

So What Are We Here For

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[0:00] How many of you knew that song? That was good, wasn't it? Little is much when God is in it. And how many of you know that we make a conscious and deliberate effort subplot on that is that we're always safe singing about Jesus, right?

We got that one too, don't we? It's like, you know, we're always safe singing about Jesus. But I remember earlier in the week as I was studying and praying, and that little chorus came back to me as I was working on the passage in John 6.

And I remember reaching out to John Kroll. That's not John the Apostle, but John Kroll. And saying, hey, John, what about this?

And I don't think we have sung that here for a long time. And yeah, we got it. We're good. And then one of the things that I love doing is just listening to you all sing.

And I was listening to you, and I thought, wow, we got on top of that, and we put our hearts into it. And I trust that you remember that song at the end of the sermon, right? Little is much when God is in it.

[1:29] Little is much when God is in it. Let's turn in our Bibles to John chapter 6. Let's pray.

Let's pray. Holy Father, this morning our hearts rejoice in the Lord Jesus.

And our desire this morning as we have sung, and our desire this morning as we open the scriptures that you have given to us, is that the thing that resonates the most with our soul is the person of our Savior.

That as we study the Word, and there are details here that you want us to know and apply and understand, but as we study the Word, our greatest desire is this, is that our hearts would grow in our love for the Lord Jesus Christ and our longing for the day that we will see Him face to face.

I confess that the responsibility of preaching is not one that I can accomplish in my own flesh. And I'm thankful for the truth of your word that never changes.

[3:14] I'm thankful for the indwelling Spirit, both in my heart and in the hearts of your people, that cares deeply about lifting up the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I'm thankful for the prayers of your people, humble, dependent, expectant on you doing a work that glorifies your name.

And so we thank you in advance for what you will do this morning, and we ask that the remembrance of our study and our time together would make a difference in the week that lies ahead, should you tarry and give us life.

And I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. As we take up this passage this morning, I want you to understand that we are looking at the only one of the miracles of Jesus that is recorded in all four Gospels.

That's pretty interesting. Because if you have done any studies in the Gospels, you understand that three of the four carry the commonality of dealing with a broad look at the life, and particularly the public ministry of Christ.

[4:32] John is different in that John's Gospel is focused almost exclusively on arguing the point or making the point clear to us that Jesus is the Son of God, that believing in Him we might have everlasting life.

It's not that the other Gospels don't have an interest in us seeing Christ as our Savior, but John is focused in a very narrow sense of bringing us face to face with the person of Christ as our Lord and

Savior.

And so as we take up this passage this morning, there is something that should immediately stand out in our thinking, and you immediately say, all right, this has bearing on me.

This passage is important for me in terms of my appreciating the Lord Jesus Christ and my being affected by that truth. Let me share something with you that I read earlier this week that was convicting to me.

J.C. Ryle, a pastor of a previous generation, wrote this. He said, I'm afraid that many Christians in our day have lost sight of Christ.

[5:44] Oh, they talk about His salvation, but not about the Savior. They talk about redemption as a theological truth, but they don't talk about the Redeemer.

They talk about Christ's work and His power, but they really don't focus on Christ Himself. This is a great fault, and one that accounts for much of the dry and shriveled spirit that infuses the religious lives of so many people who profess faith.

If ever you would grow in grace and have joy and peace and abundance, beware that you do not fall into this error of focusing on the details rather than the person.

Cease to regard the gospel merely as a collection of dry doctrine or historical facts. Look at it rather as the revelation of the living and mighty Savior that you may know personally.

Cease to regard the gospels as a mere set of philosophical propositions or hints at how to live a more productive and profitable life, how to get along with other people, etc., and find in it instead a glorious and personal friend.

[7:07] The leading subject of all that we study is to be the loving heart of our actual Savior. And I read that to you this morning.

The leading subject and focus of the sermon this morning, I trust, is not the details of the feeding of the 5,000, actually probably 20,000, not the bread, not the loaves, and all those little things, but it is the loving heart of our Lord Jesus who is your Savior this morning and the person that is most prized and most significant in your life.

