

# that you may BELIEVE

Sermon-Based Study Guide  
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

John 6 | February 7, 2016

Prepared by Rev. Curtis A. Bronzan, ThM  
curtis@gspc.org | 562/493.2553 x115

## I. Introduction to this Study

This week we continue our series *That You May Believe*, seeing that Jesus' offer of the "bread of life" is rejected because of our own presuppositions.

## II. Connecting With One Another

How did you do in the subject of math?

Did you enjoy it? Did you do well?

## III. Study the Text

### a. Read John 6.1-4.

All four gospels depict crowds of people following after Jesus. In these verses, John offers a reason they did so.

What is it? Would you have followed Jesus for this reason?

### b. Lesslie Newbigin writes, "It is natural that a crowd will flock to one who has powers of healing; but this 'following' is not faith. It has not penetrated behind the healing to the mysterious person of the healer in whom God is offering his own eternal life."

What do you make of this statement? Do you agree or disagree? Why?

### c. In verse 4, John notes that "The Jewish Passover Festival was near."

Why do you think he mentions this? Read Exodus 12 to look for clues.

### d. Read John 6.5-13.

Like Moses in Numbers 11.21-22, Jesus questions where they could find food for the people. Unlike Moses, however, Jesus isn't putting God to the test, but rather his disciples.

What do you make of Philip's statement in verse 7? Was he just *following*? Or had he come to *faith*?

### e. As Jesus transforms one boy's picnic into enough for 10,000-15,000 (the 5,000 did not include women or children), he offers a simple prayer of thanksgiving - the word used is "eucharist." While the elite dined upon bread made of wheat, the poor ate just such bread made from barley, which was used in the early church to celebrate communion.

Do you think John is trying to make a connection between this miraculous feeding and the Lord's Supper? If so, why? What is the purpose?

Is there any connection to the reference to Passover we engaged above?

### f. The three other canonical gospels include the same story. Time permitting, read Matthew 14.13-21, Mark 6.30-44, and Luke 9.10-17.

What similarities and/or differences do you see in how different authors relay the story?

### g. At this point, the crowd gets what they came for... a miracle (and a free lunch)! What's more, they are reminded of Moses, who called down manna from heaven and promised

that God would send another prophet like himself (see Deuteronomy 18.15) - one who, it was thought, could also bring down manna from heaven.

And yet, this is a problem. Read John 6.14-15.

What's the problem, here? Why does Jesus leave?!

- h. It has been written, "This is not faith but unbelief. They have not understood who Jesus is. Jesus will not be the instrument of any human enthusiasm."

What do you make of this assessment? Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Where do you see this sort of "human enthusiasm" happen today?

- i. The central question in John 6 is the identity of Jesus. While the people are ready to "make him king," they and the disciples are left in the dark - both literally and figuratively!

Read John 6.16-24.

In the midst of the stormy lake as well as the storm of the disciples' doubts, what does Jesus' declaration (in verse 20) say about his identity?

Read Isaiah 51.10-12 and Psalm 107.23-32. How are these passages fulfilled in Jesus' late night walk on the water? What do they say about his identity?

- j. Read John 6.22-27.

In verse 25, Jesus is asked a specific question. What do you make of Jesus' response in verse 26? Why do you think he responds this way?

- k. Read John 6.28-34.

Recall that in the first century some believed the prophet to come would be able to provide manna like Moses had done.

Read Exodus 16.1-5, Psalm 78.23-25, and Nehemiah 9.15. While the belief that another "Moses figure" would provide manna, who was it that provided manna in these verses? How does Jesus declare the same thing in verse 32?

Do the people seem willing to accept this teaching in verse 34? Why or why not?

- l. It has been written "The deeds of Jesus, such as the one they have just witnessed, are both 'mighty works' and 'signs.' they are effective actions which liberate people from disease, hunger, and death, and they are signs which point beyond these immediate effects to the kingly rule of God present in Jesus. The crowd has enjoyed the effect, but has failed to see the sign. And the effect - like all such effects - is transient. The hungry man is fed, but he hungers again. The sick man is healed, but he will die. The victim of oppression is delivered, but he becomes the slave of other 'principalities and powers.' These visible acts of liberation are not to be made the prime object of desire and labor; they are signs pointing to a gift that is never exhausted, a satisfaction that never passes."

How does this quote help you understand the purpose for Jesus' miracles - or, better yet, as John calls them - signs?

Read Isaiah 55.1-2. How are these verses fulfilled in Jesus?

- m. Reread John 6.34, then continue on through verse 42.

While those present had seemed open to receiving bread in verse 34, they begin to turn on Jesus. Why do they do so? Would you have done so? Why or why not?

- n. Read John 6.43-51.

Notice that Jesus does not base his identity on cultural presuppositions, personal wisdom, or religious experience. His identity is revealed only to those whom the Father draws. Jesus' identity is not based upon our *previous* understanding of God. It's been written that "one has to begin to learn the meaning of the word 'God' by 'coming to Jesus' and learn from him of the one he calls 'my Father.'"

How should this inform our efforts in evangelizing our friends, family, co-workers, and neighbors?

- o. Read John 6.52-59.

In no uncertain terms, Jesus emphatically declares: God is the Giver. I am the Bread.

The first readers of this gospel probably also saw the connection between Jesus' sacrifice and their own. (See, for instance, 2nd Corinthians 4.7-12)

How has God called you to live a life of sacrifice?

- p. Read John 6.60-71.

This "hard teaching" reveals that salvation can only come from the God-man, fully spiritual and fully material, fully God and fully man. While some came to believe (see verse 69), others did not (see verse 70-71).

Why do you think Jesus was content to let people "turn their backs on him"?

Wasn't he trying to reach more and more people?

- q. How do you hear the voice of Jesus in these verses?

How could you respond in faith?

#### IV. Pray

- a. Lift up the members of our church who are serving in Haiti this week, praying for their energy, enthusiasm in ministry, and safe travels home,
- b. Pray that we would not be offended by Jesus invitation, but open to the Father's beckoning,
- c. Ask God to use us to reach out to those who have not yet trusted in Jesus.