

# What's In Your Lunchbox?

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, if we could, this morning with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read in the Gospel according to John, John chapter 6, and if we just read again at verse 10.

We're going to look at the whole passage, but we'll just read again at verse 10. John chapter 6 and verse 10. Jesus said, Have the people sit down. Now there was much grass in the place, so the men sat down, about five thousand in number.

Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish as much as they wanted. And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost.

You know, as a minister living in a small and rural community on the west side of Lewis, over time, over the past six years of being here, I've gotten to know most of the people living in this community.

And as you would expect from a minister, I have a care and a compassion and a concern for the spiritual needs of this community. Because my desire is to see my Christian friend, my desire is to see them grow in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

[ 1 : 20 ] But my desire is also to see my unconverted friend come to know forgiveness and cleansing through faith in Jesus Christ. And you know, my unconverted friend this morning, if I meet you in the shop, or at the school, or if I pass you in the car, you know, I want you to be assured that when I see you, I am pleading and praying.

I might even be speaking to you face to face, but I am pleading and praying that the Lord will have mercy upon you. Because, you know, I can honestly say, like Paul said to the community in Rome, Paul wrote, my heart's desire and prayer to God is that you will be saved.

That's what he said. My heart's desire and prayer to God is that you will be saved. But you know, what I've been reminded over the past few months is that our community, it not only has spiritual needs, it also has temporal needs.

And I was reminded of that fact back in March at the beginning of lockdown. Because just before lockdown, a number of parents in the community, we had formed a committee to start a youth club for the kids in the community.

And even there, you know, I was so thankful that the committee, they were willing to allow the youth club to have an input from the local ministers. But when we began living in lockdown, the youth club had to take a back seat for the time being.

[ 2 : 44 ] And yet there was someone who was part of the youth club committee. I won't mention any names. But Sarah Campbell, who's the community learning and development officer for the West Side and for Ness, she suggested that because people were being put on furlough and some were sadly losing their jobs, that there might be a need for a food bank.

And so with the support of our local council and also the Barbacy State, the food bank, it got off the ground. And it's a food bank which seeks to serve the communities of the West Side, covering the villages from, all the way from the port of Ness round down to Dalmore.

And as a committee, we're very thankful for the physical and the financial support that we've received from the community as food parcels continue to be distributed and delivered confidentially each week.

But you know, this past year has been a wake-up call to many of us not to take things for granted. You know, whether that's with our family or our friends or even our fitness, our finance or even food, we're not to take these things for granted.

But I also believe that this year should be a wake-up call to the church. Because as the church of Jesus Christ, wherever we are in the world, we should not only have a care, compassion and concern for the spiritual needs of a community, we should also have a care, compassion and concern for the temporal needs of a community.

[ 4 : 18 ] Because, you know, that's what Jesus was like. And that's what we see in this passage. Jesus had a care, compassion and concern for both the temporal and spiritual needs of his community.

In fact, the temporal needs of this community of people here in John chapter 6, the temporal needs was actually an illustration of the spiritual needs of the people.

And that's why all four gospel writers, that's why Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, that's why they all mention this miracle in their gospel. They want to highlight that the temporal needs was an illustration of the spiritual needs.

And the thing is about this miracle of feeding the 5,000, this miracle, it can't be denied and it can't be disputed because it took place in the presence of over 5,000 eyewitnesses.

And I'd like us to consider this miracle this morning under three headings. The timing of Jesus, the test of Jesus and the triumph of Jesus.

[ 5 : 25 ] The timing of Jesus, the test of Jesus and the triumph of Jesus. So first of all, the timing of Jesus. If we look at verse 1, it says, After this, Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias.

And a large crowd was following him because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain and there he sat down with his disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand.

So John, the evangelist, the gospel writer, he introduces chapter 6 of his gospel by informing us that Jesus is no longer in Jerusalem defending and declaring his deity as the Son of God.

Because Jesus, he's now, as we read, he's in the region of Galilee. And in fact, John tells us that Jesus is near the shore of the Sea of Galilee or the Sea of Tiberias, as the locals called it.

And as Jesus and his disciples, they have now ascended away from the shore. They're on this area to the east side of the Sea of Galilee, well known to us today as the Golan Heights.

[ 6 : 34 ] That's where they are. And it was there that we're told that Jesus sat down with his disciples. And then John tells us in verse 4, the time of year. He gives us the timing.

