

John 6 v1-15

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again to this chapter we read in John's Gospel, John chapter 6.

And I just want us to see again by way of overview this section that we read. So he said, the beginning after this, that's after what had happened in chapter 5.

And John, as we're, I think, already seeing, and certainly as we work through this letter, this Gospel from John, John is different to the other Gospel writers.

The other Gospel writers deal with a lot of detail or a lot of the experiences and incidents and such like of Jesus' life.

John is much more selective. He just picks a few incidents and a few personalities, and he deals with a lot of the teaching.

[1 : 02] John's direction is quite different to the other. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, each one coming in a different way. Luke is a doctor. He, again, has his own different approach.

But John, he sort of just bypasses quite large or long time events. So it says, after this, that was after Jesus' confrontation with the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem.

After this, Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. So that's what we read there. Now, this is quite an interesting section, these verses, because all the Gospel writers deal with it.

This is a miracle that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, they all give us an account of this. And so it's helpful to be able to pick up little bits from the other Gospels as well that fill in this particular incident for us.

Now, after this, as we say, quite a time has elapsed, and the disciples have been away on quite a successful preaching ministry, and they've come back. And the background to this is that Jesus had said to the other disciples, after their preaching, their time of being away preaching in this successful preaching time, it was to come apart and to rest for a while.

[2 : 32] It was a time where they were going to have a time of refreshing, a time of renewal, and they were going to get away from all the crowds that were round and about. That was where they were planning to go or what they were planning to do.

But, of course, as they made their way across the Sea of Galilee, which is about seven miles wide and 13 miles long, and I would imagine it would be what we term today the Golan Heights, that it would be across, not just in that direction that they were making.

But Jesus' attempt to get away from the crowds, it's very obvious, didn't work. Because we find, for instance, in Mark's Gospel, that it tells us that many saw them going.

So many of the people round about saw Jesus and the disciples going across in the boat. Many of them saw them going and ran. That's what it tells us, that they ran from all the towns and got there ahead of them.

So, obviously, they were running round the head of the sea in order to get round to the other side where they were going. And it goes on to tell us there that when Jesus, when he saw them going, he saw a great crowd.

[3 : 46] He had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And so this would have been an amazing sight because here are all these people. And we read that there were 5,000 men.

And that's just men. And people sometimes think that's 5,000 people. No, it's actually 5,000 men. And it's reckoned that there would have been double that number if we were to take in the women and children.

So there's this huge amount of people. It would have been a spectacular sight to see all these people. And, of course, probably to begin with, there wouldn't have been all these people.

But they just joined up more and more and more, making their way. And as Jesus saw this vast crowd of people making their way, I try and put myself sometimes into that thinking. And particularly if you're tired and drained. And remember that this is what they were going to do. They were going, Jesus and the disciples were going for a rest. And it would be very tempting to say, oh, well, look at all these people.

[4 : 48] Right, double back. Let's head down the loch. Let's go in the opposite direction. Because they're all... That would be a very human reaction. But that's not Jesus' reaction.

He saw them. And it tells us that his heart was filled with compassion to them. Because he saw them like sheep without a shepherd. And he saw all these people running to him. And, you know, that's one of the most wonderful things that the Bible tells us. Is that Jesus will never run away from people who are running to him. And when people come together, Jesus will be there as well.

When we come to him, isn't that why we've come here today? Is to meet with Jesus. That's what's... That's a desire within our heart. Lord, as I come in here today, I want to meet with you. That's our whole... Surely at the very heart of why we're here. Yes, we've come to worship God. And as we come to worship God, we seek to meet with him. So that our hearts will go out to him.

[5 : 52] And that we will experience him drawing close to us. Because that's what he wants to do. Sometimes we forget that. The Lord wants to draw close to us.

And the Bible tells us the way and order that we discover that is, draw near to God. And he will draw near to you. So that as we come to God's house...

