

John 6:1-29 “Eat.”

SEVEN SIGNS

Last time I was up here, I spoke from John 4 and 5 where Jesus healed an official’s son, and an ungrateful paralytic. It was the second and third, of seven seven sign-miracles in the book of John. Today, I am continuing that series. If you are not aware. In the book of John, before Jesus dies, John gives us 7 different miracles that Jesus performed, and only seven.

1. Turning water into wine (John 2:1-11)
2. Healing the official’s son in Capernaum (4:46-54)
3. Healing the paralytic at Bethesda (John 5:1-9)
4. Feeding the 5000 (John 6:5-14)
5. Walking on water (John 6:16-24)
6. Healing the man born blind (John 9:1-7)
7. Raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-45)

And the point of these vignettes, is to help us believe. This is exactly what John will admit in 20:30:

“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

These seven miracles are meant to help us believe. These signs show us, in different ways, and by different stories, who Jesus and what his salvation is like.

The first sign was turning water into wine at a wedding. And we said that was a signal to us that before following Jesus was about carrying crosses, and before it is about sacrifice, our faith is first about a feast. Jesus provides, in himself, the means to our eternal wedding day joy.

The second and third sign were two healings. And we said that they were a signal to us that before following Jesus was about our effort, it was about rest. Resting, trusting Jesus to do what we cannot do - bring us close to God, save us from our sin, and transform our doubts into faith, and sin into righteousness.

The fourth and fifth sign are the feeding of the 5000, and walking on water. In the first, Jesus provides the feast, in the second and third Jesus provides the rest, and in the fourth and fifth **Jesus doesn’t just provide the bread, he is the bread that satisfies us.**

Let's Read John 6:1-35 together.

INTRO

My Mom is half Italian and so in addition to our family's Secret Spaghetti Sauce recipe I also inherited some Italian choice Italian phrases. My favorite growing up was "Corpo de baco!" Because it felt like swearing, but all it means was "Body of Silkworm!" (My ancestors worked in silk.) But the one that was most used around my house was "Mangia quette fa bene!" "Eat! Because it's good for you." While other kids might have heard the guilt inducing "There are starving kids in Africa, you know?" I heard this hedonistic call. "Eat. Eat because it's *good*." (On a totally unrelated point, I was very chubby as a child, and I still shudder when I think back to my Mom asking the clerk at whatever clothes store we went to if they had "Husky" sizes in the back when the ones up front wouldn't fit. But as I said -totally unrelated.) The main point of today's message (which I stole shamelessly from John Piper) is this: **Jesus did not come to just give us bread, but to be our bread. Eat because *He* is good.**

FEEDING THE 5000

The story opens on the cusp of Passover -the Jewish equivalent to the fourth of July. As you know Passover was the celebration of Israel's freedom from a brutal slavery under the Egyptians. The Jews has been oppressed for some 400 years and God saved them, against all odds. And like all great American holidays the central event around this Jewish one was the food. The night before the great Exodus all the Jewish families huddled together, slaughtered a lamb, and ate in preparation for their freedom. The Jewish people in this story were getting ready for that day, and that feast. But they were no longer free. They were in bondage to another nation - Rome. While patriotic feelings would have been at their all time high, no doubt there were unhappy men ready, and waiting to see another great exodus out from under Rome's tyranny. Maybe they were looking for another Moses, someone to prove their power, to provide for them, and lead them to victory just like God did all those years ago. But while that might have been going on in the back ground, these people were also looking for more immediate signs.

Jesus had drummed up quite the following as someone who healed the sick. These people came to observe these signs happening themselves. (6:1-2) Notice that John explicitly points out that these followers didn't want Jesus, they wanted his signs. John takes pains throughout this gospel to point out this type of person. People who wanted Jesus for what he could do for them, and not for who he was. (2:23-25, 4:48; 6:2, and 6:26)

Jesus walks away with his disciples for a moment onto some higher ground (6:3) and as he looks down and back over the mass of people that have surrounded him - he has a plan. He asks questions to his disciples about where to get, how much, and what the price of food for these people might be (6:6-8). (Expensive!) But at no point is He grasping at straws - verse 6 "he knew what he would do."

