

John Ch 6:1-21

“Test Time”

When I was in school I used to dread test time, because (as much as I hate to say it) there were times when I didn't pay much attention in class, or concentrate much on my homework and so consequently when it came time for me to be measured up as to what I'd learned I wouldn't always do to well. and Let me just say that by the time I graduated my G.P.A. wasn't much to brag about, and as far as this world was concerned, if you'd have begun to establish a portfolio for me at that time, there wouldn't have been much hope for me concerning my opportunities in life. There wouldn't have been much use for me in the business and economic matters of this world.

But as I read through the gospels I'm encouraged to find myself in good company. Because the Lord's disciples were always failing His tests to, He would give them chance after chance to *demonstrate* and *articulate* what they'd learned and how they'd grown and they were always failing. They were always missing it, and it's like they just weren't paying attention or something, but Jesus went on to “employ” them in *the most* radical, life altering and beneficial ways in the history of mankind. and I obviously only jest when I call my academic failures to set beside some of these men's shortcomings. But in all sincerity I'm so glad that, “*God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.*” 1 Cor 1:27-29 Because when I run through this list of credentials that God is searching for to employ in His work, a sobering and startling reality hits me; I qualify. and I just have a sneaking suspicion that perhaps some of you do to.

Well, John Ch 6 finds Jesus at the *pinnacle* of His *popularity* with the *people*. and We see the multitudes of people amassing *around* Him, and as a Good Shepherd with His sheep, with compassion He looks *upon* them, we find Him ministering *to* them, then with drawing *from* them. But they continue to press in *on* Him, and so He shares *with* them, and then ultimately we see the erratic and sporadic nature of man as ultimately He's deserted *by* them. He goes from *off the charts* to *ostracized* in the eyes of the people. But what we want to notice is that even though He knew they'd *turn away* from Him, it didn't stop Him from *ministering to* them.

Understand that the Love of God in non-circumstantial, He doesn't look into your heart and my heart and say, “Well, they're not going to appreciate that act of kindness that I was anticipating blessing them by, so forget it.” He doesn't bless us *because* of who we are; He blesses us *in spite* of who we are. His goodness to us isn't based upon who *we are*, but who *He is*, and God is love, therefore He loves you and He loves me, and He's moved with compassion towards you, and towards me.

Even so we're to love those around us not because of who they are, or the way that they'll respond, not on the basis of whether or not they'll truly appreciate how your blessing their lives. But because of the love of God in you, because you're moved with compassion for them, perhaps you're aware of a need in someone's life, and you just want to meet it with no strings attached. and That's the reality of Jesus Christ in your life, and you may go from off the charts to ostracized in their eyes but that's ok, you're still going to allow the love and compassion of God to move through you to bless their lives.

It's interesting to watch how Jesus dealt with the masses because he was never too impressed with crowds. Surely He was concerned for the individuals in a crowd, but numbers weren't a main concern for Him, He was more concerned for the *quality* than the *quantity* of those who followed Him. Because thousands of ½ hearted followers will avail little to nothing in impacting those around them, but 12 guys sold out to Jesus Christ will change the world. and My prayer is that we find ourselves in the quality group of followers as opposed to the quantity.

Vs1-4

So the scene begins to be set for this miracle of such magnitude that all 4-gospel writers record it. The words, "After these things" in vs 1 speak of more than just after the episode of Ch 5, the healing at the pool of Bethesda, the consequent encounter that Jesus had with the religious leaders and all. But there's somewhere to the tune of a 6 month (or so) period of time that's taken place, and as you look through the other gospels you find that during this interim period of which John is silent, a small plethora of events have transpired. A myriad of miracles (healings and all have taken place), the sermon on the Mt has been delivered, the parables of the Kingdom have been taught, J.B. has been beheaded.

In reality it's upon hearing *that* news (according to Matt's account) that Jesus ops to retire for a time, taking His disciples over the Sea of Galilee as we're reading of here for just some quiet time and rest. They'd been busy about the ministry, things had been hectic, everyone was spent, they heard of J.B.'s death and so Jesus said, "O.K. it's time to take a break." Just wanted to give His disciple's some spiritual R. and R.

