

There's Your Sign (pt.4-5)

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[0 : 00] If you would, please open up your Bibles this morning to John chapter 6. John chapter 6.

This is the chapter that R.C. Sproul calls the most important chapter in the Gospel of John. I'm not sure that I could make a claim like that, but I'm confident that as we spend the next several weeks walking through this chapter together, we will see just how rich and how beautiful and how full it is of the glory of Christ, how it presents our need for Him and the ways that He has provided for us. So let's turn there now, John chapter 6, and we'll read verses 1 through 35. Follow along with me as I read. After this, Jesus went away 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 on the mountain, and there He sat with His disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand.

Lifting up His eyes then and seeing that a 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.

[1 : 22] Philip answered Him, Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get just a little. 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?

Jesus said, Have the people sit down. Now there was much grass in the place, so the men sat down, about five thousand in number. However, Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks, He distributed them to those who were seated, so also the fish, as much as they wanted. 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 by those who had eaten.

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 take Him by force to make Him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by Himself.

And when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing.

[2 : 42] When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. But He said to them, It is I. Do not be afraid.

Then they were glad to take Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going. On the next day, the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had only been one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with His disciples, but that His disciples had gone away alone.

And other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the boat and went to Capernaum seeking Jesus.

When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, Rabbi, when did you come here? Jesus answered them, Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.

Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on Him God the Father has set His seal.

[3 : 56] Then they said to Him, What must we do to be doing the works of God? Jesus answered them, This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.

So they said to Him, Then what sign do you do that we may see you and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

Jesus then said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, It was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.

They said to Him, Sir, give us this bread always. Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to Me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in Me shall never thirst.

This is the Word of God. Let's bow once more and pray. Father, this is a picture of Your glorious provision for our need.

[5 : 07] In Christ. So we pray now as we open up this Word and discuss it in this brief time, Lord, would You do eternal work in us as we open up Your Word and seek You in it.

We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Two weeks in a row, now we have quoted C.S. Lewis, and if you thought there's no way he's going to do it three weeks in a row, you were wrong.

We're going for three. This one is from his book, The Weight of Glory. He says this. He says, It would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong but too weak.

We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us. Like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea, we are far too easily pleased.

I wonder this morning as we read this passage if that describes you. You and I, we were made for eternal, infinite joy in Christ, and anything less than that is too small.

[6 : 28] But far too often, I think we are earthly-minded. We have tunnel vision for our physical, immediate needs, and we ignore the greatness of our inheritance in Christ.

We seek temporary satisfaction, and we ignore the eternal joy that's offered to us in the gospel. In other words, we make a really big deal out of really small things, and a really small deal out of really big things.

I want our passage this morning to help correct that in us. What we see here in John chapter 6 is two more signs that Jesus performs.

We've seen already, Jesus came performing signs and miracles. He came performing these physical signs, meeting physical needs. But the whole point was to demonstrate a greater, truer, more lasting promise that our greatest needs and our greatest desires are met ultimately and only in Christ.

We're going to see this in three ways this morning. This will be our outline this morning if you're taking notes, following along. We're going to see three ways Christ meets our deepest needs.

[7 : 49] Three ways Christ meets our deepest needs. First, we see that Jesus is a God of great provision.

Jesus is a God of great provision. Look there with me to the beginning of chapter 6. Here we see this extraordinary miracle, the feeding of the 5,000.

This is the only miracle except for the resurrection. This is the only miracle that shows up in all four gospels. And it shows us that our God is a need-meeting God.

He is a God of great provision. Look there to verse 1. John tells us that after the encounter with the Pharisees that we discussed last week, Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee and it seems like a large crowd was following Him there.

Jesus' popularity was growing. Mark 6 in a parallel account and Mark tells us that when the people recognized Jesus and His disciples and saw where they were headed, people from all of the neighboring towns ran there ahead of Him to meet Him there, to get there in advance of Him.

[9 : 02] But John clues us in here to their motive. And just like we've already seen already, they were seeking Christ not for Him, but for what they might get from Him.

They were seeking Christ not for Christ, but for what Christ might do for them. As these crowds gathered around, Jesus looked up, He saw them, He saw all the people coming to Him, and He saw an opportunity for a lesson.