He sets the scene. He says that it's the spring. It's around March, April time. Because the Passover is at hand. And as we said before, when we read John's gospel, something that we have to take note of when he mentions that a feast is taking place, you know, we usually would just read over these little notes.

But John mentions all these Jewish feasts in order to give us context. Because as you know, the feast of Passover, it celebrates and commemorates the occasion in Israel's history when the Israelites were slaves in Egypt.

And on the night before they experienced that salvation from the Lord, you'll remember that an angel of the Lord passed over all the Israelite homes because the doorposts and the lintels of their houses were covered in the blood of a spotless lamb, a Passover lamb.

But at the same time, the angel of the Lord also passed over all the houses of the Egyptians, killing the firstborn of every Egyptian home.

[ 7 : 49 ] And that was the means in which the Israelites escaped from slavery in Egypt and ultimately experienced salvation in the promised land. But you know, John, he repeatedly mentions when a Jewish feast is taking place, not only to give us context to the chapter, but also to give us a countdown to the cross.

And as we said before, John mentions the feast of Passover three times in his gospel, not only to give us context to the chapter, but also a countdown to the cross.

Because John wants us to have a timeline of events. He wants us to know when the hour is coming, when Jesus will offer himself as the sinless sacrifice for our salvation.

You remember that the first Passover feast was held back in chapter two. Then the second Passover takes place here in chapter six. And the third and final Passover will take place in chapter 12 onwards, when Jesus is crucified.

Which means that we're now halfway through Jesus's ministry. We are a year away from his death. And so a year from now, this or you could say this time next year, Jesus will be crucified.

[ 9 : 07 ] This time next year, Jesus will be delivered over to die. This time next year, Jesus will be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. This time next year, as the hymn writer put it, Jesus will be bearing shame and scoffing rude.

In my place condemned he stood, sealed my pardon with his blood. Hallelujah. What a savior. My friend, John is saying to us here in chapter six, that this time next year, Jesus will be offering up his life as a ransom for many.

And the thing is, Jesus knew all this. Jesus knew what was ahead of him. Jesus knew that his hour was coming. Jesus knew that he only had a year to live.

And you know, does it ever make you think about how you would feel if you knew that you only had a year to live? Would you live differently to the way you're living now if you knew that you only had a year to live?

You know, my Christian friend, would you walk with the Lord more closely and witness for the Lord more faithfully and serve the Lord more diligently if you knew that you only had a year to live?

[ 10 : 25 ] My unconverted friend, would you call upon the Lord and commit your life to the Lord and confess Jesus as your Lord today? Would you do it today if you knew that you only had a year to live?

You know, I'm sure that we would all live differently and act differently and even deal with people differently if we knew that we only had a year to live. And yet our Bible, it reminds us that we're not even promised next year.

We're not even promised tomorrow. And you know, if this year has taught us anything, this year has surely taught us that we don't know what a day nor an hour will bring in our lives.

And you know, what John is doing in this passage is that he's once again drawing our attention to the timing of Jesus because he wants to remind us that the timing of Jesus is perfect.

The timing of Jesus is always on time because the thing about Jesus is he's never late. He's never out of sync. He's never delayed.

[ 11 : 32 ] He's never belated or behind schedule or overdue. He's always on time. My friend, the timing of Jesus is perfect. And that's what John is reminding us by giving us this timeline.

He's saying the timing of Jesus was perfect for his life. And it's perfect for your life too. Even though you might look at the circumstances and situations in your life today and wonder, how is the timing of Jesus perfect here?

But you know, I assure you this morning that nothing is wasted with Jesus. Nothing was wasted with him. Because even when life takes those unexpected twists and turns, even then the timing of Jesus is perfect.

Because in our darkness and our distress and our depression and devastation, Jesus is always assuring us that he's still there. He's still there.

He's still our refuge and our strength in our time of trouble because his timing is perfect. Therefore, my friend, what we need to do with Jesus today and every day is trust him.

[ 12 : 46 ] Oh, trust him. We need to trust the timing of Jesus because his timing is perfect. But you know, what's interesting is that John draws attention to the timing of Jesus again in this chapter.

because the last time, back in chapter 2, John told us that it was at the Feast of Passover then that he exhorted and encouraged us to see that Jesus is the Passover Lamb.

He's the Lamb of God who's there to take away the sin of the world. But this time, here in this chapter, John tells us that it's the Feast of Passover again. And he's doing it in order to exhort and encourage us to see that Jesus is also the bread of life.

Because this chapter is all about bread. And as you know, the other name which the Jews give to the Passover is the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And in this chapter, we see Jesus feeding crowds with bread.