It's so important for you and for me to take the time in the midst of the hecticities of life, on a consistent basis to get alone with Jesus and just spend time with Him. Just you and Him, no one else, just ministering to Him in prayer, receiving from Him through His Word, we all need consistent alone time with Jesus. But in this case the only alone time they got was the time that they were with Him in the boat because as soon as the multitudes who'd been following Him noticed where they were headed we read in vs 2 that this "great multitude" followed Him. That is, went around the shoreline to the other side so that when the boat pulled up to shore, they were already there. But notice again why it was that this particular crowd was following Jesus. (Vs 2, Because)

We've seen this time and again already in this gospel alone, and so I have this temptation to refer you back to those times and just kinda gloss over it, but yet I realize that if it weren't that important, the Holy Spirit wouldn't have inserted it time and again into His Word. and So because it's stressed, because it's emphasized, because it's seen time and again, I have to conclude that the Lord is trying to tell us something here. That is (I believe) that it's absolutely critical that we check our motives, and have the Lord search our hearts as to why it is that we're following Him. There are a number of reasons that people follow Jesus, and on the surface everything seems so right, people are assembled together, *listening* to the Lord, *worshipping* the Lord, being silent *before* the Lord, but in reality there's another agenda in their hearts. There are those who follow Jesus because they think He'll make them rich, (kinda like we see here just to get their stomachs filled.)

There are those who follow Jesus because they need some sort of favor, they need out of the bind they've gotten themselves into and so they look to the Lord to get them out. There are those who look to the Lord and follow the Lord because they're looking for a miracle, they want those emotional warm fuzzies, or to never be sick again or whatever. and The one thing all those things have in common is the flesh, they're all motives that revolve around some catering to the flesh, and it's always about what I can get from the Lord, not because I simply want to be with the Lord. and Jesus just isn't into a relationship that revolves around what I can get from Him rather than simply wanting to *know* Him, to be *with* Him. and No one likes that type of relationship, you often find that people who have a lot of money, or who are celebrities, they always struggle with that same type of thing. They're never certain if people hang around them, or want to be near them for who they are, or what they can give them, or do for them. Because they don't want to be used, and taken for granted, they want a genuine relationship that's true and legit, based solely upon who they are, not what they can do to benefit me.

That's the way it is with the Lord, He wants you to want to be with Him, just because of who He is, not what He can do. We're to be seeking not the gifts, but the giver. and Jesus never commits Himself to those who commit themselves to Him with a hidden agenda to somehow use or manipulate Him for self centered purposes. Now He still loves them, seeks to minister to them and draw them to Himself, but He's not committed to them.

Now vs 4 gives us the reason that so many people were in the neighborhood, the Passover was near and so literally a couple of million people would be teeming the streets of Jerusalem very soon. and Of course the Passover lamb of God was right there before them, and as usual they couldn't even see it. and We know by the other gospel accounts that as soon as Jesus got off the boat He began to teach them many things because He was moved with compassion for them seeing them as sheep with out a shepherd. No one to guide them, give them direction or protection and so He's been ministering to them all day, evening is approaching so He begins to head up the hillside and He looks out with His disciples and sees all these people just continuing to pour towards them.

Vs 5-6

Test time. Now Philip was from that region and so He says to Philip, “Where do you suppose we can buy some bread to feed these people?” and We read that there were 5,000 men, but that’s not including women or children, so you can safely estimate somewhere to the tune of 15,000 people that you’re looking at and the Lord says, “How are we going to feed these people?” But what we need to see is that it wasn’t for His *information* that He asked, but rather for the disciple’s *education*. A teacher will ask questions to his/her students, but they already know the answer, it’s not for their information, but rather for the student’s education. That’s what we’re seeing here, Jesus already knew what He was going to do; He had the riddle solved before He ever asked the question. and So what we do well to understand through this is that there are times when it seems like the circumstance is out of control, but God is always in control. He already had it covered, and we’ll see that again in vs 15-21, but we read in vs 7.

Vs7

Well, Philip just got a big fat “F” on his exam. You just want to hear him say, “Lord, over the last year and a half I’ve seen you turn water to wine, cast out demons, heal the sick, and make whole the lame. and Jesus I’ve come to realize that with you nothing will be impossible, and so even though I don’t know what You’re going to do, or how You’re going to do it, I know that there’s no need that You can’t meet.” Wouldn’t that have been cool? What a demonstration of growing and maturing faith that would’ve been. But instead he looks desperately over the crowd and says, “Lord, even if we emptied the treasury, or had 200 denarii worth of bread, that wouldn’t even get them all an appetizer.” A denarii was a days wage, so “Even if we had 6-7 months wages, we couldn’t provide for these people even a little bit.” Philip has a typical American capitalistic approach, thinks that money would be the answer to all their problems. But what Americans haven’t seemed to get yet is that as long as we look to money there’ll always be a deficit, that’s why we’re 3 point some odd trillion dollars in debt, because money is the answer.