So He asks Philip, His disciple, where are we going to buy bread so that all of these people may eat? John tells us plainly there in verse 6 that Jesus said this to test Him for He Himself for He Himself knew what He was going to do.

This was a test. Would Philip see with spiritual trust, with the eyes of faith in Christ, would he see that Christ is able to provide all the needs of anyone who know Him, or would he see with natural, physical sight?

Well, how did Philip respond? He responded like how most men would. Philip, he began to calculate the tab. How much is this going to cost?

[10:17] Some of you men have raised daughters who got engaged and got married, and you've had the experience of calculating the tab of a wedding bill.

How much is this going to cost to feed this many people? Maybe you felt like what Philip was feeling here. Philip, he was thinking rationally here, thinking logistically.

How in the world are we possibly going to feed this many people? What we see here is a picture, is an image of great need.

We call this the feeding of the 5,000, but everyone agrees that the number was actually far, far greater than 5,000. In verse 10, it says, just the men added up to 5,000.

Are you considering that this was the time of the Passover, the busy time, where many more people were there in the town, considering that women and children were also there with them? The number, actual number, likely was much closer to 20,000 individuals there on the hill.

[11:22] And Peter says, even eight months' wages, 200 denarii, eight months' wages, wouldn't even begin to cover it. Now, this was a tremendous need.

It's almost comical what happens next. Look there to verse 8. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, he steps up to the task and says, well, there is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish.

Well, what are they for so many? You know, it's interesting. This account shows up in all four Gospels. John's is the only account that gives us this detail that these were barley loaves.

I'm not sure about you, but when I read this story, when I think, the image in my mind, I'm thinking something more like a French baguette, a large loaf of bread. That's not what this was.

These were barley loaves. This was poor people bread. This was the cheapest possible bread that you could buy. It was something more like crackers, just enough for the little boy to eat.

[12:24] And the fish, it wasn't redfish or largemouth bass that would feed several people. These were more kind of like sardines, something that would just give a little bit of flavor to the crackers. You see Andrew's dilemma here.

He's looking at this meager provision and saying, this is barely enough to feed this little boy. How in the world will this feed the multitude? The gap between what they needed and what they had was great.

It was an impossible situation. What we see, this is not impossible with God. Verse 10, it says, Jesus had the people sit down.

This is the first miracle. The 20,000 people sat down and listened to what he had to say. And he took these loaves and when he had given thanks, he began to pass them out. And in the same way, he began to distribute the fish.

And according to verse 11, look at this. It says, they all had as much as they wanted. Could you just imagine being there in that crowd?

[13:30] I'm not sure if I would rather be the first person in line or the last that day. To be the first person in line and to receive the provision to take exactly what you needed and then to see the basket pass and see enough for the next family and the next family and the next family to see those baskets work their way all through the crowd and realize there's enough for everyone here?

Or to be the last person in line and to know there's just no way there's going to be enough for me.

There's no way I'm going to eat my fill and to see that doubt just grow weaker and weaker and our hope increase stronger and stronger and stronger until you realize there's enough even for me.

Of course, there was more than enough. In fact, verse 12 says that when they had eaten their fill, they gathered up leftovers. The 12 baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves.

This tremendous need was overcome by a miraculous and tremendous provision. I wonder if you've ever experienced the provision of God.

Amanda and I, there's been times in our marriage where Amanda and I have had a very clear need, more than a few times in our marriage. And I can think back on a few of those times and praise God specifically for the ways that He has provided exactly what we needed.

[14:57] There's one time when I was in seminary and we were just dirt poor and our money was drying up quickly and we sat down and we talked about what we needed just to make ends meet,

where the gap was in our budget and we discussed an exact dollar amount.

We didn't share this with anybody else. And within a week, Amanda got a phone call from a friend who said that she needed her to come and to watch her little girl. Would she be willing?

She couldn't pay much. But what she offered to pay was exactly what we needed. You hear story after story after story about God doing this.

He's a need-meeting God. Our God loves to provide for the needs of His people. Our God knows our needs better than we know them ourselves and it delights Him when we receive from His hand good provision and when we return back to Him thanksgiving for all that He's provided.

But we need to realize that we have no promise of this type of provision on this side of eternity.

[16:08] this miracle here and the feeding of the 5,000 is not a promise of physical provision here and now but a pointer to eternal provision.

