



October 30, 2011

Satisfaction Found



Background

Passage

John 6:1-71

Focal Verses

John 6:5-13,35-40

What This Lesson Is About

This lesson is about Jesus' feeding of the 5,000 and His teaching that He is

the Bread of life who alone can satisfy our spiritual hunger.

Why This Lesson Is Important

People try many things to fill their spiritual hunger, including religion, materialism, and all kinds of physical indulgences. Yet

Jesus alone is able to genuinely satisfy the hunger that gnaws in people's hearts.

How This Lesson Can Impact Your Life

This lesson can help you look to Jesus to continually satisfy your spiritual hunger.

A 2008 survey by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public life found that 52 percent of American Christians believe people can find eternal life in at least some non-Christian faiths. Among people who call themselves Christians but believe many faiths can lead to eternal life, 80 percent name at least one non-Christian religion they believe can do so. Fourteen percent were not certain how to find eternal life, while 7 percent indicated they did not believe in eternal life at all. (See <http://pewforum.org/Many-Americans-Say-Other-Faiths-Can-Lead-to-Eternal-Life.aspx>.)

We can see that even many who claim to be Christians have a distorted picture of eternal life and how to find it. Do you have a clear picture? Can you articulate not just *that* Jesus is the only way to heaven, but *why* He is? This is not a matter to be dismissed lightly. Nothing is more important than this—*nothing!* Read on.

Jesus Provides

John 6:5-13

⁵When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?

⁶And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.

⁷Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that everyone of them may take a little.

⁸One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him,

⁹There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?

¹⁰And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

¹¹And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.

¹²When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.

¹³Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.

Jesus and the disciples journeyed to the northern end of the Sea of Galilee to Bethsaida [*beth-SAY ih duh*] (see Luke 9:10). They likely wanted to separate themselves for a time of rest and mourning after the death of John the Baptist (see Matt. 14:10-13; Mark 6:26-31), but crowds continued to follow Jesus “because they saw” the miracles He performed on those who were sick (John 6:2).

Jesus led the disciples “up into a mountain” (v. 3). Sitting “with his disciples,” He **saw a great company** approaching Him. Jesus was “moved with compassion toward” the people, “because they were as sheep not having a shepherd” (Mark 6:34). Jesus welcomed them, speaking to them of the kingdom of God and healing the sick until late in the day (see Luke 9:11-12).

Then, knowing “Philip was of Bethsaida” (John 1:44), Jesus asked him, **Where shall we buy bread so these may eat?** Jesus asked Philip this question **to prove** or test **him**. Of course, Jesus already **knew what he** was about to **do**.

Philip responded in a typically mortal fashion. For Philip, the answer to the problem depended on available human resources. **Two hundred pennyworth of bread**, or the amount of bread they could purchase with the wages from 200 days of work, was **not sufficient** to give that crowd—**about five thousand men**—even **a little**. Some scholars place the actual number of men, women, and children between 9,000 to 20,000 people. Philip was right! Human resources can never do the impossible.

Andrew, also a resident of Bethsaida (see v. 44) mentioned, **There is a lad here with five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?** *Barley loaves* were the food of the poor, and the fish were small, probably like sardines. Supplies were limited, but not God’s power. In fact, God often wants to display His power in situations where none can doubt it was He who acted (see 1 Kings 18:17-39; Dan. 3:13-30).

The Making of a Miracle

Available resources were inadequate to satisfy the crowd's hunger. But Jesus would take the scant supply of loaves and fish and multiply them. It is when we surrender our meager _____ and _____ to Jesus that we _____. *God doesn't need what we have, but He asks us to surrender what we do have to make a difference for His kingdom. Why do you think this is the case? He's all-powerful. Why would He want to involve us?* **Note:** For the missing elements, please see page 98 of *Life Words Leader Guide*.

Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Then He **took the loaves; and after he had given thanks, he distributed food to the disciples,** who in turn distributed it to the people. After everyone was **filled,** Jesus directed **his disciples to gather up** the leftovers, **that nothing be lost.**

This reminds us of how wrong it is to be wasteful, especially when so much need exists in the world. How would Jesus have us deal with the problem of world hunger? We need look no further than the example He gave us in this miracle: use what we have, ask God to bless it, and waste nothing. In keeping with these principles, all contributions given through the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund go to alleviate hunger (80 cents of every dollar go to the International Mission Board, and 20 cents to the North American Mission Board) with no overhead costs (see www.worldhungerfund.com). This is but one avenue through which we can minister in Jesus' name and demonstrate His compassion to others.

When the disciples collected the leftovers, they **filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above** that which had been eaten. Not only does God meet our immediate needs, but He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). You may feel you have little to offer, but when you put those resources in Jesus' hands, He blesses them in supernatural ways.

Discover Deeper Meaning

In the Greek language, the word Jesus used for **believeth** and **believe** means “to rely on” or “to trust.” The noun form of the word is most frequently translated as *faith*. Believing involves much more than just mentally accepting some facts about Jesus. It paints a picture of a person who places his or her complete trust in Christ. It also carries the idea of relying on Him to keep His promises and trusting Him to use His power to accomplish His purpose. Faith and obedience go hand in hand (see Heb. 11).

