

**Introduction:** Have you ever been in over your head? I mentioned a few weeks ago a family I stayed with in Great Britain who had a 17 yr. old son with MS. Nigel and I hit it off right away. I went on vacation with them and they hauled their boat—that the dad had been working on for year. He took the tarp off of it, and proudly showed me all around, and it was beautiful little boat with a cabin’s quarters below.

We drove out to the northern coast and he literally backed the boat up off the shore and asked if I would help him get it in. It was about half way in, and I just remember being so physically exhausted trying to push this boat with him in the water. We finally did manage to get the boat in the water, he started it up, and we walked his son who was paralyzed with MS out, hoisted him up on the side of the boat and we finally set out into the channel to fish. After a while the sunny day turned cloudy, the wind picked up somewhat and the waves became a little more choppy. **By itself nothing to worry about really at all, except this fine boat was starting to take on seawater.** Robert (the dad) was very casual about it and just kept fishing, but I was getting worried. **I finally said, “Hey man, do you have like a water pump or something?” He said, “no, I didn’t think to bring one.”** The longer we were out there, the more water it seemed that we had taken on, and I asked Robert, “Have you ever been on a boat before.” And he replied, “Well no Jeff, this is my first time out and I have no idea what to do.” I took the wheel, hit the accelerator and drove that boat all the way to shore, and we managed to get it back onto his trailer. On the way home, everyone was really quiet and I just remember thinking “We had no business out there.”

**Segue: Have you ever been in over your head.**

**Transition:** The miracles we’re going to witness today are just that sort—the people are in over the head and Jesus has to rescue them in both situations.

**Main Idea: The work that is required for salvation is trusting Christ alone.**

**The two stories leading into Christ’s teaching today are background stories.** Because in each case both the hungry crowds, and the desperate disciples are simply out of their depth. They are not equipped or sufficiently resourced to handle the trials that come upon them.

**And these two incidents become the very illustrations John needs to show us that the same is true when it comes to our eternal salvation—we are simply not equipped nor sufficiently resourced in of ourselves to meet the requirements for salvation.**

## First Story: The Multiplication of the Bread and Fish

The people are experiencing a Sanctified distraction/Obsession: **6:2** “and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick.”

It’s official, Jesus’ fame has spread as far as the **Decapolis**—the **ten city area to the east**, and as far as **Caesarea by the sea to the west**, and as far **north** as the **coastal waters of the Levant**. Jew and Gentile, faithful and faithless, poor and wealthy, enfranchised and the marginalized—they have littered the hillsides by the thousands to hear the miracle man from Nazareth.

**They are experiencing what is essentially a holy distraction—a sacred obsession.** They find themselves so engrossed by the master’s teaching and his power that they have forgotten basic needs.

### It was a need that far exceeded resources at hand.

- Jesus asks Philip a question he already knows the answer to. **6:5-6** “he said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?” <sup>6</sup> He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

It isn’t a serious question, at least in the sense that the question itself prompts a declaration of need and an acknowledgment of scarcity. Philip’s response is understandable—it would take us months to work and save and still then we couldn’t afford to buy enough for this massive crowd.

- **Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother spoke up, 6:9** “Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?”

I like Andrew’s answer, because it is clearly an act of deficient faith. *Think about it—if you found a boy with that little knowing how great the need, would you even bother bringing it to Jesus’ attention?* It’s obvious that the kid’s basket lunch could not possibly be enough to satisfy the hunger of thousands of people. But Andrew’s offering is what we call hope.

**Principle: Experiencing the occasional trying life-event isn’t optional, but our response is optional: A declaration of our need and an acknowledgment of our lack.** God does provide bread and fish, medicine and doctors, friends and pastors—but there are needs of the heart that only Jesus can meet, there are places in the soul that only Jesus can touch.

**So Jesus feeds them all, they gather up 12 baskets full of bread and fish, God provides and he provides abundantly...**

**Second Story: Walking on Water—Jesus sends them across the lake and** a squall and a storm is quickly upon them. Even though the boat has experienced mariners and sailors, fishermen who troll that lake all the time—pros, not joes. **But they're relative expertise is of no consequence in the face of a ferocious storm.**

**Jesus comes walking out on the water to them and this story and its parallel story** in the Synoptics (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) make it clear that the disciples were afraid of both the storm and being drowned in the dark, and Jesus.

