

**John 6: 1-14; “Five Loaves and Two Fishes”, Sermon # 37 in the series –
“That All May Honor the Son”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall,
on March 26th, 2017, in the Morning Worship Service.**

The Apostle John, when he was writing this gospel, did not go back and relate very many of the incidents which had already been written down by the writers of the other gospels. But he did write down this event which is also found in the other three gospels. He relates this incident again, because there were truths that he wanted to bring out that he knew would give further light and instruction on what it means to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ. In this chapter he relates to us the fact that not all people in that day were following Jesus for the right reasons. There were many people who were following Him because they had seen His miracles and they continued following Him because they wanted to see more miracles of physical healing. The multitudes were about to see Jesus do one of His greatest miracles, the feeding of the five thousand. And yet, their seeing this great miracle would not lead many of them to saving faith in Him. At the time in which this miracle was performed, they would say that they had believed in Him, and they would say that they were His disciples, but by the end of this chapter we shall see that many would leave off following Him, and not follow Him anymore.

And so, I am convinced that you will only really follow Jesus, if you have the right kind of faith. Not all faith is saving faith. Saving faith is not simply having faith that God can do miracles, although it is important for you to believe that. Saving faith is not simply believing in the miracles which Jesus can do for you to provide for your physical needs. Saving faith is your believing in the miracles which Jesus will do in your heart, by His Spirit’s working, to provide for your on-going eternal and spiritual needs by His grace, so that you will die to sin and live to righteousness. Yes, you are saved when you first believe in Jesus, but you need to realize that that is just the start of your learning from Him. If you have saving faith you will recognize what it is that Jesus is looking for from you, as a believer in Him. According to this text, Jesus is looking for 3 things from each person who says that they are believing in Him for eternal life. 1st of all – Jesus is looking for you to have a willingness to be taught by Him. 2nd – Jesus is looking for you to give to Him all that you have so that He might multiply it. And 3rd – Jesus is looking for you gather up all the fragments of what He has done for you, so that nothing is lost. Let us understand that being a disciple of Christ is your becoming a learner of His way of thinking, and His way of doing things. And in the process, you will change to leave your own selfish, sinful, and worldly ways of doing things, behind.

1st of all – Jesus is looking for you to have a willingness to be taught by Him.

(verses 5-7)

Verse 5 says – “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?’ “But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.” “Philip answered Him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little.” You should understand that when you come to Jesus for salvation from sin that He will grant it to you when you come to Him in faith, believing in all that He has done for you. You believe in His righteous life of obedience to the Father; that He always did what was right in accordance with God’s word and His law, And so, since this was the case, He has something to impute to you; that is, His righteousness. But He also has something which He would impart to you. He would teach you the righteous way of thinking and living; something which will not come naturally to you. This new way of righteous thinking must come supernaturally to you, by means of His teaching you where you need to change in the way that you think, and where you need to grow, spiritually speaking. Some Christians fail to see this right away, and as a result, it takes them years to come

to the place where the Lord would like to bring them; to the place where they are truly willing to be taught by Him in the way that Jesus was teaching Philip here.

I am not saying that a person can become a Christian without becoming willing to be taught from the moment that they first believe, for you cannot be a true Christian without being regenerated; without being born again, without being circumcised in your heart so that you see your native depravity; how unwilling you have been to be taught by God as a sinful person, as a natural man or woman, without His Spirit working your heart and mind. We will study this a little later on in this chapter, in verse 45 of John 6 – “It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’” “Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.” This is what must happen for you to become a Christian; you must be taught by God. You must learn from the Father that you are a sinner by nature and practice, and that He has provided a way of salvation from sin; a New and Living Way, through the blood and righteousness of His Son whom He gave to be the substitute and sacrifice for sinners and for sins. You are taught by God very really and very personally and very practically when the Father draws you to Christ. You were taught, when you first came to see yourself as a needy sinner, that you were a person who could not change on your own to learn to do those things that God has commanded in His word, unless you were first washed in Christ’s blood; unless you were justified by His righteousness, and unless you were set apart by the sanctification of the Spirit and by belief in the truth of the gospel. The direction of your will was changed from doing your own will, to begin to learn to do God’s will. That must have taken place for you to have become a saved person; in order for you to have become a true Christian.