And we'll hear, God willing, next Lord's Day, Jesus giving his first I Am statement where he says, I am the bread of life. Whosoever comes to me shall never hunger.

[ 13 : 55 ] And whosoever believes in me shall never thirst. And so by drawing attention to the timing of Jesus at the outset of this chapter, John is telling us, he's telling us that by the next Passover or on the next Passover, at the next Feast of Unleavened Bread, Jesus will not only be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, but he will also be the bread of life who will satisfy your deep desires.

And what John is reminding us this morning is that it's him we need to trust in. It's him we need to come to. It's him we need to confess. Because he is the only one who can take away our sin. The timing of Jesus was perfect. So that's the first thing we see, the timing of Jesus. But then secondly, the test of Jesus.

The test of Jesus. Look at verse 5. It says, lifting up his eyes then and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, where are we to buy bread so that these people may eat?

He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, 200 denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little.

[15:19] Now in this scene, John, the gospel writer, he emphasises that this large crowd arrived on the hillside with Jesus and his disciples. And he emphasises this by repeating the phrase.

Because in verse 2, John says that a large crowd was following Jesus because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. And then again, as we read in verse 5, John tells us that a large crowd was coming towards Jesus.

And John emphasises this large crowd because what we have to understand is that it's not only bread that's an important theme in this chapter. The crowds are also an important theme in this chapter.

Because at the beginning of this chapter, the crowds are following Jesus. But by the end of this chapter, John tells us that they walked with him no longer.

And this is actually something that all four of our gospel writers pick up on. They pick up on the crowds who followed Jesus. Because as Jesus moved around the villages and towns of Galilee, there were crowds that always followed him.

[16:28] And they followed Jesus everywhere he went. And when they followed him, they witnessed the miracles Jesus performed. They heard the sermons that Jesus preached. They saw the signs that Jesus presented.

The crowds always followed Jesus. But they followed Jesus because he was this new phenomenon. Jesus was the new fad and fashion of the day. The crowds followed Jesus because, well, everyone else was doing it.

Everyone was going to see this miracle worker. Everyone was gathering to hear this preacher speak with authority. Everyone was following Jesus in the crowds. And human nature being what it is, the crowd was attracting an even greater crowd.

And for many people, it was easy to go along in the crowd. It's easy to follow Jesus in the crowds. It's easy to blend into the crowds.

It's easy to get lost in the crowds. But, you know, for the gospel writers, the crowds who follow Jesus was a negative thing.

[17:34] Because what the gospel writers want to emphasize to us is that Jesus isn't into crowds. Jesus isn't into the numbers game of counting church members. Because, my friend, there are crowds in hell.

And what, my friend, what Jesus wants, he doesn't want crowds. Jesus wants disciples. Jesus wants individuals to commit their life to him.

Jesus wants committed Christians. Christians. And Jesus would far rather have one committed Christian than 5,000 souls just going along in the crowd.

Because, you know, being part of a crowd doesn't mean anything. Being part of the crowd doesn't count for anything. What counts, my friend, is contrition of sin.

What counts is confession of the Son. What counts is commitment to the Saviour. Jesus wants committed Christians. And yet, you know, Mark tells us in his gospel that when Jesus saw these crowds, he had compassion on them.

[18:42] He still had compassion on the crowds. Why? Because he says they were like sheep without a shepherd. They were lost. And with that, Jesus said to Philip, where are we to buy bread so that these people may eat?

And as John tells us, John informs us that Jesus said this to Philip in order to test him because Jesus knew what he would do. Jesus tested Philip because he, along with all the other disciples, they had recently witnessed Jesus defend and declare his deity as the Son of God.

They had heard, as we saw back in chapter 5, they had heard Jesus preach a sermon about the Son where Jesus explained the deity of the Son and the distinction of the Son.

and the decision of the Son. But now with such a crowd in front of him, Philip, you could say, he gets stage fright and he completely forgets who Jesus is and he starts trying to work out in his head how much it will cost to feed this crowd.

And Philip says, he says, 200 denarii would not buy enough bread to feed each of them even a little. Now, 200 denarii was a lot of money.

[ 20 : 02 ] It was about eight months wages because a denarius was the equivalent of a day's wage. But, you know, like Philip, I was trying to work out, well, how much would it cost today?

How much would it cost in pounds to feed this crowd? And I was thinking, well, the national, the current national minimum wage or the national living wage is eight pounds seventy-two.

