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- [0 : 00] We're reading in John's Gospel now, from John chapter 6 at verse 5.
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- [5 : 34] John chapter 6.
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John chapter 6. John chapter 6. John chapter 6. John chapter 6. of you can remember but due to covid restrictions we've had to cut it back to two but then actually each of them has three wee sub points so we will get that but i want to notice two things with you this morning number one what we could hardly miss from this story what we could hardly miss really obvious and then secondly what we could easily miss so let's have a look at these number one what we could hardly miss well this is one of the best known passages in the bible the account of the lord jesus miraculously feeding many thousands of people is is one of the few that's recorded in all four gospels and even in the secular world well where biblical knowledge is is at an all-time low i guess certainly in the western world probably on a tv quiz show most contestants would be able to show some knowledge even of this story today and some of us here have known this story since we were kids i've known it since i was in the wee hall at the back there the very wee hall at the back in the creche with mrs care a hundred years ago goodness knows and we love this story let me draw your attention to three things we could hardly miss first of all the massive interest well it's the massive interest in the lord jesus verse one after this jesus went away to the other side of the sea of galilee which is the sea of tiberias just another name for it and a large crowd was following him because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick and when jesus went up on the mountain he sat down with his disciples that just in passing notice the geographical detail this is not fantasy this is not fiction geographical historical detail political detail even the fact that it was called tiberias it was a an emperor who called a city tiberias on the shores of sea of galilee and so also became known as the sea of tiberias and geographically there to the northeast of this shoreline in the area of bethseda and the mountain that they went up we would probably if you looked at a map today you would recognize the name of the golan heights we hear about them quite often on the news and the trouble between israel and palestine well the golan heights is exactly where this was located and in his gospel mark helps to fill out the picture a little bit mark chapter 6 he says in verse 31 you don't have to turn to this i'll read it to you and he said to them jesus said to his disciples come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while for many were coming and going and they had no leisure even to eat and they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves and many saw them going and recognized them and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them so you get a sense of the massive interest in the lord jesus not necessarily that these vast crowds of people loved him and wanted to worship him and just wanted to be with him for the joy of being with him but really because of what he could do for them they saw in him one who could meet their needs that's all they really wanted didn't want him wanted what he could give perhaps so it was a hectic demanding exhausting time for the lord and his team massive interest second wee subheading to notice that we could hardly miss what i've called mission impossible this definitely has a mission impossible feel to it doesn't it mark explains that the crowd had been listening to jesus

teach all day and it was now perhaps late afternoon and he records how the disciples saw the the the mission impossible of catering for such a vast crowd and they actually urged jesus to send the crowd away to their home if you read mark's account that's exactly what you find in mark chapter 6 so you can imagine i don't know thomas and thaddeus and andrew and and philip and peter standing around another exhausting day that was meant to be a day off for them but the crowds had come and jesus had taught them and they start to say quietly to each other you know what's going to happen next don't you you know how the boss hates to send people away hungry he's going to want to feed them and thomas says oh i'm exhausted i just want to fish supper by the lake and get my head down i'm done look peter you're good at these situations we'll back you up to the hill why don't you go up and say listen it's been a great day but enough's enough you have to send them home now lord so they can get something to eat it's going to be dark soon there's no way we can feed them and that's exactly what they do mark tells us that but back to john verse 5 lifting up his eyes seeing the large crowd that was coming toward him and they'd be with him all day so they were obviously coming for something else jesus said to philip where are we to buy bread so that these people may eat the the disciples wanted to jesus to send them away they didn't want lumbered by this huge vast crowd of people they wanted peace and quiet at the end of the day but jesus wouldn't let them off the hook where are we to buy bread so that these people may eat and he asked philip because philip we know from another gospel was from bethsaida the very area where they are so they asked the local boy is there a spa around here or is there a morrison's or is there is there somewhere is there a mcdonald's maybe we could get something of course they didn't use these terms but he was asking the guy that knew the local geography would it be down the north road or would it be up hamilton road we would look and he knew it was his home district but verse 6 of our passage have a look at it he said this to test them for he himself knew what he would do and philip answered them effectively to say it doesn't matter whether i know the area better than anybody else even if there were places 200 denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little and you know this you know this part of the story don't you that a denarius was about the the day's wage for a worker and most of these people at this area of um the shore of galilee were subsistence workers they worked and the what they got for the days what they were able to turn into food to eat that day they just scraped by like that so 200 days is seven or eight months worth of wages no one had that kind of cash on them and even if they did there were there were no outlets to purchase enough to give everybody even a bite at that kind of vast expenditure there was no time to go and bake bread like that it was impossible and we can understand perhaps the disciples urging jesus to move the crowd on send them home but at some point andrew must have slipped away to see if there was a chance of anyone having any food among the hordes and it was a good initiative but he he comes back certain that his efforts have not saved the day but have only challenged the extremity of the of the only confirmed the extremity of the challenge have a look at verse eight one of his disciples andrew

