

Tested At the All You Can Eat Buffet

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[0 : 00] Kids, I think you get to go to King's Kids today, so I'm going to let you go ahead and make your way out there. And while they're leaving, just as a reminder, if you didn't do what Steve asked you to do, then you can find the text on page 1059 in the few Bibles.

Or if you have your own Bible, you're on your own. Okay. Chapter six, John, verse 15 verses. All right, let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, we thank you that we can be together for a time of worship. We thank you for the opportunity to sing songs that express our heart, our worship.

We thank you for the opportunity to share in communion, reminding us that the payment that was made in the story that includes us.

You having redeemed us, washed us. We thank you for the opportunity to open the word and to take a look at it and see ourselves in the story a bit.

[1 : 20] To see where sometimes we recognize who you are and we honor who you are and sometimes not. Sometimes we don't see you for who you are and we fail to depend on you.

So help us to face some of those things, keeping Jesus front and center, but at the same time, seeing ourselves in the way we respond. We pray that you'll help us by your Holy Spirit to understand the text and then to apply the text.

For the glory of the Lord Jesus, we pray. Amen. The text is chapter six of John, verses one through 15.

Please follow as I read that text with you. After this, Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias.

And a large crowd was following him because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain and there he sat down with his disciples.

[2 : 26] Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. Lifting up his eyes then and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, Where are we to buy bread so that these people may eat?

And he said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little.

One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?

Jesus said, Have the people sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated.

So also the fish, as much as they wanted. And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, Gather up the leftover fragments that nothing may be lost.

[3 : 33] So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, This is indeed the prophet who is coming to the world.

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.

Tests. Most of us are not fans of tests. But tests are important to see what we have learned and to reveal how far we need to go to master the material.

In a statement, chapter five was a declaration that Jesus is God. Pastor Mike made that very clear to us over the period of the last few weeks, showing us again and again and again in chapter five that Jesus is declaring himself to be God.

Jesus showed his deity and the miracle healing of the man who lay at the pool of Bethesda. He declared it in various ways to the religious leaders of the day. All the while his disciples were watching and listening.

[4 : 51] It's not likely that chapter six follows immediately after chapter five. When you see the first two words of the text after this, that means after this.

It doesn't necessarily mean to happen immediately. In fact, in chapter five, most of that was in Jerusalem.

And yet here we are in Galilee. The Galilean ministry is pretty substantive. Whatever that word is. Substantive. Anyway, there was a lot going on in Jerusalem and a lot going on in Galilee.

But John sticks pretty much to Jerusalem. But here we're in Galilee. This little bit in chapter six. John wrote near the end of the gospel that Jesus did many signs and miracles.

He did so many that it would be difficult to include all of those, to write those and put them in a book. It would be hard to put all those together. But the disciples saw them, pretty much all of them.

[5 : 55] And in fact, in some cases, they participated in them. Surely it would have become clear by now that Jesus was God. Again, what John said was Jesus did all these miracles.

Why did he do them? He did all those for many reasons. But John says the seven that I recorded, these are the ones that you need to look at because that you might believe that Jesus is who?

The Christ, the son of the living God. And that by believing, you might have life through his name. So surely by now, it would have been clear even here on this, what is this, the third or fourth sign that John gives?

Surely becomes clear by now that Jesus is God. We're going to find out how clear that was in a couple of minutes. Jesus already knew what they understood, but the disciples needed some confirmation.

So one way or another, the test here was whether or not they got it, and then how would they respond to the truth. Therefore, Jesus gives them a test in verse six.

[7 : 11] This test, I think, was mostly for the disciples. The gathering crowd participated, but the primary target was for the disciples, for the twelve. To help us listen and learn, I have a test for you.

Okay? Jesus tested Philip and Andrew and then all the disciples. The test required two answers. The first involved the identity of Jesus, and the second would express how they were to respond to Jesus.

The correct answers by the disciples are also the correct answers for us. So, as we're talking, you've got to figure out what those are. Okay? They're easy.

In fact, I'm going to give them to you in a couple minutes. All right? But they're real easy. I think you probably already know. Jesus sets up this test, beginning with Philip. And I guess you could say this, what are we going to do in an impossible situation?

What are we going to do in an impossible situation? Let me set this up. The disciples had been on a mission trip. They had been given power and authority by Jesus to heal sick people, to deliver demon-possessed people, and even, according to Mark, even to raise the dead.

[8 : 35] So, they were given incredible power from Jesus to do these things. But the main thing that they were to do was to speak of the good news of God that there is salvation in Christ, in Jesus.