A day's labour in Israel would have been about a 12-hour day which would be about 104 pounds sixty-four pence per day. And then working six days a week with a Sabbath day's rest, it would be 627 pounds eighty-four pence per week.

And with about four weeks in every month, it would work out as 2,511 pounds and 36 pence per month. Now, we won't deduct any tax or national insurance or pensions or any other expenses even though everyone in Israel, they were to pay a temple tax and they also had to pay a fee towards the Roman Empire.

And so, in Philip's head, 200 denarii, which was the equivalent of eight months' wages, it would have cost the disciples to feed this crowd one small meal based upon the national wage, it would have cost them about twenty thousand and ninety pounds eighty-eight pence.

[ 21 : 31 ] Do you know, that's a hefty meal, that's a hefty bill for feeding this crowd. But you know, the test of Jesus, the test that Jesus was really highlighting was instead of using your head, use your heart.

Instead of using your head, use your heart. And Philip, he had used his head, but Andrew, we see, he used his heart because he comes to Jesus and he says, well, there's a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish.

My friend, the test of Jesus was instead of using your head, use your heart. And you know, my friend, sometimes that's what we need to do. Because like Philip, when we're confronted with what seems an insurmountable and even an impossible obstacle, instead of using our head, we should use our heart.

Instead of trying to plan it ourselves and work it all out in our head, we should use our heart and entrust it to Jesus. Because you know, we can be so guilty of trying to work things out with our friends or our finances or even our future.

We can try and work all these things out and we can do it all using our head rather than using our heart and entrusting it all to Jesus. And yet, you know, it was Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, who gave the greatest advice there ever was.

[ 22 : 59 ] Solomon had the greatest head and yet his advice was, use your heart. Proverbs 3, verses 5 and 6. Trust in the Lord with all your heart.

Do not lean on your own understanding, but in all your ways acknowledge him and he shall direct your path. Instead of using your head, use your heart.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart. That was the test of Jesus. Instead of using your head, use your heart. And so we've considered the timing of Jesus and the test of Jesus.

And then we see, lastly, the triumph of Jesus. The triumph of Jesus. Look at verse 9. It was Andrew who said, There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?

Jesus said, Have the people sit down. Now there was much grass in the place, so the men sat down, about five thousand in number. Jesus then took the loaves and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated, so also the fish as much as they wanted.

[ 24 : 12 ] And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost. You know, when I was young, there was a television program in the 90s called 2.4 Children.

Now maybe you saw it, it was a comedy about a stereotypical family and all the highs and lows of family life. But it was called 2.4 Children because there was a study done in the 90s that said that the average family in Britain had 2.4 children, which is obviously an impossibility because you can't have .4 of a child.

But in the stereotypical family of 2.4 children, there was dad, mum, a son and a daughter. And yet, when we come to this miracle, this is something we can often forget.

Because when the Israelites travelled to Jerusalem for the Passover, the Feast of Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when they travelled, they would all travel as families. Which means that even though John tells us that there were 5,000 men present that day, there were actually a lot more people present.

Because, you know, hypothetically speaking, if all of these 5,000 men, if they were all married, which was highly likely in that day, and if they all had the stereotypical average family of 2.4 children, or more, which is more likely, it would mean that the number of mouths that Jesus had to feed with only 5 barley loaves and 2 fish, the number would have been in the region of about 24,000 people.

[ 25 : 54 ] Which, when you think about it, that from a little boy's lunchbox, Jesus was able to feed the equivalent of everyone living in the Western Isles.

And, you know, what are the Gospel writers reminding us here with that? you know, my friend, they're reminding us that what is impossible with men is possible with God. What is impossible with men is possible with God.

And, you know, I love the faith of this young boy who was willing to give his lunchbox to Jesus to feed this multitude of people. And, you know, what he gave wasn't much, but he willingly gave what he could.

And, my friend, that's all that Jesus asks of us. He asks us to willingly give what we can.

Whether it's our talents or our time or our tithing, we're to willingly give what we can to Jesus.

Because in the hands of Jesus, as we see in this passage, all things are possible.

[ 27 : 02 ] And we see that because Jesus blessed the little, this young boy gave. He blessed it.

And everyone was satisfied. Jesus blessed the little this young boy gave.

And everyone was satisfied. And John tells us, he tells us in verse 12, when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, gather up the leftover fragments that nothing may be lost.

So they gathered them up and filled 12 baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. You know, when they record this miracle, all of the gospel writers, they note that after everyone was satisfied, after everyone was full from their meal, there was more left over than there was to start with.

