

The Rescuer we Really Need

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[0 : 0 0] our passage today is the two famous stories of Jesus feeding the 5,000 and then walking on water. Two very famous stories in the Bible. And the difficulty, I think, in a church like Holy Trinity is that we know our Bible so well that we miss what John is trying to say because we're so overly familiar with these stories. So here's one sermon for you. Jesus miraculously feeds 5,000 people with loaves and fishes. Then he casually walks on water, as you do. And they are two God-only miracles.

Therefore, Jesus must be the Son of God. So believe in him, the end. That's one sermon. That took 34 words. But I think what we're going to need is another sermon because John has laced these ordinary stories with extraordinary truths. Truths we'll miss if we're too overly familiar when listening. So shall I just pray again quickly that we won't miss them? Let me just pray again really quickly.

Father, thank you that we all know our Bibles well. Thank you that we know these stories. But Father, help us not to miss the extraordinary truths and challenges that you and John are trying to tell us. In your name. Amen.

You should have a handout there, which does a lot of work for you as well. And if you keep your Bibles open, that would really help me. We're at point number one. You see, so far in John's Gospel, Jesus has attracted lots of religious opposition.

But the crowds don't seem too bothered. In verse 2, it says, They followed him because they saw the signs that he had performed by healing those who were ill. Jesus realizes that this crowd needs to eat.

[1 : 5 1] And so in verse 5, when Jesus looked up and saw the great crowd coming towards him, he said to Philip, Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat? Philip, he sees the enormity of the problem.

So in verse 7, he says, It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite. Verse 8, another of the disciples, Andrew, who's equally hopeless.

He says in verse 9, Here's a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish. But how far will they go among so many? And so Jesus steps in.

Verse 11, He took the loaves, gave thanks, and 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 the twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. We're told that there were 5,000 men.

[2 : 5 3] Now, that means, I think, if you add in the women and children, let's say 10,000 mouths to feed. And Tina, please, there's a slide there. This is my maths. So to feed 5,000 men or 10,000 people, 10,000 mouths, it says that everyone ate as much as they needed, which I think, let's say two sandwiches per person.

Okay? And now that equals 20,000 sandwiches, because 10,000 times two, yep. 20,000 sandwiches, which is 40,000 slices of bread, not including, you know, those horrible end pieces of the loaf of bread.

Right. So what you'll need to make 40,000 slices of bread is 2,000 loaves of bread. And here is a loaf of bread.

This is, what is this? Wonder White. This is for our barbecue a little bit later, so I better not squash it. This is white bread. Don't be alarmed. I know some of you haven't seen white bread in a long time.

This won't hurt you. But to feed, to make 40,000 slices of bread for the 20,000 sandwiches, you need 2,000 loaves of this stuff.

[4 : 09] To show you what 2,000 loaves of bread looks like, I'm going to call on Naomi to help me. So Naomi, can you come to the front row there? This is what 2,000 loaves looks like. And here's a loaf. And here's a loaf.

And here's a loaf. And here's a loaf. You better help me. She's quite late. And here's a loaf. Oh, sorry, that's bad.

And here's a loaf. And here's a loaf. Now, we'll stop there. Thanks, guys. You can just... It's a little spot. It's for a sausage. It's a little spot. So what I did, that was nine loaves of bread.

Jesus fed enough people, he needed 2,000 loaves of bread. Do you get the scale of what we're talking about? Miraculous stuff. Stuff we'll miss.

We just read these stories. But you miss the enormity of what Jesus did. What about the next story? Jesus walked on water. Now, the laws of physics tell us...

[5 : 10] The laws of physics tell us that a human being cannot walk on water at room temperature. Yet, the eyewitness testimony of verse 19...

Have a look. Verse 19, it clearly says, They saw... They saw... It'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. John tells us in chapter 20, which is actually there on the screen. John has deliberately used these signs so that we may believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

And that by believing, you may have life. Have eternal life in Jesus' name. And it seems the crowds that day, they've started to catch on.