How did we come today? Did we come with a desire to meet with him? Or was that... Did we come prayerless? Was that not something we'd actually thought about?

That we just came as a matter of duty? Well, it's a good duty. But we've got to go beyond that. Got to go beyond the duty. So that it becomes personal. Ah, Lord, I need to meet with you.

I want you into my soul. I want to discover more of you. I want to experience your peace, your joy. I want to have fellowship with you. Well, you know, if that's our desire, the Lord will reveal himself.

[6 : 56] The Lord will draw close to you. Because he wants to. That is not something that we need to debate about or search the Scripture and try and work out.

Does the Lord want to draw close to me? Yes, he does. He says that over and over and over again. As his people, he loves you and he wants the best for you.

And he knows that the best for you is that your hearts will be filled with himself. That's what Jesus wants for you today. Is that what you want for yourself today?

As Jesus saw us coming here today. Saw each one of us. This is what he... I know. This is what he's saying. Here's somebody else.

Here's another of my people. And I want to draw close to him, to her today. It's a wonderful... That's one of the wonderful things, surely, as we come to God's house.

[8 : 00] And so, Jesus will never disappoint. And it also says here that he saw them... In Mark's house, a sheep without a shepherd.

Now, as we know, sheep need a shepherd. And, of course, the Lord was always describing himself as a good shepherd. Distinguishing himself from the shepherds of the day.

Because remember that the religious leaders of the day had let the people down dreadfully. They weren't interested in the well-being. The spiritual well-being of the people.

They were only concerned about themselves. About showing off their own piety. About getting place. Getting prestige. About getting money.

About getting honor. About making a name for themselves. That's all they were about. They weren't interested in the spiritual nourishment and the spiritual well-being of the people.

[9 : 00] And that's how Jesus saw them. He saw them as shepherdless sheep. And that's why Jesus kept terming himself the good shepherd.

Different to so many of the shepherds of that day. The spiritual shepherds who weren't interested in the spiritual well-being of the people. And so Jesus had compassion upon them.

And one of the things here we see is that, again, if we went before we just come to this to set the background, one of the other things is that in Mark's gospel, we find the great difference between Jesus and the disciples.

In Mark's gospel, the disciples, when they saw the crowd and they had gathered with the crowd and find that the disciples said to Jesus, send them away so that they'll get food somewhere.

It's not the first time the disciples had that attitude of send the people away. Jesus wasn't going to send them away. Jesus doesn't send people away.

[10:08] He decides what the disciples, same as when, remember when the mothers came with the little children. That's what the disciples were saying, come on, saying to the mothers, away you go, away you go.

And Jesus is one of the times we find Jesus actually, his language was really strong when he spoke to the disciples. He really rebuked them for daring to try and push the mothers and the children away from him.

That's where we have these famous words, suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. So the disciples in these days did a lot to learn, can see kind of hard-hearted.

And they were saying, oh, away, I'll send the people away. But Jesus is thinking in a different way. Now, John highlights something that maybe the others don't.

It tells us in verse 4, now the Passover, the feast of the Jews was at hand. And John highlights this because this is a difference with John and the other gospel writers.

[11:15] John is always focusing on other things, and he highlights the Passover. Passover's just coming. Now, there are two kind of, I suppose, almost two things with regard to what John is saying there.

The first that you hold in your mind with regard to the miracle before us is we've also got to remember that the Passover was the feast of the Jews.

They had several feasts, but the Passover was the main one. And they celebrated that every year, remembering God's great deliverance, remember, in Egypt. And they were still, as they celebrated the Passover, in their minds at this particular time, they'd be thinking, when is God going to send a deliverer, the deliverer, going to send the prophet that Moses spoke about?

When is he going to send again to deliver us from the tyranny of Rome? So, that was always in the minds of the people when the Passover was coming.

Because that's important because you find that in verse 15 or in verse 14, when the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, this is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.

