

John 6:1–15

After this, Jesus crossed over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias). ²A large crowd followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he was performing on those who were sick. ³Jesus went up on the hillside and sat down there with his disciples. ⁴The Jewish Passover Festival was near.

⁵When Jesus looked up and saw a huge crowd coming toward him, he asked Philip, “Where can we buy bread for these people to eat?” ⁶But Jesus was saying this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do.

⁷Philip answered him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to have just a little.”

⁸One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, ⁹“There’s a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what is that for so many people?”

¹⁰Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” There was plenty of grass in that place, so they sat down. There were about five thousand men.

¹¹Then Jesus took the loaves and, after giving thanks, he distributed pieces to those who were seated. He also did the same with the fish—as much as they wanted.

¹²When the people were full, he told his disciples, “Gather the pieces that are left over so that nothing is wasted.” ¹³So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with pieces from the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

¹⁴When the people saw the miraculous sign Jesus did, they said, “This really is the Prophet who is coming into the world.”

¹⁵When Jesus realized that they intended to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, what’s on your plate today? What is that one thing that is bothering you, nagging you, making you worry? That thing that you don’t know how it’s going to turn out? That thing that you *do* know how it’s going to turn out, but are not sure how you are going to handle it? What’s on your plate today?

While we all have different problems we are dealing with, the common thread is that we all have them. So maybe your plate is full and heavy today. And if it’s not today, no doubt, it will be one day.

The disciples had the opposite problem. Well, kind of. They’re plates were empty — literally. They had no food to feed the giant mass of people that Jesus just told them to feed.

The disciples were up in arms. There was not enough food on hand. There was not enough money to buy food. Very quickly they were out of options. They simply didn’t have enough.

“We don’t have enough” is the thought that often crosses our minds when things get dicey. Why did this happen? What am I going to do? How will I get by? How will I cope? It’s then we find the only conclusion seems to be, “I don’t have enough — fill in the blank.” I don’t have enough health. I don’t have enough wealth. I don’t have enough space. I don’t have enough time. I don’t have enough friends.

And suddenly our sinful flesh throws up it’s arms and says, “God’s not helping me, I have to do whatever I can to get by.” Like Adam and Eve in the Garden — when the devil convinced them they lacked something, that God wasn’t going to give it to them, they did the one thing that God told them not to do. Or think of Abraham — “I’m supposed to have a son, an heir. God promised it, but he’s not following through fast enough. I’m getting old. I know! I’ll sleep with someone who’s not my wife and have a child that way. NO!

When man-made solutions fall short, so quickly, so easily our sinful natures lead us to think, “Gods not serving me, I don’t have to serve him.” In those moments when your plate seems so full that it’s going to break, there are two things you need to see. First, the devil is going to use any kind of bump in the road to try to turn you against God, to try to lead you by your sinful flesh away from God’s Word, away from your faith, to your eternal doom. Recognize that right away and avoid it. And second, see that full plate as an opportunity to throw it back on Jesus. See it as a test to your faith. For whether it is an actual test from God, or just the result of living in a sinful world, our faith is constantly being tested.

The evangelist John tells us that the feeding of the 5000 *was* a test to the disciples’ faith, an opportunity for them to throw it back to Jesus. To look at all the man made solutions and conclude, it’s not going to work. to turn to Jesus and say, “Lord, you’re going to have to take this one — obviously!

When you look at your plate, how full it is, how heavy it is, as you look to the future and wonder what's waiting for you there, instead of looking at it as an opportunity to throw your hands up and find your own way out — which will inevitably end in sin — throw it back to the Lord. This morning Jesus shows us that there is no problem too big for him to handle.

5000 hungry men, not to mention their families. All the man made solutions fell short. But Jesus is God, his solution was simple: “**Tell the people to sit down.**” From anyone else — foolish. But from the Son of God, it's not. You do what he says.

And there was food enough for all, with leftovers! Imagine the looks on the disciples faces when each found themselves actually gathering extra food, or when they all met back by Jesus to see they *all* had extra food! Giddy with excitement after the unexpected, unanticipated miracle, or miracles you could say, as each of those 5000 people ate not just a bite, but until they were full.

What was Jesus teaching by performing this miracle. Lots of things, right? That we don't need to worry. That the Lord will provide. To trust in Jesus. Today in our lives with our plates full of heavy issues, challenges, and problems, we can take this truth away: When the man made solutions fall short...have a seat and count the miracles.

The thought must have occurred to the disciples, “**Tell them to sit down?** What for? We don't have enough food.” It made no sense. And when your plate is so full, it may not seem to make any sense to sit down either, when there's so much to do. But sit down and count the miracles, like those disciples did, realize you aren't on your own. Sit down and see, as they did, that there is no problem too big, no plate so full or heavy that Jesus can't handle it.

Count the miracles of your Savior — Feeding the 5000, water into wine, walking on water, healing the blind, the sick, the paralyzed. Calming the storm, casting out demons, raising the dead. Or, count the miracles in your life. Through the waters of your baptism you were made a child of God when you were still a sinful child of the devil. How he carried you, guided you, led you all the way to the point you are today. Nothing has been too big for him, and nothing will be. Because he has already solved our greatest problem, he has already met our greatest need. Where once the only conclusion was “impossible!” Jesus did just that. By his life,

death, and resurrection, he took all our sins away, bridged that unbridgeable gap between us and God, suffered the hell we deserved, closed the door to eternal death and opened the gates to eternal life.

Count the miracles in your life and then ask yourself: “Is there anything on my plate bigger than those? Bigger than death? Jesus Conquered it. Stronger than the devil? Jesus crushed him. Longer or more agonizing than an eternity in hell? Jesus freed us from it. Any thing more numerous than our sins? Jesus washed them all away. No problem is too big for Jesus to handle.

It's important to remember too that God's timetable happens according to his plan for us. Look at the feeding of the 5000. Jesus knew exactly what he was going to do even before the events unfolded. But that doesn't mean he did the miracle and provided the food before the need was there. When the people came to him, they were already hungry. He met their need.

How full is your plate? What needs do you have? The Lord knows them too, and uses them as an opportunity for you to put your trust in him to meet those needs, according to his time and will, and most important his great love for you, a love that gave you his Son.

And when that's hard — and it almost always is — the Lord has given us his Word, like the section before us today, to remind us why we can put our trust in him. He's God. He's perfect. He took care of our greatest need by giving us the greatest gift. So, dear children of God, in those moments when your plate is full, or when your plate is empty, when it seems you don't have enough, have a seat. Sit back and count the miracles of God in your life, and know that he will meet all your other needs as well. In Jesus' name, Amen!