simon's peter brother said to him there is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish but what are they for so many barley loaves were the cheapest type of bread at the time the type that the the the the working people would have eaten just ordinary small not fancy this is not you know delightful baker's bread it's just basic and what that little boy had was in one sense it was laughable feeding that vast crowd was financially unviable eight months wages and materially impractical even if they had the money how would they go about finding someone who could bake enough and transport it from the nearby town to that location it was just impossible and you know even when we've heard this a thousand times don't we smile inwardly when we get to this point because we quite enjoy seeing the odds massively stacked against the disciples of the lord jesus as the sun sets and the crowds thicken and the tummies rumble because we know that he has capabilities to make mission impossible perfectly possible so the so the third thing that is unmissable is what we might call miraculous intervention verse 10 jesus said have the people sit down now there was much grass in the place of course because of the time of year it was verse 4 tells us it was close to passover spring of the year march april before the sun scorched the grass our grass is scorched partly by a nine-year-old labrador and partly by the glorious weather that we've had in recent days maybe your grass is looking a bit more like hay than green grass but at this point there was much grass early in the spring so the men sat down about 5 000 in number and again you'll know this that if it's if it's 5 000 men then counting the women and children it's multiples of 5 000 of hungry tired people young and old this is a mission and prop impossible but it's not a problem to jesus verse 11 jesus then took the loaves and when he given thanks he distributed them to those who were seated so also the fish as much as they wanted it is staggering provision and it's typical of the lord jesus not to make a kind of hollywood style fuss over the whole thing with lots of arm waving and yelling and bawling and others none of that he takes the packed lunch the five kind of scone sized bread rolls and two salted fish he thanks his father for the provision and everyone feasts until they're full it is miraculous intervention verse 12 when they'd eaten their fill he told the disciples gather up the leftover fragments that nothing may be lost so they gathered them up and filled 12 baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten the baskets that they used would have been about baskets that come up to about waist height if you ever remember the cartoon or the film of the the the the indian gentleman playing the what did he play the flute or something some kind of musical instrument and the snake would come up out of a basket it was a big tall basket like that and they filled 12 of them now you're saying you might be saying well really and if you listen to the kind of thought for the day thing on the radio you've probably heard

[18 : 46] someone who purported to speak for christians trying to explain this away and i've certainly heard nonsense about what really happened was that the hearts of the crowd were so touched they were melted when they saw the little boys lunch being given and shared and suddenly they began to unpack the picnics that they brought and up until then had concealed and began to share with one another but but it couldn't be clearer john doesn't let us off the hook there there's no room in this passage to conclude other than that the entire provision for these multiple thousands five thousand men plus came from five rolls and two fish and not only did teeming thousands eat their fill so that as people were offering them more they were honestly i'm there you know that expression we use oh i'm there i'm done thank you couldn't eat another bite they're saying not only was that the case but they were there were vastly more left over than when they started out now if the people knew differently if the local people who were there that day if they knew that actually it was the way the guy on the radio said that it was they were just compelled to have a kind of impromptu bring and share meal and they all began to share with each other and by that means their needs were met if that was the case why did they follow jesus for another 24 hours recorded in john 6 asking him to give them that bread always verse 34 it just doesn't hang in and still people say wow but that's impossible and humanly speaking of course it's impossible it is mission impossible that's what we're seeing we shouldn't make the fact that we can't reproduce what jesus did a reason to disbelieve him just for a moment think about it that all the miraculous signs the lord jesus did were historically verifiable they weren't done in private it wasn't that jesus went away by himself and did miracles and then came back and told people that he'd done miracles and nobody could know it they were always done in front of others there was always a parent or two parents who'd seen the dead child knew their kid was dead or knew their son was blind or saw the bloke being lured through the roof and knew he was a paralytic from the community or in this case thousands of them knew there was no way to get a baker to make that kind of bread and in mark's gospel we discover that even those who were outright enemies of the lord jesus when they saw the miracles that he did much as they wanted to they couldn't deny the reality of his power they could argue about the source of his power so in mark mark three they say it's by the prince of demons that he drives out demons which is a dumb clock thing to say it's not true but the the point is even those who wanted to bring him down even the eyewitnesses at the time who wanted to prove he was a charlatan that this was fake that this was an early effort of derren brown as a magician to kind of do a performance they couldn't do it his miracles were historically uncontested and they weren't a circus performance john's word for them is signs miracles being done that point us in a direction so let's take that direction on our second sweep

