

# Session 10

May 3, 2020

## Unit 2: Jesus Encounters . . .

### The Great Crowd

Only Jesus provides our true nourishment.

#### The Word

John 6:1-13, 26-33

### Engage the Word

#### LARGE CROWD—SMALL LUNCH

##### John 6:1-9

The multiplication of loaves and fish happened near the Sea of Galilee. John calls it “the Sea of Tiberias” (named for an emperor), reflecting the extensive Roman influence in Israel at that time. Gentile readers would more likely have known the lake by its Latin name.

We see from the text that twice John says the crowd was “great” (large, great numbers). We also see that the theme of “signs” appears again (singular and plural forms in John total 17 instances)—especially linked to healings of the sick.

Somewhat awkwardly John inserts a statement that Passover was near. There is no smooth transition to the statement. Little context appears. Jesus asked Phillip where to buy the food in order to feed the large crowd. A real meal, and especially Passover, requires bread. Once, while at a café near the Dead Sea, our travel guide saw that the bread was gone. He immediately called out to the manager, in Hebrew, “lehem, lehem” (“bread, bread”) as in Beth-lehem (e.g., “house of bread”). Jesus and His disciples called for bread on this day (John 6).

Andrew reported a boy with a few barley loaves and fish. But Andrew was practical. Count the people. Count the resources. The crowd was too large. The supplies too small.

#### SMALL LUNCH—LARGE YIELD

##### John 6:10-13

Jesus did not dismiss the boy and his small lunch. Nor did Jesus concede to the “it can’t be done” pessimism of Andrew and Phillip. Instead, Jesus directed the people to take seats on the grassy lakeside. They obediently sat and received all they desired.

The Greek word translated “gave thanks” (6:11, 23) provides the basis for our word “eucharist.” But there are no other obvious features of Passover or of Christian communion yet. There was an abundant supply that day. Twelve baskets of left-over bread, more than at the beginning! The disciples were eyewitnesses to Jesus’ miracle power that day. Jesus met an overwhelming physical need of thousands with His apparently meager resources.

## **WHAT KIND OF MAN IS THIS?**

### **John 6:26-27**

An important phrase occurs frequently in John—“Very truly”—(Greek *amēn*, *amēn*, in 26 verses). The statement usually validates another’s character or testimony by saying *amēn* (“truly”) in support. In John, Jesus will make a declaration and then affirms His own words by a duplicated “amen”! A pastor of mine, years ago, listening with friends to a recording of his Sunday message, began to say “amen” to his own sermon (his wife quickly pointed this out to him)! Jesus is the only person who could ever confidently fully “amen” His own sermon.

A key title for Jesus appears. He is “the Son of Man.” Perhaps Jesus’ preferred way of referring to himself, the title appears some 80 times in the four gospels combined. It draws on Daniel 7:13, the enthronement of a heavenly champion. Some understood the Son of Man to be a messianic figure. The phrase could also suggest an earthly “human one” (as in Ezekiel). Jesus’ use of the title may have been intentionally ambiguous. Clearly John believed Jesus to be the agent of God, speaking and acting in the Father’s behalf. John gives a lofty affirmation of Jesus. Jesus had the Father’s “seal of approval.”

## **BREAD FROM HEAVEN**

### **John 6:28-33**

Jesus challenged the crowd, saying it was not the signs (healings primarily) that attracted the people, but the bread. Jesus was quick to add that earthly loaves would spoil, but the bread from God was lasting and life-giving. The people asked how to do the “works” that God required. Jesus replied with a singular “work of God,” which was to believe in the one God had sent.

Then the people asked for a sign. What “sign” would He give them so that seeing the sign would lead them to faith in Him? Jesus sought to move the people to an active faith in himself as “the bread of God” that had come from heaven. Believe, don’t look for a sign. No doubt the crowd found it quite difficult to hear the words “it was not Moses” who provided heavenly bread to their ancestors. Even more astounding, Jesus declared “I am the bread of life” (6:35). He was spiritual food and drink that would never fail, but always be enough and more.

## **Did You Know?**

Feeding the 5,000 is the only performed miracle by Jesus recorded in all four gospels (Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17, and here). Think About It  
Jesus used the title “Son of Man” of himself in three ways: 1) earthly ministry; 2) heavenly, coming one; 3) suffering. Which of these would have been most troubling to those who opposed Jesus? To Jesus’ circle of believing disciples?

## **Reflect**

What spiritual nourishment do you need from God this week?

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