So as we dive into this passage this morning, I want you to have an understanding that it is recorded here so that we, as believers, can be affected the same way the disciples were.

And I encourage you to know that it may be that the impact, that the lesson that we have may take place over time. I say that because if you will remember from your study in the Synoptic Gospels, after Jesus fed the 5,000, later they're on a little trip, and Jesus said, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.

And what did they immediately think? Oh, we didn't pack lunch, and Jesus is upset with us. And it says, And they didn't figure out that if He could handle feeding the 5,000, lunch was no problem for Him.

[8:31] And so this morning as we look at our passage, I want you to understand that John's focus is helping us see the significance of our Savior and the blessing we have in our relationship with Him.

So let's kind of step into the text. Let me read a portion of it, and then we'll begin learning to see things like Jesus. After this, Jesus went 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 onto the mountain, and there He sat down with His disciples.

Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. And lifting up His eyes then, and seeing the large crowd was coming toward Him, Jesus said to Philip, Where are we to buy bread so that these people may eat?

He said this to test Him, for He Himself knew what He would do. Well, as we step into the passage and begin, I want you to recognize that that little phrase or little statement that's made after this really has a lot of detail underneath it that is appropriate for us to take some time and get a handle on.

[9:45] We learn from Matthew, Mark, and Luke that Jesus actually, following what we found recorded in John chapter 5 and His interaction with the Pharisees, had continued to run into growing adversity and objection from the religious leaders.

And as a result, instead of working in the direct proximity of Jerusalem, His ministry had kind of stepped away to some of the outlying cities, villages. And during this time, as He was ministering in these areas, He was engaged not only in the interaction that He had with people, but He also, during this time, sent out His disciples two by two, and they went out into all the outlying communities, and they preached the kingdom.

They preached the coming of the Messiah. Repent, for Messiah is at hand. Repent, because the issues of your heart are going to be dealt with.

And as a result of this ministry, you'll remember that the pressure that was growing on Jesus also grew on the disciples. And so they became tired and fatigued in the process of ministry, and understandably, we know that as a result of the pressure that they were under, they began to need some rest and some break.

They needed a break from what was going on. As a result of this, Jesus proposed, let's step away and let's get a little bit of time to ourselves so we can kind of take a breather and get reoriented in ministry.

[11:19] It's an appropriate thing to do. All of us need rest and a break on occasion. And here is Jesus planning this, and He says, all right, let's step into a boat.

And they took off on their journey in this boat. It was only about 10 miles across the lake, Sea of Galilee, and it wasn't that long of a distance. The people, however, did not want to lose sight or the presence of Christ.

And so there was a throng of people that as they were making their slow journey in that boat, they were kind of running along the side and kind of tracking the boat. They kind of had an idea where it was going, and they were running along the side of the lake to stop wherever Jesus eventually ended up stopping.

We read there that the crowd followed Him, not because they were interested in spiritual issues, but they'd seen the miracles. Look at verse 2.

The large crowd was following Him because they saw the signs that He was doing on the sick. They were impressed with the power that Jesus was displaying. Now look in verse 3.

[12:28] It says, Jesus went up the mountain, and there He sat down with His disciples. Eventually, they landed at a place where Jesus said, all right, this will do it. And off they went, just kind of up away from the lake, a little distance from it, and they stopped, and they just kind of rested there.

And you can imagine the disciples having spent this time in evangelistic work throughout the area and having seen the crowds and the incessant pressure that the crowd brought, they were thinking, this is a time for us to get away, and we can be quiet.

I don't know exactly what the kids were. I do too. I have an idea. I remember when the kids came back from the vacation, not from vacation, but from the missions trip, most all of them slept the next day.

Am I right? Is that correct? Wave at me. They were exhausted. Many of them came home and just crashed, and instead of scampering off for the next activity, they were bushed. And so here are these disciples in the same frame, tired, exhausted, and decided, hey, we need to rest.

Jesus looks at this crowd, and he stops and immediately turns to his disciples in particular.

[13:42] It says there in verse 5, lifting up his eyes, then in seeing the large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, where are we to buy bread so that these people may eat?