Vs8-9

Andrew almost had it, until he said, “But” and then it all fell apart. It’s like here’s what we do have, but lets think practically here how is this really going to suffice. Andrew seems to be more of a people person, just always bringing people to the Lord, and he’s out combing the crowds, considering a fund raiser, or what might happen if we all come together and pool our resources, perhaps then we can meet the need collectively. But all he’s able to drum up is one little boy whose mom packed him a sack lunch that day, a few sardines between a couple buns. So it’s something, but time to get real.

Now there are a number of things happening here, 1st of all they're having real trouble believing Jesus beyond what they can see. We know from another gospel that they already tried to have Jesus send them away so they could go eat, but Jesus said, "You give them something to eat." So all day they've been scrambling, Philip says, "We don't have the money," Andrew says, "We can't come up with the goods." and They just haven't learned that Jesus seems to be able to make a way when there is no way, Jesus is seeking to get them to turn towards Him and place their faith in Him in this no way out situation.

The bible says, "*But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*" Heb 11:6 Man's impossibilities simply set the stage for God's opportunities, with the Lord no matter how desperate the situation may seem, nothing will be impossible. Luke 1:37 says it just like that, "*For with God nothing will be impossible.*"

So wherever life may find you, whatever wall you may be up against, however impossible your situation may seem don't fret, have faith, God's in control and He's already solved the problem, and you'll see soon enough what He's going to do. The point in vs 7-9 is that the resources of man are simply inadequate to meet the starving needs of humanity. There's no amount of money, there's no way we can just pull together, "We are the world" and satisfy the hunger that lies within the heart of all of humanity. and Now that they've tapped their resources, have concluded that they're inadequate to meet the needs of these people, Jesus is going to do the work. They failed to trust Him, but He's still going to use them, you know we fail so often, but aren't you glad that the Lord still wants to use your life to be a blessing to others. Watch this.

Vs10

What do we see here? A few things, #1 Jesus did things orderly. In another gospel we read where He had them seated in groups of fifty or a hundred. The bible says, "*Let all things be done decently and in order.*" 1 Cor 14:40 and Surely we see that principle demonstrated practically in this happening here. This wasn't a free for all, circus mentality, when Jesus was preparing to feed the people He made sure things were in order. Sometimes people want to know why we encourage babies to be tended to in the foyer if you're not comfortable with them in the nursery. and Honestly it's because it has a tendency to break the order in the feeding of the sheep. It can be distracting, not to you, it's your child, but I see what happens to everyone else when an infant begins to cry. The sheep quit feeding, their head is turned from the green grass of God's word, they're no longer grazing in God's Word, they're wondering what's happening over there. It has the propensity to be disorderly, and we try to be sensitive to that for the benefit of everyone. and That's just one example, but the point is that the Lord feeds His sheep in an orderly fashion.

2^{ndly} We see that when Jesus is going to feed His sheep He makes them to sit down. What does that mean, the implication is, “We’re going to be here for a while so everyone get comfortable.” I find that that with us we have a tendency to take the “fast food” approach to the word of God. We think we have 5 or 6 minutes before we have to be out the door and so, “God nourish me in your word quick because I gotta go!” But it rarely works like that, more often than not God would have us sit down, and take the time to be with Him and receive from Him that which He would have us to take in. Are fast food devotions better than nothing? Sure, but that’s about all they are, Jesus would have us to prioritize our time *with* Him, take the time to receive a meal *from* Him.

3^{rdly} We see the Good Shepherd tending to His sheep carefully, He makes them to sit down in green pastures, sound familiar? “*The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.*” Ps 23:1-2 and We see both of those things in this chapter. The Lord causing them to lie down in green pastures, and stilling the raging waters in His disciple’s lives.

Vs11

What’s the lesson here? That when you give your all to Jesus, no matter how little you may feel that is, no matter how insignificant that may seem, when we give our all to Him, He’ll insure we have no lack. Notice those last 5 words there, “As much as they wanted.” What would’ve happened if that little boy would’ve said, “Well, you can have 1 fish, and 2 pieces of bread?” I don’t know, he didn’t do that, he gave his all to Jesus, and Jesus satisfied the hunger of every man, woman and child who was in His presence that day. “As much as they wanted,” there’s just no lack of nourishment with Jesus. How much of the bread of life do you want? He’ll feed you till you just can’t take it any more; all that you can take in is there for you and there’ll be plenty more where that came from.

