



Series: So That You May Believe

Date: June 9, 2024

Speaker: Spence Shelton, Lead Pastor

Text: John 6

Title: Sign 4: Feeding the 5000

THANK YOU COMMUNITY GROUP LEADERS

Mercy Church, today at all of our campuses, our community group leaders are receiving a small gift of appreciation, and I want to take just a second and acknowledge them. One of my prayers for Mercy Church is that we grow bigger and smaller simultaneously. Bigger in terms of reaching the lost and mobilizing people for mission. But smaller in terms of everyone having a space where they can know others and be known by others. The Bible is clear as can be that

discipleship happens in a community. The space where we build community as a church is in what we call community groups. These are gatherings that meet in homes and coffee shops around Charlotte every week. These groups are the greenhouses where your faith can grow. It's where we carry out the "one another" commands of scripture and it's a very important ministry of this church. Like, I have 3 or 4 health indicators for us collectively and you individually, and one of those is...are you in a community group?

Because as goes our groups, in many ways, so goes our church. That means we put a great deal of value on our community group leaders—people who live out our ministry value of "we help people take their next steps in following Jesus." That's what they do. And by God's grace, this past year, over 80% of our weekend worship attendees were in a community group! PRAISE GOD!

We know the church continues to grow, so we are going to need more. But as these leaders take a break for the summer, we want to say thank you to them. So...if you are a community group leader, will you stand up for just a moment and let us honor you and say thank you for the way you've served the body?

OK, on to the sermon - **John 6**





We are in a series of sermons, if you are new with us, where we are looking at 7 displays of power from Jesus that are recorded for us in the gospel of John. And these displays of power - we tend to call them miracles. Because they defy the laws of physics and amaze everyone. And these displays of power ARE that. But they are more than that. John says they are SIGNS. And signs are meant to point us somewhere. Specifically, John says, they are meant to direct us to faith in Jesus that leads to life.

31 But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. -- John 20:31

So, each week in our series we are connecting the display of power to its purpose. To have the kind of belief in Jesus that leads to life. So, we've said week in and week out that the big idea of the series is simply

Signs are good and Jesus is better

And the sign we are going to look at today is the only one out of all the signs that's recorded in all 4 gospels. And in it **Jesus is going to take his disciples to a place where the resources they have fall far short of the need they are facing.**

He's gonna do that with food. Lots of people to feed, not enough food to feed them with. And then the kicker he's going to perform a sign. He's going to create abundance from very little and then say the purpose of this sign is so that you will see him as the "bread" of life. So, here's what we'll do.

1. I'll walk you through the sign
2. show you what Jesus says it means
3. and finally, how we apply this ancient sign to our life today.

FIRST, let's walk through the sign

After this, Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias).

2 A huge crowd was following him because they saw the signs that he was performing by healing the sick.

That's from last week. Word was starting to spread about him healing the official's son. About him healing the lame man. And he was healing others as well. And so even though Jesus crossed the sea of galilee, the crowd followed. BUT it wasn't exactly for the right motive. John seems to make a point and Jesus is going to make it in a minute that they were ONLY seeking the display of power. They



didn't want the one who performed the signs, only the signs themselves. And Jesus is going to address that head on.

3 Jesus went up a mountain and sat down there with his disciples. 4 Now the Passover, a Jewish festival, was near. 5 So when Jesus looked up and noticed a huge crowd coming toward him, he asked Philip, "Where will we buy bread so that these people can eat?" 6 He asked this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Phillip was from a nearby town, so he was the right guy among the disciples to direct the question to. Yes he already knew the answer, but he wanted to see if Philip could see beyond the limits the situation presented in front of him and could take Jesus into account in his answer. But alas, he does not.

7 Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread wouldn't be enough for each of them to have a little."

A denarii was a day's wages. So, Philip is saying...even if we had 8 months' worth of salary here, it wouldn't be enough for them to have a bite. In other words,...Jesus there is no way we are

going to feed these people! Andrew tries to explain the dilemma to Jesus.