And you can kind of just imagine how Philip felt at that point. He had kind of anticipated. How many of you began counting on vacation before it actually gets there? I mean, we're all there, aren't we? Jack, are you going on vacation here soon? I see Carrie and her husband here. Are you going with them too? You're planning on this? Okay. I mean, we began planning for the, oh man, I'm going to be able to relax, and I won't have to answer the phone.

And the disciples were kind of, you can imagine them settling in, and they look, and they see the crowd coming up the hill towards them, and they go, oh, you've got to be kidding me.

I do want you to understand something. Ministering to the needs of others can grow to be exhausting. It does. It does get to us.

[14:47] And Jesus recognized that, and yet, and so I should say, he planned on having this time where his disciples would get to unwind and decompress a little bit and relax.

So here we have the crowd following Jesus, and Jesus, when he sees them coming towards him, instead of dismissing the crowd and saying, hey, why don't you guys get out of here?

What we find here is that he recognizes their concern and their need, and he steps in to meet it. Look at this. There in verse 5 again, he turns to Philip, he says, where are we to buy bread so that these people may eat?

How many of you recognize in America we are seldomly very far from an outlet where we can purchase food? I mean, no matter where it is, unless you're deciding you're going to go on a wilderness journey for a week or something like that, most of us can find something, and for us to be hungry is what?

To go past 1230, right? It's like, oh, I'm starved. I'm 30. You know, we kind of obsess about the thing, and here these people had walked all that distance around the lake.

[16:03] They'd been following Jesus, and Jesus looks at them, and he knows what's on their heart. He knows how they felt. And recognizing that, he was willing to address the physical need that they had.

So I want you to understand something. Ministering to other people ends up sometimes meeting their basic needs in advance of spiritual needs. In advance of spiritual needs.

I know that next Saturday, because the announcement went out to small groups, Greg, Bernard, and Connie, I'm going to be involved in that as well.

Well, we're going to take a little morning stroll and provide oatmeal to people that are living in some less ideal circumstances than we are.

And you think to yourself, well, why start there? Well, that's where Jesus started. He met the needs of people that in some senses had no interest at all in who he was.

[17:05] They were just attracted to the externals. Nevertheless, we find here is Jesus ready to meet those needs and not to do that with a critical and a kind of sarcastic spirit towards them.

I want you to mark something else that you find there in the passage. I love the question that Jesus asked Philip. Philip looked at the crowd and I have no doubt that probably, I don't know for sure, but I would imagine Philip, like the rest of us, we're tired, we're exhausted, we're thinking we get a break and here's the crowd coming up the hill towards us and Jesus turns to us and say, hey, what are you going to do about this?

Now, when Jesus asked the question to Philip, Philip immediately looked at this crowd and while we hear the word 5,000, understand that the 5,000 identifies male, adult, not the rest of the crowd. Bible scholars estimate that this crowd was somewhere in the proximity of about 20,000 people. 20,000 people.

I know when we have Thanksgiving dinner, there's a lot of food that gets piled up and Thanksgiving dinner here at the church, probably 3,350, that's small potatoes compared to 20,000.

[18:29] And here, Philip looks out at this crowd and he sees 20,000 people and you know, he doesn't understand really what is underlying in Jesus' question.

He looks at the crowd and he says, hey, 200 denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little. What's 200 denarii?

A denarii was generally a working man's wage for one day. And so it's saying, I want you to understand that 200 days of work would not provide for everyone in this 20,000 crowd to actually have a bite or two.

We're not talking about a full meal that would satisfy. We're talking about just a little bit. I think by comparison to what happens when our people have gone to biblical counseling training over in Lafayette and I think they have between 12, 1600, something like that, Pastor Saul.

And they feed people there in shifts, don't they? There's so many people there that they have them come through the gymnasium in different time frames and they have tables stacked with the food.

[19:47] That's only 1,200, 1,600. It's nothing compared to 20,000. And so I want you to recognize as Philip looks at this situation, he is immediately overwhelmed by the reality of what is being asked of him and

he can't imagine meeting the need.

I want you to know that ministry will take us to a place that is beyond our ability and our resources. I want you to mark that down and have it clear in your heart. Ministry will take you to a place that is beyond your ability and your resources.