Notice that before He did the work He took the time to be thankful, we’re too often complaining about what we don’t have rather than being thankful for what we do have, for the ways in which God has blessed us. The bible says, “*In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*” Jesus took the time to acknowledge the Father in how He was blessing their lives, it wasn’t a banquet of kings they had that day, it was a simple meal at best, yet it would be the Father of lights that would cause this bread to nurture them all and Jesus readily acknowledged that. James tells us, “*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.*” James 1:17 When you sit down to enjoy a meal, no matter how extravagant, or simple it may be, take the time to give God thanks, I don’t care if you’re at the park, in a restaurant, or at home, give God thanks, it’s the right thing to do.

Vs12

God will meet our needs in abundance, but He's not wasteful, we're seeing good stewardship here. The Lord was a good steward of the Father's provision, and we're to be the same way. He went all out for the people, but didn't waste a thing, Jesus said, "*For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.*" Matt 13:12 In other words, do the right thing with what God gives you, and He'll give you more, be wasteful, or irresponsible with God's provision, and even what you have now will be taken from you. God help us to be good stewards of the provision with which He blesses our lives, little or much isn't the point, faithfulness and wisdom is where it's at.

Vs13

Look at all these leftovers, and these weren't fragments that needed to go in the trash, this is speaking about untouched leftovers. Again the bible says, "*There is one who scatters, yet increases more; And there is one who withholds more than is right, But it leads to poverty. The generous soul will be made rich, And he who waters will also be watered himself.*" Prov 11:24-25 The disciples gave and it was given back to them, they scattered all that they had, yet wound up with more, it's God's economy go figure (no pun intended.) Can you imagine the story this boy brought home to him mom that day! Probably got grounded for a month telling stories that big. and This is why we encourage people to get involved, and to serve, because God just will not be a debtor to man, you can't out give Him. and He's said that whatever you do even to the least of these your brethren you do to Him. and I'm not saying God will make you a millionaire in this life, (though He can if He should so choose) (But remember how we began it's not about what we can get from Him it's about being with Him period). But when you see Him face to face, and you've given Him your all, and served Him with all your heart, and you hear those words, "Well done good and faithful servant you've been faithful over a few things I'll make you ruler over many." God will reward you in ways that the words of this earth fail to articulate and no hardship that you may endure on this side of Heaven will measure up to the glory that will be revealed in you, not even close.

Vs14

Moses had spoken of a prophet that would come into the world like himself who would be their Redeemer, their deliverer. and They're thinking, "We're out here in this open area (sort of like a wilderness) we're under the bondage of the Roman yoke (sort of like Egypt) we just ate bread given to us from Heaven (sort of like manna), this must be the guy who's going to set us free." and They were so right, but they were so wrong, Jesus came to set them free that much is for sure, but not from the bondage of the Roman yoke, but from the bondage of sin and death.

Vs15

Why? Because His kingdom isn't of this world so He refused to receive it from the people in this world, Jesus was in the world not of the world just as you and I are to be. and He wasn't about to establish His kingdom based upon man's timetable, He was all about receiving His kingdom according to the Father's timing, and there was no way to circumvent the cross. What a lesson for us, we're so eager to see God's business done that we have a tendency to see it into fruition by whatever means necessary. Jesus said, "No way, I'm not doing a thing because of the press of the people, I'm waiting on the Father's direction, His plan and His purposes to unfold in My life." God help us not to be persuaded by the pressing of the people, but to move according to His will, and His timing for our lives.

Vs16-21

and Of these things there's so much we could say, but not this time. As we close all I want you to see is that it was when, "They received Him willingly" that their situation was impacted, their circumstance was influence, and their lives were changed. They could've kept right on rowing through the storm in their own vain efforts, but they received Jesus into their boat and everything changed. Perhaps you're in a storm of sorts and you're rowing hard, and today Jesus is passing by you, don't reject Him, receive Him into your boat, into your life, into that situation or whatever. He's the ingredient that'll make the difference, that'll still the raging waters in your life.

It's Jesus who satisfies the hunger of all men, it's Jesus who stills the raging waters of our lives, why would anyone not receive Him willingly into their boat? Maybe it's test time in your life, are you going to trust in the Lord or lean on human resources? When you conclude that human resources are insufficient, Jesus will do the work, hear what the Spirit is saying. Trust in the Lord, look to the Lord, depend on the Lord, spend time with the Lord allow Him to feed you and to nurture your soul.

Perhaps you're here and you don't know the Lord, you've never asked Jesus into your heart and into you life, and consequently you find yourself hungering for more than what this life has to offer. Jesus Christ is the bread of life, and He said, he who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. But did you hear the hook, you have to come to Him. He's willing to receive you, but you need to be willing to receive Him, He laid down His life for you, shed His blood for you, did everything He could do for you, all you have to do is believe in Him and you'll never perish, but have everlasting life, the forgiveness of your sin.