8 One 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 are they for so many?"

Andrew is only furthering the point right? Jesus we just aren't going to find food here for people. All we have is a Hebrew happy meal. God it seems you have put me and us in an impossible situation. And then you are asking me what to do. And I'm sitting here with 5 loaves and 2 fish going...what are these!?! **My resources do not seem to be enough to meet my NEED.**

When we planted Mercy Church in 2015 we felt like God was the one leading the way. My pastor, pastor JD up at Summit in RDU where I was a pastor, he and the other pastors were like YEP this is your next step. Confirming what we felt like God was calling us to *(BTW - if you think God is calling you to something, God has given you his church, and in particular, he's called you to belong to a church where there are faithful pastors who will help you discern God's calling on your life. And if your friends & elders all say one thing and you say*



another...likely that you need to at least PAUSE your PLAN. Don't run from person to person until somebody finally agrees with you. Instead, maybe sit it back before the Lord and WAIT on him)

ANYWAY, we had a launch team of about 60 people. Felt like man we are good to go. Lots of resources. And then I got here in Charlotte. And realized. Oh man my friends & support are now 2.5 hours away. We know our launch team, but those friendships are new. We've got 4 young kids. We have no idea if this new church idea will even work. People are confessing brokenness to me that I don't know how to "fix." Guys in 20 yr porn addictions. Marriages crumbling. People with all kinds of church hurt, others who are abuse victims, 8 yr old with terminal cancer. And I'm like LORD - I followed you out here, but I've only got about 5 loaves & 2 fishes worth of pastoral skill and the need is FAR GREATER than my RESOURCES.

And I'll never forget feeling just overwhelmed and then this old man walks up to me while I'm sitting in my office on a Tuesday morning. My office was a table at Panera on 51. And he sees me on my computer, and he starts berating me. "See the problem with your generation is you don't work. You just sit on your screens all day. What are you

even doing with your life?" And man, I was so overwhelmed & anxious & doubting if God was in this...so I just said, "I DON'T KNOW MAN" "I'm tryin to plant a church and it may have been a huge mistake."

He said, "Oh, well, I go to the Methodist church down the road." I said, " Please stay there."

Have you ever been there? God I'm out here following you. But what I thought was obedience is feeling like a mistake? Because my resources don't seem like enough to meet my need.

God, I followed you into this job - I prayed about it & everything, and man, it's HARD. God, I followed you into this marriage - prayed about it, and friends gave the thumbs up. And now we have problems that I DO NOT KNOW HOW TO SOLVE.

I think one of the lies of our comfort-worshiping culture is that it kind of seeps into our Christianity without us knowing. When we say yes to following Jesus, we don't expect trial. We expect sunny days and smooth sailing. That ain 't in scripture, **though.**

What is the situation for you? When resources just don't stack up for the need in front of you.



Maybe your salary - when stacked up against your bills - feels like 5 loaves & 2 fish.

Maybe your parenting skills - when stacked up against that kid of yours who you love but seems crazy right now - feels like 5 loaves & 2 fish.

Maybe a career - when stacked up against your resume - feels like 5 loaves & 2 fish

Maybe your ability to help others follow Jesus - when stacked up against the people in your community group - 5 loaves & 2 fish. I said yes to leading Jesus. Pastor Spence is all like...take your next step...and now I'm dealing with all this dysfunction.

I want you to ask yourself right now: What trial do you feel God has brought you into? I believe that trial, that space between NEED and RESOURCES, has a test built into it—a good test from our God to open our eyes and warm our hearts to him. Now that our hearts are there with the disciples, let's watch Jesus work.

10 Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place; so, they sat down. The men numbered about five thousand.

That's just the men. That's not the women and children. The total number of people probably

exceeded 20,000. That's a CROWD. Sitting down on this mountain.

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

As much as they wanted. That's John's emphasis. He's been repeating it over and over and will continue to. If they had 8 months wages, they couldn't have even given everyone a bite. Need too great for their resources. Yet with Jesus...they have ABUNDANCE. As much as they wanted. Here's an abundance of wine. Here's an abundance of salvation. Here's an abundance of food. In fact, so much food they have leftovers!

12 When they were full, he told his disciples, "Collect the leftovers so that nothing is wasted." 13 So they collected them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces from the five barley loaves that were left over by those who had eaten.

Now I don't normally spend too much time emphasizing the numbers in scripture, but all four gospels make a point to tell us there were 12 baskets of leftovers. There is something to that. For those of you newer to the bible the Old



Testament tells us God's people were divided into 12 tribes. This right here is a call back to Israel and seems to be indicating Jesus has enough power to supply the needs of God's people. The rest of this chapter - John 6 - seems to double down on that.