When you have a heart for Christ and you end up interacting with the needs of people, recognize that your calling and your ministry will take you to a place that is beyond what you can imagine and what your natural resources are.

Well, I want you to understand there's something else in the story and that is grasping his sufficiency because the story is not really about five loaves and two fishes and a little boy that was willing to sacrifice those for the sake of other people.

It's all about Jesus and his sufficiency. So pick up in verse 8 and 9. 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?

[21:09] Philip was the kind of the glasses less than half full dude because when Jesus asked him the question, he says, this is out of our control.

It's bigger than we can handle. We can't solve the problem. Andrew, a little bit more of the mathematician, he must have been running through the crowd figuring out, hey, do you guys have something you could share? One boy, that's all we have record of, one boy had five barley loaves and two fish.

That's it. We don't know the story of why he had that food, we just know that it was there and as a result of that, as you read there, Jesus immediately in verse 10 says, have the people sit down. Now, can you imagine the sinking feeling that went through the disciples when Jesus said that? I mean, the question, how are we going to take care of this problem?

one of the disciples says, this is bigger than we can solve. We don't have adequate resources. And in one of the gospels it says, why don't you send them back to town so they can get what they need?

[22:16] And Jesus then, in the face of all the information that he has, says this, why don't you have them sit, when do we sit down for dinner? When it's ready?

When it's ready to be served? When there's, if there's not adequate resources, do you invite people to sit down? And what's the answer? No. That's kind of like setting the table for absolute failure. And so here's Jesus, he says to the disciples, have them sit down. Talk about building expectation in the hearts of people. It's one thing to recognize the crowd's hunger.

That's easy to identify. It's another thing to say, I can meet the need. And that's exactly what Jesus did. I love that Jesus owned the very practical consideration or concerns of this great throng.

And so I want you to recognize this morning as you think about the Lord Jesus that if Jesus cared about what people would eat, you can be absolutely certain that he cares about where we spend eternity.

[23:20] He cares about us. He cares about our personal needs. He's interested in our well-being. And he pays attention to those details.

This last week, previous week, Pastor Andrew and the missions team were down in Louisville and they spent the week for the most part around Muslims. Am I correct? And they were able to go into a mosque and watch the Muslims pray and they had meals in the homes of Muslims.

They had great opportunity to interact with Islam. The idea in Islam that God cares for you personally is just way beyond the pale.

That doesn't register with them. I'll never forget talking with a Muslim about my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and my confidence in Him.

And when I told him that God loved me personally, he absolutely burst out laughing. He just, ha! ha! He was beyond himself.

[24:26] It was just, it was a joke. He said, I cannot believe the arrogance of your thinking that God cares about you personally.

Well, hey, here is Jesus looking at a crowd. By the way, out of this crowd, how many of the 20,000 were actually going to end up being followers?

Does anybody remember how John 6 concludes? 12. After Jesus preached His zinger sermon, you know, He was not a Joel Osteen kind of guy.

He kind of cut to the chase and let them know they needed to be saved from the brokenness of their sin. And as a result, what happened? That is a hard saying. I'm not real comfortable with what you're saying about my own soul.

And so off they went. You know, Jesus wasn't saying to the disciples, I want you to feed those who are going to be believers. I'm going to have you take care of just a certain select group.

[25:32] No. His love and His kindness extends to all. And here we find that Jesus, looking at the needs of people, He was willing to meet their physical need.

And I want you to understand that beyond that physical need, He is interested in the eternal destiny and the spiritual needs of every person. After the crowd had been seated, it says there in the passage, Jesus in verse 11, then took the loaves and when He had given thanks, He distributed them to those who were seated.

Now how did He do that? If we were relying on Amazon to do it, we'd drone it in, right? Little zzzz, there it be.

Meal, meal, meal, meal, meal. And by the way, they did sit in 50s and 100s. Do you like the organizational structure there? Little groups, little groups all over the place, all over the hill. What happened was the disciples lined up in front of Jesus and Jesus gave them food and they took it out to the crowd.

Now, I don't know how much they took. I don't know how it was packaged. I don't know anything about portion control. What I do know is that when the story ends, they'd had over 12 baskets full of remnants that they picked up.