But in this incident that we are studying, the disciples of our Lord already are believers. And yet we see here that believers still need to be taught. They have much more to learn than just the basics of the gospel, and the truth about what saving grace is. All disciples, in order to grow up to maturity in Christ must become willing to be taught the specifics of what they need to learn in order that they might change in their thinking, so that they will be able to work with Christ and bear fruit unto Christ. I am saying that this passage is teaching us that not all disciples learn at the same rate. I am saying that every one of us has ways of thinking and going about to do things that need to change so that we will be thinking in the way that Christ wants us to think. I wonder if you believe this? Because if you do not believe it, you will be a slow learner as a Christian. That does not mean that Christ cannot teach you, but it means that He will have to bring it to your attention, as He did with Philip in this passage, and He will test you in order to see if you understand.

Jesus asks Philip this amazing question in verse 5: “Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” “But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.” Jesus specifically asked Philip this question, it says here, in order to test him. What subject was Jesus testing Philip over? It was over Philip’s tendency to carefully calculate in a human way so that he would know what should be done, and how a goal was to be accomplished. In this case Philip quickly calculated in his mind that there were about 5,000 men there, and also a great number of women and children also, and so he says: “Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little.” I am told that a denarius was equivalent to one day’s wages in that day. If a day’s wages now would be \$200 a day, Philip would be speaking of \$40,000. Now, I could be wrong, but I think that the 200 denarii of that day would be the equivalent of about \$100 today which would bring the total to about \$20,000 in our money to feed all of these people. For, if you had even 5,000 men to feed, alone, and each of them cost 2 dollars in our money to feed them in bread and fish, it would take \$10,000 to feed them all. If there were 7,000 people in all, including the women and the children, it would probably would have cost about \$14,000 to feed them. There may have been as many as 10,000 people there that day, including the women and children. Philip knew that their little band did

not have that kind of money to feed these multitudes, and where would they go to find the bread?

Jesus Himself knew what He was going to do, but He asked this question of Philip in order to test him. I think that he was testing Philip in regard to his faith in Him to provide for them in this seemingly impossible situation. This leads me to point out to you that it is apparent that the Lord Jesus deliberately led His disciples and the multitude into this situation so that He could show them His power and ability to provide. It could not be otherwise, for it says – “He Himself knew what He would do.” Jesus always knows what He will do in relation to the various impossible situations that you and I might find ourselves in. He is asking us this same question today. Where shall we buy bread that these may eat?” There are many situations which we face, which when we calculate what is needed, carefully, we may see that we do not have the resources to be able to address our own needs, the needs of our family, the needs of our church, the needs of the missionaries that we would like to support, or needy people all around us. And yet, the Lord is not asking us to think strictly in terms of our resources alone. He is going to be testing us to see whether we will think of Him, when we think of our needs; what He can do to provide for us, and to learn to think in terms of what He is able to do, and what He is able to bring to that situation of need that we are looking at. The real question is – Are we willing to be taught the truth that He is able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we can ask or think?

Perhaps some of you will recall Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission. There were many times in his work when it seemed impossible that the mission could continue, succeed, and flourish. But He would rest in Jesus, cast his cares upon Him, and trust in His word. Listen to this, at one of the lowest times in the work of the mission in 1874. He says: “Never has our work entailed such real trial or so much exercise of faith.” “The sickness of our beloved friend, Miss Blatchley, and her strong desire to see me; the needs of our dear (orphan) children; the state of funds; the changes required in the work to admit of some going home, others coming out, and of further expansion, and many other things not easily expressed in writing, would be crushing burdens if we were to bear them.” “But the Lord bears us and them too, and makes our hearts so very glad in Himself – not Himself plus a bank balance – that I have never known greater freedom from care and anxiety.”

“My need now is great and urgent, but God is greater and more near.” “And because He is and is what He is, all must be, all is, all will be well.” “Oh, my dear brother, the joy of knowing the living God, of seeing the living God, of resting on the living God in our very special and peculiar circumstances!” “I am but His agent.” “He will look after His own honor, provide for His own servants, and supply all our need according to His own riches, you helping by your prayers and work of faith and labor of love.” “A note to Mrs. Taylor, of about the same time (April, 1874), breathed a like confidence: “The balance in hand yesterday was eighty-seven cents.” “The Lord reigns; herein is our joy and rest!” “And to Mr. Baller he added, when the balance was still lower, “We have this – and all the promises of God.” “Twenty-five cents,” recalled the latter, “plus all the promises of God!” “Why, one felt as rich as Croesus, and sang: ‘I would not change my blest estate for all the earth holds good or great; And while my faith can keep its hold, I envy not the sinner’s gold.’” I think that you can see why I say that the Lord is looking for a willingness to be taught, from you.

