

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

JOHN 6.1-21



T. M. Moore

A Scriptorium Study

And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets,

He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Luke 24.27

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Gospel of John: John 6.1-21
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Introduction to *John 6.1-21*

It's now nearly a year since the events reported in John 5. The apostle has chosen to omit a good bit from his narrative, and to pick up the story again with Jesus ministering in Galilee.

Two events feature in our passage, each of which sheds more light on Jesus – Who He is, what He's capable of, and what this means for those who follow Him. We see Jesus ministering both to the multitudes following Him around, but also to His disciples, as He grooms them for the work they will take up after He is gone.

Throughout this passage, Jesus is in charge, pursuing His agenda, and coordinating and ruling everything and everyone toward His ends. He is Healer and Teacher and Savior. And He is Lord – of everything, from crumbs of bread to winds and seas.

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1 Mountain Retreat

Read and meditate on John 6.1-4.

From Jerusalem, Jesus returned to Galilee. If the feast He attended in John 5 was the Passover, then the events that follow in chapter 6 occurred about a year later (cf. v. 4). That year saw Jesus involved in many very important activities, but John was content to leave the reporting of these to the other evangelists. Consult a harmony of the Gospel for the story of Jesus' ministry between John 5 and John 6.

¹Then after these things Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee (today that sea would be Tiberius). ²And many followed Him, because they saw the signs which He for them performed, especially those who were diseased. ³He climbed up on a mountain, where it pleased Him to abide with His disciples. ⁴And the Feast of Passover was near at hand.

- John 6.1-4

Reflect

1. We should perhaps ask ourselves why John skipped an entire year of Jesus' ministry. From what you've seen so far, how would you summarize John's purpose in writing his gospel? What did he chiefly want to communicate concerning Jesus and His ministry? Complete this prayer: *Lord Jesus, from John I'm learning to look to You for...*
2. The events of that year – which included calling the remaining disciples, the sermon on the mount, and many healings – would not have *detracted* from John's purpose, but he simply considered them *unnecessary*, especially since the other evangelists had already recorded them (John's was the last gospel to be written). Is there a lesson for us here about the work of the Lord, and our individual callings in that work? Explain. *Lord, I can't do everything in Your Kingdom, but I know You have called me to...*
3. Let's consider this: A multitude is gathering to Jesus. They're poor, hungry, and probably bringing their sick and lame with them, all to get to Jesus. So Jesus climbs a mountain? Why would He do that? *I think about my own life of prayer, Lord. How serious am I when it comes to...?*
4. One reason for going up on the mountain was to get a little time alone with His disciples (v. 3). It seems that, when Jesus saw the multitudes coming up – a testimony to their faith, to be sure – He may have gone down to them, to meet them “half-way”, so to speak (cf. v. 15). Is it important that church leaders have time away from ministry together? To do what? *Lord, I know that I need such time alone with You, so that...*
5. Apparently, Jesus did not attend the Passover this time around. John tells us why in John 7.1. Jesus will allow nothing to happen to Him except according to God's timeline. He is in control of His agenda, not the needy people around Him, His enemies, or even the demands of the calendar. What does this suggest for us, as we try to be on Jesus' agenda with Him? Bring together into one the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

Summary

“He went up onto the mountain because of the miracle he was going to do. The disciples alone ascended with him which implies that the people who stayed behind were at fault for not following. He went up to the

mountain too as a lesson to us to retire from the tumult and confusion of the world. For solitude is appropriate for the study of wisdom. Jesus often went up alone onto a mountain in order to pray, even spending the night there. He did this in order to teach us that the one who will come most near to God must be free from all disturbance and must seek times and places away from all the confusion.” *John Chrysostom (344-407 AD)*

Jesus frequently retired to a mountain, either to pray in solitude or to teach and be with His disciples. Do you suppose this “going up” to mountains had any *symbolic* significance in Jesus’ life? Explain.

