

The Wonder of Jesus' Works

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Date: 27 September 2020

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- [0 : 0 0] If you have your Bible with you, please open it up to the Gospel of John, chapter 6. We're continuing to work our way through the story of Jesus.
- We're going kind of slow, but we're milking it for all it's worth. And this morning we're in chapter 6. Last Sunday we finished up the conversation that Jesus was having with the religious leaders after he was challenged for healing a man on the Sabbath.
- And if you remember back to last Sunday, the big question under the surface that Jesus seemed to be responding to was, why should we believe you? Jesus had been making some pretty big claims.
- He claimed to have power and authority to raise people from the dead, to give them eternal life, and to do the work of final judgment on his Father's behalf.
- Why should we believe you? And Jesus told us that his Father has himself been testifying that what Jesus says is true.
- [1 : 0 5] And we talked about some of the ways that the Father has testified about Jesus, his Son. One of the clearest and most significant statements that Jesus made was in chapter 5, verse 36.
- He said, So Jesus made it clear that the evidence that all he is saying is true is the works that he is doing.
- He is doing things which no one but God could do. He is doing things that fulfill the prophecies made long ago.
- This should be taken as confirmation that he is the Son of God. If Jesus is in a courtroom right now and on trial and the world is seated in the rows watching, then according to Jesus, God the Father himself is a witness who brings a testimony.
- And a big part of the testimony of the Father is that he has given Jesus these special works to do, and some of them are miraculous.
- [2 : 2 6] Well, this morning, John wants to tell us about one of those truly spectacular works that Jesus did sometime after this conversation. And even though this particular miracle that we're going to look at today is well known, and it had been included in all the other gospel accounts written before John, John could not leave this out because it was truly amazing.
- Let's read what John writes in chapter 6, starting in verse 1. Sometime after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee.
- That is the Sea of Tiberias. So Jesus is not in Jerusalem anymore. He's gone back into Galilee, and sometime later he's crossed over to the other side or to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee.
- Verse 2, And a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick.
- So there's this vast multitude of people that is now following Jesus as he journeys about. They're following him. They're following him even out into the open country, across lakes.
- [3 : 4 1] And John tells us why. Because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick.

Literally, they were following him because they were seeing the signs that he was doing upon the sick people. Notice a couple things here.

First, Jesus has drawn the attention of this vast multitude, not just because they've heard some good things about him, but because they were seeing.

Like with their eyes, they were seeing repeatedly again and again the signs. The signs plural, not just one sign, but many signs that he was doing upon the sick people.

And again, in the original language, not just one sick person, but sick people plural. Jesus wasn't just fooling a few gullible people here and there until it all swelled up into some hype and excitement, like some of the phony faith healers of our day.

[4 : 51] No. The sense we get here is that people who were sick or ill with all kinds of conditions, sicknesses, diseases, disabilities, they were going out to Jesus from all over the place, either on their own or with the help of family or friends.

They were going out to Jesus and people were seeing repeatedly again and again these illnesses being healed right in front of their eyes by Jesus.

And if you carry a hint of skepticism here, I understand that. There have been many so-called faith healers over the years who have not helped.

If you wrestle with that, I want to encourage you to look closely at many of these modern-day faith healers and their healings and then look closely again at the healings of Jesus, the ones that are recorded in the scriptures.

There's a massive difference. I was watching a short BBC documentary on YouTube just yesterday and they followed this woman named Emily Yates.

[6 : 00] She was born with cerebral palsy and was unable to use her legs for her whole life. She was in a wheelchair. And Emily went to one of these modern-day faith healers, a man by the name of John Meller in Australia.

And I watched in this documentary as he prayed and declared the power of cerebral palsy broken in Jesus' name. At the same time, John had his strong helpers trying to lift this woman up out of her chair onto her feet.

But she wasn't able to stand. She wasn't able even just to support her own weight on her legs, let alone walk.

