

Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family**Title: Where Shall We Buy Bread For These People To Eat?****Lesson: John 6:1-15**

6 Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias),² and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick.³ Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples.⁴ The Jewish Passover Festival was near.

5 When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?"⁶ He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

7 Philip answered him, "It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!"

8 Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up,⁹ "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"

10 Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there).¹¹ Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

12 When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted."¹³ So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

14 After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world."¹⁵ Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

Today's story is about Jesus feeding 5,000 people. This story is so famous that it is known by both Christians and non-Christians alike. Although it wasn't the main focus, I briefly mentioned the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000 in my messages over the past two weeks. So, when choosing the scripture for today, I pondered whether to select this story or another passage. However, I believe this story still holds significance for all of us living today,

which is why I have chosen it as the scripture for today's message.

In life, we go through many experiences. We encounter numerous challenges. We may witness the death of loved ones or see them struggle with serious illnesses or cancer. Perhaps we ourselves have faced or are facing serious health issues. Sometimes, we experience conflicts or disputes within our families or close friendships, or face financial difficulties. When confronted with such difficult moments in life, how do you handle and cope with them?

When we face challenging times, we might consider how to navigate these hardships. We might think about whether we can overcome these difficulties through our own strength, abilities, or plans. However, if after much thought and planning, we realize that we cannot overcome them with our own strength, we may eventually turn to God, asking Him for help and expressing our needs.

One concern in my faith journey is why we or I do not turn to God first when facing life's difficulties. Why do I first consider my own strength, experience, knowledge, and plans for solutions, and only seek God when I conclude that I cannot solve the problem on my own? Why does this concern repeat itself, and am I asking God correctly?

If some of you always seek and rely on God first in any situation, I would say you are doing well. However, if any of you share a similar concern as mine, I hope this time can be an opportunity for all of us to reflect seriously together.

The story begins like this: "Some time after this..." The story of Jesus feeding the 5,000 is so famous that it is recorded in all four Gospels. Each Gospel describes the event slightly differently, but when combining the contents of each Gospel, we find that just before this story, the death of John the Baptist is described. There was a scandal between Herod Antipas and his wife, which John publicly condemned, leading to his imprisonment. At Herod's birthday party, his stepdaughter asked for the head of John the Baptist, and he was executed.

When Jesus and His disciples went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, it was close to the Passover. The Passover was a day for the ancient Israelites

to experience God's salvation. The timing of this story close to Passover hints at the beginning of God's salvation for the people of Jesus' time and for future generations.

Jesus had already healed and taught many people. Many were amazed by Jesus' authoritative miracles and teachings and followed Him. With the Passover festival approaching, there was a festive atmosphere nationwide, and many from foreign lands were visiting Israel. Consequently, more people gathered to experience Jesus' miracles and teachings.

Seeing the large crowd gathered in the wilderness, Jesus had compassion on them and taught them even more passionately as the day went on. Many were feeling hungry. Knowing this, Jesus asked His disciple Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?"

The Bible says, "Jesus asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do." Jesus asked Philip where they could buy bread to feed the people to test him. It's important to understand that this test was not to evaluate or condemn Philip. It was to reveal to Philip and the other disciples who Jesus is. Jesus was asking, "Where can we get bread to feed these people?"

If we closely examine this question, Jesus is asking His disciples where they can get bread. The emphasis is on "where."

However, Philip replied, "It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" From his response, we can see that he was a smart person. There were indeed many people gathered. At that time, only men were counted, but there were also women and children present. Given that it was an agricultural society, there would likely have been many children. Thus, there were likely more than 20,000 people present, not just 5,000. Philip quickly assessed the amount of money needed to feed the people. He was intelligent.

Yet, Jesus did not ask how much was needed to feed them. Unlike Philip, Andrew seemed to act first. He went around searching for food and found a boy with five loaves of bread and two fish, which he brought to Jesus, saying it was all they had.

Both Philip and Andrew did their best to address the situation, relying on

their strength, experience, knowledge, and plans. However, their strength and experience were of no help in this situation.

What moved me in this story was the following part. Despite their best efforts, Philip and Andrew could not overcome the situation, nor did they provide the correct answer to Jesus' question. Jesus asked, "Where shall we buy bread to feed these people?"

However, even if they answered incorrectly or did not know who Jesus was, Jesus did not rebuke them. Instead, He instructed them to have the people sit down. Then, after giving thanks to God for the food, Jesus distributed it to the people, and everyone ate until they were full. Moreover, twelve baskets of leftovers were collected.

Friends, if Jesus were to ask you, "Where shall we buy bread to feed these people?" what would you answer? "Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Indeed, the one who satisfies our hunger and thirst is the bread of life, Jesus Christ.

As I repeatedly read Jesus' question, it now appears to me as: "Where does the help to overcome the difficulties you face come from?" Friends, where does the help to overcome difficulties come from? "Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

Our faith journey is a process of knowing God. It is the process of experiencing and realizing, with our hearts, what we have learned about God through knowledge. When we face life's challenges, the beginning of God's help starts not with our best efforts to solve them but with seeking and asking God.