

# The King and I

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[ 0 : 01 ] For those of you who are joining us, who have just joined us recently, we're in the middle of a series in John's Gospel, and we're just beginning chapter 6 here, and it's a rather dramatic chapter if you keep reading, set by the Sea of Galilee.

What happens in this chapter? Jesus feeds 5,000 people miraculously, then he walks on water, and then does some amazing teaching on the nature of his mission.

And as a result, if you have a look at verse 66 there, if you've got a Bible in front of you, verse 66, it says, many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

Only 12 remained, and one of those is a bit dodgy, obviously, so kind of a solid 11 from a lot more.

So this Galilean campaign, from the outside, numerically, seems like a bit of a failure, doesn't it?

I mean, of course it's not. We know that when God moves forward, that sometimes things appear to go downhill. Perhaps you know it in your life. Chapter 6, structurally, it's pretty simple.

[ 1 : 06 ] You've got these two miracles, the feeding and the walking on the water, followed by this big discourse of Jesus interpreting what has happened. And tonight, though, we're just going to deal with the miracles. So let's get right into it here.

Okay, I've got three things I want to talk about. First, context, just general context. Second, the scarcity of human resources. And third, the abundance of God's resources.

So let's get to the feeding of the 5,000 here. Just as a side note, this is the only miracle, factoid, only miracle that, apart from cross-resurrection, the only miracle that appears in all four Gospels.

So that means that when the writers of the Gospels were talking to the eyewitnesses, and this was clearly very, very important, this miracle, to feature in all four.

And to understand it, the context is really, really key. I mean, straight away, it helps along. And we know the place. It's sort of mountain area beside the Sea of Galilee. We know the time of the year.

[ 2 : 08 ] Verse 4, it says, Passover was at hand, which means it's a year after the cleansing of the temple, which was two chapters ago, because at the beginning of that event, it says the Passover was at hand.

But that mention of the Passover is not just a timestamp. It's not a timestamp. It's there to help us theologically. That word Passover is like this little key that helps us unlock the whole thing here.

So let me remind you of what the Jewish festival called Passover was about. It celebrated the Jewish people's delivery from slavery in Egypt.

And this happened a long time before this. So at Passover, the Jewish families would get together, all of them, you know, we'd get together. They'd have these rites and rituals based around a meal to remember God's great rescue of how God judged the Egyptians with plagues.

And then he sent death to the firstborn of every family. And at that point, the Pharaoh said, you can go, you can go, you can go. And the Jewish families escaped death because God said, put the blood of a perfectly sacrificed lamb on your doorpost and the angel of death will pass over you.

[ 3 : 14 ] So God brought his people out of Egypt, out of slavery, across the sea, into the wilderness, and then miraculously fed by manna from heaven, bread from heaven. So Passover, what's it about?

Rescue and provision. But for the Jews, I don't think it was purely religious. For them, it was like Passover festival was like the 4th of July. It was Independence Day.

And so they would have been very stirred. If this was, if this happened at Passover, they would have been very stirred people at that moment. A lot of nationalistic fervor. They would have been watching Fox News and it would have just been like, yeah, we're just America, USA, but not USA, obviously.

But hold that anyway, hold that thought. Right. Back to the story. So you've got Jesus. He's in Galilee. There's this huge crowd following him. Remember? They're an occupied people in Rome. Passover celebrates them being an occupied people in Egypt and being delivered. Here, they're an occupied people under Roman rule. Nationalism is in the air. Now, that's the context.

[ 4 : 15 ] What does it tell us about this miracle? Two things. One, it tells us that whatever Jesus is doing in this miracle, it's got something to do with rescue and provision.

One. Two, it also tells us that the witnesses of this miracle, because they're so hopped up on, jacked up on patriotism, they're going to completely miss the point.

One, it's about rescue and provision. Two, the people are going to miss it. So that's context. First, second point, human scarcity. Well, the scarcity of human resources is probably a better way of saying it.

Have a look at verse six there. It says that Jesus was testing the disciples. That's so interesting, eh? He tests the disciples, I think. It says Jesus tested his disciples. And he says to them, you know, so where are we going to get bread?

Where are we going to get bread to feed all these people? And why is he testing them? What is it that he wants them to understand or see or grow in? Well, the answer is, I've said it, scarcity.