[12:32] Because, you see, this was in the people's thinking. When's the prophet going to come? When is the one that God has promised, when is he going to come? And the other reason that John mentions the Passover is that he ties the feeding.

We'll come to that not today, but as we go through this. He ties the feeding of the thousands into Jesus. The whole thing is linked up with the Passover, with Moses, with the whole wilderness experience, with the bread from heaven, where Jesus goes on to declare, I am, he says, the bread of life.

He goes back to the miracle. And he's saying to the people, you didn't get it. Oh, yes, I fed you. I fed you with food. But that was speaking of a greater feeding, a spiritual feeding, the nourishment. I am, he said, the bread of life. So, John picks up on these things. Anyway, we find that there's this great crowd.

And Jesus said to Philip, and he addresses Philip first. He said to test him, 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.

[13:55] Why Philip? Probably because Philip was from these parts. Philip was from Bethsaida. And if anybody knew the lie of the land and where you could get something, it would be Philip.

So, no doubt that's why he spoke to Philip. And Philip straight away says, hey, eight months' wages wouldn't buy enough bread for everybody to get something.

Philip was saying, not a chance. And Jesus asked Philip very simply in order to test him. And what Jesus was doing really was this.

He was kind of saying to Philip, Philip, you've been with me for a wee while. Have you figured out really who I am? Because I'm sure that Jesus was hoping that Philip would say, Lord, with you, I don't know where we're going to get all the bread needed, but, Lord, I know enough of you now to know that with you all things are possible.

But no, Philip isn't seeing Jesus. He's just seeing the crowd and no bread. And Philip's very like ourselves so often that in our problems we're not looking to Jesus.

[15:10] Philip wasn't looking to Jesus, but Jesus was testing him. And I love these words where it says, for he himself knew what he would do. You see, Jesus is in control.

And that statement is so true for our lives that the Lord always knows what he's going to do. You and I are often, we're often into situations and we have no idea what we're going to do.

And you know, often in life we feel that we're out of our depths. Maybe today you're not like that. Maybe today you feel that you've got the reins of life and you're in control.

That you're holding them and that everything's going all right. Life is going fine. You feel you're in control. Some of you in here today, you may feel completely out of control. And that life has gone just in such a different way and such a different direction.

And sometimes it has such an impact upon you that you can't even pray properly. And you're just saying, Lord, Lord, help. I really don't know what to say.

[16:13] I love these words. But he himself knew what he would do. And that's still the same today. Even when things go completely in an opposite way to what we want or hope and anticipate or expect.

The Lord himself, he knows. He knows today what he will do. I love that. And so we need to learn to rely upon him and his resources.

But then Andrew comes forward. And Andrew comes. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, There's a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they for so many?

You know, Andrew has gone a step beyond Philip. Philip is saying, look, I know the area round about. And I've already begun to work out in my head how much money we need.

We're talking here thousands and thousands and thousands. Eight months' wages won't get enough. So Philip is completely grounded in the physical and the practical, not looking to Jesus at all.

[17:30] I think Andrew's gone a wee step beyond. Andrew's gone up the first couple of rungs of the ladder. Because Andrew has come with a boy who has five little loaves and two fish.

But again, Andrew, it's like you can almost hear him. He's come to Jesus and he says, well, look who I found. Or this boy has come.

And this is what he's brought. It's a start, Lord. But what is it? You can almost hear the tone of his voice. But what's that amongst this vast crowd?

But Andrew has made a start. Because he has come to Jesus with the boy. And I think the boy may have come to Andrew. And Andrew's come to Jesus.

So as I say, it's a step forward. But still, Andrew is still not seeing all the potential that lies in Jesus.

[18:37] But the wonderful thing here is that the Lord is the one who, he's in control of this whole situation. You know, when I look at this miracle that took place here, I see everything in it.

I even see the resurrection in it. I even see our own resurrection in it. Because it's a piecing together of everything. I see here in it all the brokenness.

All the fragmentation. And to see the disintegration of everything. And of the Lord piecing everything together again. And of making more.

