

John 6:1-14

- 1 After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias.
- 2 A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick.
- 3 Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples.
- 4 Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near.
- 5 When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?”
- 6 He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do.
- 7 Philip answered him, “Six months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.”
- 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 among so many people?”
- 10 Jesus said, “Make the people sit down.” Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all.
- 11 Then Jesus 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.
- 12 When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, “Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.”
- 13 So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets.
- 14 When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, “This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.”

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- In Tabgha, near Capernaum in Galilee, there is a famous fifth-century mosaic commemorating the feeding of the 5,000.
- As always, the crowds followed!
- Why the crowds? First, they saw the signs. But also, the followers of John, after his death, would now flock to Jesus; the twelve had just returned from ministering in towns around Galilee; and the Passover was at hand, meaning pilgrims would be “thronging!”
- Literally, they “*continually saw*” the signs Jesus was “*doing habitually*.”
- With Passover coming, the disciples and the crowds would naturally be particularly expectant and hopeful.

- 5 *When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?”*
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- 7 *Philip answered him, “Six months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.”*

- Jesus always seemed to have compassion for the crowds—not just those who had proved themselves to him. Even though he knew that many were probably misguided or self-serving, Jesus was concerned with their physical and spiritual well-being.

- What does it mean that Jesus was testing Philip? Was Jesus looking for a spark of compassion in Philip? Did he fail the test? Had he failed to learn the lessons of divine sufficiency?
- 200 denarii could be as much as an *annual* wage for a worker!

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 among so many people?"*

- Once again, Andrew is bringing someone to Jesus. Do you remember whom else Andrew brought?
(*Peter, the boy, and some Greeks*)
- Isn't this itself a beautiful exercise of ministry?!
- "A child shall lead them!"
- All the Greek words used to describe the boy and the food are diminutives, as if to stress the smallness of their resources.
- Five loaves may represent the torah, while the two fish may be symbols of completion (5+2=7, the number of wholeness and perfection.)
- Was this miracle merely the willingness of people to share once the pattern had been established?
- The boy must have been from a poor family, because barley loaves were the sustenance of those on the very bottom—scarcely worth one-third of a loaf of wheat bread. In the Talmud, there is a passage where one man said, "*There is a fine crop of barley*" and another man answered, "*Tell it to the horses and donkeys.*"

10 *Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all.*

- The most difficult challenge when dealing with a crowd is to get them to settle down!
- The Greek says "the men" instead of "the people."
- There are many debates about crowd sizes. In the time of Jesus, typically only men were counted, but if this is true, the crowd would have dwarfed the population of the area, which would certainly be possible, but it is difficult to imagine.

11 *Then Jesus 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.*

- Note that Jesus was grateful for daily bread. There is something humbling in considering that the very Son of Man is giving thanks for humble barley loaves and fish that were about the size of sardines.
- Jesus is here filling the role of the head of the household.
- The people were not only fed, but were able to eat as much as they wanted. Jesus promises not only subsistence, but abundance.

13 *So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets.*

14 *When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world."*

- There wasn't much to work with, but the Lord doesn't need much!
- The twelve baskets are an obvious reference to the restoration of Israel and the completion of the covenant.
- Waste not, want not!