[ 5 : 19 ] So first he asks Philip, because Philip was a local boy. And he says to Philip, how are we going to feed these people? And Philip says, verse seven there, 200 denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to have a little.

So Philip's a really, very material thinker. And he actually spent time in his head calculating how much it would cost to feed these people, which is remarkable. There's kind of like a pathology there, or like a way of sort of thinking.

And he thinks only in quite horizontally in terms of limited human resources. And if that's one of your challenges, you know, like if you, when faced with obstacles in life and challenges and stuff, if you pretty much just think this kind of direction and not this kind of direction, this is probably really, it's probably a great text for you to think about.

We'll keep going there. Andrew does slightly better. Verse eight, one of the disciples, Andrew, son of Peter's brother, says to him, there's a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?

So again, what's the point of all these little details, these little, little, teeny little, teeny little details? Why are they naming the really high cost of feeding the people? People, money they don't have.

[ 6 : 31 ] And also then giving an exact amount of what they do have. Just like about this much. John is trying to highlight how ludicrously under-resourced they are to feed this crowd.

It's 5,000 men. It's just men. So presumably there's women and children were there. So let's, I don't know, 15, 20, 25,000 people maybe. It's a big crowd. That's a problem. That's completely unsolvable, isn't it?

With what they've got. Point three. God's abundance. So Jesus takes this really little amount of food, says grace, we see in verse 11, and distributes it.

At some point, the miracle happens. Like, I don't know, a little bit of fish. I don't know what happens, right? But it doesn't describe it. But everyone gets fed.

Not only everyone gets fed. Look at the emphasis on the passage. The emphasis is what? It's overflow. It's over-the-topness. It's crazy. It's madness. Like, it's like huge amounts.

[ 7 : 33 ] Look at, three times it sort of mentions that it was like, just too much. It was great. It was amazing. Verse 11 there. Verse 12.

And when they'd eaten their fill. I don't know how to say that in Canadian. Fill. That's pretty good, right? I'd say, I don't know what I'd say, but it wouldn't make any sense to you.

They're eating their fill. He told us, in their fill, it's just, oh, you know. And then it says, they gather up the leftover. There's fragments. How many fragments? Verse 13. Twelve baskets.

Filled. Twelve baskets. There was more left over than what they had at the start. God provided miraculously more than they needed.

There was an abundant supply. That's the point of all those details. This is called, not a miracle, remember?

[ 8 : 42 ] It's called a sign. It points to something. It's like a sign, like an actual sign, right? Like this way to San Francisco. 200 miles, right? It says, it's a sign.

It points to something. What is that thing? What does it exist to show us? Well, remember context. It points back to Passover. God's rescue.

God's provision. Points forward to what Christ will do with us and our future spiritual provision. Now, that's a dense sentence, so let me bring it down.

God's grace in your life. God's forgiveness. His provision. There is more than enough for you. There is an abundance.

There is overflow. Now, the crowd misses it, of course. They love the effects of the sign, like full bellies. They love the effects, but they miss what the sign points to.

[ 9 : 38 ] And, you know, we can do that a bit, can't we? But not all Christians, or not all of Jesus' listeners were like this. I'm going to remind you of one of my favorite stories in the Bible from Mark 7. This is an example of overflow, and somebody hearing a story of overflow, but gets it.

Gets it. These people didn't get it. This woman gets it. It's a Syrophenician woman. Chapter 7.

Love this woman. So the story goes, so she's, Jesus is, you know, doing stuff.

And Syrophenician woman, who, she was a member of a people group that were enemies of God. The Syrophenician, they would come into God's land, and they would kill God's people and take their stuff.

So this is like a, they're not on speaking terms generally, because of the pillaging. So she comes to Jesus.

She falls at Jesus' feet, begs him to heal her daughter. She says, my daughter is possessed by an evil spirit, an unclean spirit.

[ 10 : 41 ] And Jesus responds with this fantastic line. He says, let the children be fed first, for it's not right to take the children's bread. Then throw it to the dogs. Which seems, that's, you know, you're not expecting that from Jesus.

He's not calling her a dog. He's using a, like a household scene to describe something. He's going, he's basically saying, look, my ministry is to the Jews first. But he says that to teach her something about his grace, okay?

Because my ministry was to the Jews first. Which is true, if you read the text, it's, his ministry is to the Jews first, and the rest of the disciples carried on to the Gentiles. Mostly that's what happens. She says, yes, Lord.

