

## WBS Talk on John 6:1-40

John 6:1-15 Feeding of the 5,000

John 6:16-21 Jesus walking on water

John 6:22-40 Jesus, the bread of life

Three weeks ago, Donna Donnelly spoke about thirst in her talk on John 4. She discussed what it is like to feel deep physical thirst. This reminded us that our thirst for God should be so much greater. Besides our need for water, our body needs food. Have you ever experienced being ravenous after a long day at work? All you can think about is finding something to satisfy that hunger. I know that when I am hungry, I don't focus on anything else until I have had something to eat. How about spiritually? Have you gone for an extended period without spending time with Jesus? Do you have the same drive to be fed by God or do you seek other things to be fed? John 6 deals with spiritual hunger; the kind of hunger that our souls try to fill with so many substitutes, but we can only be satisfied by Jesus, the Bread of Life.

In the sixth chapter of John, there are three sections: Feeding of the five thousand (vs 1-15), Jesus walking on water (vs 16-21), and Jesus's discourse on his being the Bread of Life (vs 22-40).

Jesus performed seven signs as presented in the book of John. These signs pointed to Jesus' identity, evidence and purpose of His ministry. The first sign was Jesus turning water into wine. The second sign was the healing of the official's son. The third sign was the healing of the lame man. The feeding of the five thousand is the fourth sign given by Jesus.

Besides the death and resurrection of Jesus, the feeding of the 5,000 is the only event found in all four Gospels: Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; and Luke 9:10-17.

It has been a year since Jesus cleared the Temple of the moneychangers. This first Passover is when Jesus declared, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." The feeding of the five thousand took place in Galilee about one year later around the time of the Passover. In the final year of the ministry of Jesus, the third Passover would take place shortly before his death and resurrection.

Before this event of the feeding the 5,000, Jesus and the disciples were exhausted and weary so they went to a desolate place seeking rest. They traveled to the east side of the Sea of Galilee. This area is now known as the Golan Heights. Mark 6:30-34 adds more detail to this story. "The apostles returned to Jesus from their ministry tour and told him all

they had done and what they had taught. Then Jesus said, 'Let's get away from the crowds for a while and rest.' There were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his apostles didn't even have time to eat. They left by boat for a quieter spot. But many people saw them leaving, and people from many towns ran ahead along the shore and met them as they landed. A vast crowd was there as he stepped from the boat, and he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he taught them many things." The other synoptic Gospels tell us that Jesus had compassion on them and healed the sick and taught them about the Kingdom of God.

John presents more details regarding this miraculous sign. As Jesus saw the crowd of people coming up the hill, he spoke to Philip to ask him where they could buy bread to feed all these people. Philip replied that it would take a small fortune to feed the huge crowd. Andrew spoke up and said there was a young boy who had 5 small barley loaves and two small fish. Barley loaves were the food of the poor and the fish were most likely a dried or pickled fish. This was certainly not enough to feed a huge multitude of people. However, Jesus instructed the disciples to have the people sit down. Mark tells us that Jesus asked the disciples to have them seated in groups of fifties and hundreds. Jesus then thanked God the Father and

blessed the food and had the disciples distribute it to the crowd. According to DA Carson, a common Jewish prayer that Jesus may have offered is this: "Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth."

The apostle John emphasizes the lavishness of the supply; they ate as much as they wanted and were filled. In contrast, Philip had stated that even if they bought bread for 200 denarii it would not be enough for each of them to get just a little. In addition, all four Gospels mention that there were 5,000 men present. This does not take into account how many women and children were at hand. There could have been as many as 20,000 people.

Once everyone was satisfied the disciples gathered what was left over-12 baskets full of food, more than they originally had! This was an extraordinary miracle. JC Ryle explains, "Food was called into existence that did not exist before. In healing the sick and raising the dead, something was amended or restored that had already existed. In feeding the five thousand men with five loaves, something must have been created which before had no existence."

JC Ryle also states that this was “one of our Lord’s most remarkable miracles. Of all the great works that He did, none was done so publicly as this and before so many witnesses.”

When the crowds saw the miraculous sign, they thought that Jesus was the Prophet they were expecting. Deuteronomy 18:15-18 speaks of a Prophet like Moses. Moses said to the people, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your fellow Israelites, and you must listen to that prophet.” The Lord confirmed to Moses, “I will raise up a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites. I will tell that prophet what to say, and he will tell the people everything I command him.” Jesus providing a large quantity of bread in the wilderness reminded the Jews of Moses providing manna. Since Moses led God’s people out of slavery in Egypt, surely the Prophet would help them escape their slavery to Rome.