[26:53] I was doing a little bit of limited computation because that's risky for me, but I was kind of imagining what kind of logistics would go into feeding 20,000 adequate food.

Hey, there's one thing, I bet you none of them were kind of on a diet that day. Do you follow? Oh, no. No. Gluten-free? No. By the way, they were into it. When you're hungry, how many of you know that you'll eat almost anything?

Can I say that again slowly? Because some of you have dietary restrictions that are self-imposed. It's like, oh, I don't want broccoli. Not hungry. I don't want peas.

Not hungry. I can guarantee you after having hoofed it all the way around the lake when it came time for dinner or lunch or whatever it was, everybody, I mean, everything was just God prepared. It was just phenomenal. And so here are the disciples lined up in front of Jesus and I'm in, first one in line sees five loaves and two fishes, right?

[27:59] And he thinks, well, I don't know what the rest of them are doing, but at least I get a start. And then the second one and the third one and the fourth one and out they go to the crowd and they're thinking five loaves and two fishes and they're looking and seeing the rest of the disciples.

Guess what would have been an anxious moment for me? After I dropped my first load going back for seconds. Do you follow that? I remember in previous years when we have served the women's tea and whoever's done the cooking on that has always worked out that there's been plenty but being a boy who grew up in boarding school, I want you to know that I learned the hard way that if you wanted seconds you had to be really quick.

You got that? And so I have a tendency, I want to eat it fast and I want to get back to the window and hope that there's more left over for somebody, you know, you follow that? And so can you imagine the disciples walking out there and dumping their first load and thinking, whoa.

I took care of the little pile here, I wonder if there's any more coming. And time after time after time after time they went back and there they were, they were providing food for all of this throng of people.

How did it end up? I think it's pretty interesting when you stop and think about it. How many disciples were there? Twelve. How many baskets of leftovers do you think Jesus is good with math?

[29:31] Huh? I think he was. And I just love that, it struck me, you know. Let me kind of put these things together in practical terms for

you.

I want you to understand that Christ will put you in places where you need to meet the needs of others. Will you mark that down? If you are his child, Christ will put you, it's not on the screen, you're going to try to spell it out, Christ will put you in places where you need to meet the needs of others.

Why did he save me? Why did he save me? For his own pleasure. And one of the things that brings him pleasure is seeing his child end up meeting the needs of other people.

That's going to happen. If you are here today and you know the Lord Jesus Christ, let me tell you, this beyond a shadow of a doubt, his intention and your pleasure is going to be found in meeting the needs of other people.

And by the way, everybody look up so you don't miss this because I'm talking to you. If you become a navel gazer and a self-focused person, the unintended consequences of being that is going to be this.

[30:46] You grow unhappy in direct proportion to your unwillingness to help and serve Christ in caring for other people. Do you get that? What did I say? When you say no to being part of what God is doing and meeting the needs of other people, you become an unhappier person.

Christ will put you in places to meet the needs of other people. Secondly, I want you to recognize that Christ will use your inadequacy for his glory when you yield to him.

Christ will use your inadequacy for his glory when you yield to him. Stop and think about that. Here were the disciples. They had 20,000 people in front of them.

Jesus turns to Philip and says, hey, what are we going to do about this? Philip, the mathematician, says, oh, way beyond us. 200 days' wages is just going to get a taste to each of these individuals. And then on top of that, Christ turns around and says, tell them to sit down. Christ will use your inadequacy for his glory when you yield to him.

[31:59] I want you to understand another fact that you need to recognize here. Christ will supply your needs as you minister in his stead.

Christ will supply your needs as you minister in his stead. And let me put this together in two different ways. For one, I want you to recognize that Christ supplied what the disciples needed to meet the needs of other people.

Do you follow that? Where does it come, where does it come that you end up having the adequate resource with which to minister and encourage other broken people?

Number one, it comes from things he has taught you in your own journey and in your own heartaches. You keep your finger there in John and turn over to 2 Corinthians 1.

