

John 6: 16-42

To the casual observer, Jesus' public ministry seemed to be quite successful. John had called the nation to repentance, and Jesus had performed many miracles. And even though the religious leaders were jealous, and quite frankly *threatened* by His popularity, the common people **"heard him gladly."**

However, things weren't quite what they seemed.

No, many of the people had aspirations that didn't fit into God's plan.

And nowhere was this more evident than on that day in which Jesus fed the 5000.

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As you will remember, Jesus and His
disciples had **"--- departed into a
desert place by ship privately."**

Such a move was absolutely necessary as the
disciples were worn out.

In fact, the crowds that thronged them had
been so unrelenting that they couldn't
even eat their meals.

Jesus knew this couldn't go on, so He and
His disciples slipped away quietly.

However, **"the people saw them departing, and
many knew him, and ran afoot thither
out of all cities, and outwent them,
and came together unto him."**

I think most of us would have put them down
to nothing more than an unruly crowd.

However, in Jesus' eyes **"they were as sheep
not having a shepherd."**

So, in spite of the demands that they had already placed upon Him, He spent the rest of the day teaching them and healing their sick.

And then, at the end of a very long day, He had miraculously provided a feast for these hungry people.

It was an act of compassion, pure and simple, but it almost erupted into violence.

John 6:15 **"When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone."**

Oh, they were looking for a king all right, but on their own terms.

Here was a man who could miraculously provide food, and possibly even free them from Roman rule.

Yes, they had their own agenda, and they were prepared to use force, if necessary, to bring it to pass.

However, their agenda wasn't Jesus' agenda -

--- "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone."

There wasn't the slightest possibility that they could have taken Him by force.

However, Jesus wasn't willing to use the force necessary to stop them.

Consequently, He departed **"into a mountain himself alone."**

But, what about the disciples?

Well, Matthew's Gospel tells us, He **"--- constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the**

**other side, while he sent the
multitudes away."**

I don't know if they really understood the urgency of the situation, but they certainly followed orders.

However, the moment they stepped into that ship, they stepped into trouble.

V 16-18 **"And when even was now come, his
disciples went down unto the sea,
17: And entered into a ship, and went
over the sea toward Capernaum. And it
was now dark, and Jesus was not come to
them.**

**18: And the sea arose by reason of a
great wind that blew."**

Yes, **"Jesus was not come to them."**

In the middle of this very stressful and dangerous situation, they found themselves quite alone.

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I would like to shift gears for a moment,
and look at this whole affair from a
different point of view.

You see, the church's present situation is
much like the disciples'.

During this Age of Grace, Jesus is up in the
mountain, so to speak.

Yes, until the fullness of the Gentiles be
come in, He has put aside His office as
Israel's king, and is seated at God's
right hand, interceding on the behalf
of His church.

And where is the church?

Well, it's down here among the storms of
life.

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Getting back to the disciples.

They hadn't gotten themselves into this desperate situation by gross disobedience.

On the contrary, it was Jesus who had **"constrained"** them to get into a ship, and they had obeyed.

So, what about tribulation?

Is it unavoidable?

Certainly, our disobedience can get us into a lot of trouble.

But, apparently, so can obedience.

Yes, even when we are walking according to God's commands, and many times *because* we are walking according to His commands, we will find ourselves in the midst of a storm.

1 Peter 2:20-21 **"For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when**

ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God."

And now listen to the next verse --- **"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:"**

--- **"For even hereunto were ye called."**

Is that really part of our calling?

I'm afraid it is.

However, Jesus has promised, **"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."**

And David has said, **"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."**

But Jesus wasn't with His disciples, was He?

That night, as they struggled at the oars,
there were two things uppermost in
their minds --- **"it was now dark,"** and
Jesus wasn't with them.

Had He, in His effort to avoid the crowd,
deserted them?

We know He would never do that, and deep
down, the disciples knew He would never
do that.

And the fact of the matter is, He hadn't
done that.

No, Mark's Gospel tells us that even though
He was way up in that mountain, **"he saw
them toiling in rowing."**

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And by the way, that's another picture of
the churches' relationship to Christ.

Even though He no longer walks the dusty
roads of this earth, He is still very
much aware of our situation.

Remember what He told His disciples "--- lo,
**I am with you always, even unto the end
of the world."**

So, even though we might not aware of it,
Jesus is with us in the midst of our
storms.

And not only that, but someday He will
literally be with us.

Yes, someday He will come, "**In a moment, in
the twinkling of an eye, at the last
trump,"** and He will take us home.

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V 19-20 "**So when they had rowed about five
and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see
Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing
nigh unto the ship: and they were**

afraid.

20: But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid."

Try to put yourself in their situation.

They're 3-1/2 miles from any land, and in the middle of a storm.

Suddenly, they saw someone walking out of the darkness.