So, they're doing these miraculous things that Jesus was doing as he gave them power to do so, and the disciples come back. How do you think they came back? I mean, man, they were pumped. They were excited.

But they also came back exhausted. So, Jesus takes them away by boat across the Sea of Galilee to a desolate place to rest.

And when the crowds heard that they were there, they walk around the lake, and then basically, shortly after Jesus and his disciples arrived, they show up.

And so, Jesus, seeing them, he heals their sick, he teaches the multitude about the kingdom of God, and by this time, it's getting to be evening.

[9 : 36] And the disciples are asking Jesus to send these people away. I mean, after all, they're going to need to find something to eat, they're going to need to get home, so it's time to shut this down.

And that's when Jesus sets up the test. Here's the setup. If you compare the four Gospels, by the way, this is interesting that this particular sign, this particular miracle occurs in all four Gospels.

Each emphasizes a little bit differently what's going on, but it seems that the disciples first suggested that Jesus send the people away so that they could, on their own, find something to eat in the surrounding villages.

But Jesus, directing comments to Philip, says, you give them something to eat. In fact, that's exactly the way Luke puts it in his account. So there's the test.

The people had followed after Jesus. It's one day. Now, have you ever missed a meal for a whole day? Probably.

[10:39] Did you, like, go on your deathbed the next day? Probably not. I mean, this was one day. I mean, it wasn't like they were starving to death. It was one day.

And if they missed a meal, it wouldn't be that big of a deal. If they were really hungry, they could have probably found something to eat in one of the villages along the way as they're heading home. But this was really not about hungry people.

This was about developing faith-filled disciples. So this was the test. Jesus asked, where are we going to buy bread that so many people may eat? What would Philip's response be?

Well, it was a calculated answer. Immediately, Philip looks around the situation. He assesses the situation, and he comes up with this. 200 denarii worth of bread would not be enough.

There was a supply problem, and there was a financial problem. Where can we even find that much bread out here? And even if we find it, how are we going to buy it? And even if we empty the treasury and then some, it would only be a small bite, not a meal.

[11:44] This guy's good. He's a mathematician. He's a whiz. He effectively analyzes the problem, but he sees no solution. 5,000 men plus women and children.

To add all that together, you might have 15,000, 20,000 people there. 200 denarii, about eight months wages. Can't be done.

Send them away. Let them fend for themselves. This is an impossible situation. By the way, have you ever had an impossible situation in your life? Just asking.

We can see all the hurdles. We can see all of the obstacles. I would suggest to you that Philip got an A in mathematics, that he got an F in theology.

What was Philip missing? Well, there was a factor, I think, to figure in God in all of this. One commentator said this.

[12:44] It would have been a different story, perhaps, if Philip would have said, Lord, why are you asking me? You made everything. You're the creator. We've seen you create.

Surely you can do all these things. You can make dinner for everybody. But that's not what Philip said. He just flunked theology 101. Nothing is impossible for God.

He made water into wine. They saw him do it. Surely he can meet this need. Do you know what the right answer is here? The ultimate answer for all of life's problems? He's God.

You can argue that. By now, the disciples knew it. In their head, maybe. But what they should have known didn't carry over to their response.

So what should have been their response and what should be our response? He's God. Then what do we have to do? Trust him.

[13:48] You get those two answers right, and they're in your heart, in your head, and in your life, you're not going to have too many overwhelming difficulties that can't be solved.

You see, he's God, and you can trust him. Those are answers to the test that I mentioned earlier. Is that too simplistic? I don't think so. He's God.

Trust him. Well, let's keep going because there's something else going on here. What are we going to do with totally inadequate resources? The focus moves from Philip to Andrew.

Again, I'll set this up. It was a little uncertain what happens next, but from Mark's account, Jesus requested an inventory of what might be available.

How many loaves do you have? Go and see. They did. And what they discovered was that apparently one kid in this massive crowd had saved some food.

[14:53] Maybe he didn't like it or maybe he failed to eat it earlier. Maybe he forgot he had it. I don't know, but he had it. And basically, it was the equivalent of five crackers and a couple of sardines.

That's it, okay? When we think of loaves, we think of, you know, loaves. Not loaves, okay? Just a little snack.

That was it. That's all they had to work with. Often God makes something out of nothing. Sometimes God makes a lot out of a little. How would Andrew respond to this test from Jesus? He failed. I'm going to call this a faithless obedience to start with. At Jesus' directive, a search was made and this boy with his lunch was found and Andrew had been obedient. He gets an A in inventory retrieval. Okay? Good deal. Way to go. He also gets a bonus point for talking this little boy out of his lunch. I find that to be quite interesting. [15:57] But he failed creative distribution. Andrew made this faithless statement. after he brings the lunch, here's what we have, Jesus.