Even though she hadn't had any pain in her feet prior to going up to the front, Mr. Meller made a big deal of how God had done something because she doesn't have any pain in her feet after standing with the help of two big, strong men for a couple minutes.

Eventually, they had to let Emily sit back down in her wheelchair. And she wheeled herself out of the service, disillusioned and disappointed.

[7 : 17] At the end of it all, this is what she said in tears. She says, I keep hearing of all these amazing miracles that are happening. And all these people with these horrendous illnesses that are getting healed.

And she had attended a number of meetings before she went up to the front. And all we saw was people with sprained ankles and headaches and frozen shoulders feeling better. I went on John Meller's website and ironically, meetings have been suspended due to the coronavirus.

I couldn't help but think, well, if he is able to heal people, why not just go to the hospital and do it for those who are in the hospital right now with coronavirus?

Instead, he's put a 90-second video clip on YouTube where he prays and declares the power of coronavirus broken over whoever is watching.

This is not how Jesus healed people. He didn't do it with a, well, sometimes it works when I pray and ask the Father to do it and sometimes it doesn't.

[8 : 29] No, the people flocked out to him because they were actually seeing people that they knew and loved healed of conditions and illnesses, many which had been permanent and devastating.

They were seeing it happen again and again and again. The lame walking without the help of others after 38 years of being unable to walk.

The man at the pool of Siloam, the blind seeing after decades of not being able to see. These are not the kinds of things that the modern day faith healers do today.

Even the religious leaders saw some of the signs that he'd been performing and they could not refute them. Just as Nicodemus said, we heard this last week, We know that you are a teacher who has come from God.

For no one could perform the signs you are doing unless God were with him. If even Jesus' opponents, many of whom were bent on discrediting him and killing him, getting him killed, if even they had to admit that there were real healings happening and could not disprove his miracles, it tells you something.

[9 : 45] The miracles of healing actually happened. In fact, the other gospel writers tell us that since they couldn't disprove his many miracles of healing, they instead decided to acknowledge that he was doing them, that people were getting healed, but tried to make him look bad by saying it was by the power of the devil that he was doing them.

His miracles of healing were undeniable. And it's one of the big reasons this morning why thousands and thousands of people were following him around the Judean countryside.

So here Jesus is with a huge crowd following him around on the far side of the Sea of Galilee. And John tells us that one particular day, let's read it in verse 3, Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples.

The Jewish Passover festival was near. When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, Where should we buy bread for these people to eat?

He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. Philip answered him, It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite.

[11 : 19] Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, Here's a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish. But how far will they go among so many?

So here Jesus is with a huge crowd coming out to them. And I love this story. I want you to imagine for a moment that you're Philip. And Jesus turns to you as this crowd is coming out and says this to you, Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?

How are you feeling at that moment? How would you like to be put in charge of hospitality for thousands of people out in the middle of nowhere? So what does Philip do?

He decides to do a bit of mental math. And you can almost just imagine his eyes just go wide all of a sudden as he's thinking about this. And then he responds after a minute, It would take more than half a year's wages.

Like half of what I make in a year. More than that. Just to get each person a bite. Most of us have probably been to a wedding or a banquet.

[12 : 44] These things aren't cheap. Even a few hundred people can easily be thousands of dollars. Philip is doing the math here. This is not going to happen.

We can imagine how his mind must have been racing. Do we want to spend that kind of money just to give this huge crowd a little snack? Do we even have that much money in the purse?

Judas. What's the balance? Even if we could afford it, how are we going to get all that bread from the nearest town out here?

I know they ate a different kind of bread back then, but just to get a sense of this in my head, I was just imagining a loaf of wonder bread with 15 slices. Chop each slice up into four pieces.

That's enough for a mouthful for everyone. We're talking like 250 loaves of bread. How are we going to carry all that here?

[13 : 48] Do we rent a cart? Philip is doing the math. Then there's Andrew. We don't know exactly what he's thinking, but at least he has the good sense to figure out what they already have and take a bit of inventory.