Closing Prayer

Then He shall speak to them in His wrath,
And distress them in His deep displeasure:
“Yet I have set My King
On My holy hill of Zion.”
“I will declare the decree:
The LORD has said to Me,
‘You *are* My Son,
Today I have begotten You.
Ask of Me, and I will give *You*
The nations *for* Your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth *for* Your possession.
You shall break them with a rod of iron;
You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.’ ”

Psalm 2.5-9

Psalm 2.4-8 (*Agincourt: O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High!*)

The Lord in heaven laughs in wrath
At all who embark on this cursèd path.
His angry Word to them is plain:
“Yet shall My King in Zion reign!”

Proclaim the message far and wide,
That God has exalted the Crucified!
From heav’n He sent us His only Son,
Who has for us salvation won!

2 What's for Supper?

Read and meditate on John 6.5-9.

Jesus sees “a great multitude coming toward Him,” and, knowing the time of day, He gets to work. He and His disciples start down the mountain toward a level, grassy place, and Jesus gets them on the same page with Him by asking Philip a question in the hearing of them all.

⁵Then Jesus lifted up His eyes and said to Philip, “Tell me, where shall we buy bread for all these people?” For He saw that to Him many were approaching. ⁶But He knew what He would do, and only said this as a test. ⁷So Philip answered, “Lord, who has sufficient money so that everyone could even have a little?” ⁸Then said one of His disciples – Andrew, Simon’s brother – ⁹“A lad here has five barley loaves, and other food – two small fish. But what are these among so many?”

- John 6.5-9

Reflect

1. We might describe Jesus as ministry-minded. What does that mean? We have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2.16). What should this mean for us? Complete this prayer: *Lord, help me to be more ministry-minded, to think like You do whenever...*
2. In what sense was this a “test” for Jesus’ disciples? For what was He testing them? Does He test us like this? Can you give an example? *Lord, You will probably spring a pop quiz on me today, so let me...*
3. You can see that the disciples are trying to work through this problem from a *rational* and *material* approach. But that’s not Jesus’ approach. How would you describe Jesus’ approach to dealing with this situation? How did His approach differ from that of the disciples? *Lord, I seem always to be thinking rationally and materially about my needs. Help me instead to see them...*
4. As they descend the mountain, moving toward the opportunity on the grassy plain, the disciples are looking to the *problem* and *the available resources*. Jesus is looking to, well, Jesus. Apply this to a challenge you’re facing today. *Lord, I have many challenges ahead of me, and what I want is...*
5. What is the primary lesson to be learned from Jesus’ “test”? Put yourself in the disciples’ shoes. What were they supposed to come away with from this situation? Was their thinking wrong, or merely incomplete? Explain. Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote from questions 1-4.

Summary

“By explaining the purpose of that question the evangelist added: ‘He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do.’ ‘To test him,’ he says, but he means, rather, to provide the proof. Indeed, he first kept Philip in doubt and difficulty because of the shortage of food, but then, when Philip would see the miracle accomplished, he would learn that everything must always be committed to God and that he should never feel embarrassed because of any shortage.” *Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428 AD)*

The purpose of any test is both to *prove* and to *improve* those who are subjected to it. What did Jesus’ test *prove*

to the disciples? How did it *improve* them? How do the tests Jesus sends your way each day prove and improve your walk with and work for Him?

Closing Prayer

O God, do not be far from me;
O my God, make haste to help me!
Let them be confounded *and* consumed
Who are adversaries of my life;
Let them be covered *with* reproach and dishonor
Who seek my hurt.
But I will hope continually,
And will praise You yet more and more.
My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness
And Your salvation all the day,
For I do not know *their* limits.
I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD;
I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only.

Psalm 71.12-16

Psalm 71.12-16, 3 (*Solid Rock: My Hope is Built on Nothing Less*)

O God, be not too far from me; my ever-present Helper be!
Consume and shame my enemies; let them reproached and humbled be.
A Rock of habitation be, command Your Word to rescue me:
My Rock and Fortress ever be!

But as for me, my voice I raise to sing in hope and constant praise!
With saving grace my voice will swell Your never-ending grace to tell.
A Rock of habitation be, command Your Word to rescue me:
My Rock and Fortress ever be!

3 Food Abounding

Read and meditate on John 6.10-13.

As you read this story, try to imagine what the disciples must have been thinking. What was going on in their minds about Jesus? About His purpose in calling them? About your own discipleship?

