



Look Beyond the Signs

Message Notes, May 22, 2016

John 6:1-15, 25-40

General observations:

- This was a miracle! There are speculations that the little boy's sharing inspired others to share, that as people gave generously, there was enough for all. It's a good notion, an inspiring model, but not true to this gospel account. John is clearly capturing the miraculous nature of the event, even pointing out that these were *small* loaves and fish, and that there were 5000 *men* (i.e., the number did not even include the women and children who were present), and that there were *12 baskets* left over.
- John's account of this event is unique. He captures the initial conversation Jesus had with Phillip: "... where shall we buy bread for all these folks? He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do" (6:5-6). The Lord often confronts us in circumstances or by his silence "to test" our faith, our trust in him. He always "has in mind what he is going to do."
- Jesus had them all "sit down." In the face of need or challenge, our tendency is to stand up, get moving, figure it out, fix it! Jesus often waits for us to slow down, *sit down*, relax, and look to him.
- Jesus will take and use what we give him. In His hands, five loaves and two fish are enough.
- The people are amazed – "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world" (6:14). But Jesus knew they did not understand the work he came to do and the kingdom he came to bring. They would make him a political king ("by force"). So "Jesus withdrew from them to a mountain by himself."

To understand the deeper message here, we have to read on, picking up the story in v. 25. Jesus confronts the shallow desire of the people – they are coming for more food or perhaps for more dazzling miracles. They are coming for the "signs," but Jesus beckons them to look beyond the signs to the ONE behind them! "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry."

What Is a Sign?

A biblical definition: "Signs are events that unmistakably involve an immediate and powerful action of God designed to reveal His character or His purposes."

- A sign is not the destination; it points to the destination.
- A sign is not the desired end; it reveals the desired goal or treasure.

Are we after only the things Jesus can do for us, or are we hungry for Him? That is, to know Him, worship Him, follow Him, serve Him. Is He our bread of life?

Yes, God cares about our wholeness, joy and peace. He does care about the circumstances of our lives, but he cares even more deeply about the fullness of our souls. From His eternal perspective, "our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all (2 Corinthians 4:17). This glory is rooted in Him – "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

This latter verse connects to the story nestled in the midst of this narrative, John 6:16-24 – another miracle, another sign: Jesus walks on water!

It is stormy. The disciples are struggling to get across the lake. They are surely stressed, perhaps even fearful, and Jesus comes walking out to them. John does not focus on the Peter incident (where Peter attempts to walk on the water to Jesus). John has a unique phrase in his account – "[Jesus says], 'It is I; don't be afraid.' Then



they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore.”

They “took Him into the boat.” ... “Christ *in you*, the hope of glory.”

Often, when the storms of life are churning, we cry out to Jesus to calm the storm, fix the problem, just do “a sign” and make it alright. But we are “the boat” – will we welcome Him in? Just who He is. Will we trust in Him (our hope of glory). Will we let Him strengthen us, sustain us, enable us to navigate the storm, even rest in it?

Jesus has not just come to *give* bread; He *is* the bread. Jesus has not just come to *satisfy* our desires; He wants to *change* our desires.

Reflection Questions

1. Are you in the midst of a “test” (a challenging situation and you can’t see what God “has in mind to do”)? What might He be wanting to show you about yourself? What might He be teaching you in this waiting?
2. Is there a storm churning in your life right now? How can you “take Jesus into your boat” – your heart mind and/or body? How can your soul “feed on Him, the Bread of life” even in the midst of this storm?
3. Do you know someone who is in turmoil? How might you be a sign that points them to Jesus? How can you help them welcome Jesus into their boat, even in the midst of their storm?