

John 6:1-14 – "Jesus Provides"

Text: John 6:1-14 (CSB)

1 After this, Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias). **2** A huge crowd was following him because they saw the signs that he was performing by healing the sick. **3** Jesus went up a mountain and sat down there with his disciples. **4** Now the Passover, a Jewish festival, was near. **5** When Jesus looked up and noticed a huge crowd coming toward him, he asked Philip, "Where will we buy bread so that these people can eat?" **6** He asked this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. **7** Philip answered, "Two hundred denarii wouldn't be enough bread for each of them to have a little." **8** One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, **9** "There's a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish—but what are they for so many?" **10** Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place; so they sat down. The men numbered about five thousand. **11** Then Jesus took the loaves, and after giving thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated—so also with the fish, as much as they wanted. **12** When they were full, he told his disciples, "Collect the leftovers so that nothing is wasted." **13** So they collected them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces from the five barley loaves that were left over by those who had eaten. **14** When the people saw the sign he had done, they said, "This truly is the Prophet who is to come into the world."

Key Background:

- **Sea of Galilee/Tiberias:** The same body of water known by different names. Tiberias was a city built by Herod Antipas on the western shore, named after Emperor Tiberius.
- **Passover Context:** The timing near Passover is significant - this was when Jews remembered God's provision for their ancestors in the wilderness and their deliverance from Egypt. The miracle parallels God's provision of manna in the wilderness.
- **Philip's Test:** Jesus specifically questioned Philip, possibly because he was from nearby Bethsaida and would know local resources. This was a test of faith, not a request for information.
- **Two Hundred Denarii:** This represented about eight months' wages for a common laborer - a substantial sum that emphasizes the impossibility of the situation from a human perspective.
- **Barley Loaves:** Barley bread was the food of the poor, less expensive than wheat bread. The boy's modest lunch highlights the humble origins of what Jesus used for the miracle.
- **Twelve Baskets:** The number of baskets corresponds to the twelve disciples, showing God's abundant provision. The Greek word suggests wicker baskets that Jews commonly carried for food to maintain dietary laws.
- **The Prophet:** This refers to the prophet like Moses that God promised to send (Deuteronomy 18:15). The people recognized Jesus as this promised prophet because of the similarity to Moses providing manna in the wilderness.

Questions from the Story:

- Why was a huge crowd following Jesus (v. 2)? What does this tell us about what initially attracts people to Jesus?
- Where did Jesus go with his disciples (v. 3)? What does this show about Jesus's need for rest and preparation before ministry?
- What Jewish festival was approaching (v. 4)? How might this timing have influenced the crowd's expectations and understanding of what Jesus did?
- What question did Jesus ask Philip when he saw the crowd (v. 5)? Why did Jesus ask this when he already knew what he was going to do (v. 6)?
- How did Philip respond to Jesus's question about feeding the crowd (v. 7)? What does his answer reveal about his focus and understanding of the situation?
- What solution did Andrew bring to Jesus (vv. 8-9)? What does Andrew's approach show about his willingness to present small resources to Jesus?
- What was Andrew's assessment of the boy's lunch (v. 9)? How did his human reasoning limit his expectation of what Jesus could do?
- What was Jesus's first instruction to the disciples (v. 10)? What does the organized seating arrangement show about Jesus's orderly approach to ministry?
- What did Jesus do before distributing the food (v. 11)? What does his giving thanks teach us about recognizing God as the source of all provision?
- How much food did the people receive (v. 11)? What does "as much as they wanted" reveal about the abundance of God's provision?
- What instruction did Jesus give after everyone was satisfied (v. 12)? What does his concern about waste teach us about stewardship of God's blessings?
- How did the people respond to this miracle (v. 14)? What title did they give Jesus and what does this reveal about their understanding of his identity?
- What does this miracle teach us about Jesus's power over the natural world and his ability to provide for our needs?
- How does Jesus's use of a boy's small lunch encourage us about offering our limited resources to God?
- What does this story reveal about the importance of bringing our needs to Jesus, even when the situation seems impossible?
- How does this miracle point to Jesus as the ultimate provider who satisfies not just physical hunger but spiritual hunger as well?