



It seems safe to say that most of us in this room don't worry about where our next meal will come from. For many of us we have multiple cupboards in our home where we store all kinds of food. Some people even have a special place to keep food called a pantry, a location in your home with so much food you can walk in to look for food. Parents in the room, you may sometimes hear your kids looking around in those cupboards saying something to the effect of: "Mom, there is nothing to eat in here!" Now we all know there is something to eat in there, but there is nothing that your kid, or husband, wants to eat!

Imagine what it would be like if you really had nothing to eat in your home. We have a missions partner here at CPC by the name of Jackie Perez. About eight years ago Jackie took a trip to the Dominican Republic where she partnered with G.O. Ministries to serve, reach out to children, begin building a church and feed kids. Now I know, personally, how badly this broke Jackie's heart because she was my admin at the time in Las Vegas. Jackie maintained close contact with G.O. Ministries and in May 2007 she took a huge step of faith and moved to the DR to follow the call of God.

For most of us, we can pretty much eat whenever we want, but for the kids who attend the nutrition centers in the DR the food truly is a miracle from God. Many of these kids don't have a balanced diet. Many of them may not have a hot meal without the help of G.O. Ministries. Now G.O. isn't the only missions organization that is helping to feed kids across the globe. One thing these people who are passionate about serving Christ have in common is they know it's tough to tell a starving kid about Jesus; you have to meet the physical need before meeting the spiritual need.

We all know what basic physical needs are: food, shelter and clothing. But have you ever asked yourself what spiritual needs are? Have you ever sat in your car, or stayed up at night, thinking about about how you could meet the spiritual needs of yourself and others? Have you ever wondered how you can teach others to pray or get a Bible into someone's hands? This morning we're going to look at John 6:1–59 where we see three things: Jesus feed a large crowd meeting their physical need of hunger; Jesus walking on water to rescue the disciples; and Jesus teaching the crowd in the synagogue at Capernaum.

## **Jesus Miraculously Feeds the 5,000+**

The story begins in John 6:1 where Jesus was with His disciples. They hopped in a boat and traveled to a secluded place where He could spend some time with them. It appears that Jesus wanted to get away from the crowds and spend some time with His disciples. Instead of that happening the people who had probably arrived early for the Passover wanted to hear this Jesus people were talking about. Rumor had it He was teaching His disciples on the other side of the lake so they head over there in masses.

Jesus is relaxing with His disciples when He looks up and sees the crowd coming His way. Anticipating the situation He turned to His disciples to see how they would respond. Now if anyone ever said Jesus doesn't have a sense of humor they've never read John 6:5.

**When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?"**

Philip must have been good at math because he knew it would take more than a years' wages for everyone to have just one bite!

Another disciple, Andrew, looks at Jesus and says he found a little boy who has five small barley loaves and two small fish. The specific mention of this meal is important. We know this boy was poor because barley is the worst kind of bread someone had during this time period. Barley was considered feed for the animals. John gives us another clue because in the Greek there is an emphasis on the word "small" for the fish that Andrew is referring to. Jesus instructs the disciples to sit down; He gives thanks and begins distributing the food to those who were seated.

Scripture tells us there were about 5,000 men that came to the shore of the sea of Galilee that afternoon to hear Jesus. If there are 5,000 men then there could be anywhere from ten to twenty thousand people Jesus fed that afternoon. Think about the implications of this. In the hands of this young boy all there were was a few loaves of cheap bread and some small fish to help choke them down, but in the hands of Christ there was a feast for thousands to eat.

**Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples,**

**“Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted” (verses 11–12).**

Plainly hidden from us we see a remarkable statement. Scripture tells us Jesus gave the people as much bread and as much fish as they wanted. Everyone had enough to eat. So five small loaves and two small fish feed this massive crowd who have come out to see Jesus. In our culture we could easily pass over that statement because we generally have all we can eat, but in this time period people would rarely have a meal where they ate all they wanted. Joel C. Gregory said: “Most of the population never knew total satisfaction from hunger. Yet Jesus never fed them only to satisfy physical hunger. He intended the physical bread to point them to higher spiritual sustenance.”

Just as Jesus met the physical needs of these people, He came to meet my physical needs. Jesus had a plan in meeting the physical needs of the crowds. We’re going to see how this meeting of the physical needs enabled Jesus to address their spiritual need when He speaks at the synagogue in Capernaum.