No wonder they thought He was a spirit!

But then they heard that familiar voice floating over the waters --- **"It is I; be not afraid."**

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Sometimes the storms of life can so blind our eyes, that we don't even recognize our Saviour.

Sometimes, we forget **"that all things work together for good to them that love**

**God, to them who are the called
according to his purpose."**

At least, I do.

Like old Jacob, we cry out in despair ---

"all these things are against me."

Certainly, our troubles are real.

Just like the disciples, sometimes we are

"tossed with waves."

However, we might not be so prone to despair
if we had better *eyesight*.

Take a closer look.

Isn't that Jesus walking on the very waves
that threaten to overwhelm us? --- **"It
is I; be not afraid."**

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V 21 **"Then they willingly received him into
the ship: and immediately the ship was
at the land whither they went."**

Just a few moments before they were at their
wits end; now they were at their
journey's end.

And all because they had **"--- willingly
received him into the ship."**

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V 22-24 **"The day following, when the people
which stood on the other side of the
sea saw that there was none other boat
there, save that one whereinto his
disciples were entered, and that Jesus
went not with his disciples into the
boat, but that his disciples were gone
away alone;**

**23: (Howbeit there came other boats
from Tiberias nigh unto the place where
they did eat bread, after that the Lord
had given thanks:)**

24: When the people therefore saw that

Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus."

They had taken special note of the fact that Jesus wasn't in a ship when the disciples left.

So, sooner or later, He had to come from the mountain to look for a ship.

However, they waited all night, and Jesus never appeared.

So, **"they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus."**

But why Capernaum? Was it just a guess? I think it was.

You see, during His public ministry, Jesus had spent a lot of time in Capernaum. In fact, you might call that city His home base.

So with no idea where He had gone, they
decided to look in Capernaum.

And once there, the synagogue was the most
likely place where He could be found.

However, there was something they couldn't
figure out, and it was the first
question they asked Him, --- **"Rabbi,
when camest thou hither?"**

That was the big mistake, wasn't it?

They had no idea how He had ever managed to
get to Capernaum without a ship.

However, Jesus ignored their question and
went right to the point.

V 26 --- **Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye
seek me, not because ye saw the
miracles, but because ye did eat of the
loaves, and were filled."**

That was the crux of the matter, wasn't it?

They were so taken up by the fact that Jesus could provide a banquet that they had completely missed the most important point.

Yes, after centuries of waiting, they were the privileged generation to whom the Messiah had come, and all they could do was think about food.

V 27 **"Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."**

Remember the Samaritan woman that Jesus met at Jacob's well.

All she could think about was a convenient source of water.

However, Jesus had been able to raise her sights, and the results were marvellous.

He wanted to do the same thing for these folks, but like the Samaritan woman, they had a one track mind.

John 6:28 **"Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?"**

There seems to be a bit of a disconnect here.

In V 27, Jesus told them about **"that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you."**

It was His gift to them.

However, they were still talking about works --- **"What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?"**

Actually, the only thing they could do was
"believe," and that's exactly what
Jesus told them.

V 29 **"This is the work of God, that ye
believe on him whom he hath sent."**

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But they still couldn't give up the idea of
free food.

They had already tried the direct approach.

As you will remember, they had done their
best to **"take him by force, to make him
a king."**

This time they would use a more subtle
approach, but their goal would be just
the same.

Believe it or not (and with scripture to
back them up) they actually tried to
trick Jesus into supplying food on a
continuing basis.

Here's how their little scheme worked.

V 30-31 **"They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?"**

31: Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat."

As you remember, their motivation for following Jesus had been the **"miracles which he did on them that were diseased."**

And then, because of a legitimate need, they had been miraculously fed.

No, they didn't need any more signs to convince them that He was their Messiah.

Their request was nothing more than a trick
--- **"What sign shewest thou then, that
we may see, and believe thee?"**

And then they got very specific --- **"Our
fathers did eat manna in the desert; as
it is written, He gave them bread from
heaven to eat."**

Granted, you gave us food yesterday, but
Moses kept it up for 40 years --- **"What
dost thou work?"**

What a tricky bunch they were!

V 32 **"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily,
verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you
not that bread from heaven; but my
Father giveth you the true bread from
heaven."**

First of all, He corrected their theology.
There was no possibility of a competition
between Himself and Moses, because

Moses hadn't provided the manna in the first place.

Consequently, their scriptural illustration was flawed.

However, being the teacher He was, Jesus used their example of manna to point them to Himself.

V 32-33 "---- **Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.**

33: For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world."

The "**bread of God**" and the manna they wanted to talk about had one thing in common.

The Source was just the same "-- **my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven."**

What a wonderful analogy that was, and what a clever way to raise their sights from the physical to the spiritual!

So, what was their response?

I'm afraid it was no better than the one that the Samaritan woman had given Him.