Because we're told that there were 12 baskets of bread left over. And of course, the number of baskets full of bread is significant because, not even because there were 12 disciples who needed to be reminded to stop using their head and start using their heart.

But the 12 baskets was significant because there were also 12 tribes in Israel. Therefore, what the gospel writers are asserting and affirming to us is that Jesus has more than enough bread.

[ 28 : 27 ] He has more than enough of a supply to satisfy the needs of the whole nation and beyond. Jesus has more than enough bread to satisfy lost souls if they'll only come to him.

And why? Why is he able to satisfy them? Well, as John will tell us in this passage, Jesus is the bread of life. Jesus is the bread of life.

And that's what Jesus is reminding us this morning. He's saying to us on the pages of Scripture, I am the bread of life. Whosoever comes to me shall never hunger, and whosoever believes in me shall never thirst.

You know, my friend, in this miracle that we're seeing this morning, we're seeing the timing of Jesus and the test of Jesus, but also the triumph, the triumph of Jesus, that he has prepared a new and living way for us to come and find satisfaction for our souls.

But you know, I want to leave you this morning with the words of my good friend, J.C. Ryle. You know, he can always put it better than I can. And he says in his commentary about this miracle, he says, there can be no doubt that this miracle was meant to teach the adequacy of Christ's gospel, to supply the necessities of the whole world.

[ 29 : 57 ] Weak and feeble and foolish as it may seem to man, the simple story of the cross is enough for all the children of Adam in every part of the globe.

He says the story of Christ's death for sinners and the atonement made by that death is able to meet the hearts and satisfy the consciences of all nations and peoples and kindreds and tongues. Carried by faithful messengers, it feeds and supplies all ranks and classes. The preaching of the cross, he says, is to those who perish is foolishness, but to us who are saved it is the power of God.

Five barley loaves and two small fishes seemed scanty provision for a hungry crowd, but blessed by Christ and distributed by his disciples, they were more than sufficient.

Let us never doubt for a moment, says Ryle, that the preaching of Christ crucified, the old story of his blood and his righteousness and his substitution. Ryle says, it is enough for the spiritual necessities of all mankind.

[ 31 : 05 ] It's not worn out, it's not obsolete, and it's not lost its power. We need nothing new, nothing more broad, nothing more intellectual, nothing more effectual, nothing, we need nothing but the true bread of life distributed faithfully among starving souls.

Let men sneer, or ridicule as they will, he says, nothing else can do good in the sinful world. No other teaching can fill hungry consciences and give them peace.

We must feed on Christ crucified and the atonement made by his death, or we shall die in our sins. My friend, we must feed on Christ crucified and the atonement made by his death, or we will die in our sins.

Jesus is the bread of life, and he says to us this morning, whosoever comes to me shall never hunger, and whosoever believes in me shall never thirst.

Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to thee this morning for that wonderful reminder that Jesus is the only one who is able to satisfy our deep desires, that we may be those who try and fill our lives with fun and fitness and finance and all these things, but ultimately we need that spiritual food that comes from the hand of Jesus.

[ 32 : 47 ] us. O Lord, we pray that if we are feeling empty this morning, if we are aware of our sin and our need of a Saviour, that we would come to Jesus, come assured of the promise that whosoever comes to him, that they will never hunger, and whosoever believes in him shall never thirst.

O Lord, help us to trust Jesus with our life, but more importantly to trust him with our death. O guide us then, we pray, go before us and take away our iniquity, receive us graciously, for Jesus' sake.

Amen. We're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning by singing the words of Psalm 36. Psalm 36 in the Scottish Psalter, and we're singing from verse 5 down to the verse marked 11. Psalm 36 from verse 5. Psalm 36 from verse 5 down to the verse marked 11.

To God's praise. mercy, Lord, is in the hands, thy truth doth reach upon, thy justice is like mountain swaying, thy justice keep God's love.

[ 34 : 40 ] Lord, love, be sad, and fun on knees, our precious kids, thy grace, therefore in shadow walk thy wings, man's sons, their trust shall place.

May with the kindness of thy heart shall be well satisfied from rivers all thy pleasures thy will take to them provide.

Because of life the fount endure remains the love with thee, and in the purest light of thy we clearly life shall be.

Thy love in thy love in kind that come to them continue that be known, and still on them the of pride in heart, thy righteousness best be stoned.

Let not the fruit of pride not the fruit of pride, come out against me down, and let be not renewed thee, or by the wicked time.