



Sermon Series: ALL SIGNS POINT TO JESUS

To be used with Session: The Sign of His Authority

Sermon Title Possibilities: BELIEVE FOR YOUR NEED

Scripture: John 6:1-13

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the Bible study “All Signs Point to Jesus” this sermon demonstrates that Jesus meets the needs in our lives. We see this in the three previous signs. The wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11), illustrates that when we’ve run out of options, Jesus can change the circumstances. The healing of the royal official’s son (John 4:46-54) illustrates that when we’re facing a dire situation, Jesus can speak life into it. The healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-9), illustrates when we’re down, Jesus can lift us up. We serve a God who can supply our every need, according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:19).

Introduction: David McCasland tells a story about an old Chinese salutation, that instead of asking, “How are you?” people would ask “Have you eaten until you are full?” McCasland goes on to say that the greeting likely originated during a time when food was scarce, and many people did not know when they would eat their next meal. So, when food was available, it was prudent to eat until you were full (Our Daily Bread, 8/29/2012).

Jesus fed 5,000 men, besides women and children. Not only did they eat until they were full, but there were leftovers, which Jesus commanded be gathered. If Jesus was that concerned about hungry people, that He was determined to meet their need, and involved the disciples; then as disciples of Jesus, we need to be just as concerned. We need to get involved and help meet the needs of those who lack food. Jesus’s refusal to waste leftovers should caution us to cook (or order) to our need, not to our greed.

There’s a saying, “don’t be so heavenly minded that you’re no earthly good,” meaning we shouldn’t be so focused on the spiritual and eternal life, that we neglect the physical and present needs of people in this life. Following Jesus’s example, if we were truly heavenly-minded, we would be of the greatest earthly good. We have a responsibility to meet physical needs, which often opens the door to our meeting people’s greatest need, the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

JESUS PERCEIVES OUR NEED (6:1-5)

After sending out the twelve to spread the Gospel (Mark 6:7-13) and hearing of John the Baptist's death (Mark 6:14-29), Jesus took the disciples aside for some quiet time with Him (Mark 6:30-31). Jesus perceives our need for rest. When we are submitted to Him, He will teach us to find the balance between self-care and service-care; between a time to mourn and a time for ministry. However, when He allows interruptions amid rest, it is often an opportunity to share the Word.

The setting was the region of Galilee, the northern section of Israel. Galileans were primarily poor farmers who labored hard for a living wage. Their primary issues were the necessities of life: food, clothing, and shelter. This was in contrast with the southern region, which being more affluent, was concerned more with the legal and theological implications of Scripture. Jesus's ministry in the north contrasted with His ministry in the south and teaches us we need to meet people where they are. To do that, we need to perceive people's concerns. When Jesus met the people's need, what He previously taught them (Mark 6:34), made further inroads and many perceived He was more than a Rabbi (John 6:14), which allowed Him an opening to preach the Gospel (John 6:26-65). Meeting needs are often seeds for planting the good news.

JESUS HAS A PLAN TO MEET OUR NEED (6:6-10)

Jesus asked Philip a question, to test particularly Philip's faith, who may have been the spokesmen for the rest of the disciples (John 14:8). When God asks a question, He plans on answering. Philip was from nearby Bethsaida, so he knew where to purchase food. However, Philip calculated, it would take over six months wages to purchase such a large amount. Faith takes the reality of a situation to God. It acknowledges when it doesn't have enough. But faith also believes in the God who owns "the cattle on a thousand hills" (Ps. 50:10). Andrew brought what he knew wasn't enough and trusted the God with it.

"Stone Soup," is a story about a starving man who came to a village, but no one gave him a crumb of food. He put a stone and water in a pot over a fire and talked about the great soup he was preparing. Intrigued, the villagers watched him stir his "soup." They then began to suggest ingredients that would make for a better soup. Soon, one brought a couple of potatoes; another added some carrots. One person added an onion, and still another some barley. Finally, a farmer brought some milk. Eventually, the "stone soup" became a tasty chowder.

The story reminds us that even if something seems insignificant, we need to bring what we have; it may turn out to be more than what we think. If this is the case on a human level, how much more with God?

JESUS PROVIDES FOR OUR NEED (6:11-13)

It has been said, "You don't have to feed the five thousand. Just bring your loaves and fishes." There were 5,000 men, besides women and children, which means the total may have been as many as 20,000. Just like Jesus took a little boy's lunch and multiplied it far more than

anyone expected, when we bring what we have to God, we ought to expect the same. We ought to expect God to supply our need but not necessarily in the way we expect it. This story also teaches us, when we give God what we have, we need to thank Him in advance, believing He will provide.

The fact that they ate as much as they wanted, doesn't mean that God provides whatever we want. It means that when He provides for our need, He provides to the full – He satisfies. "For He has satisfied the thirsty and filled the hungry with good things" (Ps. 107:9). He's also the God of the leftover and the God of the spill over (Ps. 23:5). In other words, you don't have "leftover" blessing to keep for yourself. You have "spill over" blessings so you can bless others. There were 12 disciples. There were 12 baskets left over. When we are obedient God will also take care of us!

Conclusion: A missionary in Africa experienced great difficulty in trying to translate the Gospel of John into the local dialect. The problem was finding a word for *believe*. When it came to translating the word, he always had to leave a blank space.

Then one day a runner, having traveled a great distance with an especially important message, came panting into the camp. After catching his breath and blurting out his message, he fell exhausted into a nearby hammock. He muttered a brief phrase that expressed, at the same time, both his great weariness and his great contentment at finding such a delightful place of relaxation. The missionary, never hearing these words before, asked a bystander what the runner said. "Oh, he is saying, 'I'm at the end of myself; therefore, I am resting all of my weight here!'" The missionary exclaimed, "Praise God! That is the very expression I need for the word believe!"

When you are at the end of your resources, the end of your wits, the end of yourself, rest on God's promise to supply all your needs. Sometimes "the end" is the beginning of God doing exceedingly, abundantly above all we could ask or imagine!

Bio: Dr. Jerome F. Coleman is lead pastor of the First Baptist Church of Crestmont, Willow Grove, PA, shepherding God's flock for 16 years. He has been happily married to his wife Kim for 28 years and is currently vice-president of the National African American Fellowship of the Southern Baptist Convention.