

Leader Resources for Small Groups | March 22, 2020

4 Gospels — John: The Gospel of Signs

Focus Passage: John 6:1–15

Additional Context: John 6:1–77

Corollary Scripture: Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:30-44, Luke 9:10-17, John 20:30-31

Sermon Recap: The sermon used the object lesson of a pop-quiz—an unexpected test or set of questions given without prior warning—to describe the feeding of the 5,000 in John 6:1–15. John 6:5–6 reads, “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’s initial response was to calculate that even 8 months wages would not be enough money to feed everyone one meal. Andrew found a boy with five loaves of barley bread and two fish and recognized that would clearly not be enough food to feed the mass of people. In this pop quiz, Jesus was teaching His disciples that money would not be enough and available resources would not be enough to meet the need. The underlying question was “on what can we depend?” or more precisely “on whom can we depend?” Jesus wanted His disciples to see that they needed to depend on Him rather than on money or their own resources. Jesus multiplied the resources on hand—five loaves and two fish—to feed the multitude until they were full and they still had enough leftovers to fill 12 baskets.

The sermon also compared our current public health pandemic to a pop quiz, similar to the feeding of the 5,000. We do not have enough money or resources on hand to meet the needs. We must depend on the LORD who is able to feed His people, even in desolate places, until they are full. However meager or great our resources, we can bring them to Jesus to multiply. We can also take our fears, anxieties, doubts, and sin to Jesus, depending on Him to provide forgiveness and peace in ways that our money and resources will never be able to do. Pop quiz! On whom are you depending?

Introductory Comments

In light of our current situation in which we face a global pandemic, knowing entire families would be watching the service together online, the Pastor wisely crafted the sermon to speak to and engage children as well as adults. The message was application-oriented, with the big idea of “Let’s depend on the One who feeds us in desolate places until we are full.” In the sermon follow-up resources, we want to connect some dots in our overall plotline of the Bible—creation, rebellion, redemption, and new creation with Jesus at the center. While you can use these resources individually, they may also prove helpful in leading family devotions that show parallels between Jesus and Moses, between God’s miraculous feeding of His people in the wilderness of Sinai and Jesus feeding the crowd of more than 5,000 in a desolate place. You may want to walk through the 7 signs one day, and another day go through the 7 “I Am” statements of Jesus, pointing to how God introduced Himself to Moses in the burning bush with the name “I Am”. You might consider watching the *Bible Project* video on John Part 1 linked below in the Further Resources section.

Interpretive Helps

- “Of the four canonical Gospels, three of them—Matthew, Mark and Luke—are called “Synoptic” because they can be viewed together (*syn*, “with”; *-optic*, “see”) in a Synopsis.”¹ In contrast, the Gospel of John is more theological in nature, presenting Jesus as the preexistent God who is “I Am” in the flesh. John is known for structuring his gospel around 7 *signs* and 7 “I Am” statements of Jesus.
- There are several differences between John’s Gospel and the synoptic gospels. “In John there is no actual account of the baptism of Jesus (e.g., Mark 1:9), no parables such as are present in the Synoptics (e.g., Mark 4), no general calling of twelve disciples or naming of all of them (e.g., Mark 3:13–19), and no story of the transfiguration (e.g., Mark 9:2–13). There is no account of any demon exorcisms (e.g., Mark 5:1–20), no institution of the Lord’s Supper (e.g., Mark 14:22–25), no account of the temptations of Jesus (e.g., Matt 4:1–11) nor of the strategic confession at Caesarea Philippi (e.g., Matt 16:13–20), no kiss of Judas (e.g., Mark 14:45), and no extended eschatological address like the Olivet Discussion in the Synoptics (Mark 13; Matt 24–25; Luke 21:5–37). On the other hand, there is in the Synoptics very little that parallels John’s three Cameos of Witness

¹ Mark Goodacre, [“Gospels, Synoptic,”](#) ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

(1:29–51), no changing of water into wine (2:1–11), no Nicodemus story and its discourse (3:1–36), no account of the Samaritan woman (4:1–42), no resuscitation of the dead Lazarus (11:1–44), no direct parallels to the *mashals* (proverbs/allegories) of the shepherd (10:1–30) and the vine (15:1–11), no comparable account of a foot washing (13:1–20), and no formal similarities to the great Johannine prayer chapter (17:1–26), the appearance to Thomas (20:26–29), or the recommissioning of Peter (21:15–23).²

- “While John alludes to many signs (2:23; 20:30), there seems to be a sequence of seven signs culminating with the raising of Lazarus in 11:1–44. The seven major signs are: changing water into wine (vv. 1–11); healing the official’s son (4:46–54); healing a lame man (5:1–15); feeding the 5,000 (6:1–15); walking on water (6:16–21); healing a blind man (9:1–41); and raising Lazarus from the dead (11:1–44).”³