Verse 14, After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, Surely this is the prophet who is to come into the world. And so there is the sermon.

[6 : 14] That's the end. Be like the crowds. Follow Jesus. The end. How about that? Maybe I should sit down. However, these two signs are used by almost all the gospel writers in all four, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

And so if we are to be driven to real belief, not a superficial one, but a real belief that leads to life, we need to see how John executes his story.

And to help us, we're going to watch a film. Thanks, Tina. Sound? Sound? Sound? Sound? Behold his mighty hand!

The wind opens the sea.

God opens the sea with the blast of his nostrils. Lead them through the midst of the waters.

[7 : 44] His will be done. He opens the waters before them and he bars our way with fire. Let us go from this place.

Men cannot fight against a god. Better to die in battle with a god than live in shame. Raise God and down into it. Thanks for seeing that song.

Excellent stuff that is. They don't make movies like that anymore, do they? And part of the reason is that movie goes for three hours and 40 minutes. It's a fantastic film, The Ten Commandments.

Actually, it's very accurate to the Bible, so I do recommend you watch it. We're doing Exodus in some of my Bible study groups and I keep threatening that we're going to watch that film. And I think we should, but it's quite a long one.

But they don't make movies like that anymore. And part of the reason they don't is because, as I said, the time. But if they did make movies like that, then today's passage would be the sequel.

[8 : 43] Today's passage would be the sequel. Because John uses his famous events, feeding the 5,000, walking on water, to point back to an even more famous event, the Exodus.

Do you remember the Exodus story? Where God rescues his people from slavery in Egypt? Exodus is all about rescue. And on your handout, what I've done is put a table there to show you how over and over and over again, John references the Exodus story.

And we won't have time to go through all of those elements, but we'll just do a few. So in Exodus, there was a great multitude following God's man. Here in verse 2, there are great crowds following God's man.

In Exodus, the first Passover was observed. Remember the Passover? God's judgment passed over his people to the Lamb. Notice what John says in verse 4.

Just out of the blue, the Jewish Passover festival was near. He's raising the same expectation in the reader. In Exodus, remember when the crowds were hungry?

[9 : 52] How did Moses feed them? We're told, manna or bread from heaven. Verse 11, Jesus took loaves, gave thanks and distributed to those who were seated.

Again, miraculous bread seemingly from heaven. In Exodus, they were filled with bread. We were told the Israelites gathered up as much as they needed.

Here, the same emphasis is on abundance. Verse 11 says they ate as much as they wanted. Verse 12, when they had all had enough to eat.

And in verse 13 says there were 12 baskets left over. Another key moment in Exodus was from that movie clip. When God enables them to walk through the Red Sea.

Do you notice what events John puts right after the feeding of the 5,000? Jesus walking on water. Again, two miraculous water crossings.

[10 : 50] Can you imagine Moses and Jesus in heaven together? And Moses says to Jesus, yeah, I was there that day. Amazing. We walked through the sea. And Jesus says, mate, that's nothing.

I walked on the sea. Fantastic stuff. I was in Israel last month, as some of you know. And when we visited the Sea of Galilee, and this actually happened, this is true.

A huge storm came out of nowhere. And the winds were about 70 kilometers an hour. It was pretty bad, actually. Lots of people ran for cover. But me, I sensed my opportunity.

So I walked down. There's a photo on the next slide. But I walked down to the sea, stood on a boulder. And you can see all the waves crashing on the rocks. And I said, peace, be still.

And you know what happened? Nothing happened. Nothing at all. The storm kept going. Clearly, clearly, I'm not Jesus. Obviously.

[11 : 47] Obviously. But do you see what John is doing? The exodus from Egypt, the exodus from Egypt is the greatest rescue in the Bible.

Until now. When John uses a nifty bit of narration to make the point that the exodus is about to happen again.