Then he says, but what are they for so many? That's a logical response to the situation. Given the circumstances, most people wouldn't have even bothered to bring the boys' lunch forward. Andrew's assessment was spot on, but faithless. And then there's this blinded response. Standing beside him and giving directions was Jesus.

He had made water and wine. He had healed the sick. He had delivered people from demonic possession. And remember, who is he? He's God. Okay.

Very good. Okay. A couple of you have got it. All right? We're moving in a good direction. All right? Now, could not the creator of all things made fish and bread enough to feed the crowd?

[16:59] Imagine if Andrew had said to Jesus, I love this, at this direction, I have found a boy with five loaves and two fish. I can't wait to see what you're going to do with that.

Sadly, he didn't say that. And more often than not, neither do we. It's one thing to declare Jesus as God. It's another thing to trust him.

So now we have this amazing revelation. The disciples were given the task of organizing the people into manageable groups of 50 and 100. Jesus gave thanks and then began to break the loaves and the fish.

Now, it depends on, you kind of get the impression from John 6 that Jesus was passing it out. But if you read the other accounts of this, actually, to whom was Jesus giving the bread and the fish to the disciples so they could deliver it to the people.

So he kept handing out more and more to his disciples. They keep, they continue to distribute what's received from Jesus to each group. You might enjoy this kind of corny comment from the late John MacArthur.

[18:15] I'm going to read it and anybody thought it was kind of fun. He says, with no fanfare, no voice from heaven, no lightning, no thunder, he distributed to those who were seated. He just kept passing out crackers and fish.

He was creating it. These were crackers that never came from grain, that never grew, that never were in dirt. These were fish that never swam. He created them. These are the best crackers anybody ever ate.

These were unfallen crackers. Those were uncursed crackers. Look, I like cursed crackers, actually, so I don't even know what uncursed crackers would be like. Maybe they'd be like manna. Came from heaven. And this is a fish with no mama fish. This is what kind of fish would God create if he created a perfect fish never touched by fallen world. Okay. But they got the food, all right? They got it all. They got all that they needed. Everyone had enough. Everyone had everything they wanted. Everyone had their fill. Before the wilderness smorgasbord closed for the evening, Jesus instructed his disciples to gather the leftovers that nothing may be lost.

[19:22] Why? Maybe to show the abundance of God's provision. After all, they had more left than they started with. Maybe.

Perhaps it was a tangible evaluation following the test that they had today learned something about Jesus and what had they learned. you know, I think the leftovers, and this is Les Martin talking, not scripture, but I think the leftovers play a part in the next event that the disciples would experience, particularly from Mark's account.

If you read ahead, you might be able to figure that out. I think it had to do with the 12 baskets that the disciples probably took with them on the boat when they encountered the storm when Jesus wasn't with them.

I say that based on what Mark said at the end of that, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened. Those fragments, those leftovers, said, he's God.

Trust him. But that was not their response. Okay, back to the test. Back to the text, I should say. This has been a story, amazing story, but we're not finished.

[20 : 38] So, picture this, huge crowd, little lunch, everybody fed, wonderful. And the people at this point are not exactly participants in what's happening, but now they get into the scene.

What are we going to do when the tide of public opinion changes? That's my question. Here the crowd, again, plays a role in the drama. They get an A for recognizing something very special and something very unique about Jesus.

but they fail to understand how they were to respond to him. Again, I'll set this up. People have just been fed. They're filled and satisfied.

They also have some time to think. This is a great deal. He took care of us. He healed us. And then he fed us. Moses said that there was a prophet that was coming someday.

This must be that prophet. Let's make him king. So, by force, the crowd attempts to make Jesus king. What can we learn from this? Well, I guess to start with, the world's evaluation is always wrong about Jesus.

[21 : 53] Have you noticed? There are times when people of the world get excited about Jesus, but generally it's not the real biblical Jesus. It's the Jesus they want.

In the words of one commentator, quote, it may be the morally exemplary Jesus or the socialist Jesus or the capitalist Jesus or the revolutionary liberationist Jesus or the counter cultural cool Jesus, but not the whole Jesus who in the end gives his life a ransom for sinners.

And if your enthusiasm for Jesus is for a Jesus that doesn't exist, your enthusiasm is no honor to the real Jesus and he will leave you and go into the mountain.

End quote. See, the world saw their provision in the bread, but they failed to see Jesus as the bread of life. In effect, Jesus was saying, you've seen my power, but you do not know me.

You don't know who I am and what I came to do. The world's evaluation is always wrong about Jesus. The world's response is always wrong about Jesus.