**The sight of a ghostly man walking out to them on the water was equally as terrifying.**

**They're just as afraid of God's solution as they are of their predicament.**

And the same point is made from this story: The disciples find themselves in far over their heads, beyond their skills and ability and resources to address their dilemma.

**Jn. 6:24-29:** Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. <sup>24</sup> Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus. <sup>25</sup> When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" <sup>26</sup> Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. <sup>27</sup> Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." <sup>28</sup> Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

## 1. God knows you have finite needs, and he desires to meet those needs.

Jesus has already clearly had compassion on the crowds, fed their bellies and sent them home fat and happy.

Jesus told his disciples in the Sermon on the Mount “So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ <sup>32</sup> For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them” (Mt. 6:31-32).

**Mark 6:45** “Jesus had compassion on the crowds because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.”

If we learn anything from the story, at base, Jesus does minister to the hungry crowds, and the disciples and all who come to him with empty hands. Hear me well. If you’ve come this morning with a heart aching with hurt, and you’ve come carrying a burden—Jesus has compassion on you and he wants to meet your needs.

## 2. Through our physical and temporary needs, God wants to draw our attention to our deeper, spiritual needs.

To those necessities of the heart which are not temporary and physical but eternal.

<sup>27</sup> Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”

**Notice the people come seeking Jesus—but Jesus lays bare the true motivation of their hearts.** They do not really want to know him, to walk with him, to have a transforming communion with him—they just want him to meet their needs and fill their hungry bellies and heal their bodies. But they’re not seeking him for his own sake. Again we connect the Sermon on the Mount: “and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. <sup>33</sup> But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Mt. 6:32-33).

**Illus.** This past week I asked God the same, “Are you displeased with me? Is there something more you want from me?” And the answer came back clear as a bell: I don’t want more *from you*—I want more *of you*. Your heart. Your desire.

Often those physical and immediate necessities can arrest our attention, and draw us to the greater necessities of eternal life, peace with God—reconciliation by grace.

**3. Our greatest spiritual need is a reconciled relationship with God the Father, through belief in God the Son. This is surely the most pressing, urgent need of the human soul.**

**Now, How does a person receive eternal life and the abundant life that is in Christ**

**It is not by works.** Notice the question on the Crowd's lips? In 6:28 "Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" They didn't hear him say <sup>27</sup> "which the Son of Man *will give you*"

- **Illus. What are the things we should do—just like the rich young ruler who had been Torah observant all his life**—kept the commands of Moses to the letter without veering to the right or the left—but still the man comes with a gnawing sense that it isn't enough. What more must I do to inherit eternal life when God's Kingdom finally comes on earth as it is in heaven?
- **It is by faith.**
  - **Faith involves God pursuing us.** A.W. Tozer famously stated, "Before a man can seek God, God must first have sought the man." Jesus will later say in 6:44 "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day."
  - **Faith involves God arresting us through conviction.** Jesus' words should bring conviction to their souls. We'll learn next week that his words are so discombobulating, so discomfoting that most of these so-called disciples turn and walk away from him.
  - **Faith involves trusting reliance in Christ alone.**
    - **Two components are necessary here: (1) Is genuine, trusting reliance. A deep and abiding belief that is mysteriously unshakeable. (2) The right object.** You see, like these folks, you can have Jesus the real—right there in front of you—confirmed by Scripture, the same Son who came from the Father full of grace and truth, who is one with the Father in mission, message, and merit—who alone is worthy of all honor praise and glory—you can have that Jesus right here, and miss him. Because we are too focused on the pressing needs, the urgent necessities of this finite life. The right object—but no faith.

**Series: The Glory of the One and Only**

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- **Or you can have stalwart faith.** I mean an unmovable deep belief that the gospel you trust in is the real one—and the truth is—you never had Christ at all.
- **Illus. Me as a boy trying to fly in my superman suit.** You can believe anything is true and it may not be. Your belief can be an unshakeable trust in the object and it turns out that it's false.

**Recap:**

1. Whatever you need this morning, know that God wants to meet the needs of those who come humbly and boldly. Will you ask God this morning?
2. How might God be drawing your attention to a greater spiritual need through that physical or finite thing your facing? What might he be further addressing in your soul?
3. What would it really profit a person to gain the whole world, to have every prayer answered for finite and temporary needs, but to ultimately forfeit your soul? Are you willing to trust Christ by faith?
  - What must you do?
    - It is a trusting reliance—a deep and genuine faith that is “all in”.
    - It is a genuine faith in the right object—Jesus, who God the Son.