Why? Because Jesus is the new rescuer. The better Moses. The Old Testament reading we heard from Allison. That was from Deuteronomy.

It makes the same point. Deuteronomy 18. From the time of Moses. Moses says, don't worry. One day God will send the prophets. He will be one like me.

He says. One like Moses. The crowds have made that link. They say in verse 14. Surely this is the prophet. He was to come into the world. Moses says, you must listen to this prophet.

[12 : 44] Because God will put God's words in his mouth. He will only tell people what God commands. And doesn't that help to describe what Jesus says about his own words?

And what he does? He says. He only says and does what the father reveals to him. That was last week. The point is that sons follow their fathers.

Have a look over across the page. Verse 19. Across the page. Five. Verse 19. Very truly I tell you. The son can do nothing by himself. It can do only what he sees his father doing.

Because whatever the father does. The son does also. And what does the son do? Just as the father rescues. So the son rescues. Here is the son's rescue.

Verse 24. Chapter 5. Verse 24. Very truly I tell you. Whoever hears my word. And believes him who sent me. There's the prophets. Here's the rescue.

[13 : 40] Has eternal life. And will not be judged. But has crossed from death to life. This is the most important link to Exodus.

The Exodus story. Just as God rescued Israel from judgment. Passover. For a promised land. So too Jesus at Passover time.

Rescues people from God's judgment for eternal life. Do you see how well that parallels together? From judgment for eternal life. Why? Because Jesus is the rescuer.

And that is the end. That's another sermon right there. That's the end of the sermon. We squeezed a lot out of that passage. Well done everyone. The point being. You've got lots of information.

Enough to believe in Jesus. So go ahead and go away and believe in Jesus. However. Obviously that's not the end of the sermon. Because John is not just finished.

[14 : 38] Finished just yet. Because John wants to challenge. Belief. He wants to challenge. What we think belief is. He wants to move us.

Out of our. Overly familiar positions. To a point of. Real belief. And this is our second point. To help us with belief. John.

Is going to help us feel the tension. Between what we want. And what we need. Do you know that tension? Do you ever feel it when you're at Westfield. And you're thinking. I really want this pair of shoes. But do I really need them?

You know. Wants. Verse needs. 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 today. What sort of rescue do you want from Jesus? What sort of rescue do you need? The crowds that day. They wanted Jesus to rescue them from sickness.

[15 : 35] Verse 2. A great crowd of people followed him. Why? Because they saw the signs he performed by healing those who were ill. They wanted a rescue from sickness.

They wanted a rescue from social and political problems. Verse 15. They tried to make Jesus king by force. Give us freedom, Jesus. They will follow him.

But only as long as Jesus does what they want. Imagine if Jesus was a genie. You know a genie. You rub the lamp.

He comes out and he gives you the three wishes. Do you ever think about what would you do if you had three wishes? What rescue would you wish for from Jesus? Would it be a rescue from issues of getting older?

Such as dementia? Rescue from things like stroke and aged care? Would it be a rescue from all the anxiety you have about your children?

[16 : 35] What jobs they will have? Where they're going to live? Who they'll marry? The temptations they will face? All the children anxieties. Would it be a rescue from your loneliness? Maybe a rescue from your marriage?

Maybe a rescue for your marriage? What about work issues and the depression associated? A rescue from that, please?

Would it be a rescue from your body because of self-esteem issues or sickness like the people in verse 2? I wonder if you're like me.

You know when you turn on the news and you think the world has gone mad? I do that all the time. Would it be a rescue from social and political problems like the people in verse 15? You see, maybe you identify with the crowds.

You wouldn't call yourself a believer, but you're happy to follow as long as Jesus does what you want. As long as he grants your wishes like a genie.

[17 : 36] You know, you rub the lamp. I want this. I want that. When the crowds try to fit the real Jesus in their pocket, here's the warning.

Verse 15. He knows. He knows, it says. He knows their agenda. And what does he do? He withdraws. He knows your agenda and he withdraws.