¹⁰Jesus said, "Now tell them, young and old alike, to sit down in the grass." And so they did – 5,000 men amassed there on that hill. ¹¹And Jesus took the bread, and broke it, when He had thanksgiving said, and His disciples took it all around, the fish likewise, to those who on the ground were seated, just as much as they could eat. ¹²When all were finished, and the meal complete, He said to His disciples, "Gather all the leftovers, each piece and fragment, small and great, so none of it is lost." ¹³They did, and filled twelve baskets right up to the lid with food.

- John 6.10-13

Reflect

1. In some ways, this work of Jesus was like the creating work of God in Genesis 1 and 2. Explain. Do you suppose this thought might have crossed the disciples' minds? Complete this prayer: *Lord, You are the Word of God! You have power to create out of nothing, and this means that for me...*
2. I find the mention of "much grass in the place" a curious insertion from a writer who was willing to overlook a whole year of Jesus' ministry. Why do you suppose John mentioned this? Does it matter? Did it matter to Jesus? Why? *Lord, every day You surround us with little comforts and delights, such as...*
3. Meditate on Ephesians 3.20, then on John 6.10, 11. How would you apply these verses to your own needs as a follower of the Lord Jesus? *I believe, Lord, that You can do everything! Help me to believe You for...*
4. Why was it important that Jesus involved the disciples in passing out this food? What was He teaching them? What were they learning? What were the people learning about them? Is there a principle of disciple-making to be observed here? Explain. *You have called me to be and to make disciples, Lord. From this story I see that...*
5. As if feeding 5,000 men – not to mention women and children – from such meager fare were not enough, John reports that 12 baskets full of food were left over! Jesus could make more food by snapping His fingers, but He instructed His disciples to save the leftovers. Here's a principle of ministry: How would you explain it? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote for questions 1-4.

Summary

"He therefore created as God creates. For, just as he multiplies the produce of the fields from a few grains, from that same source of power he multiplied in his hands the five loaves. There was power, indeed, in the hands of Christ. And those five loaves were like seeds, not indeed committed to the earth, but multiplied by him who made the earth." *Augustine (354-430 AD)*

Jesus has power to meet your needs, exceedingly abundant power, more than you've ever dared to ask or

think. So, why not dare to think it, and to ask for His power to help you with some challenge you're facing today?

Closing Prayer

I will bless the LORD at all times;
His praise *shall* continually *be* in my mouth.
My soul shall make its boast in the LORD;
The humble shall hear *of it* and be glad.
Oh, magnify the LORD with me,
And let us exalt His name together.
I sought the LORD, and He heard me,
And delivered me from all my fears.
They looked to Him and were radiant,
And their faces were not ashamed.
This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard *him*,
And saved him out of all his troubles.
The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him,
And delivers them.
Oh, taste and see that the LORD *is* good;
Blessed *is* the man *who* trusts in Him!

Psalm 34.1-8

Psalm 34.1-9, 3 (*Alleluia [Lowe]: Mighty God, While Angels Bless You*)

I will bless the Lord at all times; I shall praise Him evermore!
My soul makes its boast in Jesus – Him we gladly all adore!
Magnify the Name of Jesus!
Let us lift His Name in praise!

When I sought the Lord, He answered, and from fear delivered me.
Those who look to Him are radiant; shamed their face shall never be.
Magnify the Name of Jesus!
Let us lift His Name in praise!

When I cried to God, He heard me, and from trouble rescued me.
'Round their camp His angel lingers that they may delivered be.
Magnify the Name of Jesus!
Let us lift His Name in praise!

Taste and see how good is Jesus; blessed are all who in Him hide.
None shall lack for any blessing who in Christ will e'er confide.
Magnify the Name of Jesus!
Let us lift His Name in praise!

4 Reluctant King?

Read and meditate on John 6.14, 15.

Great! They want Jesus to be their King! Just as the prophets foretold. But wait...

¹⁴Then all those men, when they had seen this sign that Jesus did, said, "This must mean that Jesus is the Prophet who is come into the world!" ¹⁵ But He departed from there, when He knew that they would want to make Him king, and would use force to try to take Him. So He went up on the mountain by Himself.