Think about how often Christ meets all our physical needs. I will never forget the first day I drove to Bible College. For months I felt God prompting me to enroll but I was scared I wouldn’t be able to afford it. I was scared I wouldn’t be able to pay my bills. I was scared I wouldn’t have enough food to eat. I share those fears because a week prior to starting I felt God prompting me to quit my job and trust in Him during this time in my life. So against all wisdom I quit my well-paying job with Dupont to attend Bible College.

Heading to school that first day my fears increased when I passed the gas station. Gas prices were rising and I think gas just hit \$1.80 a gallon. I remember passing the gas station thinking to myself this was a bad decision. Interesting enough the stoplight was green and as I passed the gas station I felt God speak this to my heart: “I’ve asked you to serve me. If you do I will always put gas in your truck, a roof over your head and food in your stomach.” For the last 11 years I’ve kept my end and God has kept His end meeting all my physical needs. If you’ve been following Christ for any period of time I imagine you’ve experienced the sufficiency of Christ in your own life.

Let’s look back at Scripture. Seeing the miracle Jesus performed prompted the people to confess that Jesus is the prophet to come.

**After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.” Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself (verses 14–15).**

This statement has all the characteristics of a statement of faith similar to what we saw a few chapters ago from the people in Samaria (see John 4:42). This group wanted to take it one step

further and appoint Jesus Messiah right then and there which He wasn’t about to let happen. So he slipped away into the mountains by Himself.

### **Jesus Walks on Water to Help the Disciples**

We’ve seen how Jesus met the physical need of hunger for this crowd. Now let’s continue in the story to see Jesus meet the disciples in a storm. Scripture tells us as night approached the disciples climbed into their boat and headed across the lake to Capernaum. Now this isn’t the kind of boat ride we’re accustomed to. This wasn’t a ferryboat system where the disciples paid their 4 shekels, hopped aboard and took a nap. The disciples enter the boat and begin rowing across the lake. The Sea of Galilee is famous for storms whipping up, almost out of nowhere. The location of this lake and its elevation provide a prime place for violent storms to occur. The Sea of Galilee is 700 feet below sea level. When the wind came off the mountains where the disciples just were it created some intense winds and deadly waves.

John tells us the disciples were about three to four miles away from shore. Given the size of the Sea of Galilee we guess they are basically in the middle of the lake; that point where you’re too far into something to turn back. Finding themselves in a discouraging place in life—and remember many of these men were experienced fishermen who shared the stories of lost boats in this body of water—at their darkest moment in the middle of the night Jesus comes to their rescue.

**When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were frightened. But he said to them, “It is I; don’t be afraid” (verses 19–20).**

You think they were frightened! Jesus is walking on water; of course they were frightened! This would scare any of us to see someone walking on water in the middle of the night! No one says a word to Him but Jesus, knowing all things, says a simple greeting: *“Don’t be afraid, it’s me.”* To the disciples this was a familiar voice bringing hope in a deadly situation, but to us the statement reveals a deeper truth.

The Greek Jesus used here for “It is I,” which literally translates “I am.” Now at first glance we might miss the significance of this statement so let me reveal it. I think Jesus is communicating something deeper to the disciples, something more than a recognizable voice. Think back to Exodus 3:14 where God appears to Moses in a burning bush. During that conversation God asked Moses to travel to Egypt and release His people from slavery. Moses responds to God and asks who he should say is sending him to which God responded: *“tell them I Am sent you.”*

Once the disciples realized it was Jesus they were willing to take Him in the boat.

**Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading (v. 21).**

How consistent is this to our interactions with Christ? We encounter a situation, we struggle, we try our hardest and when we feel like all hope is lost Jesus arrives to pull us through in our exhaustion.

This morning you may be experiencing a situation just like the disciples experienced in the Sea of Galilee. You may feel like all hope is lost, that you are fighting the battle on your own and you can't continue. You may feel like you are losing the battle in your marriage, at school, at work or with your family. Please don't lose hope! Remember that Jesus is the I AM. That means I AM able to help you, I AM able to save you, I AM able when you are not. Jesus not only meets our need for sustenance but also for security.

### **Jesus Teaches on The Bread of Life**

In the beginning of my message I told you we would see Jesus feed the 5,000, walk on water to help the disciples, and then teach in the synagogue. We've already seen the first two and now we're going to see how Jesus' teaching in the synagogue directly relates to His feeding the 5,000. After Jesus fed the 5,000 word must have traveled fast that Jesus was handing out free bread and fish. I don't know if a bunch of people checked in on Facebook or what but the crowd was actively looking for Him!

When they finally found Jesus they address Him as "Rabbi," which would indicate they have a spiritual question to ask Him, but we see their question is anything but spiritual.