as we think about not only what we what we can would be hard to miss but what we might easily miss and I I used that heading because I missed lots until I came to look at this in preparation for today I've really enjoyed this looking at this over the last few days there was lots of things I'd missed so let me show you three of them it's very easy to be so enthralled with the little scene that we've been describing that that we miss what it's pointing to so here's three things I'd noticed as we do a second sweep I'd never seen before number one the significance of the timing and then the significance of the test and then the significance of the throne three things right now so number one significance of the timing verse four john tells us now the passover for the feasts of the jews was at hand now that means if you're tracking with john's chronology that a year had passed since jesus cleared the temple in chapter two because that was at the time of passover and it's passover time again now why does john tell us that well you probably know the passover celebrated god's rescue and deliverance of his people from slavery in egypt how he brought them out and how they took he took them across the the red sea and dry land and central to the commemoration for every jewish family at the passover was that they slaughtered and cooked and ate a lamb so why does john flag up in verse four that it was passover and the thoughts of all the jewish community are turning towards getting the lamb ready well john's already told us in chapter one verse 29 in chapter one verse 36 about this jesus who is the you can repeat it lamb of god and he's come to take away the sin of the world and as chapter six unfolds we hear jesus speak of the need for him to die to give his life as the lamb to take away the sin of the world we hear explain the means by which he will provide not only that kind of geographical historical deliverance of israel from egypt but eternal rescue and freedom from slavery we see in chapter six that this is possible because he offers to give those who come to him not just bread on that occasion but that bread on that occasion points to the fact that he is the one who comes to give living bread which is his flesh that he'll give for the sake of the world so look at verse 51 of chapter six i am the living bread that came down from heaven says the lord jesus if anyone eats this bread he will live forever and the bread that i will give for the life of the world is my flesh so here's the lamb who will be slaughtered for the ultimate passover we're meant to see the miraculous provision of physical bread in these first 15 verses pointing as it were to the infinitely greater provision of the lord jesus himself as the living bread sent by god the father that is the significance of the timing of the miraculous feeding so close to the passover secondly the significance of the test back to verse 5 where midway through jesus said to philip where are we to buy bread so that these people may eat verse 6 he said this to test him for he himself knew what he would do now i was chewing my pencil about this this week i was trying to work out why jesus asked

philip where they could buy bread when he already knew that nobody was going to be parting with money there wasn't going to be a purchase there wasn't anywhere to make the purchase he knew that no one was going to be trying to deliver arrange delivery of dinner for 10 to 20 thousand people so why did he ask philip where are we to buy bread and it struck me that jesus may have raised the subject of cost where are we to buy even though there wasn't going to be any cost financially maybe he did that to draw attention to the fact that although that vast dinner cost no one a penny it was not without cost to him and we already know that the effect of raising the question where are we going to buy dinner for these people confirmed what he already knew that it was impossible for any of them to pay that price seven or eight months wages they were out of their depth financially to meet that cost have you ever felt that way in our first year here at bells hill 1989 just just as we arrived this church family was already set up to engage in an american partnership mission a team were coming over from the states and we were thrilled margaret and i were thrilled to host two retired american gentlemen hugh and grady they were part of that team who'd come to help us with the mission and what we didn't know at the time was that they were retired businessmen very wealthy and very generous and the following year they sent us tickets and they flew us across the atlantic to spend a month with their respective families with hugh and georgia and grady up in washington dc and it was amazing and everybody wished that they'd hosted them instead of just us they were so kind to us flying us over and hosting us and driving us around and often buying us meals and and one day i said to meg listen i want to i'm just going to pick up the tab tonight we can't have them doing this all the time i'm going to buy dinner tonight and thankfully i'd only announced my intentions to meg i hadn't told them of what i planned to do because when i saw the menu at the restaurant we went to and the prices and the number of people around the table that he'd invited i realized that would have cleaned out my entire holiday budget and most of next month's salary if i was going to try and pay for that meal so i just sat quiet and decided to buy him a coffee sometime while my host graciously paid you see i wanted to pay but i was completely unable to cover it he was abundantly able to settle it didn't give him a thought i didn't notice him going and having to lie down in a darkened room afterwards the way i would have had to do all we had to do was accept his invitation and sit at the table and i think that's the point of the test i think that's the significance of jesus asking philip where are we going to buy this bread how will we pay and the answer to the question is given in chapter 6 verse 27 where the lord jesus says have a look at it with me do not labor do not invest your energies for the food that perishes which is all food but do so labor invest your energies effectively for the food that endures to