DA Carson states, “Their attention focused on food and victory—not on the divine self-disclosure mediated through the incarnate Son, not on the Son as the Bread of Life, not on a real assessment of their own need.” Jesus knew that the crowds were ready to seize him to make him King, so he left them and headed into the hills to be alone to spend time with His Father. Jesus sent his disciples back to sail to Capernaum. It is possible

Jesus wanted to prevent them from being influenced by the crowd trying to make Him king. Jesus likewise wanted to escape from the crowds. Their insistence on making him king perhaps reminded him of Satan's temptation in the wilderness. Matthew 4:8-10 states, "Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve." Jesus needed to spend time in prayer and to be refreshed by His Father.

The fifth sign is Jesus walking on water. In the evening, the disciples got into a boat to sail to Capernaum. It was dark and the sea became rough because of a strong wind. After rowing 3-4 miles, around the middle of the sea, they saw Jesus walking on the sea, coming near to the boat. The disciples were petrified. Mark 6:49 says that they thought it was a ghost. Matthew 14:25-32 gives more detail. "At 3:00 in the morning , Jesus came walking on the water. The disciples screamed in terror. Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." Peter called out, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you by walking on water." Jesus said, "Come." Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water

toward Jesus. But when he looked around at the high waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted. Jesus reached out his hand and grabbed him. "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" Jesus replied. When he got into the boat the wind ceased." Not only that, John tells us, "Immediately the boat reached the shore." Jesus the Lord and Maker of all creation has power over the waves of the sea.

JC Ryle explains, "Let all true Christians take comfort in the thought that their Savior is Lord of waves and winds, of storms and tempest, and can come to them in the darkest hour, "walking upon the sea." There are waves of trouble far heavier than any on the Lake of Galilee. There are days of darkness which test the faith of the holiest Christian. But let us never despair if Christ is our Friend. He can come to our aid in an hour when we do not think and in ways that we did not expect. And when He comes, all will be calm." I have found this true in my life. One of the darkest times in my life was when my daughter, Ruth died over six years ago. I have never experienced such grief. Yet Jesus used many of you to minister to me as His hands and feet and remind me of God's peace and comfort amidst my storm. God's Word was also a comfort to me, particularly Isaiah 43:1-3, Verse 2 says, "When you pass through the waters I will be with you and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you." Likewise,

various songs ministered to me. The third verse of “Jesus, What a Friend for Sinners” is: Jesus! What a help in sorrow! While the billows over me roll, even when my heart is breaking, He, my comfort, helps my soul. Hallelujah! What a Savior! Hallelujah! What a friend! Saving, helping, keeping, loving, He is with me to the end.” Jesus has promised to walk with us as we face the storms in our life. He is our refuge and shelter.

The third section of John 6 begins with verse 22. The next day the crowd discovered that the disciples had left and decided to travel to Capernaum hoping to find Jesus. When they found him they asked how he got to Capernaum? Jesus responded, “You are seeking me, not because you saw signs but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal” They responded, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” Jesus responded, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.” They ask for a sign so they can believe, totally misunderstanding what Jesus had just done for them. They mention the provision of manna in the wilderness, the bread from heaven. Jesus responded it was the Father who gave the manna, and he gives you the true bread from heaven. They asked for this bread, and Jesus responded,



“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. (vs 35)” Bruce Milne in his commentary on John states, “Jesus presents himself as the Bread of Life, the Satisfier of the human heart.”

This is the first of seven “I AM” statements of Jesus. Later Jesus will proclaim, “I am the light of the world, I am the gate, I am the good shepherd, I am the resurrection and the life, I am the way, the truth, and the life, and I am the true vine.” In Exodus 3:13-14, when God called Moses to deliver the Israelites from Egypt, Moses asked, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you, and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?’” God said to Moses ‘I AM who I AM. And He said, ‘Say this to the people of Israel: I AM has sent me to you.’” In making this statement, I AM the Bread of Life, Jesus is equating himself with God.

In contrast, the Galileans did not believe in Jesus because they misunderstood the miracle of feeding the five thousand. They did not see it as a sign of His divinity but as some magical power. They were more concerned about Jesus meeting their physical needs than with the condition of their sinful hearts. Yet God is much more concerned about the

heart. 1 Samuel 16:7 reminds us, “For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”

RVG Tasker in his commentary on John alluded to the examples of John the Baptist who called for repentance (John 1), Nicodemus who was told he must be born again (John 3), and the Samaritan woman who was awakened to her spiritual need in order to recognize the coming reign of God (John 4). Tasker continues: “Now He brings home to these insensitive Galilaeans the truth that it is a spiritual hunger for imperishable, life-giving food that He has come to satisfy, for it was to accomplish that task that He had been sealed with His Father’s authority. Only those who accept Him as the giver of that food can ever work the works of God, i.e. do the works that God would have them do. Faith in Jesus is the essential preliminary of such works.”