Andrew pipes up and remembers, or finds a boy with 5 barley loaves and two fish. It's a ludicrously inadequate meal to the need. Jesus and his disciples help seat the some 5000 *men*, which means women and children were not included in that count. DA Carson mentions the number might have been over 20,000.

Jesus takes the food, thanks God for it and distributes, those same loaves and fish to the 20,000-ish people present. ("He distributed *them*" 6:11. This is not a story about people being generous with their lunches. Sharing with others from their backpacks but a story of God providing *all that we need to be satisfied*.) Because we are told they had "as much as they wanted" (6:11) with 12 baskets of leftovers collected (6:12).

The crowd at this point cashes out all that patriotic zeal it had been saving during years of oppression and attempts to take Jesus, by force, and make him king. Jesus understands that those 5000 fighting-age in that crowd could easily use him to foment a rebellion (“Make Israel Great Again), and possibly take out some of the surrounding Roman garrisons. But Jesus did not come to be useful to their political agenda he came to be precious to them, and to be himself their delight; and so immediately draws away to be on the mountain by himself. That’s the first sign.

JESUS IS OUR BREAD

There are 71 verses in John 6 all of them (except 5) deal with, and unpack the miracle of feeding the 5000. And the major point of all those 66 verses is that **Jesus didn’t simply come to give us bread, but to be our bread.**

This is seen very clearly in Jesus’ conversation with the Jews who rowed across the Sea of Galilee to look for him. (6:24) Since there is this whole business of Jesus walking on water (which we will get to in a second) they want to know how he got there so fast. Jesus doesn’t answer their question but instead goes straight for their hearts, unraveling their motivation for crossing the sea.

“I say to you, you are not seeking me because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.” (6:26)

Jesus tells these “seekers” that he knows all they want is more bread. He knows they didn’t come because they saw the sign, and concluded he was God’s son. He knows, they just concluded they could eat for another day. These Jews wanted his stuff, but not Him. So Jesus tells them:

“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.” (6:27)

Jesus tells them the search they are on will never end. No matter how much bread they eat that day, they will still be hungry tomorrow. He tells them to stop their endless search for fulfillment and satisfaction in food, and *instead of working, be given the food* that will sustain them forever. But they totally miss the point!

“Then they said to him, ‘What must we do to be doing the work of God.’” (6:28)

They thought they could *work*, for what only God can *give*. If you are not a Christian here today, you might have some of the same misconceptions about Christianity that these Jews did.

You might believe that the Christian life is more like cooking, than eating. If you add the right spice of belief to the right meat of good deeds, and right actions and if you let it simmer just right you will get to taste your heavenly meal. Provided your good deeds outweigh the bad. The mantra goes: “Get it right, *then* God will accept you.” Or maybe you have heard it “God helps those who help themselves.” But this is not the Christian message. Jesus does not offer us a new novel way to work. Jesus does not offer cooking classes. Jesus offers the meal fully prepared...

“This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent...” (6:29)

You see Christian *work* is *receiving* what is *given* by the Son. Christian “work” is belief. Christian work is trust. Christian work is treasuring the bread God gives, finding as precious the bread God sends.

Maybe I can say it another way: the story of the feeding the 5000 isn’t that God sees our five loaves, and two fish and tells us: “You do the first bit, and then I’ll do the rest”. No, the point is that it is totally impossible for five loaves and two fish to feed 5000 men and their families in the same way it is totally impossible for you to satisfy yourself with your own efforts and your own work.