Comments to Leaders

- For most of us, this time of social distancing has taken away many of the activities with which we routinely occupied ourselves. Where we may have used the excuse that we were “too busy” to pursue our relationship with God, the majority of us now have more disposable time than we’re accustomed to having. I encourage you to be intentional about spending more time in prayer and engaging God’s word. In addition to the prayer times, devotions, and [worship experiences](#) the Chapel is providing online, we encourage you to continue (or start if you haven’t already) the [E100 stories with study helps](#). Also, remember that you have free access to [Right Now Media](#) — literally thousands of Bible study resources, teachings, and children’s videos.
- When dealing with the LORD’s provision, Psalm 37:25 may be a comforting verse.
- When dealing with our default to trust in money, Jeremiah 2:13 is a powerful challenge.
- If your group will be using Cisco Webex Meetings for a videoconference group, here are a few tips to keep in mind.
 - Have your group members download the Cisco Webex Meetings app to their computer or device. Let them know that they can use the app as a guest without having to set up a Webex account with username and password. GROUP LEADERS HOSTING A MEETING WILL NEED AN ACCOUNT WITH USERNAME AND PASSWORD BUT PARTICIPANTS DO NOT. Please let me know if you need an account and we’ll get you set up.
 - James Payne has found what I believe to be the simplest solution for meeting-hosts to invite and get participants connected to the meeting. When the host schedules a meeting, a meeting number and meeting password are assigned to the day and time of the meetings. If hosts will send the meeting number to their invited participants, the participants can simply click “Join Meeting” from their app. They will only have to put in a name, an email, and the meeting number to get connected. THE KEY IS ENTERING THE CORRECT MEETING NUMBER. In his experimenting James was able to sign on with a bogus email address, using Donald Duck for his name, but he had to enter the correct meeting number. We hope to have a brief video tutorial on the Chapel website soon for participants to refer to if needed.
 - During your video meetings, it’s helpful to have participants mute their microphones when they are not speaking. Muting prevents background noise from distracting the group and also serves as a sort of signal that when someone changes their status from muted to unmuted they are preparing to say something.
 - If someone can’t be heard or seen on the video, ask them to make sure their camera and microphone are turned on and unmuted.

Group ~~Gathering~~ Interaction

Connect: *Making Honest Connections with One Another (Pick one)*

1. Please share briefly one of the following:
 - a. Did you have any meaningful interactions with your neighbors this week?
 - b. With 1 being low and 10 being high, what number would you use to rate your level of anxiety this past week?
 - c. What has God been saying to you through His word, the sermon, or other people?

Grow: *Listening to and Learning from God’s Word*

² Gerald L. Borchert, [John 1–11](#), vol. 25A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 37.

³ John D. Barry et al., [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), Jn 2:11.

Read John 6:1–15

1. John 6:1 says, “After this, Jesus went away to the other side of the sea of Galilee.” What happened immediately before to which John refers “after this”? Read John 5:39–47.
2. Why do you believe that all four gospels included the miracle of Jesus feeding the 5,000?
3. Besides miraculously providing food for people in a desolate place, do you find other allusions in John 6:1–15 that relate Jesus with Moses and the Exodus of the Israelites in the Book of Exodus?
4. What was the crowd’s response to Jesus and the miraculous feeding? ... How did Jesus react to their response and why did He do what He did?

Serve: Serving King Jesus and Others, By Living Out and Letting Others Know God’s Word

1. Pop Quiz: On the continuum lines below, most of us would probably like to have both, but this is a quiz about making hard choices. Mark a dot at the location that best describes where you see your desires at present?

Filled with certainty

Filled with faith

Filled with clarity

Filled with the Holy Spirit

Filled with regular routine

Filled with family time

Filled with assurances of financial security

Filled with assurances of salvation

2. What do I need to take to Jesus? (ie. Fear, anxiety, sin, desire for control, etc.)
3. What resources can you place into Jesus’ hands to use?

What we hope members glean from the passage:

1. Jesus had just stated the theme of our annual focus — The Bible is God’s story of creation, rebellion, redemption, and new creation with Jesus at the center. Although the Jewish leaders claim to put their hope in

Moses, Moses himself accuses them because if they truly believed what Moses had written, they would also believe in Jesus, because Moses wrote about Jesus.

2. No set answer, but hopefully the idea of showing that Jesus is fulfilling the Exodus story afresh, someone greater than Moses.
3. Jesus crossed the sea (John 6:1), Jesus went up on the mountain alone (John 6:15).
4. The crowd wanted to forcibly make Jesus King so Jesus withdrew to a mountain alone.

Further Resources

- Bible Project –
 - John Part 1 – <https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/Series/181310?episode=46>
- Illustrations and quotes from the sermon can be found on the “Sermon Slides” link at the bottom of www.wcchapel.org