

The Rescuer we Really Need

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[0 : 00] Our passage today are the very famous stories of the feeding of the 5,000 and Jesus walking on water. Two very, very famous stories.

And for us here at Holy Trinity, I think they'll be quite difficult for us. Difficult because for us in this room, we know our Bibles really well. And there's a danger that we become so overly familiar with these stories that we'll miss what the author is trying to say.

So let me show you. Here is one sermon. Jesus miraculously feeds 5,000 people with the loaves and the fishes. Then he casually walks on the water, as you do, to God-only miracles.

Therefore, he must be the Son of God. And so believe in him, the end. Now that was 34 words.

Maybe you're wishing that that was the end, but it's not.

But we're going to need another sermon because John has laced these ordinary Bible stories with some extraordinary detail.

[1 : 04] Some extraordinary truths that we will miss if we're too overly familiar. So shall I pray that we wouldn't miss? Let me pray quickly and we'll start.

Father God, we thank you that here at this church we know our Bibles really well. Thank you that we know these stories. But Father, please help us not to become too overly familiar.

Please help us not to miss what you and John are trying to teach us. In Jesus' name. Amen. You should have a handout there, which does a lot of the work today.

And if you could please keep your Bibles open, that would really be helpful. So we're at point one.

So far in the story of John's Gospel, Jesus has attracted loads of religious opposition.

We saw that last week. But the crowds, the crowds don't seem to be too bothered. Verse 2, they followed Jesus because they saw the signs he had performed by healing those who were ill.

[2 : 06] Jesus sees the crowds. He realizes they need something to eat. So verse 5, when Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming towards him, he said to Philip, where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?

Philip, one of the disciples, he realizes the enormity of the problem because he sees the enormity of the crowd. God has a go in verse 7. He says, it would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have just a bite.

Another of Jesus' disciples in verse 8, Andrew. Andrew is equally hopeless. In verse 9, he says, here's a boy with five small barley loaves and the two fish. But how far will they go among so many?

And so Jesus steps in. Verse 11, he took the loaves, gave thanks, distributed to those who were seated. As much as they wanted. 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. We're told there were 5,000 men.

[3 : 17] So actually, with the women and children, let's call it 10,000 people. 10,000 mouths to feed that day. And we're told that everyone had as much as they wanted. And so I reckon on average that's two sandwiches per person.

As much as they wanted. And so for 10,000 mouths, that's two sandwiches a person. That's 20,000 sandwiches, which is 40,000 slices of bread.

So there's a slide. Thank you. This is my math. Now, the average loaf of bread has 20 slices, not including those terrible edge pieces.

You know, the crusty bits on the ends. And so here's one loaf here. There you go. Now, everyone, this is white bread. Don't be alarmed. It won't hurt you.

I know some of you haven't seen white bread in a long time. There it is there, white bread. You will need 2,000 loaves of tip top for 20,000 sandwiches.

[4 : 19] And what that looks like is this. So here's a loaf of bread. And here's a loaf of bread.

And here's a loaf of bread. And here's a loaf of bread. And here's a loaf of bread. And here's a loaf of bread. And here's a loaf of bread.

And here's a loaf of bread. Right. Well, you better not do it anymore. Thank you. I'm having a garden. Thanks. So that was eight loaves of bread I gave him.

And that went on and on for a while. And he could obviously barely carry it. Jesus produced 2,000 loaves of bread that day. Imagine how many, how long that would have gone on for.

2,000 loaves of bread to feed 10,000 people. Miraculous stuff, isn't it? We forget. We just see these things and we forget how much and what Jesus did that day.

[5 : 19] Miraculous stuff. Let's not forget that Jesus walked on water as well. Now, the laws of physics state that a human being cannot walk on water at room temperature.

But the eyewitness testimony in verse 19 clearly says, They saw. They saw. That's eyewitness testimony.

They saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water, and they were frightened. Again, miraculous stuff. Here are two miracles or signs from Jesus.

And John tells us, you can see even on that screen just there, underneath the words Gospel of John. That's his main point. John tells us that he has carefully or deliberately used specific signs. Why? So that we may believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. And that by believing, we may have life. We may have eternal life in Jesus' name.

[6 : 19] And it seems that that day, the crowds have begun to catch on. Verse 14. After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, surely this is the prophet who has come into the world.

And so there is the sermon. That's the sermon finished. Be like the crowds. Follow Jesus. The end. However, obviously we're not done.

Because these two signs, the feeding of the 5,000, the walking on the water, they are used by pretty much all the Gospel writers in the books.

And so if we are to be driven to real belief, not a superficial one like the crowds. If we're to be driven to a belief that leads to eternal life, we need to really understand how John is using the signs.

How John is telling his version of the story. And to help us, we're going to watch a clip. Thanks, Barry. Oh no, sound. Come behold his mighty hand, says Charlton Heston.

[7 : 28] It's alright. It's alright. The wind opens the sea.

