

Series: John

Title: Christ Knows What He is Doing

Text: John 6: 1-14

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John 6: 1: After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is *the sea* of Tiberias. 2: And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. 3: And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. 4: And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. 5: When Jesus then lifted up *his* eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? 6: And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. 7: Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. 8: One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, 9: There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? 10: And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. 11: And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. 12: When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. 13: Therefore they gathered *them* together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. 14: Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.

We think of this multitude as 5000 people. But that was only the men. One of the other gospel says there were also women and children. If they only had one wife and two children that is 20,000 people—probably at least 30,000. Madison Square Garden seats 18,200. This was over 20,000 people who were hungry, irritable and looking to the Lord's disciples to feed them. It was a dangerous situation. But the Lord Jesus who is the Son of God, one with the Father, drew them there.

John 6: 44: No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.

That is true not only spiritually, but even physically. The Lord healed diseases knowing this multitude would follow him to this place. He taught the multitude to keep them there until it was late in the afternoon, almost dark, until they were all really hungry on purpose. This was all worked together by the Lord on purpose—get this—only for his true disciples.

John 6: 5: When Jesus then lifted up *his* eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? 6: And this he said to prove [test] him [and all his true disciples]: for he himself knew what he would do.

THE TEST

Christ did this to prove them, test them, to teach them the vital truth he teaches all who are his own—*He knew what he would do*. This crowd was there because the Lord drew them there. This was on purpose. It was for the good of his people as every trial and everything else God is working together for his people.

Romans 8: 28: And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. 29: For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30: Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Feeding this multitude was an impossibility for the Lord's true disciples—he knew that. The Lord brings his child to face impossible things in our lives on purpose. But this impossible task set before the Lord's true disciples represents far more than the various the trials the Lord puts before us in this life. It represents the impossibility of *justifying* ourselves from our sins and making ourselves the righteousness of God. It represents the impossibility of overcoming our sin-nature in which “EVERY imagination of the thoughts of

our hearts are ONLY EVIL CONTINUALLY.” We will see that in how the true, believing, sanctified disciples answer the Lord.

Who among Adam’s fallen race—you and me—can justify ourselves and overcome our sinful flesh so as to come to Christ for justification through faith?

John 6: 44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

No man can except the Father and the Son do for us because all is impossible for us.

John 6: 63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life.

Also, the impossibility of feeding this multitude represents the impossibility of God’s preacher feeding God’s people. It represents the impossibility of the Lord’s church drawing his people from all parts of the world. We see here the impossibility of making the gospel effectual in his people. The lesson is this:

Matthew 19:26...With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

Luke 1:37 For with God nothing shall be impossible.

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things THROUGH CHRIST which STRENGTHENETH me.

FAILING THE TEST

John 6: 7: Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. 8: One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, saith unto him, 9: There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?

Think of what they had seen the Lord do already. The apostles had experienced the power of our Lord’s call. They saw him purge the temple of money changers. His first miracle, which they witnessed, was that Christ turned water into wine. He called the woman at the well and many in Samaria. With a word they saw Christ heal the impotent man who had been lame for 38 years. It appears at this point they had seen him cast devils out of the Gadarene and heal Jairus’ daughter and the woman with issue of blood. He had given the apostles power and authority over devils and to cure diseases and sent them without money and they lacked nothing. The apostles had just returned from that trip and heard our Lord declare to the Pharisee’s he is the Son of God, one with God the Father.

Rather than answering the Lord “Lord, thou knowest”, they judged this to be impossible. Why? Because they based it on the fact that it was impossible for them to do. That is where we often err.

Yet, after all they had witnessed, they did not look to the Lord alone and believe with all confidence that he could do this, no problem. They told God to send the multitude away. They essentially said let them go pay for their own food and feed themselves.

Is that not me and you, believer? After the Lord feeds this multitude, the unbelieving multitude will come to him and say, “*What will you do to convince us to believe on you—Moses gave our fathers bread from heaven.*” We think what horrid unbelief after so great a miracle. But that is exactly what we see in the Lord’s true disciples. And in us! We have seen the Lord do far more than the apostles had seen at this point. We have witnessed Christ’s power in scripture, on the cross and in our own lives. But let the trial become too difficult and rather than answer, “Lord thou knowest” I start praying, telling the Lord what to do.

We may not see this as sinful but this is *evil unbelief*. This is the imagination of the thoughts of our sin-nature—“*EVERY imagination of the thoughts of the heart are ONLY EVIL CONTINUALLY.*” This multitude hungry, complaining, is the multitude of sins in our sin-nature. We cannot overcome our sin-nature in the first hour to believe on Christ nor can we any moment after that. We strive against it. But we

do not have sufficient to pay to give ourselves life nor to put down this sin-nature in us nor increase our inner man any more than they had sufficient to purchase bread for this multitude.

Imagine this irritable crowd of over 20,000 looking to you to feed them. This is a serious trial. Yet the Lord says through James count it all joy when you come into different trials; it is only for our good; it will always terminate in our good. Do we imagine the Lord's disciples could make themselves be full of joy at this trial? Can we? No, their flesh was reigning. They answered in total unbelief. Their answer was murmuring the same as the unbelievers did later after the Lord had fed their bellies. Joy is the fruit of the Spirit. By the end of the trial, they will be full of joy. But it will be the fruit Christ produced even as Christ produced the food for the multitude. Christ alone is able.