eternal life which the son of man will sell you no give you for for in him god the father has set his seal and as jesus said that then from the crowd came the obvious question verse 28 then they said to him what must we do to be doing the works of god what is the price we must pay what is the energy we must apply what is the labor we must do what are the works of god how are we going to pay to make this happen and what was jesus answer in verse 28 have a look at it this is the work of god that you believe in him whom he has sent this is the work this is the work you do that results in eternal satisfaction forever the work is believing in the one that he sent do you see the link there is a cost for the food that endures to eternal life there is work to be done but the lord jesus has paid it all and done it all it cost him sorely he was in the world on the

Golan heights that day because there was another hill that he was going to go to calvary where he would lay down his life so that eternal life could be the experience of those who look at him and trust in him and so the way to labor for the food that endures to eternal life is to believe in him the one sent by the father who from his boundless resources will give you and me and anyone else who looks to him all that we need the cleansing and the freedom and the rescue and the reconciliation to him that we need to have eternal life of complete satisfaction salvation so these are the things that I would easily have missed if I hadn't the opportunity to come here today and preach on this passage and look at it and see the direction of it significance of the timing the significance of the test finally the significance of the throne have a look at verse 14 when the people saw the sign that he'd done they said this is indeed the prophet who has come into the world they'd seen enough to utterly convince them that bible prophecy was being fulfilled by the lord jesus they were thinking a way back as jews to what moises had said in deuteronomy chapter 18 verse 15 moises said this the lord your god will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers it is to him you shall listen and this vast crowd that day getting ready for passover thinking about whether we get the lamb thinking about remembering how god had delivered them also it was a huge period of nationalistic fervor for the jewish nation they were thrilled this is the one that moises was speaking about this is the leader we need no wonder they wanted him as their national shepherd their miraculous king to stand up for them against the occupying roman forces and verse 14 if we finish there might look like the perfect response as though that day ended with people saying let's make jesus our king and that would have given the preacher the opportunity to say would you like to make jesus your king but that's not how it ends it's not a good ending in verse 14 and verse 15 and we should remember perhaps from chapter 2 a similar situation that looked promising but wasn't you remember in chapter 2 verse 23 flick back to it for a moment if you like now when he was in jerusalem verse 23 of chapter 2 at the passover feast many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing but jesus in his part did not entrust himself to them because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man for he himself knew what was in a man knew what was in one knew what was in all knew what was going on knew what the thinking was with all these people who believed in his name because purely because of the signs he was doing he knew that they were following him because of what they wanted him to do for them same here in chapter 6 this is the prophet who's coming to the world verse 15

[36 : 05] John 6 15 perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself it'd be so easy to miss this wouldn't it or to say I wish Craig had finished at verse 14 that kind of spoils that lovely day on the mountain with all these people being fed but the fact is that Jesus knows how we think and friends to our surprise and sometimes to our disappointment he does not play along with our agenda for him in our lives you've got an agenda for God in your life I've got an agenda for God in my life there's so much I could do with the Lord Jesus and the power that he has that's how the people thought of him that day they were desperate to be liberated from Roman occupation here's a leader who could sort out the Romans who could send them packing in short order no problem but Jesus withdrew he wasn't going to be that kind of king he wasn't going to answer those temporary heart longings and even after he rose from the dead in Acts chapter 1 when he meets with his disciples they say to him are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel are you finally going to kick the Romans out I mean this was a big deal we find we find that difficult still don't we why when he is so clearly powerful enough to do anything we ask him to do and when we know that he loves us why doesn't he be the kind of king we want him to be and get me that job that I want or that partner that I want or that lifestyle that I want or that healing miracle for myself or for my loved one or that peace of mind that I'm desperate for when he's got all that power and I know he loves me why doesn't he line up his kingship behind my agenda have been trying to follow the Lord Jesus by his grace for nearly 40 years more than 40 years and I still find it hard when he doesn't get behind my plans for him isn't it so dangerous to want Jesus for what we want him to do for us rather than what he wants to do for us and we are disappointed when he doesn't deploy his kingly power in the ways that we would have him do now I know that he and you know that he graciously answers countless prayers of his people over time of course he does and he wants us to bring these things to him but we always have to say not my will but yours be done because he's the king I don't make him king he is the king and we're not going to have heaven in this world we're not going to have every longing satisfied in this world and still today people as on that day in Mark in John 6 so you want him to be a political revolutionary they want a Jesus like that or they want him to be a one man NHS chapter verse 3 tells us that he followed him because of the signs he was doing on the sick and a king Jesus like that