God opens the sea with the blast of his nostrils. Great. Fantastic movie, by the way.

They don't make movies like that anymore. And part of the reason is because that movie goes for three hours and 40 minutes. So it's fantastic. It's quite accurate to the Bible, in fact.

But if they did make movies like that, then today's passage would be the sequel. Because time and time again, John uses his story to point back to that more famous story.

Do you know the story of the Exodus, when God rescues his people from slavery in Egypt? Exodus is all about rescue. God rescuing his people. And I've put a table on your handout, which does a lot of the work, really.

[8 : 50] And it shows the links between Exodus 6 from John and the details in John 6 to the Exodus story.

We won't go through all of them, but I'll just pick out a few. So in Exodus, there was a great multitude of people following Moses. In John 6, verse 2, it says, The great crowds following Jesus, God's other man.

In Exodus, the first Passover was observed, when God's judgment passed over his people onto the Lamb. Remember that? But in verse 4, John tells us something similar is happening.

He says, The Jewish Passover festival was near. See, he's raising the expectation in the reader. In Exodus, when the crowds were hungry, do you remember how Moses fed the crowds?

With the manna, or the bread from heaven. Notice in verse 11, Jesus took loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated. Again, miraculous bread from heaven.

[9 : 56] In Exodus, they were filled with the bread. The story emphasized how everyone gathers as much as they needed. And the same emphasis on abundance is there in verse 11.

It says they had as much as they wanted. Verse 12, When they had all had enough to eat. And in verse 13, we're told there were 12 baskets full of pieces left over.

Another key moment in Exodus was from that movie clip, when God enables them to walk through the Red Sea. And did you realize what event John puts right after the feeding of the 5,000? John walking on water. Another miraculous water crossing. See how John has arranged this material? Very deliberate. You can imagine Jesus and Moses in heaven, can't you? And Moses says to Jesus, Yeah, that day, it was amazing. I walked right through the sea. And Jesus says, That's nothing, mate. I walked right on top of it. I was in Israel last month, as some of you know.

[11:01] And when we visited the Sea of Galilee, this is true actually, this actually happened. A huge storm came out of nowhere. And the winds were, I think, around 70 kilometers an hour. So pretty hairy stuff.

It was pretty bad. And lots of people ran for cover, except for me. I sensed my opportunity. I went down to the edge of the sea. And my feet were all wet and everything. And I stood on a boulder. And there's a photo of it here. That's me. And I stood up and I went, Peace, be still. And do you know what happened? Nothing at all happened.

Nothing at all happened. Evidently, I am not Jesus. Which is obviously, yeah. But, thanks, Barry. But do you see what's going on here?

The exodus from Egypt is the biggest rescue in the Bible. Until now, says John. Because John uses a nifty bit of narration to make the point that the exodus is about to happen again.

[12:03] And why? Because Jesus is the new rescuer. The Old Testament passage we heard, that helps make the point as well. That was from Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 18, from way back again from Moses' time. Moses announced a day when God would send a prophet. One like me, says Moses. And the crowds, the crowds are starting to make the link.

Verse 14 says, After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, Surely this is the prophet, from Deuteronomy 18, who has come into the world.

Moses says, You must listen to that prophet, because God will put his words into his mouth. And the prophet will only tell people what God commands. And isn't that what Jesus says about his words?

And what he does? He only says and does things revealed to him by his father. That was from chapter 5 last week. The point is that sons follow their fathers.

[13:06] Just look over the page, across the page actually, to 5 verse 19. Verse 19. Very truly I tell you, the son can do nothing by himself. He can only do, can do only what he sees his father doing.

Because whatever the father does, the son also does. And what does the son do? 5 verse 24. This is the rescue. Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my words, and believes him who sent me, there's that prophet language, but here is the rescue, has eternal life, and will not be judged, but has crossed over from death to life.

And this is the most important link, I think, to Exodus. Just as God rescued Israel from judgment for a promised land, so too Jesus, the son of God, at the Passover time, announces a rescue from judgment for eternal life.

Jesus is the rescuer. And that is another sermon. We squeezed a lot of information there, out from the passage. Well done everyone.

Lots of information about Jesus, enough for you to believe in him. He is the new rescuer. However, obviously that's not the end of the sermon, because John is not done with us just yet.

[14:26] Because John wants to challenge our belief. He wants to challenge our belief to something beyond our overly familiar positions. And this is our second point.

You see, John wants us to feel the tension of our wants versus our needs. Do you know that tension? Maybe you feel it when you go shopping. I really want that pair of shoes, but do I really need it?

I really, how much money do you want? How much money do you need? What sort of Bible teaching do you want? What sort of Bible teaching do you need?

And here is the punchline. What sort of rescue do you want from Jesus? What sort of rescue do you need? The crowd, they wanted Jesus to rescue them from sickness.

Verse 2. And a great crowd of people followed him. Why? Because they saw the signs he performed by healing those who were ill. The same crowd wanted Jesus to rescue them from their social and political problems.

