

Sermon Outline

“LIFE IN HIS NAME”
THE PURSUIT OF WHOLENESS AND THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

THE PROPHET

JOHN 6:1-2

I. The Passover Was at Hand (Jn 6:3)

- A. The Lord has come back to the Galilee region. He has become known for his signs of healing. And he is drawing the crowds.
- B. Verses 3-4 tells us that “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.”
- C. Why would John see the need to tell us that the Passover was at hand? Perhaps it is to help us understand these next miracles that Jesus is about to do. They have something to do with the meaning of the Passover.

II. The Significance of the Passover (Ex 12)

- A. *What significance did the Passover have on the Jews?*
 - 1. The Passover represents the great salvation event of the Old Testament.
 - 2. It defined the people of Israel as the people of God.
- B. To understand what Passover meant to Israel, go back to Exodus 12:
 - Ex 12:1-2: “The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, ²“This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you.”
- C. The Passover marks a new beginning for God’s people.
 - 1. By redefining their use of time, God redefines the meaning of life for his people.
 - 2. Passover is God’s way of telling Israel that he is their new beginning. From now on, the life of Israel revolves around him, not around Pharaoh’s timetable or the calendars of the Egyptian gods.
 - 3. By setting the Passover at the first month of the year, the whole nation begins the year by remembering God’s power, God’s salvation, God’s rule over their lives.
- D. The heart of the Passover celebration is a lamb.
 - Ex 12:3-6: “Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers’ houses, a lamb

for a household. ⁴ And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb.

⁵ Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, ⁶ and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight.”

- E. Each family would take the blood of the lamb and apply it to the doors of the household. Each family would have to consume the meat of the lamb.
 - Ex 12: 7-8: “Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. ⁸They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it.”

- F. But the manner with which they consume the lamb is also very specific.
 - Ex 12:11: “In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD’s Passover.”

- G. We come to the definition of the Passover itself.
 - Ex 12:12: “For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD.”

- H. And then we come back to the lamb’s blood.
 - Ex 12:13: “The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.”
 - 1. It is the lamb’s blood that...
 - a. protects each Israelite from the fury of the divine judgment.
 - b. sets the Israelite family apart from the Egyptian family.

- I. The Passover was both a judgment event and a salvation event. God descended in judgment upon the people of Egypt and rescued his own people through the blood of a sacrificial lamb.

- J. When we come to the Gospel of John, what does John the Baptist call Jesus?
 - Jn 1:29: “The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’”

- K. One other element of the Passover meal is the unleavened bread.
 - Ex 12:8: “They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with *unleavened bread* and bitter herbs they shall eat it.”
- L. The unleavened bread, along with the lamb and the bitter herbs, forms the sacred meal that represents God’s salvation for his people.
- M. In John 6, this symbol of bread will feature quite prominently. Bread and lamb come together in the person of Jesus Christ, indicating that Jesus himself is the ultimate Passover meal.

III. Nothing Much (Jn 6:5-9)

- A. Now that we know why Passover is important, we get a sense as to what Jesus might be saying to us through his signs and teachings in this particular chapter.
- B. Coming to verse 5, Jesus sees the large crowd coming toward him.
- C. At this point, he turns to Philip and asks a question: “Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?” But Jesus was using this as a teaching moment, because “he himself knew what he would do” (v 6).
- D. The disciples’ response.
 1. Philip: “Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little” (v 7).
 2. Andrew: “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?” (v 9)
- E. In other words, there is nothing we can do to feed the people. This brings up the universally experienced theme of *helplessness*.
 There is nothing we can do to help a rebellious son.
 There is nothing we can do to heal a very sick parent.
 There is nothing we can do to get someone out of depression.
 There is nothing we can do to make ourselves want the good.

IV. A Grassy Place (Jn 6:10)

- A. Jesus says to them: “Have the people sit down” (v 10).
- B. “Now there was much grass in the place” (v 10)
 1. John inserted this observation to indicate that the place was comfortable enough for the people to rest.
 2. But there may be more. “Now there was much grass in the place” may cause us to think of sheep and shepherds.

- Ps 23:1-2: “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
² He makes me lie down in green pastures.
 He leads me beside still waters.
- Ezek 34:15: “I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD.”

C. John may be helping us to view this event more deeply—to see that Jesus is acting here as God’s appointed Shepherd, leading God’s people to green pastures, giving them food that leads to eternal life.

D. In the second half of this chapter, this idea of feeding gets even stronger.

V. A Logistical Nightmare (Jn 6:10)

- A. It turns out that there were “about five thousand” people there that day (v 10).
- B. That was the number of people who needed food at that very moment. And there were no catering services. It was a massive logistical nightmare.

VI. At the End of your Rope (Jn 2, 6, 11, 17)

- A. A preacher once said that God’s office is at the end of your rope. In other words, you meet God in his power only in your darkest hours.
- B. We seem to see this pattern in the Gospel of John.
 1. The wedding party that ran out of wine (Jn 2:3-5)
 2. The disciples in the storm (Jn 6:16-21)
 3. Lazarus who died (Jn 11:5-6)
 4. Jesus himself on the cross (Jn 17:1)
- C. God often reveals his glory most powerfully when it is clear to you that you are not the hero of your own story; when it is clear to you that salvation belongs entirely to him.

VII. There were Leftovers (Jn 6:11-12)

- A. Jesus must have been in deep communion with his heavenly Father, because Jesus knew exactly what the Father wanted him to do at this very moment:
 - Jn 6:11-12: “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. ¹² And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, ‘Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost.’”

- B. God's office is at the end of your rope.
God's hour comes when your party runs out of food and drink.
God's glory blazes in the thick of failure and sin.
God's love radiates brightest after the covenant is broken.
God's heart shines most powerfully in the corpse of a crucified prophet.
- C. If we want to see God's glory, we need to give up on ourselves and trust in him.

VIII. The Prophet Has Come (Jn 6:13-14)

- A. The response of the Galileans was not unlike the response of the Samaritans.
 - The Galileans. Jn 6:14: "When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, 'This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!'"
 - The Samaritans. Jn 4:42: "They said to the woman, 'It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.'"
- B. Both are positive, believing kinds of responses that point in the right direction—Jesus was the Bringer of God's new world.

IX. Our Scarcity, His Abundance

To see God's salvation, we must recognize that we are not enough, that we cannot make it. To see God's salvation, we must recognize that it is Jesus who is enough. He will use our five loaves and two fish (or whatever scraps of material we have) for his glory. Or he will give us life where there is hardly anything left (a corpse for instance). Jesus alone is the Savior, not us. We must come to him, and let him do what he alone can do. We have to let him work. We let him save us. It can be a scary thing to freefall into the grace of God. But as I myself am learning, it's all of grace or nothing. So let us trust in Jesus Christ alone for our salvation. Let us allow the Lord to do what only he can do—be our salvation.

Questions for Reflection

1. Was there anything in particular about today's sermon that blessed and encouraged you?
2. Was there anything that you disagree with or found difficult to accept?
3. What significance did the Passover have on the Jews?
4. How did Jesus resolve the problem of a lack of food?
5. "God's office is at the end of your rope." What do you think? How does this theme emerge in the Gospel of John?
6. Where are you feeling most hopeless in your life? Commit that part of your life to the Lord Jesus. Ask him to save you and have mercy on you.