And of giving in an abundance. You know, when it comes to the resurrection. And when you think about our bodies going into the grave. And when you think of the dissolving of the body.

It's only temporary. That's how the Bible speaks about the grave. It's like you're going to bed at night. And then you pull back the covers and you get up.

[19:39] Because that's what the Lord's going to do. And the Lord who took five loaves and two fish. And out of that fed this vast multitude.

So that at least 10,000 people had more than enough. And there were 12 baskets left over. I see here everything.

Everything. The whole power of God. The whole amazing power of God. At every area of our lives. Just now in the gospel.

This is a picture of the gospel. But it's a picture, as I say, right down into the resurrection. Of the pulling together. The piecing together. The restoring. The renewing of the body.

And making it. Making it. Making. Making. This is what he's doing. He's making. Making all things new. Because there's going to be new heavens. And a new earth.

[20:38] This earth is going to melt with fervent heat. But it's not the end. There's going to be new heavens. And a new earth. Wherein dwells righteousness. Are we seeing Jesus today?

You know it's so easy in this world that we're living in. This world that is so post-Christian.

Anti-Christian. In this world that is doing everything to take God off his throne.

But they can't. Lord's in control. But he himself knew what he would do. That can be written over every chapter of life.

Every event in history. It's written large over this whole world. He himself knew what he would do.

And the one who fed the thousands from the five loaves and two fishes.

It's a God who is still in control of absolutely everything. And so we find that he gets the people to sit down. Verse 10.

[21 : 38] He makes the people sit down. There's much grass. And then Jesus took the loaves. And when he had given thanks. A very simple thing. But something we should always do. As was one of the things Jesus taught us.

By example. That when we sit down to eat. We should give thanks. Just this acknowledgement. Lovely thing to do. Just to give thanks to God.

As the one who provides. Who provides for us. And then we find that Jesus. And when he had given thanks. He distributed them to those who were seated.

Now again when we go to the other gospels. It tells us very simply. That Jesus distributed to the disciples. He gave to the disciples. And the disciples distributed to the people.

It was at this point. That the miracle kept coming. Coming. Taking place. Taking place. Taking place. It's an amazing thing. And you know.

[22 : 36] The disciples will come. Not today. The disciples. It tells us. I can't remember in which of the gospels. That their hearts were hardened. That they didn't consider the miracle. I find that quite extraordinary.

That they're going back to Jesus. Back to Jesus. For more. For more. And more. They didn't consider it. They were involved in it. They were at the very heart of it. They were a major.

They were the major players in it. But they didn't consider it. It was kind of passing them by. Even although they were involved in it. That sort of thing can happen. Now they had a lesson to learn.

But that's not what we're looking at just now. But I see here a beautiful picture of the gospel. And here is this gospel of Jesus Christ. And the Lord gives it to us.

To give. To give. To every believer. The Lord has given himself. And he's given himself to us. But he's given us his word.

[23 : 38] His gospel. To share with others. And you may be saying to yourself. Oh you know. It's only we, me. What can I do? I'm not of much use.

I don't feel I can do much. Well if that young boy with the five loaves and two fishes had thought that. Then. I don't know.

Would we have this account? No. There wasn't much. There was hardly anything. Andrew said that. What's that amongst all the people here?

Maybe that's how you feel. How I often feel. But we've got to fix our eyes upon Jesus. Because he is the one who is able to make a feast out of next to nothing.

Let us give what we are. Let us bring what we have to him. Let us use what he has given us. For him.

[24 : 36] And we'll be amazed at how he actually works. This is what, this is the amazing thing about preaching. It's the same word. Week in, week out.

Year in, year out. For the last, for decades, centuries. It's the same word. But it's ever new. And the Lord applies that word.

And there's plenty. For everybody. That's the wonder of it. That's the beauty of this gospel. So I would say to you, to encourage you, my friend. Don't hold back.

