

He Loved Me . . .

He Loves Me Lots

The Gospel of John

Text

John 6:1-15

Topic

Jesus miraculously multiplies bread for 5000 men

Title

“Wonder Bread”

Some call him “Sushi Man.”

German triathlete Jaroslav Bobrowski went to a restaurant that featured an all-you-can-eat buffet. *Bobrowski ate one hundred plates of sushi weighing eighteen pounds.* The owner banned him from further buffets.

João Carlos Apolonio ate fifteen pasta dishes in a buffet restaurant in São Paulo, Brazil. He called the waiter over and, instead of closing the bill, *ordered eight more dishes* - four portions of lasagna and four of gnocchi. The manager asked him to leave.

Five thousand men enjoyed an all-you-can-eat buffet of bread and fishes hosted by Jesus and none were turned away.

The miracle presented a teachable moment for Jesus and His disciples. He “test[ed]” them, not to see them fail but teach them a lesson.

Jesus "lifted up His eyes, and [saw] a great multitude." The lesson for disciples in all ages: Lift up your eyes to see the multitudes the way the Lord sees them.

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 Lift Your Eyes & See Your Source**, and **#2 Lift Your Eyes & Serve With God's Resource**.

#1 - Lift Your Eyes & See Your Source (v1-9)

In the *Lord of the Rings* movie trilogy, Legolas the Elf has better vision than men, dwarves, or wizards. "What do your Elf eyes see?" was a question put to him by Aragorn.

Jesus had better vision than the twelve disciples. Let's see what Jesus' eyes see... Or saw.

Joh 6:1 After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias.

Passover was approaching (v4), and Jesus was making the pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem.

We cannot be reminded enough that we are strangers and pilgrims passing through Earth on our way to Heaven. We are looking for the city whose builder and maker is God. In the city, New Jerusalem, we have custom mansions.

Do you camp? Camping is uncomfortable. Our pilgrim journey is like camping.

Or maybe you glamp? That's OK, but not so much if you are a pilgrim. An example of a believer camping versus glamping is Abraham and Lot. Lot's glamping in Sodom did not end well.

Joh 6:2 Then a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased.

It almost sounds like Instagram, the word “followed.” Word spread through social contact along the pilgrim road, and soon He was followed by “a great multitude.”

Is there a difference between miracles, signs, and wonders? The Holman Bible Dictionary says,

The words used in the Bible to describe the miraculous include sign, wonder, work, mighty work, and power. In the Old Testament, the two Hebrew words most frequently used for “miracle” are translated “sign” (oth) and “wonder” (mopheth).

Miracles are signs and wonders.

- The “sign” aspect of them is to point to God. They engage the mind.
- The “wonder” aspect is more a description of engaging the heart.

Joh 6:3 And Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat with His disciples.

Jesus was quite the mountaineer. The Mount of Olives and the Mount of Transfiguration come to mind. Matthew mentions Jesus and mountains seven times in his Gospel.

Jesus’ descent from this mountain is part of a typology developing in this passage. We’ll discuss it in a moment.

Joh 6:4 Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near.

The Passover celebrated the Exodus from Egypt. It also inspired hope for a deliverer like Moses to free the Jews from Rome. This explains why the multitude will try to make Jesus king (v15).

Joh 6:5 Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?”

Joh 6:6 But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.

Sometime in the night, the Father and Jesus agreed on a miraculous food distribution. They'd open a sort of pop-up restaurant, the *Boonies Bread Buffet*, or *Barley Bell*, or *Lord & Loaves*. It would be free all-you-can-eat.

At the end of *Spider-Man Homecoming*, Tony Stark wanted to introduce the webslinger as the newest Avenger. Peter declined the offer, feeling he wasn't quite ready. As he walked away, he said, "That was a test, right?" It wasn't to see him fail.

Jesus took the opportunity to "test" His boys. Jesus' plan had nothing to do with purchasing food from some marketplace. Yet He asked, "Where shall we buy bread?"

Joh 6:7 Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little."

This was an appropriate answer to the question posed. They did not have resources to purchase enough bread. But remember - this was a "test."

In fifth grade, our teacher passed out a test and told us no one had ever finished it in the allotted time. She kept emphasizing that point. When she said, "Go," we turned the test over and immediately began answering the twenty-five questions. No one read the directions atop the page which instructed, "Answer only question #25 and turn in your test."