There are many things which we need to learn about the real presence and power of Christ with us. We need to believe that He is for us; that He is leading and guiding us into all the truth, and into fruitful service to Himself. We further need to believe the truth that because He is for us, because He suffered and died for us, He has much to give to us all along the road of our Christian life. Christ’s Church is a multitude in the wilderness of this world. This is how she is, at times. He will have to provide for us each and every day, our daily bread. Sometimes it will seem as though it is impossible that the Church can continue on to fulfill all that Christ has

called us to do. But we need to see that because of His finished work, His on-going work of intercession and provision continues on for us. He is for us and He is with us, and He will be continuing with us day by day. He will be helping us to do His good work in His good way, because He is our Friend and our Brother. And He will have ministry work to do for Him, which will require resources beyond those which we will naturally accumulate through hard work or by saving money.

2nd – Jesus is looking for you to give to Him all that you have so that He might multiply it. (verses 8-11)

“One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to Him, ‘There is a lad there who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?’ ‘Then Jesus said, ‘Let the people sit down.’ ‘Now there was much grass in the place.’ ‘So the men sat down in number about five thousand.’ ‘And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted.’ Truly we need to see this truth in regard to our ministry to people who need the bread of life. Andrew has an attitude of great doubt in regard to this small number of loaves and fishes which were at hand. ‘What are they among so many?’ Well, they are not much in relation to the great need at hand. But what is that to the Lord of glory who was able to take the five loaves and the two small fish, and multiply them as He distributed them to the apostles and disciples. They had seen the Lord Jesus do great miracles of healing already, but they had not seen Him do this miracle before. And so they were amazed, surprised, and delighted. You and I may have seen the Lord Jesus do many good things for us before, but why is it that once we have been following Jesus for a time, we cease to believe that He can show us anything new, or do something that is new for us in the context of where we are now, in this church that we are a part of, now? These new things are something which only the Lord Jesus can bring; they are something which only He can do, but we should believe that they will come because He is faithful to provide for His people.

Listen to Isaiah 43: 18 in the New American Standard translation – “Do not call to mind (or remember) the former things, or ponder things of the past.” “Behold, I will do something new, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it?” “I will even make a roadway in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.” “The beasts of the field will glorify Me, the jackals and the ostriches, because I have given waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My chosen people.” “The people whom I formed for Myself will declare My praise.” Now, the former things which God is saying that Israel is not to remember or consider, the things of old, are mentioned in verses 16 and 17, where it says this: “Thus says the Lord, who makes a way in the sea and a path through the mighty waters, who brings forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power (they shall lie down together, they shall not rise; they are extinguished, they are quenched like a wick): Do not remember that, He is saying.

This was God’s delivering Israel at the Red Sea. Surely this was an event well worth remembering, but it was something that people had focused on so much, only remembering the past things that God had done for their people, that they could not believe that God could do anything for them, right at that time, right where they were. God was about to do something new, but the question was, would they be aware of it? It was going to spring forth, and they might not be aware of it, if they were spiritually dull. They were told by God not to remember the great things done in the past because it might prevent them from considering the present and the future. The new thing which God would do was not simply His delivering the Jews from their enemy the Chaldeans, or even His bringing the Chaldeans into captivity. Both of these things were promised. But the new thing which they should look forward to was the great salvation which God would accomplish through our Lord Jesus Christ. He would be the One who would accomplish redemption and bring those believing in the promise, the water of life

and all the blessings of salvation which would not only save them from sin, but which would satisfy their thirsty souls.

In this event we are studying this morning, Jesus was showing His disciples a very important principle of truth in pictorial form. There was no bread and no fish among them except that which a young lad had brought for his own lunch. 5 loaves and two small fish. And he was willing to give it up for the common cause, but what a small amount of food for such a great number of people! This little lad's contribution, however, will be remembered forever. He gave what he had, and the Lord multiplied it to feed all of these thousands of people. Now, it should be remembered that since Jesus Christ was God, as well as man, that He could have produced bread out of nothing if He had chosen to do so. But He chose to use means. He chose to use this little lad's contribution of food. It shows us that it does not matter how young or old we are; our willingness to give of what we do have to the service of Christ, no matter how small an amount, is something that the Lord can bless and multiply the effects of it, to the benefit of thousands of people around us.

The Lord knew what He wanted to do. He specifically brought all of those people into the wilderness to hear Him preach and to heal their sick, but this miracle that Jesus did, took place beginning with the generosity of this little boy. It was the providence of God that so ordered things that day that there was no one who could help out with food except this lad. The Lord so ordered things that day that the glory for all that was done would go to God. Christ multiplied this little quantity of what was freely given, many thousands of times over. Even so, He can multiply what little you have, to the benefit of many thousands of people as well, if it is His purpose. You will say to me: I have such a little portion of the understanding of the word of God; what can I do? You can bring it to Jesus and ask that He might let you help others with the little store of knowledge that you presently have. He can take it and multiply the effects of all that you say, and all that you do for Him.

