

6 Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), ² and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick. ³ Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. ⁴ The Jewish Passover Feast was near.

⁵ When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?” ⁶ He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

⁷ Philip answered him, “Eight months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!”

⁸ Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up, ⁹ “Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?”

¹⁰ Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. ¹¹ Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

¹² When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, “Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.” ¹³ So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

¹⁴ After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.” ¹⁵ Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

Jesus “Knows Your Needs and Well-Provides You”

1. Your physical needs
2. Your spiritual needs

You’ve all heard the song, “I am Jesus’ Little Lamb,” haven’t you? There’s a line in that song that I want to draw your attention to this morning: “He (Jesus) knows my needs and well-provides me.” Even if you’ve never heard it before – “he knows my needs and well-provides me” – you know that it’s true. Jesus knows you need to be taken care of. As a physical creature, you need things like clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home. As a spiritual creature, he knows you need God’s love and forgiveness. He knows what you need, even better than *you* know what you need, and in the Bible he gives you all sorts of promises telling you he’ll provide what’s best for you.

Most of you have been singing that line for years – that song is probably one of the first songs your parents or Sunday School teachers taught you.

But, as sinful, forgetful human beings, we need to be reminded of that truth. The disciples certainly did in the lesson I just read for you. When the rubber hit the road, they didn’t turn to Jesus and trust in his power to provide food for a hungry crowd. And when the crowd saw the miracle, they needed to be reminded that the spiritual blessings Jesus came to bring were so much more important than a full stomach.

Like the disciples, our trust in Jesus to provide for us isn’t perfect. And like the crowd, we’re tempted to let physical blessings in life crowd out the more important spiritual blessings Jesus gives us. So listen as Jesus shows us again how he knows our needs and well-provides us, physically, and more importantly, spiritually.

I. Your physical needs

The crowd following Jesus must have been hungry. This is the same crowd we saw last Sunday, the one that ran along the shore to follow Jesus and his disciples in their boat. They had been following Jesus all day, and they hadn't eaten. They hurried to find him, so they didn't have time to pack a lunch. They were out in the middle of nowhere, so there were no McDonald's or 7-11s nearby.

Jesus knew they were hungry. So did the disciples. The other gospels say they told Jesus to send the crowds away to find their own food. But Jesus had compassion on these people. He had a miracle in mind to show his power as God's Son and his love for these people.

Of course, he wanted to teach his disciples a lesson, too. So he said to Philip, "**Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?**" This was a test, John tells us. Jesus wanted their trust. He wanted them to realize that they couldn't provide for the crowd, and to turn to Jesus as the one who could.

How did the disciples do? Philip turned to the bank account. He pulled out his calculator, and crunched the numbers. "Impossible," he said. Even if they had 8 months pay, they couldn't do it. Then Andrew steps up to the plate. Andrew turned to the resources at hand – 5 loaves and 2 small fish. For so many people? "Impossible," he said.

Now, Jesus was waiting for that "right answer:" "Jesus, obviously we can't provide for them, but we trust that you can." But that answer doesn't come.

Like the disciples, Jesus wants our trust. "Don't worry about food, clothes..." Jesus said. "God knows you need those things to survive. Trust that he'll provide for you." Most of us here this morning have to say that God has given us way more than the basic necessities. But don't you still sometimes find yourself worrying? About your retirement account? About your property value? About your job? Doesn't that show that, to some extent, just like we saw with Philip and Andrew, that's what you're putting your trust in? That's where you're looking for your daily bread?

And sometimes God tests us, just like he did with the disciples. The economy goes downhill. A retirement account gets cut in half. We lose a job. We get sick. We don't always pass those tests with flying colors. Sometimes we start to worry even more.

Listen to what happened next. Jesus had the people sit down. He took the loaves and fish, thanked his heavenly Father for them, and started to hand them out. And he kept handing them out. And kept handing them out, until the people couldn't eat anymore. 5 loaves, and 2 fish, for 5,000 men – not to mention women and children. And when it was over? 12 big baskets of leftovers, one for each disciple, a vivid reminder of Jesus power and love to provide for them.