- John 6.14, 15

Reflect

1. What seems to have been the motivation for these men wanting to make Jesus king? They were looking to Scripture, so where did they go wrong? Complete this prayer: *Lord, just because I see something in the Bible, doesn't mean I can...*
2. Note that these men were planning to take Jesus by "force." Goodness! What would that have looked like? Does Jesus come into His Kingdom by *force*? Meditate on Luke 16.16. Do *we* come into the Kingdom by force? What kind of force? *Lord, I want to press further into Your Kingdom today, so help me to...*
3. In following Jesus, it's never right to do the right thing in the wrong way. Apply this principle to this attempt to make Jesus king. *I want to do what's right and good in Your eyes, Lord, especially where...*
4. Was it that Jesus didn't *want* to be King? Explain. *You are King, Lord Jesus! And I am...*
5. Again, Jesus retreats to the mountain, this time by Himself. Why do you suppose Jesus thought this was a good idea? Are there times in your life when a little solitude and a change of scenery might be a good thing? Explain. Bring together into one your prayers from questions 1-4.

Summary

"Wonderful! How great is the tyranny of gluttony, how great the fickleness of people's minds! No longer do they vindicate the law, no longer do they care for the violation of the sabbath, and no longer are they zealous for God. All such considerations are thrown aside when their bellies have been filled. He was a prophet in their eyes, and they were about to choose him for a king. But Christ flees. Why? To teach us to despise worldly dignities and to show us that he needed nothing on earth." *John Chrysostom (344-407AD)*

Jesus will only be King on *His* terms, not *ours*. How should this counsel us as we think about serving our King in His Kingdom?

Closing Prayer

The fool hath said in his heart,
*There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works,
there is none that doeth good.*
The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men,
to see if there were any that did understand, *and seek God.*
They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy:

there is none that doeth good, no, not one.
Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?
who eat up my people as they eat bread,
and call not upon the LORD.
There were they in great fear:
for God *is* in the generation of the righteous.

Psalm 14.1-5

Psalm 14.4, 5 (*St. Anne: O God, Our Help in Ages Past*)

None understands, none seeks the Lord; they all have turned aside.
Deception leads them from God's Word who have His grace denied.

The workers of iniquity consume God's sheep like bread;
They trust not in the Lord, and He shall fill their hearts with dread.

5 Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Read and meditate on John 6.16-19a.

Sometimes the disciples are all ideas and no solutions, all effort and no results. Not unlike many churches today. What were they missing?

¹⁶Then His disciples thought to try and cross the sea unto Capernaum.

¹⁷They got a boat, but Jesus had not come to them, and so they left. Already it was dark when they departed in that ship.

¹⁸Then suddenly, the sea arose. A great wind blew, ¹⁹and rowing, they could only make a few short miles.

- John 6.16-19a

Reflect

1. Jesus has gone to the mountain to pray, and the disciples are left alone. Their natural instinct is to sail over night to Capernaum. If you had been there, what counsel might you have offered these disciples? Why? *Lord Jesus, I see You going to the mountain to pray, and I want to follow You, so...*

2. “Jesus had not come to them.” So they left? Do we ever do anything like this, sailing off into the dark night while we leave the Light of the world up on the mountain? Explain. *Let me never, Lord, never not wait on You, especially for...*

3. How would you describe the disciples’ experience of interacting with the stormy sea? What words or ideas express what they were experiencing? In your life, do you experience anything like this? *Lord, sometimes I feel like I’m just running in place. I’m trying to get somewhere, but...*

4. The disciples were being taught some important lessons in these two episodes – the feeding of the 5,000 and their struggle, apart from Jesus, with the sea. What seem to you to be the main lessons Jesus wanted them to gain from these two situations? *Help me to be alert whenever You are teaching, Lord, both from Your Word and...*

5. As we shall see, Jesus doesn’t condemn or berate the disciples here. He is continuing to test them because He wants them to learn as much by what they *experience* as by what they *see* and *hear*. Is learning by experience an important part of discipleship today? How should we apply that principle in our churches? Bring together your prayers from questions 1-4 into one prayer.