14 When the people saw the sign he had done, they said, "This truly is the Prophet who is to come into the world."

People saw the sign - LOTS OF BREAD WHERE THERE WAS NO BREAD - FEEDING GOD'S PEOPLE OUT IN THE WILDERNESS - and said OH...I remember a time before where 12 tribes were in the wilderness and needed food. And we had a leader. His name was Moses. When we needed food he went to God for us, and we got bread type stuff called Manna. And then later on he said to us...

15 "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him -- Deuteronomy 18:15

So here we are - a big group of people out in the "wilderness" without food until this guy steps in and now we have BREAD. HE MUST BE THE PROPHET! And in a sense, they are right. He is the prophet Moses foretold about. Probably why he

goes up on a mountain for this, to resemble Moses. BUT they don't understand who he is fully. And that is evident by what John says next

15 Therefore, when Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself. -- John 6:1-15 (CSB)

They were looking for a king. And Jesus is a king. But Jesus is not the kind of king they were looking for. In fact, by the end of this very chapter, once he explains who he really is. The reaction to him reverses completely. Instead of crowds wanting to ENTHRONE him, by the time he explains what the SIGN really means - even many of his followers desert him.

So that's part one of the sermon. What happens. The need was far greater than the resources the disciples had. Which was a test. And Jesus didn't just meet the need. He poured out an abundance. **Now part 2 of the sermon - What does it mean?**

this is one of those times, and it doesn't always happen, where Jesus tells us outright what it means. Isn't that great? Turns out verses 22-70 of this chapter explain what he was doing here. And



the big idea is Jesus was trying to SHOW them, and trying to show you one simple thing:

Jesus is the Bread of Life

That's your key take away today. He is the bread of life. He says it twice

35 "I am the bread of life," Jesus told them. "No one who comes to me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in me will ever be thirsty again. -- John 6:35

48 I am the bread of life. -- John 6:48

What does it mean? Let's just leave verse 48 up there. First Jesus is the **Bread** of Life. Let's talk about The Bread. Because I think we need that. And do you know God created man with the capacity and creativity to turn grain into bread so that he could teach us about himself through bread? BREAD exists...to tell you about Jesus. Isn't that awesome? Truthfully ALL things exist to point you to Jesus. That's the idea behind Romans 11:36

36 For from him and through him and to him are all things -- Romans 11:36

And in this case Jesus says there's a specific bread that HE now is taking the place of - It's the bread from heaven that God gave them.

49 Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50 This is the bread that comes down from heaven so that anyone may eat of it and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever. The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." -- John 6:49-51

In other words, he's saying I'm not like Moses. Who prayed & God gave bread. He says I AM the one that came down from heaven. And I'm not even like the manna. Because the manna only sustained them for a day. I will sustain you for all eternity. And he's demonstrated through this abundance of bread that he created that he IS more than enough for the whole world. Don't come to Jesus for bread. **Come to Jesus for JESUS!**

And the point of the metaphor is that "eating" is equivalent to believing.

47 "Truly I tell you, anyone who believes has eternal life. 48 I am the bread of life. -- John 6:47 - 48



So, as you eat of HIM...he's the bread...you will live forever. Now, important here is to talk about not just the length of life but the quality of life he is promising. Because in all honesty...if all he's saying is your life as you have it now will stretch out for all eternity...that's not a pleasant prospect. All your stress, aches & pains, problems...goes on forever? Well, there are two words in the Greek for life. One is bios which is more like - you are alive. Where we get biology from. Study of living things. But the other is Zoe. Which speaks to quality of life. It's vitality. It's flourishing. That's the word here. It's the good life.¹

Like when I'm with my youngest daughter. Who is just the life of the party everywhere she is. She's a blast. And we went down to the beach, and we put up the shade together on the beach. We put our chairs out. We went out and jumped waves for a bit and then we go back under the shade, we got out these little icee things we call chilly willy. Not sure if that's the name but you know what I'm talking about? Anyways, we lean back in the chair

¹ Tim Keller illuminated this distinction for me in his sermon "The Feeding"
Tim Keller | February 9, 2014

with this refreshing snack & a cool breeze, the shade, sound of the ocean. And she just says, "now this is the life." What's she saying there? She's not saying this is existence. Bios. No, she's saying this is living. This is wonderful. It's flourishing. ALL of my senses are satisfied all of my needs are satisfied. No worries. It's very good.