The point isn't that Jesus will miraculously put food on your table. The point isn't that Jesus will make you rich. He never tells you that in his Word. But he does tell us that, when it comes to earthly possessions, he knows what's best for us. When it comes to daily necessities, he'll give us what we need until he takes us home to heaven. And this display of power and love is a good reason to trust him.

Listen to what the apostle Paul has to say about it: "If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" The almighty God is *for* you. He proved it. Those sins of worry, a lack of trust in God – he loved you so much that he sent his only Son from all eternity to die for those sins. He won your forgiveness by sacrificing his own Son in your place. A God who loves you that much, Paul says, isn't he going to make sure you're going to be taken care of every day? That same Jesus who died for you is ruling all things at God's right hand. Isn't he going to make sure that everything that happens to you is for your eternal good?

That's a God you can trust. You know, one of the ways you express that trust is by praying, "Give us *this* day our *daily* bread." You're not worried about the rest of your days. God

will take care of them. And you're not worried about today, because you're placing your bodily needs into the hands of your loving God and leaving them there.

II. Your spiritual needs

So, how did the crowd react to Jesus' miracle? ¹⁴ **After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world."** It seems like a good reaction, doesn't it? Notice, they called him not a prophet, but *the* Prophet, with a capital 'P.' They're referring to a prophecy Moses gave 1500 years earlier about the coming Messiah.

So they recognized he was the Messiah. That's good, isn't it? Isn't that what Jesus wanted? Look what happens next: ¹⁵ **Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.** These people wanted him to be a different kind of savior. Their focus was on the physical, not on the spiritual. Here was their "meal-ticket." They'd never be hungry again. Here was the king who could get rid of the Romans, make Israel a great and wealthy nation again.

This was a temptation for Jesus, wasn't it? This is Satan saying to him, "Hey, you came to be king...and here are your people, begging you to rule over them. You don't need to go through all that suffering and pain. Give them what they want."

But Jesus never lost sight of why he had come. He knew that all the food in the world wouldn't satisfy their greatest need: They needed a Savior from sin, or they'd suffer eternally in hell. It was that greater spiritual need the crowd had lost sight of, but Jesus never did.

There are still people today who try to make Jesus just a "bread-king" – someone who can solve all their earthly problems. A friend of mine worked in a Christian bookstore one summer, and do you know what the biggest, most popular section was? The section on money, full of books that actually told you that God can help you get rich. Obviously, that "Christian" bookstore had lost its focus.

You would never make Jesus a "bread-king" like that. But there's a warning here for you, isn't there? Don't focus on physical wants and lose sight of your spiritual needs, like that crowd and that bookstore. That's what the world is telling you to do every day. It holds out things like money and pleasure and tells you, "This is what makes you happy. This is what you need. Focus on this."

Jesus comes to you in his Word and reminds you of your greatest need. He points you to the law, shows you all of those sins that you commit so casually every day, and how serious God is about punishing those sins. They earn you a place in hell. So, what do you need? More than anything else in this world, you need forgiveness for those sins.

Then he shows you in the gospel how he already provided that forgiveness for you. He kept all of God's commandments perfectly in your place. He carried your sins to the cross, and suffered hell there, to pay your debt of sin in full. He rose from the dead, guaranteeing that one day you'll rise from the dead, too, to spend an eternity with him in heaven.

The best part of the forgiveness Jesus won for you is that it's in abundant supply. The 5,000 ate their fill, and had plenty left over; and when Jesus provides for you spiritually, he does it in abundance. "God is able to make all grace abound to you..." Paul said in the second lesson today. You can keep going back to his Word, keep going to Holy Communion, keep remembering your Baptism, and you'll find a constant supply of God's love and forgiveness there.

Jesus knows your needs and well-provides you. Don't lose sight of that truth. Trust that he'll provide your daily bread. And never lose sight of the more important blessings he provides for you in his Word – forgiveness of sins, eternal life. Amen.