Summary

“Christ does not appear to those in the boat immediately after they set sail or at the onset of danger but only when they are far away from the shore. For the grace of our Savior does not come to us when our tribulations begin but when our fear is at its height and the danger shows itself to be great—when we are found, so to say, in the midst of the waves of affliction. Then, Christ appears unexpectedly and removes our fear and frees us from all danger. By his ineffable power he changes horror into joy, and as it were, calms the storm.... When Christ appears and looks on us, we shall effortlessly succeed even against our hope. And we who are in danger because of our distance from Christ shall no longer have to labor to accomplish what is helpful for us when he is present. Christ is our deliverance from all danger and the accomplishment of achievements beyond hope to those who receive him.” *Cyril of Alexandria (375-444 AD)*

I think we tend to be very much like the disciples at this stage of their development. We encounter

opportunities or challenges, and we fall back on our personal experience, material resources, and best ideas, when maybe what we need to do is meet Jesus on the mountain. Explain.

Closing Prayer

The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty;
The LORD is clothed,
He has girded Himself with strength.
Surely the world is established, so that it cannot be moved.
Your throne *is* established from of old;
You *are* from everlasting.
The floods have lifted up, O LORD,
The floods have lifted up their voice;
The floods lift up their waves.
The LORD on high *is* mightier
Than the noise of many waters,
Than the mighty waves of the sea.
Your testimonies are very sure;
Holiness adorns Your house,
O LORD, forever.

Psalm 93

Psalm 93 (*Trinity: Come, Thou Almighty King*)

The Lord in majesty reigns, girded and clothed in strength!
Earth stands secure: Nor shall it e'er be moved;
God on His throne above set it in place with love –
His reign is sure!

What, though the floods arise, raising their voice to the skies,
Strong though they be, God on His holy throne
Drowns out their fearsome drone, hasting to save His own,
Eternally.

Almighty God on high, Your Word can never lie!
Your truth is sure – holy and just are they
Who tread Your holy way; Yours shall they ever stay
Lord, evermore.

6 Jesus on Board

Read and meditate on John 6.19b-21.

The disciples see Jesus coming. They're obviously afraid. Then Jesus speaks to them, and a collective "Duh!" rises from the boat. Aren't these disciples a lot like us?

*Then Jesus came to them,
and He was walking on the sea! When Him
they saw, they were afraid. ²⁰But He said, "Do
not be afraid, for it is I." ²¹They knew
Him then, and took Him in the boat. Then they
arrived at land, right where they planned to stay.*

- John 6.19b-21

Reflect

1. The disciples were afraid because they saw something *they could not explain*. Are there any aspects of your faith that you can't explain? Should that make you fearful? Explain. Complete the following brief prayer: *Lord, I don't need to understand or be able to explain everything. Instead, I can...*
2. Jesus didn't calm the sea, apparently; and He didn't help them row to shore. Was this another test? What was Jesus testing them for here? What did He want them to learn? *When I think about You walking on water, Lord, I understand that...*
3. How would you describe Jesus' experience of interacting with the stormy sea? How was that possible? Twelve strong men are tugging at oars, going nowhere, and one single Man is walking on the water, *drawing near the boat!* What are the disciples thinking about now? Is Jesus still this same Person? What stormy waves in your life might He help you glide over safely? *Lord, I just don't think about You when I need to, like when...*
4. Note that Jesus' words led the disciples to willingly receive Him into the boat. Should we expect Jesus' words to have that kind of effect on us? Why or why not? *As I read Your Word, Lord, make me willing to...*
5. Comment on Jesus' words to the disciples. They obviously *were* afraid. Should they have been? Of what? But Jesus contrasts being afraid with "It is I..." How does Jesus dispel our fears? Which fears? Bring together your prayers from questions 1-4 into one prayer.