Whoever you are. Doesn't matter how young you are. Doesn't matter how old you are. You use yourself for the Lord. You may be saying to yourself, I'm the smallest, the littlest, the youngest person in here.

I have the fewest number of gifts. That's by your own assessment. What can the Lord do with me? The Lord can do an amazing amount through you. Be encouraged by what we have here.

[25 : 38] And so we find that when everybody had eaten and had their fill, that's what it tells us. And when they had eaten their fill, my friends, that is what we get in Jesus Christ.

A filling. You chase after the world. And you can chase and you can chase and you can chase. And, you know, there is a satisfaction, but there's no satisfaction.

It doesn't matter how hard you chase, how long you chase, how much you get. You never get enough. It can never satisfy. There's always just that emptiness.

It's like the juice is being squeezed out all the time. That's what the world does. It just squeezes out the juice out of the enjoyment. You just can't get hold of it.

There's more. I've got to get there. I've got to get there. Jesus is different. He gives that peace. He gives that satisfaction. He fills us with Himself.

[26 : 42] That's a difference. And so they were all filled. A beautiful picture here. And one which is spiritual for God's people. And one which you today are able to discover.

And then it tells us that there were twelve baskets. Because Jesus says, and when they had eaten their fill, He told His disciples, gather up the leftover fragments that nothing may be lost.

So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left. You know, they had more when they finished than when they started. It's amazing, isn't it? And that's the way it is in the gospel kingdom.

But it might be a very small point, but it's not an insignificant point. I think Jesus is here teaching us also to guard against waste.

The Jewish people were very careful about that. And it was customary for them not to be destructive with what was left over.

[27 : 43] And I think there's a strong message coming across here today. And when you think of the destruction of excessive food that goes on in this world, when you think half this world is perishing or starving, it's unbelievable.

I know there has to be conservation worked in a different way, but when you see the wholesale dumping of beautiful fish, all these buttermint, all these kind of things, and it's all in the name of economics when there's a world that's starving.

Terrendous. So I think Jesus is even here pointing, look, there was all the food left. He said to the disciples, come on, gather all that up. It shouldn't be waste.

We've got to be economical. We've got to be sensible with what the Lord has given us. And then it tells us, time has gone, very briefly, when the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, this is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.

Perceiving then that they were about to come and to take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself. There's this recognition in the people, wow, we think this is him.

[28 : 59] Let's make him king. Jesus at this moment knew, no, no, no, no, this is not the way. Jesus didn't come for the world's adulation.

He wasn't going to get the crown by the way of the world. Satan was tempting him to take the crown by the way of the world. The way of the crown was by the cross.

And Jesus knew there was no other way. And Jesus today has come to seek and to save. Jesus is Savior and he is servant.

He came to seek, to serve. He came, he is a servant king. And that is the way we are to meet him. You know, there was an amazing humility throughout the life of Jesus.

We see it over and over and over again. Whenever the world wanted to put its adulation on him.

And there were times the world gave him great recognition. And even when he rode into Jerusalem, remember, it wasn't, mind you, it wasn't on a beautiful white stallion, but on a donkey.

[30 : 02] But there were times that there was the adulation. Jesus was always the servant. Always the servant. And we are to meet him as the serving, servant, servant, stroke, king.

That's where we are to meet Jesus. That's where you and I must meet him today. Who is the one who is king, Lord, but he came as a servant to seek and to save.

May we know this Jesus then, the same Jesus who performed his miracle, same Jesus who wanted to meet with these people. May we know Jesus meeting with us today.

And may we rejoice in him. Let us pray. Lord, our God, we give thanks for this word and for another opportunity of meeting with you.

May we know Jesus in all his fullness, in all his loveliness, in all his power to save. All be merciful to us, we pray. Grant us grace in all that we have to do.

[31 : 09] Take us all home safely, we pray. Forgiving is our sin in Jesus' name. Amen. Our concluding psalm is...