You say: I have such a small amount of money to be able to give to the church or to the work of Christ; what good will it do if I give it? I might as well just hide it away. No, No, this is not what the Lord would have you to do. Listen to 2nd Corinthians chapter 9, verse 6 – “But this I say: He who sows sparingly will reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” “So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.” “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.” Now may He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.” You see, it is God who gives seed and bread for food, and He will well able to continue to supply you and to multiply what you have given so that many people are benefitted.

What precious promises I have just read to you; God is able to make all grace abound toward you, so that you will all sufficiency in all things, and have an abundance for every good work. Does this come by hiding and hoarding, or in connection with your sowing bountifully and giving freely? It does not mean that you necessarily have a lot to give; it just means that you are a cheerful giver of what you do decide to give. You want to do what you can with what you have, even if it is only a little that you have. Remember the widow who Jesus saw give her mite? He was sitting opposite the treasury and He was watching a number of wealthy men put in great sums, and then He saw this poor widow who came and put in two mites. And He called His disciples to Himself and said to them: ‘Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood. This is what the Lord Jesus is looking for from you – cheerful giving, of yourself, your time, your talents, your resources.

I like what C.H. Spurgeon says of our text here in John 6 – “But, what is better still, these loaves and fishes were blessed by Christ as He lifted up his eyes, and gave thanks to the Father for them.” “Think of it.” “For five little cakes and two sprats (fishes) Christ gave thanks to the Father; apparently a meagre cause for praise, but Jesus knew what He could make of them, and therefore gave thanks for what they would presently accomplish. “God loves us,” says Augustine, “for what we are becoming.” “Christ gave thanks for these trifles because He saw whereunto they would grow.” “Do you not think, that having thanked the Father, He also thanked the boy?” “And in after years these words of gratitude would be ample recompense for such a tiny deed.” “Like the woman who cast in the two mites to the treasury, he gave his all, and doubtless was commended for the gift. Though high in glory to-day, Christ is still grateful when such offerings are made to Him; still He thanks His Father when, with timid trembling hands, we offer to Him our best, our all, however small; still is His heart gladdened when we bring him our scanty store that it may be touched by His dear hand, and blessed by His gracious lips.” “He loves us, not for what we are, but for what He will yet make us; He blesses our offerings, not for their worth, but because His power will yet make them worthy of His praise.” (Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, Vol. 37, P. 415)

And then 3rd – Jesus is looking for you gather up all the fragments of what He has done for you, so that nothing is lost. (verses 12-14)

“So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, ‘Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost.’ “Therefore they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten.” “Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, ‘This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.’ When the Lord Jesus does take what little you have and multiplies it, will you not remember to gather up all the reality of what He has done for you, all that which remains of this abundance, so that you might not lose anything, but really do something for the advance of Christ’s kingdom? You know, the whole world is physically fed today by Jesus Christ. And you should know and understand that the Lord uses means in His feeding of the whole world. For instance, a good portion of what is grown here in the United States serves as a supply for many other needy people over the whole wide world. Similarly, you and I can help in feeding needy people through organizations like World Vision or Samaritan’s Purse. We can find ways to help if we will look, to help feed starving people.

Let’s apply this also to the distribution of spiritual truth to needy sinners and saints all over the world. Waste nothing of what has been given to you in truth. Store it up. Lay it up not only for yourself, but for future use in giving it to others who are spiritually needy. You and I, if we will only take the leftovers of what we are given in the preaching of the word of God and give them to others, many people can be fed the bread of life. This is why it may be helpful for you to take notes of the sermons that you hear. It is here where you are spiritually being fed. You may have enough left over in the notes that you take, both to remind yourself and to help spiritually feed others. If you do not take notes, remember that I post my written sermons to sermon audio each week along with the audio, so that you might be able to go back and to see exactly what was said at a particular point, or what was being taught on a particular text or subject. This can help exceedingly to promote the advance of Christ’s kingdom and the truth of the Bible, if you will avail yourself of it. Please do avail yourself of this in order that you might help feed needy sinners and saints all around you. Because each of us should understand from this sermon that Christ is able to take the little that we may have and to increase the harvest of our righteousness, to the glory of His name. Let us become like the apostles and disciples of our Lord who gathered up the fragments, after they and the multitude were full that day, so that they might still be able to help others in the future.