It is a pointer to true and lasting satisfaction in Christ. That is what we need more than anything else. That's our greatest need.

More than food on the table. More than money in our bank account more than a roof over our head. We need our sins forgiven in the presence of Christ with us. We need our souls to be satisfied in Him.

Our greatest need is Christ Himself and the good news of the gospel is that He is here to give us as much as we want of Him. this is what He tells us in verse 35.

He says the point of this sign the point of this provision is that I am the bread of life. I am the bread of life. Come to me not just to have your bellies filled but that you might find true and lasting satisfaction for your souls.

[17:23] Church we need to think bigger not less of our needs and we need to think bigger not less of God's provision.

Is this what we seek after? Is this what we hunger for? Is this what we desire more than anything? Let your temporary need teach you of your eternal need and let God's temporary provision teach you point you to his eternal provision of himself in Christ.

Second we see that Jesus is a God of great protection. Jesus is a God of great protection. Just like all of us want provision I think it's safe to say all of us want protection.

All of us want to be safe. We want protection from danger. We want security from our enemies. We want to feel safe. That's what the Jews wanted as well.

Look there to verse 14. It says when they saw this sign they praised him. This is the prophet who is to come into the world. And not only that verse 15 says they were about to come and take him by force to make him king.

[18:45] Now we have to understand that the Passover season for the Jews was just bursting with national pride and patriotism. This was like the 4th of July on steroids.

They were just zealous and excited. They were supercharged with pride for the Jewish nation. And so it makes sense, doesn't it, that at this time of the year more than any they would be thinking and seeking and looking for and hoping for a king.

Someone who would rule over their people. Someone who would triumph over the Romans.

Someone who would lead them and protect them. And who better than this guy who just gave us all a free lunch?

Right? We all want this, don't we? We all share a desire and a need for good leadership.

And that desire, we need to see this, the desire was not wrong, but the timing was. Jesus was not there to rule and to reign.

[19:52] Not yet. He was not there to be their king. Not yet. He still has work to do. And the kingdom that he was coming to establish was much bigger, much better, much greater than what they could ever imagine.

The protection that he was coming to provide for his people was much better, much more lasting than they could have ever imagined. I feel like I need to make this application here, especially with election season coming up.

We'll probably need to talk about this a few more times before then. Our desire for good leadership is not a bad one. It is good and it is right for us to desire godly leadership, to pray for our leaders, to cast a vote for those who we feel might lead us in the will of God, to desire godly leadership, to pray that God would send us political leaders who would lead and serve in ways that are pleasing to him and are a blessing to the people.

But we have to realize that this desire for God fearing leadership, for us to be a God fearing people, it will not be totally realized on this side of eternity.

It is not fully realized in the Republican Party, it is not fully realized in the Democratic Party, it is not going to be fully realized in America or in any other nation of the earth.

[21 : 23] That desire will be fully realized when Christ returns, when Christ establishes his kingdom on the earth.

Jesus knew that his time to reign was not yet here. So verse 15 says, when Jesus saw that they were wanting to make him king, he didn't remain, he didn't stick around, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

Apparently, his disciples didn't wait around for Jesus. They went on without him because it says, when evening came, they went down to the sea, got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum.

And it was dark. Now for me, that's strike number one. I don't think I've ever been out to sea, out on a boat in the ocean when it's pitch black, maybe some of you have.

But I imagine that that is not the best time for them to be out at sea, especially they didn't have the modern conveniences that we have of GPS navigation or even boat lights to see where they're going.

[22 : 30] Everything is just dark and eerily lit up by the moon. And to make things worse, strike number two, the waves begin to get rough. The water starts to get choppy because verse 18 says a strong wind was blowing there throughout the area.

Now I have been on a boat when things got choppy and I liked it for a little bit. It was kind of fun until it wasn't. You feel out of control and dangerous and apparently the Sea of Galilee is about 600 feet below sea level and so some combination of cool and warm air that I don't quite understand, it comes in and it just mixes up the water and the water begins to just suddenly get violently rough and it happens quickly.

The water becomes tumultuous. One minute the water is calm and the next minute you're tossing and turning, holding on to the boat, you're at the mercy of the ebb and the flow of the waves. This is a dangerous place to be and you can imagine the fear in the minds of the disciples.

