup> And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick.

**Mark 6:34 (NKJV)**

<sup>34</sup> And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd...

Now when you're trying to get some "r" and "r" the last thing you want when you get to where you're going is to have fifteen to twenty thousand people waiting for you to minister to them.

Jesus and His disciples desperately needed some rest—yet the needs of the multitudes touched His heart.

The word translated “**moved with compassion**” literally means “*to have one's inner being stirred*”—it is a stronger Greek word than *sympathy*.

The word is used twelve times in the Gospels—and eight of those references are to Jesus being moved with compassion towards hurting and desperate people.

It is a part of God's nature to show compassion to hurting people—

**Psalms 86:15 (NKJV)**

<sup>15</sup> But You, O Lord, *are* a God full of compassion, and gracious, Longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth.

**Lamentations 3:21-23 (NKJV)**

<sup>21</sup> This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. <sup>22</sup> *Through* the LORD'S mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. <sup>23</sup> *They are* new every morning; Great *is* Your faithfulness.

**Isaiah 49:15-16 (NKJV)**

<sup>15</sup> "Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you. <sup>16</sup> See, I have inscribed you on the palms of *My hands*...[literally with the nail prints from the cross]

Someone has said that the word ‘*compassion*’ comes from a root that means, ‘*to get into the skin of another*’—that’s exactly what the incarnation was all about.

God Almighty didn’t just *feel* sorry for us when the human race fell He had compassion on us—in other words, He did something, He climbed into our skin, becoming a man to die for the sins of man. (“*I sat where they sat...*” Ezk.3:15—Comment)



## **I. The Desperation of the Multitudes—v.1-2**

## **II. The Compassion of the Savior—v.3-5a**

## **III. The Preparation of the Disciples—v.5-14**

### **A. They needed to learn a lesson in faith—v.5-6**

#### **John 6:5-6 (NKJV)**

<sup>5</sup> Then Jesus lifted up *His* eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" <sup>6</sup> But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.

#### **Matthew 14:15 (NKJV)**

<sup>15</sup> When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food."

Here they were standing in the presence of the ‘Bread of Life’—the One Who had come down from heaven to give them life.

And by this point in His ministry, Jesus had already done many miracles, including healing incurable diseases, casting out demons and even raising the dead.

So, you’d think that by this point (one year from the cross) the disciples would have been walking in a little more faith than they were demonstrating here.

You’d think that by this time they would have looked over at Jesus and said something like, “*It’s getting late and the people need to eat—what are You going to do Lord?*”

Instead their first impulse was to send these people away.

Now, I realize that, at this time, these disciples of Jesus weren't Spirit-filled.

And non-Spirit-filled people who follow Jesus and go to non-Spirit-filled churches—their first impulse when people come to them for help with their needs, whether those needs are spiritual or physical, is to send them away to the world for help.

J. Vernon McGee—

*“Right now [church leaders] ...are saying that we need to send the multitudes away, that there are natural ways of caring for their needs. We send them to the psychiatrist for emotional help and to the government for physical relief...the thing which is lacking is the power of the Lord Jesus. If we only had that power, we wouldn't need to send the multitudes away. We fail to realize that the solutions today are not in government nor in human imaginations but in God”.*

Many churches today are deserted places where the presence of God has long since moved out and the power of the Holy Spirit has long since been gone—and all that's left is worldly wisdom and human ingenuity.

The disciples needed some lessons in faith if they were going to continue the work that Jesus had begun when He returned back to His Father.

**Matthew 14:15-16 (NKJV)**

<sup>15</sup> When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food." <sup>16</sup> But Jesus said to them, "**They do not need to go away...**"

**John 6:5-7 (NKJV)**

<sup>5</sup> ...He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" <sup>6</sup> But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do. <sup>7</sup> **Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little."**

A denarius was equivalent to a day's wage for a soldier and the average working man—and so two hundred denarii was about 7 months' pay for the average man.

Why did Philip pick that amount to mention—two hundred denarii?

I think because—that is what they had in the group treasury at that time.

It could be that Judas, as the group treasurer, had given a report that morning and that was the total money they had in the ministry treasury.

Philip looked at the crowd, then thought of what they had in the money bag and said that “*two hundred denarii wouldn’t be sufficient to buy each a little bit to eat.*”

Remember, the number of people was five-thousand *men* plus *women and children* (15 to 20 thousand people)—so we can understand Philip’s assessment that two-hundred denarii wouldn’t even begin to feed that many people.

But then the Lord caught the disciples completely off guard by saying, “**They do not need to go away—you give them something to eat.**” (Matt.14:16)

The Greek is emphatic—“*You give them something to eat—I say you do it.!*”

**John 6:8 (NKJV)**

<sup>8</sup> **One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, <sup>9</sup> "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?"**

What indeed!? With men it would be impossible—but with God all things are possible.

My pastor used to like to point out that the difficulty of anything must always be measured by the agent doing the work. (Explain)

**Jeremiah 32:27 (NKJV)**

<sup>27</sup> "Behold, I *am* the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?

**Mark 9:23 (NKJV)**

<sup>23</sup> Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things *are* possible to him who believes."

We have entered into a season of the year that should remind us of what the angel Gabriel told a Jewish teenager named Mary, when he announced that she had been chosen by God to be the mother of the Messiah.

Mary responded by saying, "*How can this be, since I am a virgin and have never known a man in that way?*"

To which Gabriel said, "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God...For with God nothing will be impossible.*" (Luke 1:35, 37)

I don't know what you're all going thru or how impossible it is by humans standards but remember this Christmas season that—**"with God nothing is impossible"**.