John 6: 63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life.

Does this justify our sin? No, and we do not have sufficiency to justify and make ourselves righteous either. Christ is the Redeemer who paid it all. He is the LORD our Righteousness who alone Justifies. He alone gets the glory for subduing our sinful flesh and quickening our inner man.

But get this brethren, the Lord had compassion on the multitude and healed their diseases. He had compassion on them and taught them because they were as sheep without a shepherd. The Master had compassion on them and fed them. And they were not his elect who he everlastingly loved, for whom he died. What do we think the Lord will do for us who are his purchased possession by the price of his own blood?

He knew what he would do—and he knew what his disciples would do—and us too. But he does not deal harshly with his true disciples. He speaks and makes them willing. Christ feeds their inner man with his word and thus overcomes their flesh and teaches them he is the true Bread who does all! That is what he constantly does for you and me who he has called. It is the goodness of God feeding us this Bread from heaven that leads us to repentance

This trial is to teach them and us that in our flesh dwells no good thing, no ability. But all things are of God our Savior. Without him we can do nothing. But with him nothing is impossible.

THE LORD'S WORK

John 6: 10: And Jesus said, And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. 11: And Jesus took the loaves and when he had given thanks he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. 12: When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. 13: Therefore they gathered *them* together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.

First, *the Lord speaks*. All is by Christ by his word. Christ is the Bread from heaven; for of him, and through him and to him are all things: to whom be glory forever. By his word he subdues our flesh and makes us sit down in our new hearts at his feet. Later he will say all his people shall be taught of God. This is the purpose of putting an impossible trial before us to make us sit down at his command.

He did not make them sit in the dry, thirsty desert but in the green grass. There was much grass. He led them there on purpose so there was much grass for the people to sit. Christ is our Shepherd. He is the pastor who is God. The grass is the green pastures our Shepherd leads us into. It is his house where he sits us down and feeds us his word making us lie down in green pastures. Later we see him assembled preaching the word.

John 6: 59 These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.

It is in his church where Christ feeds his people through his gospel. When he speaks it is always effectual—*the men sat down, in number about 5000*. It does not say everyone sat down. Christ does not work this in everyone, only his true elect, redeemed, who he makes his disciples. But by his word, his

people shall sit down. It is only by making us submit to Christ in faith that Christ feeds us. Christ shall make all his own sit down and shall feed us.

Then *Jesus took the loaves*. One who is often overlooked in this is the lad. Consider the lad. This was a child. He had a meal. Yet, at the Lord's command he gave it all up. The Lord's multiplication to us is first by subtraction then by division. He makes us willing to let go of all that we thought was ours and that would provide for us: our wisdom, our righteousness, our holiness, our redeeming works—all must be Christ alone! But by making the lad obey, the Lord fed this child that which Christ created—that which did not exist before—the life Christ gives us by which we live did not exist before—Christ created it all and all the fruit is of him. Through this lad Christ divided a multitude of bread to the others.

Christ said, “Except ye become as little children, ye shall in now wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.” In the hearts of his people, he makes us give up self-sufficiency and by this subtraction, Christ multiplies unto us by making us feast on Christ the Bread alone and Christ divides the abundance to other lost sinners throughout the world through the gospel.

And when he had given thanks—this was our Head, representing his elect, giving the Father the glory by giving him thanks. Christ alone make this gospel a blessing to us. So as he gave thanks to the Father, we give all glory to Christ and God our Father in Christ. That is how John describes the place where they landed in their boats: the place where the Lord gave thanks.

Then the Lord *distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would*. Christ could have spoken and filled this people. He could have spoken and made us believe on him. But the Lord is pleased to use us, his disciples because it pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

But get this: Christ distributed to the disciples. Then they gave it to the people only because Christ gave it to them and made them willing to give it to the people. And Christ even made the people willing by hunger. Christ distributes the Bread—Christ the Living Bread—to each of his children. And Christ make us receive Him!

They ate all they would eat—as much as they would. As the disciples gave it out, Christ multiplied it, so the people ate all they would. Not only did the lad eat the bread Christ created, but he also ate far more than he would have before. They gathered up 12 baskets full beside all that over 20,000 people ate—maybe it was 12 baskets for 12 apostles—to show them, “Why did you doubt?”

Christ is all sufficiency: his grace is sufficient—he never runs out. The little mouse was in no danger of eating up all the corn in Joseph's storehouses. The minnow is no danger of drinking up all the water in the ocean. We are in no danger of partaking of Christ too much--come to Christ and partake—he is all sufficiency!

THE END EFFECT

John 6: 14 Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.

This was not faith. They merely had their belly filled. Later they said do something to show us you are the Christ because Moses gave our father's bread. What are you going to do for us? Then Christ said except ye eat me the true Bread to which they said, “hard saying and left him.” But here is the end in those who Christ makes partake of the Bread.

John 6: 67: Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? 68: Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. 69: And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

We start out in the trial murmuring like the apostles saying, “The Lord sent this trial for some reason.” If we are his Christ will succeed in making us know the reason. Here it is. To prove each of them that are his. It is to prove to us that we are only sinful unbelief with no ability: all flesh is grass, every though only evil continually in our sin-nature. It is to make us feast on Christ the Bread in the new heart Christ created

so Christ produces this fruit, we say, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

Amen!