THAT is a little bit of what Jesus is saying with this idea of life. It's not just that you will exist for eternity. It's that you will flourish. You will live the good life you were created to live. No more sin, no more brokenness and suffering. The good life. And he says that life can start now. That's the idea in verse 35

35 "I am the bread of life," Jesus told them. "No one who comes to me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in me will ever be thirsty again. --
John 6:35

Your hunger & thirst for Zoe. For the good life - that can be satisfied here and now. But not by anything in this world. The drink and food of this

Accessed 3 June 2024 - <https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/the-feeding/>



world...it makes you hungry again. And the more you make those things central to your life, the more needy you will be. The more hungry & thirsty you will be. Everything else you consume will ultimately consume you. But do you want to live? Do you want to be satisfied? Like Jesus says to the lame man - Do you want to be well? Might sound easy - but it requires coming to Jesus entirely. To make him your source of life. In fact, he says:

54 The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life -- John 6:54

That right there caused many to turn away from him. They couldn't understand him and couldn't bring themselves to move from desiring his bread making power to desiring HIM. To believing in HIM. To trusting HIM. So many left him and he looks at the 12 disciples and says - do you want to leave to? And peter answers:

68 Simon Peter answered, "Lord, to whom will we go? You have the words of eternal life -- John 6:68

Where else will we go? What a powerful reality. YOU Jesus have proven yourself to us. You are the one who has the words of eternal life. You. Are. Life.

See the gospel says you have a NEED that is far greater than the resources you possess. You don't have the power to truly live here. You don't have the power to overcome your fear & anxiety. You don't have the power to change the hearts of other people. You don't have the power to save yourself from your sin. In you, even in the strongest of us - we don't have that kind of power. But Jesus - what we are seeing sign after sign - what power he has. And all the power he demonstrates in these signs are meant to lead you to trust in his power to save you from your sin. To lead you to the Zoe. to the good life.

Leads me right to the final part of our sermon. How do we apply the truth that Jesus is the Bread of Life?

1. **Believe in Jesus for eternal life** - I want to be really clear today because Jesus went to great lengths to be clear. There is only one way to live. And some of you are on the fence about Jesus and I believe you just needed today to be extended an opportunity to say YES. so here it is. Will you receive LIFE? Will you make him your source of life? It means turning from the things of this world. But he can be yours today.



2. **Depend on Jesus during your time of need** -

Here's what I mean. The test for the disciples was whether or not they would recognize who was with them. The gap between need and resource was so wide. There was no solution they could manufacture. BUT - Jesus was with them. Do you know the promise of Matthew 28? Matthew closes his gospel saying I AM WITH YOU to the end of the age. Isn't that powerful to you and to me? That's not sentiment. It's theology. You and I can still depend on Jesus. That's because he's given us his holy spirit who lives IN us and has all the power of God available to us.

So, what is the need in front of you right now that is too great? Is it causing you anxiety? Is it causing you fear? Stress? Well, when we go to Jesus and wait on him we are immediately called back to how he met our greatest need. And the result? We calm down. In an anxiety riddled world we walk with peace. In a fear filled world we walk with humble confidence. In a world of uncertainty, we walk with assurance.

That's because, in the words of John 6, we've been feeding on Jesus every single day. Jesus is my life.

And you can't take it away. So even if I lose my job. Even if sickness comes. If uncertainty comes...I'm settled, Joyful even. Because I'm living ZOE. the good life. The abundant life.

3. **Make Jesus your daily bread**

Too much Christianity is foxhole based. That is - we get into a time of need and we turn to God. And yes God is gracious and good to help us. He says as much. But - waiting to go to Jesus until you have a major need would be like waiting to eat until you are about to starve to death. We don't eat once in a while - we eat every day. This is the call to you - here in the quiet - maybe here this summer when things are hopefully a little slower in your life - will that be a time you begin to build the daily rhythm of going to Jesus? Of eating the bread of life?

When you go to him every day you are training yourself to trust him. You are training your faith muscles. Start with 15 minutes every day in bible reading and prayer. Don't know what to pray? Open your bible to Matthew 6 and pray the prayer Jesus tells us to pray. Don't know what to read? Get a reading plan. Start choosing him first in your day and let's see what God does.