Summary

"And how does Jesus come to the disciples? He comes walking upon the waves, keeping all the swellings of the world under his feet, pressing down all of humanity's pride. And so it continues, so long as time endures, so long as the ages roll. Tribulations increase, all these swell and mount up: Jesus passes on treading upon the waves. And yet, so great are the tribulations that even those who have trusted in Jesus and who strive to persevere to the end greatly fear lest they fail... But they open the gospel, they open the Scriptures and find all these things there foretold; that this is the Lord's doing. He tramples down the heights of the world that he may be glorified by the humble." *Augustine (354-430 AD)*

By the way, if "immediately the boat was at the land where they were going" (NKJV) as Jesus got in, why did He bother to get in the boat? Was there something important about their willingly receiving Him? Does faith always need *some* form of expression?

Closing Prayer

The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul;

The testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple;
The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes;
The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether.
More to be desired *are they* than gold,
Yea, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
Moreover by them Your servant is warned,
And in keeping them *there* is great reward.
Who can understand *his* errors?
Cleanse me from secret *faults*.
Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous *sins*;
Let them not have dominion over me.
Then I shall be blameless,
And I shall be innocent of great transgression.
Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
Be acceptable in Your sight,
O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.

Psalm 19.7-14

Psalm 19.7-14 (*St. Christopher: Beneath the Cross of Jesus*)

The Law of God is perfect, His testimony sure;
The simple man God's wisdom learns, the soul receives its cure.
God's Word is right, and His command is pure, and truth imparts;
He makes our eyes to understand; with joy He fills our hearts.

The fear of God is cleansing, forever shall it last.
His judgments all are true and just, by righteousness held fast.
O seek them more than gold most fine, than honey find them sweet;
Be warned by every word and line; be blessed with joy complete.

Who, Lord, can know his errors? O keep sin far from me!
Let evil rule not in my soul, that I may blameless be.
O let my thoughts, let all my words, before Your glorious sight,
Be pleasing to You, gracious Lord, acceptable and right!

7 King Me?

Read and meditate on John 6.1-21.

Jesus is, indeed, to be King of Israel, but only in His time, and by His chosen means. He will not be made into a political figure; He will not be dictated to by human agendas; and not even the constraints of the natural world – whether shortages or raging storms – will keep Him from doing as He wants. Because He is King, and He knows it. Do we?

¹Then after these things Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee (today that sea would be Tiberius). ²And many followed Him, because they saw the signs which He for them performed, especially those who were diseased. ³He climbed up on a mountain, where it pleased Him to abide with His disciples. ⁴And the Feast of Passover was near at hand. ⁵Then Jesus lifted up His eyes and said to Philip, "Tell me, where shall we buy bread for all these people?" For He saw that to Him many were approaching. ⁶But He knew what He would do, and only said this as a test. ⁷So Philip answered, "Lord, who has sufficient money so that everyone could even have a little?" ⁸Then said one of His disciples – Andrew, Simon's brother – ⁹"A lad here has five barley loaves, and other food – two small fish. But what are these among so many?" ¹⁰Jesus said, "Now tell them, young and old alike, to sit down in the grass." And so they did – 5,000 men amassed there on that hill. ¹¹And Jesus took the bread, and broke it, when He had thanksgiving said, and His disciples took it all around, the fish likewise, to those who on the ground were seated, just as much as they could eat. ¹²When all were finished, and the meal complete, He said to His disciples, "Gather all the leftovers, each piece and fragment, small and great, so none of it is lost." ¹³They did, and filled twelve baskets right up to the lid with food. ¹⁴Then all those men, when they had seen this sign that Jesus did, said, "This must mean that Jesus is the Prophet who is come into the world!" ¹⁵ But He departed from there, when He knew that they would want to make Him king, and would use force to try to take Him. So He went up on the mountain by Himself. ¹⁶Then His disciples thought to try and cross the sea unto Capernaum. ¹⁷They got a boat, but Jesus had not come to them, and so they left. Already it

was dark when they departed in that ship.
¹⁸Then suddenly, the sea arose. A great wind blew, ¹⁹and rowing, they could only make a few short miles. Then Jesus came to them, and He was walking on the sea! When Him they saw, they were afraid. ²⁰But He said, "Do not be afraid, for it is I." ²¹They knew Him then, and took Him in the boat. Then they arrived at land, right where they planned to stay.