[15 : 31] Verse 15. They tried to make him king by force. See, they will follow him. The crowds will follow Jesus, but only as long as he gives them what they want.

The rescues they want. So let me ask you, if Jesus suddenly became a genie, and as genies do, you know, they grant three wishes, what would be your wishes from Jesus?

What would be the rescue that you want? Would it be a rescue from issues of getting older, such as dementia? A rescue from things like stroke or aged care?

Would it be a rescue from all the anxiety you have about your children? Would it be a rescue from your loneliness? Or from your marriage?

Or maybe a rescue for your marriage? Would it be a rescue from your body because of self-esteem issues or sickness, like the crowd?

[16 : 33] Maybe you're like me. Every time you turn on the news, you think, wow, the world has gone mad. I say that a lot. And what you really want is a social or political rescue, just like the crowds in verse 15.

See, maybe you are here, and maybe you identify with the crowds. I want this. I want that. Maybe you wouldn't call yourself a believer, but you're happy to follow Jesus as long as he grants your wants, your wishes, just like a genie.

You know the genie, you rub the lamp, I want this, I want that. When the crowds try to fit the real Jesus in their pockets, here's the warning, verse 15.

It says, he knows, and he withdraws. He withdraws from them. That's the warning, and here's the sting. Even if Jesus gave us the rescues we wanted, who is going to rescue us from death to life? Who is going to rescue us when we face God's opinion on our lives? That is the real measure of rescue in the Bible, to save you from God's judgment for eternal life.

[17 : 56] From God's judgment when it falls, like it did at the Passover, for eternal life. That's the rescue that all people need, but not always the rescue they want.

And so people refuse to believe in Jesus. Jesus' agenda is always more necessary. His rescue always more eternal from judgment for eternal life.

He bends the laws of physics that day to prove he can do it. He withdraws from the people to back up his agenda. And being clear about Jesus' agenda will help us as a church and our agenda.

There's always going to be pressure to be about sort of social justice rescues. Of course we are to serve in our community. Of course we are. But being clear of Jesus' agenda, it puts a priority on the ministries we get involved with.

Do they include something about Jesus' rescue, about escape from judgment, or do they stop at worldly rescues? There's the crowds. Maybe because you're a Christian, which is most of us, maybe because you're a Christian, you identify with the other characters, the disciples, Philip and Andrew.

[19 : 21] They didn't just follow Jesus, they believed in him too. Maybe that is you as well. Did you notice what Jesus did to his disciples? Have a look at verse 5. When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming towards him, he said to Philip, where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?

And here it is. He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. Here is a test for us. Imagine you're standing next to Jesus but don't have enough food.

What are you going to do? That's the test. You see, I think we're supposed to say something like this. Jesus, the last time you were at a feast, which was the wedding in Cana, a few chapters earlier, you provided abundantly.

And I don't know how you're going to do it again today, but you're here and so I trust there'll be no problem. I think that's the test. And let's see what Philip does.

Verse 7, Philip answered him, it would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite. Another disciple has a go. Verse 8, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother spoke up.

[20 : 29] He is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many? They kept focusing on the problems, not the solution. And we know that they failed the test because there's a warning for them as well.

And it's a warning, I suppose, for us. Verse 3, Jesus started the story on a mountain with his disciples. But notice how he finishes, verse 15, again on a mountainside but alone.

Jesus withdraws from people who refuse to believe in him and who refuse to trust in him. Life is really tough for us.

We're even for believers. We're not immune from crying. We're always asking God for a rescue.

We're not immune from the suffering of this age.

We were praying for things just a moment ago. Part of belief will be to trust Jesus when we're faced with this suffering. To trust Jesus' agenda and not our own.

[21 : 41] That would be passing the test, the test of faith. Of course, it's not wrong to pray for healing. Of course, it's not. Jesus says we should pray.

We did it just before. Lots of the things we pray for aren't things that we could just easily want. They are things we need, such as healing. Our prayers will always reach the ears of a father who loves us.

Of course, we should pray. But when we struggle to trust Jesus or we don't think he's giving us the rescue we want or he won't fit in our pockets like a genie, let's not think Jesus uncompassionate or indifferent to our problems.

Let's realize Jesus has a much more necessary agenda from which he will not be diverted. See, according to Jesus' agenda, anyone in our church struggling with depression or anxiety can be rescued from God's judgment.

According to Jesus' agenda, anyone in our church trapped by despair or sickness can have eternal life even if they're suffering now.

[22 : 55] Every suffering disciple at Holy Trinity will receive eternal life if we keep trusting in Jesus. His agenda is so much more than anything we could want because in his agenda he gives us the rescue we need.

So should I pray for us? Praise and glory be to Jesus. We thank you Lord Jesus for your power, for your ability to rescue.

And we thank you that you don't bow to our will to give us everything we want. Please help us to trust you for the serious things that we long for.

And we thank you that you give us the most profound rescue we need to enable us to live with you and the Father forever. We thank you in your name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.