Then comes strike number three. You're panicking in the midst of the storm, things are dark, things are spooky and you look out at the water and there's someone walking on top of the waves.

Verse 19 says when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat. This is terrifying. Matthew's account says that they thought they saw a ghost and they cried out in fear.

[24 : 00] But then Jesus says something. here that I want us to see this. He says something that puts them at ease. Look at what he said.

Verse 20, but he said to them, it is I do not be afraid. And then something changed.

All of a sudden they were glad to take him into the boat and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going. I want you to answer this question in your mind.

So what happened to change the disciples' fear into gladness? The storm was still raging. The storm didn't go away. The water was still choppy.

It's still dark. It's still spooky. This figure is still coming to them. What caused the change from fear to gladness? It was the realization temptation that although they were in the presence of danger, they were in the presence of God.

[25 : 06] And he was coming to them not to do them harm, but for good. These two parts here of Jesus' response, just four words in the Greek, this ought to give us comfort and confidence for any earthly danger that we face.

Look what he says. He says, it is I. Just two words here in the Greek, ego, a me. If you translate this literally, do you know what it says?

It says, I am. I am. You may have heard before that John's gospel has seven I am statements of Jesus.

We see another one here in this passage, I am the bread of life. In the weeks to come, Lord willing, we'll see some more. We'll hear him say, I am the way, the truth, the life. No one comes to the Father but by me.

I am the door. Before Abraham was, I am. Seven sayings of I am. For some reason, this one gets overlooked in the count. But here I stand, this one belongs.

[26 : 16] It's no less an I am statement than any of the others. It's the same two words. It's the same divine revelation of Jesus. Ego a me. It is I, I am, I am.

And if you know your Bible, especially the book of Exodus, you know that when the Lord revealed his name to Moses, what did he say? I am who I am.

Tell them I am has sent them to you. Jesus knows exactly what he's saying here. This is a direct claim to divinity.

Jesus is revealing himself as God. But it's the second part of this phrase here that puts them at ease, isn't it? I am, do not be afraid.

For those who don't know the Lord, his presence is their greatest danger. More than waves chopping, more than dangerous weather, the presence of God is the greatest danger for any sinner.

[27 : 23] But for those who know him, we can claim this comfort, we can claim this protection from any danger we face. I am, I am, do not be afraid.

Christian, we need to know that there is no danger here in this life no amount of chaos, no turmoil, no disaster, no earthly threat, no earthly loss that can overcome the presence of Christ in you. No matter what dangers you face, if you belong to Christ, you are safe in the hands of God. No one can take that from you. I am, do not be afraid.

This doesn't mean that we'll never face danger. quite the opposite, in fact, but what it means is that we now face any danger with confidence. The confidence of Paul in Romans, he says, I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Lord. If nothing can separate us from that, then what do we have to fear? This is the confidence that Christians have in the face of any earthly danger.

[28 : 47] fear. You may know that Tim Keller passed away last week, you may know that name, after a nearly three-year battle with pancreatic cancer.

That is the very scenario that men and women fear almost more than anything. A terminal condition, it's one of the nastiest, cruelest dangers that we face.

You talk about being afraid, you talk about being in danger, you talk about needing protection. I would imagine when you hear those words, that diagnosis from the doctor, that is when you want protection more than any other time.

You know what he said in his last days to his family? Just before he passed, he said, there is no downside in me leaving.

Not in the slightest. No downside. Why? Because he knew that despite this danger that would kill him, he was protected.

[29 : 54] He was safe in the hands of God. He could face it with confidence. Because the Lord is with me, I will not fear even death itself.

The Lord will protect me. This may kill me, but all he can do is bring me to him. This light heart and momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

Is this how we view danger, Christian? Is this how we measure risk in our life? Is this how we view safety?

We tend to view safety and risk with earthly eyes, but Christ, he's purchased for us true, eternal protection.

If you want to be safe, truly safe, seek shelter in the presence of Christ. And when we reach the shore of eternity, all the chaos of this present life with all its dangers, all its toils and snares, it will feel like it was over in just one fleeting moment.

[31 : 08] This type of confidence and security in the face of danger, it baffles the world. They don't have this type of assurance.

They can't make sense of it. What is the basis of the Christian's confidence? What is the secret to infinite joy that lifts us up out of our present circumstances?