**When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" (v. 25).**

Jesus sees beneath their question and makes it clear the only reason they are looking for Him is because they want another meal.

**Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval" (verses 26–27).**

The conversation takes a turn for the better when Jesus begins talking about working for food that will last. Did you see it? Did you see that Jesus is telling these people to work for food that endures to eternal life? Jesus changes the conversation from meeting their physical need of hunger to meeting their spiritual need of God. Jesus accurately explains to them that drawing close to God is not about works but belief.

**Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work**

**of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent" (verses 28–29).**

The work we do in drawing close to God is believing! The work of drawing close to God isn't work but it is to believe and to trust.

This is the most important part of this message, right now. Not only did Jesus come to meet our physical and spiritual needs but He provided a way for that to happen.

**So they asked him, "What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"**

**Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."**

**"Sir," they said, "always give us this bread."**

**Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty" (verses 30–35).**

Here we see the first "I am" statement from Jesus in the Gospel of John.

When Jesus claims "*I am the bread of life*" He is making a bold statement. We may have lost the value of bread in our culture but to this group of people, it was very clear to them, "if you have bread you have life." Bread was the main sustenance that kept people alive throughout history. Without bread men would die. Knowing this, you begin to see Jesus is claiming to be the one men and women could not live without.

We've been talking about how Jesus came to meet our physical needs but now it's clear that He came to meet more than that: Jesus, the bread of life, came to meet my physical **and** spiritual needs. Imagine how Jesus explaining Himself as the bread of life impacted the people that day. Imagine not having the ability to eat until you are full and now hearing Jesus is the spiritual sustenance you have been longing for your entire life. It had to be life changing.

I know a man who was longing for spiritual sustenance his entire life. I met Kamran Husain while I was living in San Diego. Kamran moved to San Diego after graduating high school and all his friends called him "Tanto." He was close with my sister's boyfriend so he would come over some Saturdays to swim and BBQ. I was already a Christian but Tanto wasn't. He would drink a few beers, climb up the apartment and jump into the swimming pool. He was a great guy but it was evident there was a spiritual battle raging within.

One day I was heading the 7:15 pm service at church and I saw Tanto leaving the 5 pm service. It was like he wasn't sure what to say; almost like he had been caught seeking after Jesus. Tanto rejected the food he'd been eating and started feeding on the bread of life. Tanto realized everything he was pursuing in life had left him empty. He started studying the Bible. He began praying and one day Tanto confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord; that day everything changed for him. We started hanging out more and one day Tanto told me he was going to attend Bible College. In his first six months of Bible College missions grabbed his heart in a way like I've never seen before. Tanto went on a mission trip to Puerto Vallarta for a month. While serving in Mexico Tanto fell in love with the people and had a firm understanding God was calling him to minister there.

For the last ten years Tanto has dedicated his life to serving Christ in Mexico. He has been blessed with an amazing wife and a handsome little boy. Currently he has planted two churches and just last summer started up his third! Tanto has seen God provide all his physical needs—food, water, shelter, and clothes. Tanto has experienced God provide all his spiritual needs as they rely on Christ to provide everything they need. Tanto's life has been radically changed by feasting on the bread of life, a bread that fills more than just a man's stomach.

This morning if you are spiritually hungry you can choose to continue living life the way you have or you can feast on the bread of life. If the food you've been eating has lost its taste, how about switching up your diet to a food that comes down from

heaven? This is your opportunity—today—to make the change in your life you have longed for. This morning there is one thing I want to invite you to do: Trust in Christ with your whole heart.

This encouragement is for everyone listening to this message; no one is excluded from this invitation. Maybe you've placed your trust in Christ many years ago and your commitment remains true today. You have faithfully trusted in Christ to provide all your physical and spiritual needs. You can testify to the faithfulness of Jesus Christ and living a life based on faith. You no longer hunger.

There are probably some people here who have never fully trusted in Jesus Christ with their whole heart. You've lived your life for the next meal and every few hours you find yourself craving more, but it never fills. This morning you're interested in receiving bread that won't continually leave you hungry. You are curious about how Jesus can meet your spiritual needs and you're ready to act on it. In just a few minutes I'm going to close in prayer and during that time I'm going to give you an opportunity to change your life. You're going to have the opportunity to trust in Jesus Christ with your whole heart. This is your chance to stop chasing things that can only fill your stomach and to start pursuing a personal relationship with Christ that will fill your spiritual needs. This morning will you turn your eyes to Christ to meet your spiritual needs?

*This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.*