You cannot “work” your little meal into an enduring feast for your soul. No “work” can produce a paycheck big enough to underwrite your appetite. There is nothing on this earth, once having achieved it, that will allow you to say “That’s enough. I’m full.” To look for and find satisfaction in anything other than Jesus, whether that’s your home, beauty, intelligence, power, sexuality, position, or financial security is to live for, as Jesus said “a food that perishes.” If you want to live, and really live, you need a different meal. This is why Jesus says:

I am the Bread of Life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.” (6:35)

Being a Christian is about eating the Bread of Life! “Eating Jesus” means that we *trust* that God in Jesus is a more fortifying meal than bread, or steak, or ham or beauty or intelligence or sin. “Eating Jesus” is *believing* that if we were to never drink another cup of water that Jesus would still satisfy our thirst. “Eating Jesus” is coming to a Jesus you find so precious all other earthly pursuits feel optional, unnecessary, unsatisfactory and un-quenching. **Jesus came to be, himself alone, your bread. Eat him because he is good.**

Jesus has not come to give you the “bread” of your political agenda to “Make American Great Again.” Jesus has not come to just give you bread when your pantry is empty. Jesus did not come just so we could look for “miracles” “signs” and “wonders.” Jesus didn’t even come to give us the “bread” of healing. **Jesus came primarily to show himself as the only one who can save and satisfy your soul. Jesus came not just to give you bread, but to be your bread.**

IS HE REALLY THAT SATISFYING?

However, at this point, we all have a question. Jesus makes an unsettling claim.

“...whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”

Jesus uses the most vivid physical metaphor possible to grab the attention of subsistence-on-the-verge-of-starvation farmers and agrarians to make the point that He can satisfy all their voracious and most felt desires in himself. All they need do is trust him, eat him, believe in him, drink him.

But that's terrifying. What if he isn't enough? What if eating Jesus doesn't make my stomach full? What if by believing in Jesus and doing what he says we miss out on greater pleasures, and other tasty, sensuous treats? What if there is a cost to trusting him? Will the price of turning away from sin, be matched by the riches of Jesus? Will he really satisfy us if we give up what we consider most fundamental to our wellbeing and identity? Does the satisfaction Jesus offers compete with the threat of losing my family? My comfort? My sexual orientation? My money? Will he protect my family if we becoming missionaries among the unreached? The question I think we are all asking is: "Will he *really* be enough? Is his "bread" *really* that satisfying?"

WALKING ON THE WATER

And it's at this point we turn to the sign of Jesus walking on the water. Unlike the 66 verses spent unpacking the feeding of the 5000, there are only five verses describing this sign.

There is no commentary on them, no explanation. It just happens.

The disciples wait until the evening, get into their boats and start heading for Capernaum on the opposite shore. A storm comes up about three miles in, they're scared. Jesus walks on the water towards them, Jesus gets in the boat and immediately the boat was back on dry land. (6:16-21) The end. No more explanation. No main point. Jesus gets in the boat and the whole story is over. But what if that's exactly the point?

Jesus just fed 5000 people, and he gave each one of his 12 disciples one of those 12 baskets of leftovers to carry. Almost a personal message - I will provide for you a personally, tailor-made basket of provision. "I am not just the bread of life, I am *your* bread of life! I didn't just come to give bread, but to *be your* bread!"

But right after hearing the truth, that God will provide for us what we need in his Son, a storm comes. And the question we all asked instinctually was asked by each of those disciples on the boat.

Does the message of the loaves work on the water? Does it work in real life? Will God provide in the storm? Will he provide when it's hard? Will he provide if our anxiety comes back? If we never get married? If we never have kids? If we never make enough money? If our kids can't go to college? Will Jesus provide? Will he give me what I need?

And the answer is - Jesus always gets in the boat. That's the message of the second sign. He will literally cross oceans to be in your boat. He will never leave you, and you will not be lost to the sea. He will always provide, he will always satisfy.

If you notice in John's account the storm doesn't end. In both Matthew and Mark we are told the storm ends, but not in John. Why? Because I think John is trying to tell us the storm might not end, but Jesus will always be in your boat. Jesus is in the boat and he will satisfy you no matter the circumstance - he will always provide. John wants us to know that Jesus can be your "Bread of Life" even on your worst day, when you are most in need, and when it is most difficult. The storm doesn't end in John's gospel because for a lot of us it hasn't!