I'll tell you what it is. It is faith in the promises of God. It is trust in the rock solid promises of God.

This is our third and final point this morning. Third, we see that Jesus is a God of great promise. Look there to verse 25.

It says, When the people found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, Rabbi, when did you come here? And Jesus, knowing everything, knowing that they were seeing with only earthly sight, he went straight to the heart.

[32 : 14] It says, Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Now, listen to this. He says, Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you, for on him the Father has set his seal.

Do not work for the food that perishes. You know, this is all most people know how to do. This is all that we know how to do.

We spend our energy, we work hard, we wear ourselves out so that we can put food on the table, then we eat the food, the food runs out, and now we've got to go work some more. We work to earn enough money, the money runs out, so now we've got to go work some more.

We hope that we'll just work long enough to earn as much as we can, to earn enough so that we have enough money to put enough food on the table for the rest of our lives, but at some point the money will expire, the food will expire, or guess what?

We will expire. It's all so empty, but Jesus says there is another way. seek the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.

[33 : 41] You may remember walking through Isaiah 55 together late last year, and this wonderful invitation, come everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, and he who has no money, come buy and eat, come buy wine and milk without money, without price.

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food, incline your ear and come to me here that your soul may live.

this is the invitation that Christ is making to these Pharisees, and it's the invitation that he's making to us.

He's holding out this incredible offer, a never-ending buffet, eternal satisfaction, free of price, eternal provision for our hunger, for our thirst, but how did they respond?

With physical sight. What must we be doing to do the works of God? Do you see that? You see how works-minded, how physical-minded, how earthly-minded they are?

[35 : 06] I've been working for this bread, it perishes, it perishes, it perishes, it runs out, you're offering me eternal bread, what do I have to do? How do I have to work to get that bread?

Jesus says, this is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent. This is the message of the gospel, church.

Eternal satisfaction is given, not earned, is given through faith in Christ. That is so different from the way that we're wired.

We want to work, we want to earn what we're given, that's the American way, you work hard, you earn a paycheck, you get up, you do it again. That is not the way it works with Christ.

And that is not the message of the Bible. One of my favorite insights from Tim Keller, he said, Buddha's final words before he died, you know what they were?

[36 : 08] Strive without ceasing. Jesus' final words on the cross, it is finished. The gospel is not a message of go do, it's a message of this is what Christ has done.

Would you receive it? Would you believe it? Would you stop working to earn it? Would you receive it by faith? Christianity is not another job where we earn our bread, we receive the bread of life by believing in him.

The way that they responded, I don't think gives us much hope that they got it. they said, what sign do you do that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?

Our fathers, they ate the manna in the wilderness as it is written, he gave them bread from heaven to eat. So what can you do for us, Jesus? What can we see you do that we might see and believe?

And of course, Jesus doesn't take the bait, but he does teach them a lesson. Jesus said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven.

[37 : 14] Stop talking about Moses. Don't put your faith in Moses, don't put your hope in Moses. It was not Moses, but my father gives you the true bread from heaven.

For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

It is an offer promise of true bread. Not from Moses, but from God. Not manna that perishes, but a person who comes down from heaven.

Not for physical sustenance, but for eternal life. Not just for the Jews, but for the world. Any who believe in him.

Here is the promise, church. anyone who comes to Christ, anyone, from the moment they first believe, they will begin a feast for their soul that will last forever.

[38 : 24] Now, we can taste it now. We live by this bread right now, but we know it will get better and better and better, more and more and more satisfying. We will never lack what we need the most.

And our experience of him will only get better the more we feast on him from now to the rest of eternity. You will have no hunger and you will have no thirst if only you would believe in him. Church, we were made to be satisfied in him. But we are far too easily pleased. so come to him. Trust him. Feast on him. Lean on him. Believe in him and be satisfied in him.

And do not think too small of him. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we thank you that you are the bread of life.

[39 : 37] Who came down from heaven, not just to meet our temporary needs, God, but to meet our greatest needs, our eternal needs. Lord, we need nothing more than to have our sins forgiven, to be made right with you, to be satisfied in you, not just now, but into eternity.

We praise you that that offer, that promise, is available to any who would come to you in faith. And so we pray now that we would rejoice in that provision, if we have it, and that we would repent, if we don't, and seek you in the promises made to us in the gospel.

We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.