That's the warning. And here's the sting. Even if Jesus gave us all the rescues we want, who is going to rescue you from death to life?

Who is going to rescue you when you face God's opinion of your life? This is the real measure of rescue. To save you from God's judgment when it falls, as it did at the Passover, for eternal life.

From judgment for eternal life. That's the real measure of a rescue, according to the Bible. That's the rescue that all people need. That's the rescue that all people need. But not always the one they want.

[18 : 41] And so they refuse to believe in Jesus. His agenda is always more necessary. His rescue always more eternal. More abundant. There's lots of abundance in that passage.

From God's judgment. From God's judgment for eternal life. He bends the laws of physics to prove he can do it. He withdraws from the crowds to demonstrate his own agenda.

And being clear about Jesus' agenda is really helpful for us as a church. There's always going to be pressure for us to be about social justice rescues.

Now, of course, we should be involved in the problems of our community. Of course we should. But being clear of Jesus' agenda just puts a priority on our ministries here at Holy Trinity.

Do our ministries involve something about Jesus' rescue? Or do they stop at worldly rescues? That's the crowds.

[19 : 43] Maybe because you're a Christian, you identify with the other characters, the disciples. Philip and Andrew. They didn't just follow Jesus. They believed in Jesus. Maybe that's you too.

Did you notice what Jesus did to the disciples? Have a look at verse 5 and 6. When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming towards him, he said to Philip, Where shall we buy food for these people to eat?

Here it is, verse 6. He asked this only to test him. For he already had in mind what he was going to do. So here's a test for you. Imagine you're standing next to Jesus and also thousands of people who all need something to eat.

What would you do? There's the test. What would you do? I think to pass the test, you've got to do something like this. Jesus, last time we were at a feast, you came to the rescue.

Do you remember the wedding at Canaan? Just four chapters early. Jesus came to the rescue, water to wine. We don't know how you're going to do it, but you're here and so we trust you to provide.

[20 : 48] I think that's how you pass the test. Let's see how the disciples go. So, verse 7, Philip answered, It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to eat or to have a bite.

Another of his disciples, Andrew, has a go. Verse 9, Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many? And we know they failed the test because the warning is there for them as well.

Jesus starts in verse 3 on a mountain with his disciples. Notice how he finishes the story, verse 15. Again on a mountainside, but alone.

He withdraws when people fail to trust him, when they fail to believe in him. Jesus withdraws from them. Life is so tough.

Even for believers, we're always crying out for a rescue. We're not immune from the sufferings of this age, not by any stretch. But part of real belief is to trust Jesus, to trust his agenda when faced with that suffering.

[22 : 01] That would be passing the test. Of course it's not wrong to pray for healing and well-being. Jesus tells us we should pray for those horrible things.

These are not simply things we want, are they? Healing is something we need. Of course we should pray. Our prayers will always reach the ears of a heavenly father who loves us.

But when we struggle to trust Jesus, or Jesus doesn't give you the rescue you want, or he won't fit into our pockets like a genie, let's not think Jesus are uncompassionate.

Let's not think Jesus is indifferent, but recognise he's got a more necessary, a more abundant, a better agenda from which he will not be diverted.

You see, according to Jesus' agenda, anyone at Holy Trinity struggling with depression or anxiety can be rescued from God's judgement.

[23 : 03] Anyone in our church trapped by despair or sickness can have eternal life with the Father, even if they suffer now.

Every suffering disciple at Holy Trinity will receive eternal life if we keep trusting in Jesus. His agenda is much more than we could ever want, because only he offers the rescue that we need.

So shall I pray? Lord Jesus, we thank you for your power, your ability to rescue. We thank you that you don't always bow to our will.

We thank you that you don't always give us everything we want. But please, for the really serious things that we long for, help us to trust you, to trust your agenda.

We thank you that even if we die, you give us the most profound rescue that we need. A rescue from judgement for an eternal life with you. In Jesus' name, Amen.