Here's a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish. But how far will they go among so many?

And what's funny about this is that John tells us even before Philip and Andrew respond that Jesus was only saying this to test Philip. So what kind of test is this?

What would it mean for Philip to pass the test or fail the test? We don't know. John doesn't even tell us. We're kind of left to guess.

But if there's one thing that Jesus seems to want them to realize, even before the crowd gets here, it's that feeding this large crowd a lunch or a supper or even a light snack is impossible.

[14 : 59] At least by ordinary means. That's the conclusion that Philip really comes to. Half a year's wages wouldn't be enough to buy each one a single bite.

We can't do this, Jesus. It's impossible. Then there's Andrew. Let's take inventory. We've got five little loaves, which are kind of more like buns in this boy's lunch kit, and two little sardines here.

How far will that go among so many? Even if we slice it like this, it's not going to last long.

It's not possible. And perhaps that's what Jesus' testing question was meant to reveal.

John tells us that Jesus knew what he was about to do. Verse 10. Jesus said, Have the people sit down.

[16 : 14] There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down. About 5,000 men were there. Now that's a lot of people. Then we flip over to Matthew's gospel, his record of this very same event, and we read this.

The number of those who ate was about 5,000 men, besides women and children. That's a whole lot more people. I don't know why they just counted the men.

Maybe that was just easier to do in such a large crowd. Some scholars will guess 15,000 to 20,000 people. Who knows?

Not everybody had probably a wife or a child or husband who was there, and some probably brought the whole family. So let's just be conservative and imagine that it was 10,000 people, with all the women and children included.

And let's try and visualize this. Here's a picture of 3,000 people in a theater. Don't miss the people in the balcony.

[17 : 18] There's probably tons of them up there that we can hardly see. Times that by three-ish. 10,000 people.

Here's a picture of 10,000 people at a sporting event. Again, don't miss the people that are way up here in the back there. And then there's all the people out of the shot, out of the picture, on this side of the stadium that are watching.

10,000 people. If you've been to Mosaic Stadium in Regina, what does it hold? I think 30,000 or something like that.

Imagine a third of Mosaic Stadium packed. That's a lot of people. Have the people sit down, says Jesus.

Okay. Verse 11. Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted.

[18 : 23] He did the same with the fish. When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.

So they gathered them and filled 12 baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. You read that and it's like, hold on a second here.

Like, what just happened? Jesus takes the five loaves and the two fish. He gives thanks. He prays and thanks God for the provision of them.

And then they begin to distribute them in the baskets to 10,000 or possibly more people. And it says that each of those people had as much as they wanted to eat.

And then after all that, there were 12 baskets filled with the pieces left over. What just happened here? Out in the middle of nowhere, Jesus miraculously multiplies a boy's lunch to feed 10,000 or more people as much as they wanted to eat.

[19 : 36] And at the end, there was even more left over than they started with. This is impossible. I was thinking about this.

I would challenge any and all of the world's best magicians to come together to a location of my choosing. They wouldn't know what's happening in advance.

And then when they get there, say, okay, we got 10,000 people coming in 30 minutes and you have to feed them all. Here's five loaves and two fish. They couldn't do it.

Penn and Teller, David Blaine, David Copperfield, Houdini, they couldn't do it. This is impossible by any ordinary ways of doing things.

What Jesus did that day was supernatural. It was a true miracle.

[20 : 36] Something only the power of God could do. It's one of those miracles, probably more than any of the others, that I wish that I could have just been there to see what happened.

How did it look up close? Were the loaves just kind of growing back as they were pulling pieces off of them? Did they all close their eyes to pray and then bam, all the baskets just started bubbling up with fish and loaves out of thin air?

Where did the bread and the fish come from? The only thing that the disciples could point to was the five loaves and two fish that they had started with.