- John 6.1-21

Reflect

1. The idea that people might make Jesus king by force is laughable. As Psalm 2 reminds us, God has appointed Jesus as King, and given Him all authority in heaven and earth. What in the stories in John 6.1-21 bears witness to the sovereign rule of King Jesus? Complete this prayer: *You are Lord and King, Jesus my Savior, and today I will observe Your rule as I...*
2. Food shortage? No problem. Meager resources? Not to worry. People trying to force you to do something you know you shouldn't do? No sweat. Storms at sea? All our best ideas coming to naught? Worn out and exhausted from all your striving? Look to the mountain, and Him Who waits for you there. Apply this principle to your daily life. *Help me to keep my eyes on You, Lord, or I will surely...*
3. What lessons did Jesus want His disciples to learn from the two situations reported on in these verses? What should *we* learn from these stories? *Let me always keep learning more about You, Jesus, and from these stories, let me learn...*
4. How would you describe the *power* of Jesus, as revealed in John 6.1-21? Do you experience this power in any ways? How should you respond if you do? *I know that Your Spirit and Kingdom give me power, Lord (Acts 1.8; 1 Cor. 4.20), so today, help me to...*
5. When we see Jesus like this, in all His grace and power, how can we avoid the temptation that overtook the men who wanted to make Jesus king by force? How can we know when we're trying to *use* Jesus rather than simply *love* Him? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

Summary

"The divine substance is not visible to the eye, and the miracles of the divine government of the world and ordering of the whole creation are overlooked because of their constancy.... Because of this, God has reserved for himself acts that are above and beyond the established course and order of nature that he does at suitable times. He does this so that those who overlooked the daily course of nature might be roused to wonder by the sight of what was different from—though not at all greater than—what they were used to. The government of the world is certainly a greater miracle than satisfying the hunger of five thousand with five loaves; and yet no one wonders at this. The miracle excited wonder, not from any real superiority in it but because it was rare.... But it would be wrong to gather no more than this from Christ's miracles.... Let us understand that the Lord on the mount is the Word on high.... He saw the multitude and knew they were hungry, and so he mercifully fed them not only in virtue of his goodness but also of his power. For what could mere goodness do when there was not even enough bread to feed the hungry crowd? If power had not accompanied goodness, the crowd would have remained fasting and hungry. In short, the disciples, hungry themselves, also wanted to feed the multitudes, but they did not have the wherewithal to feed them."

Augustine (354-430 AD)

Where do you need the feeding of Jesus? His power to still the storms of your life? What tests do you expect

to encounter today?

Closing Prayer

Praise the LORD!

Sing to the LORD a new song,

And His praise in the assembly of saints.

Let Israel rejoice in their Maker;

Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.

Let them praise His name with the dance;

Let them sing praises to Him with the timbrel and harp.

For the LORD takes pleasure in His people;

He will beautify the humble with salvation.

Let the saints be joyful in glory;

Let them sing aloud on their beds.

Let the high praises of God be in their mouth,

And a two-edged sword in their hand...

Psalm 149.1-6

Psalm 149 (*Toulon: I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art*)

Sing to the Lord a glorious song and new!

Praise Him you people, to Whom praise is due!

Let us rejoice, let us be glad in Him

Who has created us and cleansed our sin.

Praise Him with dance, with tambourine and lyre!

To be so praised is God's one great desire.

Lord, beautify Your holy ones with grace;

Show us the mercy of Your saving face.

Sing to the Lord, exult with great delight!

Sing on your beds with joy to God by night!

Sing praise and take His Word into your hand;

Publish His grace and wrath in every land!

The Gospel of John: John 6.1-21

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. What do the two stories in John 6.1-21 add to John's growing picture of Jesus? How do they illustrate or prove things John has previously told us, for example, in John 1.1-3?
2. We need to keep in mind that Jesus is making disciples as He goes about His ministry. What do we learn from Jesus about making disciples from these two stories?
3. Thinking with the mind of Christ does *not* mean *not* thinking with our own minds. What *does* it mean?
4. The natural world and all its resources and powers obey the Lord Jesus Christ. To what ends? How should this encourage us in serving the Lord?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from John 6.1-21? How are you putting that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

Items for prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.