This is great. I love her. Yes, Lord. Yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.

Yes, Lord. Even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.

I mean, she's brilliant. In other words, she's saying, there is so much, going back to this previous sign here, there's so much bread or life or restoration or healing, there's so much that you have to give, Lord.

[ 11 : 43 ] There's an abundance. I'd just be so much of it. I'm just happy with the overflow. I'm happy with the bit that just falls, I'm just, bit falls off the table. I'm just, I'm just happy with that. I'm happy with that. That's enough. That's enough.

That's that little crumb. That is enough to heal the daughter of this woman who is basically an enemy of God, her people's enemies. That bit, they're just like, hang on, let me get, I'll get, there we go.

That's enough. That's enough. She says, I know that, I know your ministry first is to the Jews, but I'm happy with the crumbs.

That's enough. And Jesus paraphrased, and this is paraphrased, his good response. When you get back, your daughter's going to be healed. I mean, the healing is a picture of wholeness and rescue and provision.

And she knew Jesus had more than enough to give. Let's try and apply this to our lives for a few minutes here, shall we? What other big issues you face in your life? The really big ones. Perhaps, perhaps you feel guilty over sin.

[ 12 : 51 ] Maybe stuff you, maybe sin, like, you know, kind of big stuff. That maybe you committed years ago. And it's still, you can feel it on your shoulders, you know. You can feel it. You're still wearing it.

Maybe you are, maybe it's not a sin. Maybe it's, maybe you face life as a single person. And it looks like you're going to be single for a while. And that's a grief to you. Or maybe you're in a marriage and it's just not what you dreamed of.

Or maybe you want kids and it's just not on the horizon. Maybe you have kids and you're thinking, I'm sure it's supposed to be better than this, you know. Or maybe you have a job that's really unfulfilling and you're not, you're not trained to do anything, stuff that you really love to do. Or maybe you just don't have the resources to live the perfect West Coast life. I mean, these are real issues. I'm sure it's a good chunk of you face these things. The feeding of the 5,000. I keep talking about overflow and abundance, et cetera. This is not a promise that any of those things will change. You know, if like, oh, you know, God did this. If I just believe, you know. [13:54] No, but it is a promise. It is a promise that God will abundantly resource you to walk faithfully in the life that he has for you.

And it might not be the perfect West Coast life, but it will be a life with God as your friend and not your enemy. Which means that God, through his Son and through the gift of the Holy Spirit, if you're a Christian, has already given you what you need most for an abundant life.

And that's peace with God. And that's forgiveness. And that's the comfort of his Holy Spirit. And that's the promise of eternal life. Now, what happens, though?

What happens, though, if like the crowd, you're actually more interested in the effect of the sign than what it points to? What happens, in other words, what does your life look like when you actually don't rest in God's abundant grace to walk with you in life?

What happens if you don't trust in God's abundant forgiveness and provision? What happens if you don't really believe that, but you kind of like the kind of like, the idea, if I pray, something might happen and it's miraculous, you know.

[15:10] What does your life look like? Well, it's probably a life marked by guilt. And if you are carrying guilt and you have repented, but you're still wearing that guilt, why is that? It's because you do not believe in the abundant grace of God.

You do not believe in the abundant grace of God. Grace, it's so amazing that even the crumbs that fall off the table are enough to forgive an enemy of God.

If you're not trusting in God's abundant rescue, it could be a life filled with anxiety about your salvation. I remember probably the first five years of my Christian journey. I became a Christian at 17. I just kept thinking, like, am I actually saved?

Like, is everything kind of sorted? I didn't know. Am I good enough? Well, the answer is, of course, no, you're not good enough. Of course you're not good enough. But Jesus is, and he lived a life that you clearly can't live.

And he died for the sins that you've committed. But in sum, not trusting in God's abundant grace is a life filled with, it's just, you misunderstand who Christ is.

[16:15] You misunderstand what he's come to do. And it's a life that loves the effects of the signs. So you just pray for your needs, any particular immediate needs you might have. But there's no understanding of what it points to.

The crowd's misunderstanding of Jesus was so profound that, well, look at what they tried to do in verse 14 and 15.