And we don't need to hear that Jesus will always get us out of the storm, we need to hear that he will always be in the boat! We don't need to hear that Jesus will always give us bread we need to hear that He is our bread and will always satisfy. The call I offer to every person in this room believer or non-believer is: **Eat! Believe! Trust! Treasure! Eat him because He is good for you.**

THE PASSOVER

Rewind with me for a moment back to verse four. "Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand." As you know, and as you have heard, John doesn't give us details for them to be ignored. If there was a shotgun over the fireplace in chapter one, it's meant to be there, and you can bet it will be fired. So what significance is there in the fact that it was the Passover?

I mentioned already that the proximity of these events to the Passover might explain some patriotic fervor, and might have been a contributing factor in attempting to take Jesus by force and make him king.

But it also informed the line of questioning the Jews brought to Jesus in Capernaum. (6:25-35) They wanted Jesus to perform signs to prove who he was. Their minds jump immediately to Moses, the man who led them out of Egypt, the man who instituted the Passover. The man who told them to slaughter a lamb, to take its blood and spread it on their doors so death would pass over them, and to eat the lamb in preparation for their Exodus. Their salvation accomplished by that incredible miracle - the parting of the Red Sea. Their rescue was made even more amazing by God providing for the Israelites bread from heaven. All amazing stories of God's provision, power and faithfulness through Moses.

Not only that, but if you jump back a little bit more to the end of John 5. (John 5:44-47) Jesus rebukes the Jews there for saying they believed in Moses, but not believing in whom Moses pointed them to - himself, Jesus.

So it seems as if John brings up the Passover to teach Jewish skeptics that their hope in Moses or a Moses-type figure should be questioned. Moses was about to be eclipsed. Moses instituted the Passover to celebrate these incredible victories by God in the past but John's point is that they point something even greater than the Exodus, and greater than the Red Sea. Those signs pointed to Jesus, and his salvation.

While Moses' salvation pointed to the end of one power in one portion of the world, in one particular historical era but Jesus' salvation is the end of all powers, in the entire world, for all time. Including our greatest enemies - death and sin.

Moses' bread gave the Israelites food for the next day's journey, but Jesus' is himself our bread and that food gives us eternal life!

Moses' salvation was accomplished by parting the Red Sea allowing the Israelites to walk on dry land. But Jesus' salvation requires no dry ground. Jesus will save you and redeem even if you are drowned on the ocean floor, or if the waves are 50 feet above your boat. Jesus always gets in the boat.

Moses told the Israelites to celebrate these great deeds forever with a feast! And what did they eat? They ate the lamb sacrificed, whose blood was shed for their protection from death.

And as Christian we celebrate with a feast too but it is Jesus who is our sacrificed and spotless lamb. Whose blood was shed to protect us from death, and whose flesh we eat. The entire of history of the Bible speaks to this truth: **Jesus didn't just come to give you bread. He came to be your bread. Eat because He is good.**

BUT CAN'T WE ASK FOR BREAD?

At this point, maybe your are asking: "Well is it wrong to ask for bread?" No. Of course not.

Bridgeway has been blessed over the past several weeks with God miraculously healing people here. It's amazing. I don't remember a time where Bridgeway has been so blessed by God's delight and power to heal. And I do not want that to end in any way. You should not want that to end in any way. We should all continue to pray for God's power to fall in healing but the point of today's message is that as much as we pray for God's signs, and devour stories of him healing. We should pray 10,000 times more for satisfaction in Jesus. We should eat up Scripture where God has promised to speak to us. We devour opportunities to confess our sins, and drink up each time we can gather together to worship. We should continually be hunting for the places God has promised a new taste of our salvation!

I told my student's this last week, and I'll say the same here. My goal as a pastor of Bridgeway isn't to make you well adjusted people who are experiencing a lot of happiness, with lots of bread on your counter. My goal is to preach Christ as so precious that when you have nothing left, that when you are depressed to the point of suicide, that when your family is falling apart, and you have no money that you can still come here and sing "It is well with my soul!" because He is your satisfaction and not your situation. **Eat him, because he is good!**