Jesus Satisfies

John 6:35-36

³⁵And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

³⁶But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not.

After Jesus miraculously fed the multitude, He went “into a mountain himself alone,” but His “disciples went...over the sea toward Capernaum” (John 6:15-17). During the night, as the disciples struggled in “a great wind,” Jesus appeared to them walking on the water. When Jesus entered the boat, “immediately the ship was at the land,” at the disciples’ destination (v. 21). The confused crowds, who of course hadn’t seen Jesus enter a boat for a journey across the sea, gave pursuit (see vv. 22-24). After finally discovering where Jesus was, the first question the crowd asked was, “Rabbi, when camest thou hither?” (v. 25). Jesus knew their true interest was not of a spiritual nature. Initially people had followed Him because of His miracles, but now their motive was purely a materialistic one—to be fed (see v. 26). They were not wrong in wanting to be fed, nor were they wrong to look for Jesus. They *were* wrong to want Jesus only to satisfy their own appetites (see v. 27). Why

do we look for Jesus? Do we want to be in His presence and receive the joy of His fellowship, or do we look for Him for selfish reasons?

Jesus cautioned them to “labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.” This latter food comes from “the Son of man” (v. 27). Jesus wasn’t telling the people to work for salvation, but to seek diligently the things of God. Nevertheless, the crowd heard the word *labor* and, steeped in the legalistic teaching of their religion, believed they needed to *do* something to receive salvation. They had completely ignored the word “give” (v. 27). They were curious as to what they might “do” to “work the works of God” (v. 28). Jesus’ response was clear. He said, “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent” (v. 29). The only thing they needed to “do” was believe in Jesus and His ability to save them, even as they recognized their own inability to save themselves.

Again the crowd asked Jesus what sign He would show to get them to believe on Him. Would He give them manna, as Moses had during the Israelites’ wilderness experience? The word *manna* was derived from the Hebrew words meaning, *what is it?* The manna was a miraculous provision of food for the Israelites in their pilgrimage through a barren land, but it came from God and not Moses. In verse 32 we see that Jesus emphasized this very point.

As the crowd asked for this bread, **Jesus told them He was the bread of life** and then offered a genuine invitation. **He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.** Just as we receive food and drink and take those elements within ourselves, we are to make Jesus a part of our very being. Jesus would later expound on this teaching in verses 53-58, emphasizing, among other things, that we don’t have the power to save ourselves. Just as our bodies are dependent on food and drink in order to have physical life, we gain eternal life by appropriating His sacrifice into our innermost being, remaining totally dependent on Him for our spiritual security. Jesus was the “sign” (v. 30) they were seeking, yet they didn’t recognize this.

➔ **Why do so many people looking for a sign miss the true sign, Jesus Himself?**

Jesus Secures

John 6:37-40

³⁷**All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.**

³⁸**For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.**

³⁹**And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.**

⁴⁰**And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.**

In John 6:37-40, we read profound and powerful statements from Jesus regarding salvation. Jesus first stated that **all that the Father giveth me shall come to me**. Then He declared that those who do come to Him will never **be cast out**. Moreover, Jesus clearly stated that he would **lose** none of those God **hath given** to Him. Those who have accepted Jesus can live with confidence that their salvation is absolutely secure. Just as the forgiveness of sin is solely dependent on the power of the sacrificial death and the resurrection of Jesus, the salvation we treasure also depends on God's authority—not on our own power. In these encouraging statements, Jesus gave a sure promise to those who believe: He affirmed He would **raise** them in **the last day**, a reference to His return and the resurrection. Not even death can rob us of our salvation!

Although He was and is co-existent and co-eternal with the Father, Jesus had come, not for the purpose of doing His **own will, but the will** of the One who had **sent** Him. So often we speak about God's will in areas of life that are of concern to us, but our understanding of God's will is vastly limited in contrast to the faithfulness of Jesus in fulfilling it. While we should always seek God's will, it is important that we be willing to accept and live in accordance with His will, even to the point of surrendering our desires and plans to see it fulfilled. This is entirely consistent



with Jesus' words in Matthew 16:24-26: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

⇒ *How would you respond in this situation: The football game of the year is to be televised at 7:00 PM. One-half hour before the game begins, you receive a call from a fellow member who is in need of your help with a vital church ministry.*

The Life Word

During the 1980s, the Smith-Barney brokerage firm made a series of commercials with distinguished actor John Houseman speaking the famous line, "We make money the old-fashioned way. We earn it!"

That may be an admirable and appealing trait in the financial world, but when it comes to salvation, God knew sinful people never could earn something for which only a completely righteous person was eligible. So He sent His Son Jesus—the only One eligible to enter heaven—to forfeit His life to make sinful people qualified to enter. We become eligible on His—Jesus'—merits, not our own. This is what happens when we place our faith in Him, the only One who can truly satisfy the hunger pangs of our hearts.

A compassionate Jesus provided bread for a hungering multitude, and in doing so He pointed them to the only way they could receive eternal life and genuine satisfaction for their spiritual hunger. Have you partaken of the Bread of Life? If so, how has your life changed as a result? If not, what are you waiting for?