



Pentecost 9-July 25th, 2021  
Baltic and East Nidaros Lutheran Parish  
John 6:1-14

## “Jesus Knew”

Sermon by Pastor Randall J. Questad

*Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen*

*“He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do.” **Jesus knew.** Jesus knew from the moment he saw the crowds what he was going to do. But before he did what he knew he would do, Jesus tested one of his disciples to see what he would do.*

*The question Jesus asked Philip shouldn't have been a trick question for any of the disciples. It should have been an easy test to pass. Jesus had already and recently shown his disciples several times what he could do when faced with impossible situations beyond human control such as scarcity and death. The book of John is also known as the book of signs. The feeding of the 5000 in the lesson for today was not the first sign that the disciples had witnessed recorded in John. They were with Jesus when the wine ran out at the wedding at Cana when Jesus' mother knew where to turn. Mary told the servants at the wedding to do whatever he (her son, Jesus) tells you to do. The disciples witnessed the six stone jars of water turn into 30 gallons of high-quality wine. The disciples also were aware of the royal official who knew where to turn when his son was at the point of dying. After Jesus listened to this father beg him to heal his son, Jesus simply told the official that his son would be made well. And he was made well without Jesus making a house call. The official believed Jesus could do what no one else could accomplish. The disciples were also with Jesus in Jerusalem when a man who had been paralyzed for 38 years was asked by Jesus if he wanted to be made well. This man thought his only hope was to get into the pool of water that apparently had some healing properties that worked for some people. But whenever he tried to get into the pool someone got in front of him preventing him from the possibility of being made well. Jesus simply told this man, “Stand up, take your mat and walk.” At once this man was healed.*

*Philip, who was one of the disciples who witnessed each of these signs, you would think would know the answer to the question that Jesus asked. Of course, Jesus' question was a little tricky in itself by asking, “Where are **WE** to **BUY** bread for these people to eat?” Jesus hadn't asked the disciples for help in these other signs. They were simply bystanders. Jesus didn't ask Peter*

to bring the water jars at the wedding closer to him so that his power would work better. He didn't need James to deliver a personal message to the royal official's son that he would soon be made well. He didn't ask John to get some of the healing water from the pool at Bethsaida and pour it on the paralyzed man so that he would be healed. Jesus performed each of these signs without any help from the disciples. Jesus had all that was necessary without first going to a store to buy supplies to carry out the sign. The disciples had seen the signs but failed to see who performed these signs of scarcity to abundance or death to life. They were so fascinated by the "what happened" of the sign that they missed the "whodunit" of what remained a mystery to them.

After Jesus had given these signs for the disciples to see, he thought now might be a good time to test Philip and see what Philip saw. Philip saw the large crowd. Philip saw the dollar signs that would prevent him from feeding this crowd. Andrew saw a little more than Philip by seeing a boy who had five barley loaves of bread and also two fish. But Andrew, like Philip, only saw a problem that they couldn't solve even if they helped Jesus. The disciples who were talking face to face with Jesus failed to see who was right in front of them.

The disciples failing this test however did not change the outcome. **Jesus still knew** what he was going to do. Their failures didn't change Jesus' desire to have compassion on this hungry crowd. Do not be distracted like Andrew was in this story by the five loaves and two fish that the boy had. This is not a story of how we can help Jesus. Jesus could have just as easily fed twice as many people without the help from anyone else. It was not what the boy brought that fed the multitude. It was what Jesus did. The only help the disciples provided was when Jesus told them to have the people sit down in the thick grass. You would think a few of these people might have started reciting the 23rd Psalm from memory as they witnessed this miraculous sign unfold. "The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures." But it didn't matter if these people had memorized Psalm 23 or had never heard of it. Jesus provided daily bread to EVERYONE. They all received as much as they wanted-- the believers and doubters alike. And the evidence of their complete satisfaction was in the 12 baskets of leftovers. (I confess that my first thought for a title for this sermon was "Leftovers", but then I realized that too was focusing on something other than Jesus who made this miraculous sign happen.)

There is more that follows immediately after this amazing sign took place. We are told that "when the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world." Wouldn't this be a great Billy Graham crusade moment? Jesus had everyone's attention. They had to still be discussing with each other how 5000 people were fed just with five barley loaves and two fish. John recorded that they **began** to

*believe that Jesus was a prophet. Why didn't Jesus take this opportunity to preach a barn burner of a sermon to this crowd of satisfied customers? If you read the next verse that follows this story, we learn that there was a group of people that were going to take Jesus against his will and make him their king. Jesus knew that these people were consumers of the bread that Jesus gave them to satisfy their earthly hunger and not confessors of Jesus who is their bread of eternal life.*

***Jesus knew** their intent. And in knowing this, Jesus withdrew from this crowd to be by himself on the mountain. The kind of king this crowd wanted was a king that would satisfy their wishes including filling their stomachs. They, like the disciples, did not yet see Jesus as a king that would be put to death wearing a crown of thorns. They could not understand what a king could do for them if he were dead. They did not yet believe in Jesus or see him as someone who had more power by speaking words of forgiveness than doing signs that delivered only temporary satisfaction.*

*This past Wednesday afternoon I had the wonderful experience of speaking God's word to the residents at the Touchmark Retirement Facility. I focused on the words Jesus gave Paul to speak in Romans 10. I began by asked those worshiping to complete the verse from this chapter that I started for them. I said, "Faith comes by \_\_\_\_\_." And quickly an attentive lady responded, "hearing". Faith comes by hearing. Then I laid out the rest of the 10th chapter which is consistent with all scripture. We are saved by faith. And we receive faith by having God's word delivered to us by someone who has been called and sent so that when you will confess with your lips and believe in your heart that Jesus is Lord, you will be saved (Romans 10:9). This is a certain promise of salvation, not a doubtful possibility. This good news comes from hearing it and not from seeing signs.*

*I greeted each of the people who attended this vespers service as they left the chapel and made their way to their evening meal. Another resident thanked me for coming and then challenged me by asking, "But can't you get faith by seeing." I agreed with her that Jesus indeed used many signs in his ministry, and we are told that after this sign of feeding the 5000 many **began** to believe. God himself sent the sign of a star in the sky on Christmas for the beginning of all our faith. But **all** signs are **only** signs. They only point to who you need to hear from.*

*The feeding of the 5000 is one of the best-known signs or miracles in all of scripture. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John each made sure to include this miraculous event in their writings. Jesus knew where to place signs to direct people to him and he also knew that signs would last about as long as the time between meals. **Jesus knew** that his word is the only thing that will endure forever. Amen*