It says, when the people saw the sign he had done, they go, oh, it's a prophet coming to the world. Fantastic. Perceiving then that they were about to take him by force. God, about to take Jesus, who's God, by force, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

So the crowd, you know, feeling very patriotic, they want Jesus to rescue them from Roman captivity. They want to try and make him king, want to make him their king. Well, there's a few problems with this, clearly.

One, and the big one is you can't make Jesus king. He is the king. He's already the king, whether you want him, whether you realize it or not. He is your king. I mean, they want him to ride into Jerusalem with a spear and he's got an army of 5,000 people there, probably, who would go with him and bring a spear and judge the Roman dogs.

[17:29] But he's going to do the opposite, isn't he? He's going to go to Jerusalem and take a spear. And he's actually going to take the judgment that the Romans deserved. He's going to receive the judgment that they want him to pass out.

Now, it's easy to think, what a stupid, stupid people these people are. How could they think that? But we can think like this crowd. I mean, there are various ways which we can try and use Jesus for our own ends, aren't there?

And Christians have done it throughout history. And the saddest way is when Jesus becomes a mascot for a particular theological or political proclivity. You know, people like using Jesus as a bit of a figurehead for a movement they feel passionate about.

Because he's, you know, he's a good look. You know, if you ignore all the salvation and judgment stuff, he's kind of like got a kind of a stick it to the man kind of vibe, right? So people sort of like that. But remember, the lesson of the passage is this. A quote from a commentary here.

We can't just use Jesus to further our values, unless they're God's values as well.

[18:38] You might say, well, I just don't do that. I would never do that. But it can present in our life in quite mundane ways. We want Jesus to fulfill our agenda. Really mundane ways.

You know, like, it's like, give me stuff. It's like the give me stuff, Jesus. Give me a girlfriend. And give me a promotion. And give me these things. And give me comfort. Give me comfort.

My daughter, Sadie, with three kids. Older daughter, Sadie. She's just about turned five. So she's playing with something the other day. This is just this weekend. A couple of days ago. She's playing with, I don't know, peroxide and squirrels.

I don't know. It was just something I wasn't happy about anyway. And I said, baby, stop doing that. Stop doing that. Stop now.

And she said, daddy, daddy, daddy. It's not about you, daddy. She's like four now, right? It's not about you, daddy.

[19:36] It's about me. This is a true story. It's verbatim. Like, there was no gap between these sentences. It's not about you, daddy. It's about me. It's not about everybody.

It's just about having a great time. I foresee no problems in the future. But that just desire, you know, I just want my stuff.

I want everything my own way. It starts pretty young, doesn't it? We don't really, I don't think we grow out of it. We just kind of, we just kind of hide it better or make it look a bit slicker. Now, it's not wrong to pray for stuff that you desire, I don't think.

And this is really selfish. But remember, the main point of the feeding of the 5,000 is not Jesus can be my miracle man. Jesus, you got them stuff, give me stuff. The main point is here is Jesus came to rescue us from spiritual darkness and blindness.

And he came to give us life so that we can share in the life of the Trinity. So we can have abundant life. I'm almost finished here. At the start, I said at the end of this chapter, tons of his disciples leave him.

[20:39] And it's because he wasn't the Christ they wanted or expected. And it's a warning to us. When we misunderstand who Jesus is, he's a miracle man. He gives me stuff if I pray enough. Jesus will disappoint us.

And we will invariably leave him. Folks, it can be really hard to get Jesus right, I think, in our hearts. And that's because our hearts are such slippery things.

And we want to remake him for our agendas. Just like the crowd did. This is why verses like this are so important. They reorient us. We need to hear them constantly because we must constantly relearn Jesus.

And that's going to be a lifelong task for you. So, you know, stay on it. Stay committed to it. And I'll finish up here. We're not going to get to the walking on the water. But, look, the main point of that is, you know, the disciples were out in a boat.

It was choppy. All of a sudden, they see Jesus walking towards them. And they freak out. And he said, it is I. Do not be afraid. Literally in the Greek. Do not be afraid. I am. Do not be afraid. I am.

[21:37] Which is the great I am statement of the Old Testament. It's the great how God self-identifies. I am. So John inserts this miracle immediately after the feeding.

And before Jesus explains the feeding. Why is that? Why does he plug this little incident in the middle? It's because the things the disciples really needed to understand to get their head in the game more than anything else was who he was.

Who he was. And he was God incarnate. And that's about the best thing you can know. I'll end there. I'll end there.