They couldn't describe it. Think about the size of that crowd. They would have needed more fish than they had caught when Peter first came to follow Jesus and the boats were sinking.

As far as miraculous goes, this is a whole other level. Back there in the sea, Jesus made all these fish appear where they couldn't be seen down under the water and then, oh, there they are in the nets.

[21 : 51] Fish live in the water. This is a whole other level. Jesus causes all of this food to appear out of nowhere, right out of thin air, on land, fish on land.

It's amazing. It was a phenomenal sign from God, a work that God gave Jesus to do that testifies that Jesus has indeed been sent by his Father, by God, and is the Son of God.

For those who will only believe what they can see and touch and taste and feel, it doesn't get any more tangible than this.

Each of them there that day had the evidence that Jesus was sent from God in their hands, in their mouths, in between their teeth, in their stomachs, and not just a little bit, but as much as they wanted, John tells us.

It's as though the call for seconds and thirds and fourths went out, and eventually people just stopped asking for more. They were full. Got me thinking about the Olive Garden restaurant.

- [23 : 09] When you go there, they give you this warm, freshly baked bread, and their thing at Olive Garden is that you can have as much of that bread as you want, and as much salad as you want, and then your meal comes, even after you finish the main course, you can keep asking for more bread.

It's bottomless there. It's unlimited. But eventually you have to stop asking because even though the supply is endless, you can only eat so much. Jesus made that kind of a meal moment happen for 10,000 people out in the middle of the Judean countryside.

And the people recognized that this was a miracle. Verse 14. After the people saw the sign Jesus had performed, they began to say, surely this is the prophet who is to come into the world.

Not just any prophet or a small p prophet, but the prophet, the one Moses wrote about. Back in Deuteronomy 18, God told Moses about a coming prophet.

The Lord said to me, what they say is good. I will raise up for them a prophet like you, Moses, from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put, this is the Lord speaking, I will put my words in his mouth.

- [24 : 41] He will tell them everything I command him. I myself will call to account, says the Lord, anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name.

The people that day didn't just see a miracle, they participated in it. And they understood that it was a sign from God. At least some of them, if not many, they began to say, this is the one that God told Moses he was going to send, the prophet.

Verse 15, Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

What a response from the people. Not just the prophet, but the Messiah, the son of David, the one who would be king and sit on David's throne. It seems like that's what many of them were thinking.

So much so that John tells us they were literally about to come and grab him and so that they could make him king. The time sense is a little unclear here.

- [25 : 52] It could be that this was right after the miracle or it could be that the, this was after the crowd had gone home and word began to spread about Jesus and perhaps they started thinking, man, we got to go back there.

We got to get him. We got to start the coronation right now and march this guy up to Jerusalem. I'm not sure which it is, but it seems at this moment, one thing is for sure, they wanted to get Jesus installed as their new king as soon as possible.

But again, we see that Jesus knows what's going on in the hearts and minds of people. He knew that was their intent and so knowing this, it says he withdrew by himself again to, to a mountain.

We might wonder exactly why Jesus didn't just go along with it, but I imagine he probably would have said something like, my hour has not yet come or the son of man came to give his life as a ransom for many.

As we'll see in the weeks ahead, many of the people in the crowd that day may have believed something true about Jesus, but many of their, many of those people's faith in him, there's something not quite right about it.

- [27 : 15] We'll continue the story next Sunday. But what's here for us this morning? Well, again, if you're here this morning and you're not sure if you fully believe in Jesus, maybe you're kind of sitting on the fence, maybe you believe in part or some things, but not all of it.

Maybe you're skeptical about some of the miracles. Maybe you just feel like you're not ready to surrender your whole life to him, to give your whole heart to him. I want to ask you this morning, do you see the amazing sign that Jesus did that day?

The people were right. He was and is the prophet that God told Moses was coming long ago. one who would speak God's very words to people.

That's what the miracle that he did points to. That he is that one. Do you hear the words that God spoke long ago through Moses?

I myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name. Whether you believe Jesus' words and listen to them, take them seriously, respond to them, obey them, has serious implications.

[28 : 53] So if you're sitting on the faith fence and maybe only kind of believe, I want to call you today in the presence of God to get off the fence and to put your full trust in Jesus, to embrace him and everything that he said is true.

For the rest of us who do believe like that, I don't know about you, but this is one of the miracles of Jesus that we are most familiar with.

And I'll be honest, even as I was preparing to preach or before I had started my preparation, I was kind of thinking the feeding of the 5,000. I have heard so many sermons on the feeding of the 5,000.

I've read this so many times. What could I possibly say to make this fresh for us this morning? Sometimes we just get so familiar with things that we lose the wonder of what happened that day.

Maybe not lose the wonder of what Jesus did that day for that massive crowd of people. even as I got thinking about that, I started to wonder, maybe that's part of the problem for many of us at different times and in different seasons of life.

[30 : 13] Perhaps even for some of us today. We've become so familiar with the story of Jesus that we've lost the wonder of much of it.

It doesn't live in our hearts like it used to. It doesn't spark the wonder and amazement and joy and thanksgiving to God like it used to. And then I got thinking about how losing the wonder of Jesus can affect every area of our lives.

Joyful service of Christ becomes begrudging duty. A feeling of strength and energy in our relationship with Jesus becomes a feeling of tiredness and weariness.

Joy is replaced with boredom. Thanksgiving is replaced with a quiet grumbling and discontentment. Being a Christian easily changes into being all about what we need to do for God now rather than about what he has done and continues to do and has yet promised to do for us.

Heartfelt prayer is replaced with just repetitious sayings that we do out of habit before a meal or before bed. Going to church becomes mainly about just seeing other people rather than to sing to and hear from Christ himself.

[31 : 41] And evangelism sharing the good news of Jesus with others well let's put it this way we like to share with people what we are most excited about.

we like to talk to people about what does live in our hearts what gives us that feeling of wonder and so if it isn't Jesus anymore then what is it?

Movies? Television? Politics? News? the latest purchase?

Our current project? If Jesus had come in our day and he did this miracle we would have caught it on camera probably we'd have these phones just imagine him doing it at Mosaic Stadium and you were there it would have gone viral social media would be on fire why should we believe Jesus?

Look at the things that he did the signs that he performed all things that point to this wonderful truth that God himself has sent him into the world because he desires a relationship with you have you lost the wonder of our Savior if you have do you want it back?

[33 : 17] There's lots of reasons why we might lose the wonder of Jesus maybe like Jesus said in the parable of the sower it's the weeds that are choking out the word of God so that you're not really hearing from him anymore like you used to things like the worries of this life the deceitfulness of wealth or simply the desires for other things which Jesus says can come in and choke out the word there could be lots of reasons but I think whatever the reason it is for you whether you know it or not Jesus would simply say probably the same kind of thing to you what should you do to get back the wonder come to me come to me come to me all you who are weary and burdened come to me all you who are thirsty hungry those of you who long for more in life and I will give you what you've been missing what you've been lacking how do we do that we do that very simply through prayer it's a humble prayer and opening his word to read and reflect on what

Christ has said to us as we do that in faith in humility God's spirit makes his word fresh and he puts the wonder into our hearts again and he keeps it there so let's do that together now Lord Jesus we come to you as a church Lord you know each of our unique situations and exactly what's been going on in our hearts this week we come to you now you know what we long for you know what we desire we want a living and vibrant relationship with you we want the joy that we read about so often in the scriptures and that we heard you talk about we want the deep needs of our souls met and so we come to you would you meet us here would you bring back the wonder that maybe some of us have lost and would you sustain that in us not just for a moment but for throughout this whole week let it spill out of our lives too especially as we bump into people neighbors friends co-workers we ask this in Jesus name amen and turn board up in