[23 : 08] The people tried to make Jesus or take Jesus by force and make him king. Jesus quickly pushed his disciples into the boat to head across the Sea of Galilee again and that he might dismiss the crowd.

We're not told how, but he dismisses the crowd and then he goes himself up into the mountain to pray. I'm guessing that the disciples are quite confused at this point as to what's going on.

Huge crowd apparently ready to follow Jesus, ready to treat him as their king. Jesus knew what was in man, but the disciples failed to understand. They had failed to realize how the typical sinner responds to God.

It's not bowing before the one who can save us. It's demanding what he can do for us. this is always a response of the multitudes.

And sometimes the only response for the believers to move away. It's not possible to reason with the determined mob.

[24 : 13] So the exhausted, confused disciples leave Jesus behind. They head across the sea of Galilee as darkness falls. They row and row and row, unaware that Jesus is setting up an even greater test to see what they have learned in regard to who he is and how they should respond to him.

Remember the right answers on the test I mentioned at the beginning? Basically been the message throughout John's gospel. He's God and we need to trust him.

That's it. Most of us have settled on the issue of who Jesus is. He's God. But I think we struggle a lot with trusting him in any given situation at any given time.

I can be amazed at God's works and still not trust him. I can respect God and hold him in high regard but still be guilty of a lack of trust.

I can profess to be inspired and excited by the word and by his power and by his wisdom and by any or all of his attributes and still struggle to trust him.

[25 : 26] Trust is a real problem for us. We struggle with it every day. God has a way of teaching us to trust him. One of those things is called unsolvable problems.

It's called inadequate resources. It's called negative reactions from others who hear about our faith to name a few. As these impossible problems assault us this week before we say things like where are we going to get that or what good will that little bit do or why did they respond to me in that way? Why don't they respond to me in the right way? I didn't sign up for such treatment. Remember he is God. It's time that we learn to trust him.

Before we wrap this up, why do we have a problem trusting the Lord? You ever thought about that? He's God. He created all things.

He's sovereign over all of them. He's in control. And if we've trusted him for our salvation, why do we have trouble trusting him for anything else?

[26 : 46] I've spent a long time thinking about that this week. And I just, I thought of a lot of things, but it's like none of them really were worthy things.

I don't trust him sometimes because I just don't trust him. I'm looking at myself, I'm looking at the situation, and I fail to see who he is.

I fail to remember what he's done. I fail to remember that he is my Lord and my Savior, and he takes care of me, and provides for me, and protects me, and loves me, and has a plan and purpose that's eternal for me.

Do you remember Romans chapter 8, this verse? He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all. Here's the question.

How will he not also with him graciously give us all things? If he did that for us, what's this other stuff? in the same chapter, Paul wrote, and we know that for those who love God, all things what?

[28 : 03] Work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. glory, our good, always at work, and everything that happens to us all the time.

And what I have to keep learning is to trust him. Now, did the disciples finally, completely, ultimately, trust Jesus after this experience?

No. they failed, and they failed, and they failed. Does Les Martin trust God and all the experiences of life?

Don't talk to my wife about this. No. Sometimes I'm frustrated, irritated, upset, you know, and why is this happening?

No, you know, and all this kind of stuff. And what she should do is put a sign on the refrigerator, since I would spend a lot of time there, a sign that says, he's God, trust him.

[29 : 22] They forgot, the disciples forgot what had happened because they were focused on the next 30 minutes, not eternity.

they forgot to fix their eyes and ears and minds and hearts on things above. They forgot all about the fact that this is all for God's glory.

Are we going to struggle with this issue the remainder of our lives? Probably. But here and there, we're going to get it right. He's God. I can trust him.

I can't wait to see what he's going to do with the situation to bring good to me and glory to himself. Wouldn't that be a great way to live?

That almost make you want to have a problem. I can't wait to see what he's going to do with this. Let's pray. Father, thank you. Thank you for your grace.

[30 : 23] Thank you for your mercy. Thank you for the test. These are not to hurt us. They're to help us. They're not to make us frustrated.

They're to make us trusting you. They're to make us understand that you are God and you're trustworthy. Please help us.

Please help us. For those who are struggling with these kinds of things right now, Lord, help them to have that in front of them today. He's God.

We can trust Him. The answers won't always be what we want. But again, they'll be for our good. They'll be for your glory. And they come out of a heart of love that you have for us.

Thank you for being with us today. Thank you for helping us today. Thank you for reminding us that a lot of important people in the Bible had trouble doing the same things we have trouble doing.

[31 : 27] But ultimately, they found the answer in you, Lord Jesus, because you're God and we can trust you. Amen.

Thank you.