2 Corinthians 1. In verse 4, it says, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

[33:13] How many of you understand that one of the things that is characteristic of our Savior's economy and ministry is that He providentially puts you into situations and into relationships with people who need what He has helped you learn already?

You've gone through a heartache in your life. You've had difficulties with your children. You've had some difficulties at work. Whatever the challenge is, in God's economy, He's going to bring people up against you that you're going to bump into and you end up having seen the grace of God help you through that thing and you can say, hey, let me talk to you about how Jesus helps.

You can speak from experience. You can speak from seeing the Word of God playing out in your life as He has strengthened and enriched you and supported you. You can speak to that.

So Christ will supply your need as you minister in His stead. But there's another piece that I want you to recognize. Not only will He supply what you need to meet the needs of others, but He will also supply your need, your personal need.

Did the disciples need to be fed that evening like the rest of the crowd? What's the answer? Yes. Were they as hungry as the rest of the crowd? Yes.

[34:28] Were they as exhausted from ministry as you can understand they would be? I think about the men again serving the women's tea.

It's fun. It's fun. But when the day is all over, guess what the rest of the guys are like in the back? I mean, running back and forth, it's great.

I love the women's tea. But, you know, eventually the wheels get a little tired. You know, it's like, huh, okay. How many more water trips does she really? Okay. And, did I say something?

Yeah, I did. Here's the truth. Follow me. Jesus will supply your need as you minister in his stead. He will not leave you exhausted and broken. When you step up to be his instrument in the lives of other people, you can count on him supplying what you need personally.

[35:30] Now, I want you to understand something. The main lesson of this passage that we find there in John chapter 6 is not about bread. It's not about boys' lunches.

It's not about a mom that had the forethought to pack ahead. It's not about organizational structure and how you put people in 50s and 100s to take care of all the needs. It's really about the fact that the Lord Jesus is the one who can meet the need of every person's heart and he pays attention to the real things that are going on in your life.

And I'm excited about that because I know this. Jesus who cares about food cares about eternity and he's interested enough that he is willing to deal with the smaller things in a person's life in order to lay also the groundwork for the larger things.

Isn't that the way we should be? We willing to meet the smaller things so we can be instruments in Christ's stead to meet the larger things.

I love the fact that as I read this passage I am reminded that this is my Savior and my Jesus. I get excited. I get excited. When I stop and think that the story here is in a sense just a little picture of just how wonderful my Savior is.

[36:52] That's my Savior. That's my Jesus. And when I stop and think about the fact that he is able to meet such an incredible need and to do it in such a simple way I'm just overwhelmed when I think man there's no problem too big for him.

There's no problem too big for him. And so as I read this passage my heart is lifted up and I say you know what? If Jesus can do this for others and he is willing to use me to be his instrument then my life is wrapped up in finding my pleasure and my satisfaction in being part of what he's doing.

Let me ask you a question. In two ways I'm curious this morning whether or not your walk with Christ is marked by a confidence in his provision and the certainty of his meeting the needs of others because of what he's doing in your life that you do not have to be pressed and pushed to share the sweetness of the gospel with other people.

Do you understand what I just said? He is capable. He is capable. And are you finding his capability playing out in your life so that you are ready?

I'll bet you by the third or fourth time walking back to get another load of food the disciples were not kind of walking forward in hesitancy. They were all over it like I am going at more food.

[38:32] He'll do it. I'm trusting him. Are you confident in his power because of what you've seen him do in your life that you are passing that enthusiasm and affection onto other people?

Secondly, I don't know. There may be some of you that are sitting here this morning that have grown up hearing the Bible stories.

You've memorized all the Juana verses. You've been through the routine but the truth of the matter is you have never come to grips with the reality that you desperately need Christ in your heart.

And this morning there is a Holy Spirit driven discontentment and sourness with life that cannot be remedied apart from coming to Jesus as your personal Savior.

How can I preach about Jesus and not tell you that he came into the world to be the Savior of sinners and you are here today and you need Christ and there is no remedy in your own efforts?

[39:48] And the Spirit of God calls you this morning to repent and believe in Jesus Christ alone. And I would plead with you if you are here and don't know Christ now is the time.

Let's close in prayer. as you Thank you.