JC Ryle expresses it this way, “What our Lord did mean to rebuke was that excessive attention to labor for the body while the soul is neglected, which prevails everywhere in the world. What He reproved was the common habit of laboring only for the things of time and letting alone the things of eternity--of minding only the life that now is and disregarding the life to come. Against this habit He delivers a solemn warning.”

The Galileans were not seeking after Jesus, the one who was ushering in the Kingdom of God. Jesus when speaking to Nicodemus in John 3: 18 warned those who did not believe in Him. “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”

The Galileans yearned to have their bellies filled with the bread Jesus had provided; but they lacked true hunger for the Bread of Life, Jesus Himself. Speaking on the Mount of Olives Jesus declared, “Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” (Matthew 6:31-33). These verses remind me of how Jesus Himself put God’s kingdom first in His ministry. Jesus had been in the wilderness fasting for 40 days. He experienced intense hunger. Matthew 4:1-4 states, “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.’ But he answered, ‘It is written,

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

Likewise, in John 6:38 Jesus said He came down to earth to not do his own will but the will of His Father. The Father’s will is that Jesus would lose nothing that the Father gave Him. Verse 37 says, “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.”

The true bread is Jesus Himself. JC Ryle says, “Our Lord would have us know that He himself is the appointed food of man’s soul. The soul of every man is naturally starving and famishing through sin. Christ is given by God the Father to be the Satisfier, the Reliever, and the Physician of man’s spiritual need... in Him alone will empty souls find their need supplied. In Him there is life. He is ‘the bread of life.’” Jesus states in verse 40 that whoever looks on the Son, the Bread of Life, in faith will have eternal life.

Today people still do not see their need for Jesus. They believe, “God helps those who help themselves.” Alistair Begg in his devotional *Truth for Life* reminds us, “We too, could easily forget that the good news is not a message of “Do your best, and be good enough” but rather “Your best is never enough-but Jesus is.” Jesus taught that a person is justified by faith

apart from the works of the law. The apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:8-10, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

JC Ryle encourages us to labor for what lasts, “How are we to labor? There is but one answer. We must labor in the use of all appointed means. We must read our Bibles like women digging for hidden treasure. We must wrestle earnestly in prayer like women contending with a deadly enemy for life. We must take our whole heart to the house of God and worship and hear like those who listen to the reading of a benefactor’s will. We must fight daily against sin, the world, and the devil, like those who fight for liberty, and must conquer or be slaves. These are the ways we must walk in if we would find Christ and be found of Him. This is “laboring.” This is the secret of getting on about our souls.”

Our souls need to yearn for Jesus Himself and desire to listen to Him as He speaks to us through His Word. We need one another to encourage each other to be faithful to Him. The Apostle Paul tells us in Hebrews 10:24-25, “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but

encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” 1 Thessalonians 5:11 states, “Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”

In John 6:39-40 Jesus tells us, “And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them to eternal life at the last day. For it is my Father’s will that all who see his Son and believe in him should have eternal life—that I should raise them at the last day.” In John 10: 27-29 Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.” Later in John 14:1-3 Jesus tells his disciples, “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”

In conclusion, we see these signs—the feeding of the five thousand and walking on water—point to the identity, evidence, and purpose of Jesus’ ministry. Jesus identifies Himself as the Son of God, equal to the Father. He

shows evidence of this by feeding the 5,000 and having control of creation by walking on water and calming the storm. He identifies his purpose by declaring himself the bread of life; whoever believes in Him will have eternal life.

We who believe in Jesus have hope. Hope for our day to day lives, but also hope for our future. I Corinthians 16:13 admonishes us, “ Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like women, be strong.” We must stand firm and remind ourselves, and each other, to not look to alleviate the hunger of our hearts with the substitutes of the world which will never genuinely satisfy, but to desperately look to Jesus, The true Bread of Life. Romans 15:4-6 reminds us, “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

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Prayer:

Father, we thank you for your love for us and for providing Jesus, the bread of life, to satisfy our hearts. I pray that we will hunger for you and not find contentment in other things. I join with Scotty Smith in praying this prayer,

“Jesus, only your love is better than Life. Only your love will never let go of us. Only your love has, is, and ever will be enough to satisfy our deepest longings. Hallelujah!”

In the precious name of Jesus I pray, Amen