The disciples had witnessed many miracles. Jesus had catered a wedding by turning water into good wine in large quantities. But when tested, they defaulted to natural thinking.

Helen Keller said, "The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision."

Part of lifting your eyes is to think supernaturally.

Joh 6:8 One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him,

Joh 6:9 "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?"

Philip dismissed any possibility of feeding the multitude. Andrew thought they might be able to gather enough to make Stone Soup.

You know the recipe for Stone Soup, right? In one version, three monks come upon a small famine-ridden and war-torn village. They find that everybody is afraid of them and hiding in their homes. The three monks begin to make Stone Soup. The soup starter is water and three round stones. One by one, the monks convince the village people to help them make their soup by sharing their spices, vegetables, and other valuable ingredients. It thus becomes a feast thanks to the generous sharing of resources.

Nice try, Andrew, but *No Stone Soup for you.*

The disciples did not fail the test. Their responses revealed their need to look beyond *resources* to the *source*.

This isn't the first time Jesus encouraged His disciples to lift up their eyes. In chapter four, He said, "Lift up your eyes and see the fields white for harvest" (v35). He had already taught them to do this, but they did not apply it.

We don't read that the disciples "lifted their eyes." No one asked Jesus, "What do your God eyes see?"

Jesus' question made it sound like it was up to Philip to feed the multitude. We often think that way, as if we could do anything apart from the Lord. We assume that ministry requires resources we do not possess. Mostly money. This is why so many churches and parachurch organizations adopt worldly methods to raise funds.

It was impossible for the disciples to resolve the need. They must throw it back to Jesus, expecting the Lord to tell them what to do.

When Jesus asked Philip, "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" a better answer would have been, "You know, Lord."

Go to the source and wait for His resources. While waiting, remember that the ultimate need of the multitude is living bread. It is salvation.

#2 - Lift Your Eyes & Serve With God's Resource (v10-15)

Course des garçons de café.

That's the name of a competition that tests the speed that a waiter can carry a loaded tray without tipping it. It originated in Paris and has spread to fifty-three countries.

The twelve disciples of Jesus got a crash course in waitering at the course des garçons de wilderness.

Joh 6:10 Then Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

Miracles can create a lot of work!

John, the author of this Gospel, was there. He estimated the multitude as "five thousand men." More like 5013 men to include the Lord and the twelve.

Numbering only men isn't a woke way of putting it because there were women and children. O well. Estimates of the total number range up to fifteen thousand. Let's assume ten thousand.

Each of the twelve disciples would be responsible for a group of nearly nine hundred. That's a rather large group for one waiter.

Joh 6:11 And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted.

Common Core math is a snap compared to God Math. One commentator writes, "These five loaves (by a strange kind of arithmetic) were multiplied by division, and augmented by subtraction."

When you subtract something from what you have, you end up with less. Not in God Math, where you get more by giving. Our generosity is treated as an investment in the Kingdom, and the dividends are phenomenal. John Bunyan wrote, "A man there was, though some did count him mad, the more he cast away the more he had."

Joh 6:12 So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost."

The gathering of the fragments is a good place for us to reveal the typology in this chapter that we put on hold earlier. A multitude of Israelites was following their Deliverer in the wilderness and had no bread to eat. Sound familiar?

It is typical of the Moses-led Exodus that the Feast of Passover commemorates. Note the following:

- Moses came down from a mountain to minister to the Israelites. Jesus came down from a mountain to minister to the Israelites.
- Moses miraculously fed the people manna in the wilderness. Jesus miraculously fed the people bread in the wilderness.
- The Israelites were given orders to gather the manna. The disciples were given orders to gather the bread.

I came across the following on a Messianic Jewish site:

Both Moses and Messiah are born in a time of national bondage. Both redeemers appear after Israel waits generations for redemption. Both redeemers are destined to break the bondage of Israel and lead her into the promised land. Both perform unparalleled signs and wonders to validate their ministry. Both act in the role of Law-giver and singular authority of Torah. Both fill the role of intercessor between God and the nation. Both do the work of

reconciliation, renewing God's covenant relationship with Israel when that covenant is compromised.