When He offered her living water, she responded --- "**Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.**"

And when He offered this crowd "**the bread of God,**" they simply said, ---"**Lord, evermore give us this bread.**"

Actually, that's what we've chased you halfway across the country for.

They were on a different wavelength entirely!

However, Jesus hadn't given up yet.

V 35 **"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."**

He didn't say, *I will supply the bread of life*, He said, **"I am the bread of life."**

Salvation isn't a set of rules or a religion. It's a Person --- **"I am the bread of life."**

Remember Simeon's words when he met Mary and Joseph and the Babe in the temple?

Holding that little boy in his arms, he said --- **"For mine eyes have seen thy salvation."**

Yes, that little boy was **"the bread of life,"** and He still is.

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In an attempt to get her eyes off the well and onto her Redeemer, Jesus told the Samaritan woman --- **"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: 14: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst."**

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Now He adds one more ingredient.

V 35 --- **"he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."**

But His words had fallen on deaf ears.

Realizing *their* little scheme wasn't working, they quickly lost interest.

V 36 **"But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not."**

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Had He used the wrong approach?

Maybe He should have used this example of
manna to talk about free food.

Why, even today, the prosperity gospel never
fails to get a large following.

No, there was nothing wrong with Jesus'
illustration or His application.

The problem wasn't the message, it was the
hearers "--- **ye also have seen me, and
believe not.**"

The principle is just the same today.

If people don't want to see Jesus, it will
do no good to show them something else.

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Scripture teaches us that man has a free
will.

In fact, Romans 10:13 says, "**For whosoever
shall call upon the name of the Lord
shall be saved.**"

No, God's Word doesn't teach us that man is hopelessly locked into a predetermined fate.

Just as Adam and Eve were allowed to choose for or against their Creator, so every one of their descendents have been given a free choice.

However, because of God's foreknowledge, He knows what each man's choice will be, and He has always known it.

This, of course, is also true of His Son.

So when you hear Jesus talking about His Father giving Him certain individuals, as He does in V 37-39, it is simply a case of the Shepherd knowing who His sheep are.

Let's continue.

V 36-40 **"But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not.**

37: All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

38: For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

39: And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

40: And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."

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V 38 **"For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me."**

Jesus left the glories of heaven for one reason.

Yes, He spent 33 years in this sin cursed earth and endured the cross because it was the His Father's will.

And all through His earthly pilgrimage, it was His Father's will, not His own, and definitely not His physical desires, that guided His footsteps.

Philippians 2:5-8 **"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:**

6: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a

servant, and was made in the likeness
of men:

8: And being found in fashion as a man,
he humbled himself, and became obedient
unto death, even the death of the
cross."

What an attitude!

And by His grace, we are to emulate that
attitude.

Yes, "Let this mind be in you, which was
also in Christ Jesus."

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John 6:39 "And this is the Father's will
which hath sent me, that of all which
he hath given me I should lose nothing,
but should raise it up again at the
last day."

Did you notice Jesus' words, "I should lose
nothing?"

Yes, He will rescue us in our entirety.
Our souls, our spirits, and even our bodies
(yes, our physical bodies) are under
His special care.

We are His possession, His inheritance, His
bride, and He will **"lose nothing, but
should raise it up again at the last
day."**

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V 41 **"The Jews then murmured at him, because
he said, I am the bread which came down
from heaven."**

The crowd that pursued Him in the hope of
receiving food were consistently
referred to as **"those men"** or **"the
people."**

However, as we begin V 41, it is **"The Jews"**
that are reacting to His message.

What has changed?

Well, I think His audience has changed.

Skipping ahead to V 59, we find that this whole conversation took place **"in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum."**

So putting two and two together, it appears that Jesus had turned from the first crowd, who had rejected His words, and was now addressing the Jews that had assembled in the synagogue.

You would almost think their interest in spiritual things would make them a more receptive audience.

However, they had their own scruples.

V 41-42 **"The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.**

42: And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and

mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?"

Certainly, they wouldn't have had any problem with His teachings if He had said an angel came down from heaven, but not Jesus.

No doubt they had already accepted Him as a teacher, and even a prophet, but not someone who had *come down from heaven*.

Why, they even knew His parents.

So, in spite of His signs and wonders (many of which had been done in their own city), He would never rise above the status of a prophet.

So this was the situation.

The first crowd was quite willing to make Him their king, provided He followed their agenda.

And no doubt the second crowd would have
accepted Him as a prophet.

But none of them would ever accept the fact
that He was **"the bread which came down
from heaven."**

No, Jesus' message was just too
unbelievable, but it was the only one
that could help them.

So in next week's lesson, we will find Jesus
using the same illustration, and even
intensifying its application --- **"if
any man eat of this bread, he shall
live for ever: and the bread that I
will give is my flesh, which I will
give for the life of the world."**