who just dealt with every cancer and every heart condition and every diabetes and every rheumatoid arthritis and all the rest of it and Jesus like that we could get behind that we could do so much with a Jesus like that or they see him instructing his disciples to gather the leftovers in verse 12 and they want an environmental warrior Jesus or the old chestnut chestnut he's a he's a great humanitarian Jesus feeding the poor and there's truth there's a bit of truth in all of these things but he will not line up behind any of them and parts of the church in a kind of insanity think that if we could make Jesus look like that the world would listen to us when actually what Jesus is offering is the vast glorious eternal hope for anyone who will look to him it's not temporary the original Jesus the real Jesus withdraws he won't sit on the thrones we would make for him rather he sits on the throne his father has made for him having done the work his father sent him to do of infinitely greater worth and significance than all our ideas for how he should exercise his kingly power and he goes on in chapter six as you'll see he goes on to explain in great detail why he's come and how he will reign that's why we began with verse 36 and the bread of life whoever comes to me shall not hunger whoever believes in me shall never thirst all the hungering for all the stuff all the thirsting for all that we long for not just bread and water but all that we long for he is the one who's able ultimately to satisfy that in himself and verse 40 that we read at the beginning for this is the will of my father that everyone who looks on the son and believes in him should have eternal life and I will raise him up on that last day and as he explained it in chapter six they didn't like it have a look at verse 66 we're closing now but have a look at verse 66 after this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him do you know why I believe that miracle really happened the way we're told it happened because if you were inventing this if you were making this up David and I were talking about this through the back you would not put a detail like that in verse 66 the vast crowds the thousands who had come to applaud him who were thrilled by him excited by him wanted to make him king he withdrew from them and then they withdrew from him when they heard why he'd really come and what he was really going to do and how much they needed him as to be their savior they weren't interested so verse 67 Jesus said to the 12 do you want to go away as well and you know there are millions who become disgruntled with the Lord Jesus for not being the kind of king not being the kind of God they wanted him to be not doing the things that they had hoped he would do they've become really disgruntled they've gone away but verse 68 Simon Peter answered him Lord to whom shall we go you have the words of eternal life and we have believed and have come to know that you're the holy one of God I love Stuart Town ends him there is a hope I'm going to quote the final verse as we finish this study this morning as we think about people still longing for satisfaction

but pretty sure they're not going to find it in Jesus wanting to make another kind of Jesus disappointed that he wouldn't line up behind their ambitions for him not impressed by the stunning thing he has done in the giving of his life in the shedding of his blood that we're going to remember now as we come to break bread but Town End wrote there is a hope that stands the test of time that lifts my eyes beyond the beckoning grave to see the matchless beauty of a day divine when I behold his face listen to this when suffering ceases and sorrows die and every longing is satisfied then joy unspeakable will flood our souls for we will be truly home that's what the Lord Jesus came to make possible for those who will look to him for those who will put their trust in him let's pray together Jesus said to them I am the bread of life whoever comes to me shall not hunger whoever believes in me shall never thirst this is the will of my Father that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day thank you Father that there is a hope that stands the test of time even when you don't answer all the longings of your people now even when we die you will raise us up and thank you that one day because of what the Lord Jesus has done because he is the bread of God the bread of heaven who has been sent one day he is going to satisfy every longing of every heart of every person who looked to him so help us supposing we've been walking with you for decades help us to keep walking with you not to be like the people in verse 66 who walked with him no longer help us to keep being thrilled by who you are Lord Jesus and by what you're accomplishing keep trusting you as our King and to be recruited to your cause not recruit you to ours and thank you that there is joy unspeakable that will flood our souls when we're truly home one day in your presence bless this word we pray