The Israelites were slaves in Egypt some four hundred years before Moses was born. From the last words of the Old Testament until Jesus was born were some four hundred years.

In the Book of Exodus, the first Passover in Egypt was celebrated by sacrificing a lamb and eating unleavened bread with bitter herbs. Moses mentions no other items on the menu.

Passover 2022 will begin the evening of Friday, April 15th, and end the evening of Saturday, April 23rd. Christians enjoy hosting Passover Seders. The word "seder" means *order*. There is a specific order followed as the Passover meal progresses.

The modern menu includes gefilte fish (poached fish dumplings), matzo ball soup, brisket or roast chicken, potato kugel (somewhat like a casserole), and *tzimmes*, a stew of carrots and prunes, sometimes including potatoes or sweet potatoes.

A bunch of traditions have been added, too.

My problem with Seders is that *no one explains that this was not how Passover was celebrated in the Bible*. If you want to commemorate Passover, "eat [the lamb and bitter herbs]: *with* a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It *is* the LORD's Passover" (Exodus 12:11).

The multitude followed after the **Lamb** of God, who would be sacrificed for them on a subsequent Passover. They mainly ate **bread**. Did anyone realize the symbolism?

Jesus told them to gather the fragments “so that nothing is lost.” I don’t want to make too much of a single word, but “lost” can be translated as “perish.” It is in the same family of words as “perish” in John 3:16.

Whether intended here or not, Jesus is not willing any perish from the multitude of lost humanity.

Joh 6:13 Therefore they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten.

The disciples will be called “the twelve” for the first time in verse sixty-seven. It was a special designation.

Each disciple had a basket to carry. Scholars - you gotta love them - can’t agree on the size of the baskets. Some suggest these were huge, heavy baskets that the Lord made them carry to emphasize how wrong they had been. The Lord was showing them that ministry to Jesus and others comes first, but God doesn’t forget your needs.

The twelve had a long, hard day of waiting. People can be difficult, as those of you who have waited or waitressed know all too well. In 2019 a waiter in Paris was shot dead over slow sandwich service.

A servant is going to be treated like a servant.

Don’t expect advancement, or recognition, or reciprocation serving the Lord. He *is* the reward.

Servants do what their master tells them. They don’t have job descriptions, unions, or arbitration. They serve at the pleasure of Jesus.

Billy Graham once said, “When we come to Christ, we’re no longer the most important person in the world to us; Christ is. Instead of living only for ourselves, we have a higher goal: to live for Jesus.”

Joh 6:14 Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world."

In Deuteronomy 18:15, Moses wrote, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear."

Jews believed the Prophet was a deliverer like Moses. The crowd followed Jesus on account of His miraculous healings. They had experienced a miraculous feeding. He must be the Prophet. It seemed like *Go time!* for the Kingdom of God on Earth.

Joh 6:15 Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.

Again with the mountain. You might recall that immediately after Jesus was baptized by John God the Holy Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. The devil tempted Jesus for forty days and nights.

One temptation was to take Him up on an exceedingly high mountain and show Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. He said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me" (Matthew 4).

The multitude was tempting the Lord, offering to make Him their King. Jesus understood there could be no crown without the Cross.

On a doctrinal note, verse fifteen establishes that Israelites and Jesus understood the Kingdom to be a rule of God over the nations of Earth from a throne in Jerusalem.

There are, of course, spiritual aspects to the Kingdom of God. It is accurate to say that we are "in the Kingdom." Nevertheless, the Lord *is* coming a second time to this Earth to fulfill the unconditional promises of a Kingdom on Earth that will last one thousand years.

Janet Oke said, "Those who choose to be servants know the most about being free."

You can *choose* or *refuse* servanthood. The Lord leaves it up to you. It is an easier choice when you "lift up your eyes" and see the *harvest* and the *hungry* and realize that, but for the grace of God, there go I.

I don't mean to give the impression that if you look to the Lord as your source, He will grant you the physical resources you are asking for. He might; He can.

Most likely, His resources for you will be spiritual. They can be summarized as His sufficient grace.

A word to nonbelievers. Lift up **your** eyes. See Jesus lifted up on the Cross. He is there for you, instead of you, that you not perish but have everlasting life.