



SERMON TITLE: Doing the Impossible
SCRIPTURE: John 6:1-21

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"These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ" (John 20:31). This is how John concludes his own biography of Jesus. He wanted the young, the old, the sick, the well, the despairing, the hopeful, the skeptics, the faithful, and whoever reads his account of Jesus to believe and trust him more fully. But what did John want them to believe? He wanted them to believe that Jesus alone brought eternal life into the present, broken world. And for all who enter this eternal life with God right now, we—like John—are exiles. For all who enter a relationship with Jesus, we will very likely be marginalized and dismissed because we follow him. So, what does it mean to believe? And how do we mature in believing? What does it mean to remain faithful to God when the pressure is on? These are the things that John will help us explore by showing us the glory and beauty of Jesus.

As we enter this new year, there's one thing I think I can say with a great degree of certainty, and that is—at some point in the coming year—most of us will face what we consider to be an "impossible" situation. God will put something in your path that requires more of you than you feel capable of doing. The question is—how do you handle situations like that?

That's exactly where we find the disciples in John 6. We are going to step into two very challenging moments in the lives of these men. There are two situations that teach them some very important lessons about how God works to grow our faith in impossible situations. READ John 6:1-21.

The Dominant Theme in John 6 is that Jesus is the Greater Moses. (compare to 5:45-47; Deut 18:15). John wants us to see that in many ways—especially in these two stories—Jesus' ministry is an echo or Moses and the Exodus.

The Story—The Passover was to Israel what the Fourth of July is to America. It was a time of nationalistic fervor. Where we think of flags flying and bombs bursting in the air and hot dogs and picnics, *the Jews were thinking* of unleavened bread, lamb's blood on doorposts—and deliverance from *Egyptian bondage* through the Red Sea. The people of Israel were longing for a New Moses who would come and deliver them from *Roman bondage*.

So Jesus—with these back-to-back miracles—will show that he is the Greater Moses. Moses fed the people manna and quail in the wilderness. Jesus fed the crowd bread and fish in a desolate place. Moses led God's people through the Red Sea. Jesus led his disciples through a stormy sea.

Now in the first story—the feeding of the 5000—Jesus wanted his disciples to wrestle with the impossibility of the situation. Remember, these men have seen Jesus work many, many miracles: the lame walk, the deaf hear, the blind see, the dead are raised, and the water is turned to wine. And not only had they seen Jesus do these things; they too had been used by God to do some of these same things—like healing and casting out demons.

So, Jesus had *already* asked them to do "impossible" things and they had *already*, personally experienced God's power doing impossible things through them. So the issue is this: *How would they respond to this new challenge to do the impossible?* This was a test. Jesus' purpose here is NOT to have them *solve* the problem. He wants them to realize that—*humanly speaking—there IS NO solution*. And he wants them to wrestle with that. They have no solution, but Jesus shows himself more than capable of doing the impossible and again, they participate in the miracle.

In the second story, John does not give us the details that are found in Matthew and Mark's account. John is just so matter of fact, so what's his point? First, we see that this miracle is another echo back to the Exodus. Again, Jesus is the Greater Moses. Second, we see that whatever Jesus intends to do will be done. So really, what is there to worry about? What is there to be afraid of? Jesus, the Great I AM, is with you and for you and he will do what he says he will do. Both miracles reveal Jesus as a Savior who, in impossible situations, is more than capable of *providing for* and *protecting* his people; more than capable of intervening in our times of trouble, of providing what we need, and bringing us through dark storms to safety.

The Principle: God will ask you to do more than you are capable of doing in order to grow your faith. God will put you into “impossible” situations where you do not have what it takes to do what he asks you to do—situations designed as “tests of trust.” He wants you to learn that his power will enable you to do what you thought was impossible.

The Five-Part Application: (1) God will test you by putting you in “impossible” situations (compare to 1Peter 4:12; James 1:2). Sometimes, some things come into our life for no other reason than to test of trust. (2) When God tests your trust, remember, God knows what he is doing. (3) God tests us just past our trust. Meaning, you will not always have all the resources you need to do what he wants done. (4) Do not wait until you have all the resources you need before you take the next step. The disciple’s faith may have failed, but their obedience did not. Obedience is always the channel through which faith comes. (5) Expect that God will do more than you can imagine. Jesus takes our *insufficiency* and makes it *sufficient*. He takes our *inadequacy* and makes it more than *adequate*. Our needs and problems and weaknesses are not obstacles for him. In fact, he gives thanks for the little we give him to work with. *God supplies in abundance*. He can take the little we have and multiply it far beyond our wildest expectations. In these two stories, Jesus teaches us two things: the sufficiency of his power and how we can become channels of his power, but the key is, *expecting* God to put you into impossible situations where you have to trust him to do for you what you can’t do for yourself.

Two Questions: (1) Are you facing what looks like an impossible situation right now? Don't let your estimation of what can and can't be done keep you from trusting God to supply more than what you need. (2) Do you have the expectation—the desire—that God would use you to do the impossible? I believe God is looking for people—for churches—who will trust him with impossible things. Would you be that person? Will you be that church?

Discussion Starters:

Icebreaker: As you think about the New Year, what are you looking forward to? ...What are you expecting God to do in your spiritual life this coming year?

Read John 6:1-21

1. How does John make the point that Jesus is the Greater Moses? (cf 5:45-47; Passover; 6:14—explain the significance of these passages. Now ask—How does this shape how you read and study both the Old and New Testaments? ... Were there any new thoughts/ideas you had as the similarities between Exodus and John 6 were explained.
2. If you put yourself into the story like Charlie suggested, how are you feeling about Jesus laying the responsibility of feeding this large crowd? How do you think you would have responded to such a crazy, impossible situation?
3. Think about Philip and Andrew’s “hopeless solutions” to the problem. What they needed was a miracle, but they offered human, pragmatic perspectives to the problem. How do we do the same today? ...What causes us to take matters into our own hands and not believe Jesus?
4. Why do you think Jesus refused to let the crowd make him King?
5. How do the two miracles—the feeding of the 5000 and Jesus saving his disciples from the storm-tossed sea relate to each other?
6. How do these two stories affect our lives Monday-Saturday? Why does it matter? What changes if our actions match our beliefs about this text?
7. What was the most impactful thing about this passage/sermon? What are some ways that you were challenged to respond? Are you facing an “impossible” situation right now? .

Or try this approach:

Now ask—“From what you heard in Charlie’s message or what we just read...*What are some of the “AHAs” you had? ... What did you hear that resonated with you? What new thoughts and insights did you have?*”

When someone volunteers an “AHA,” ask follow up questions to dig deeper and to keep the discussion going. Ask the group, “*Anyone else have this same “AHA”?. What do you think about this insight?*” After you’ve exhausted topic, throw the original question back out to the group, “*Who else had an “AHA?”* —Repeat the pattern above. —

If someone says, “*I didn’t really have an “AHA,” it’s more that I don’t understand*” Then go that direction. Ask follow-up questions to help them clearly articulate the issue. “*Anybody else think about that/struggle with that?*” Ask the group for input, “*So, how would you answer that question?*” Whoever answers, ask follow up questions, ask for input from the group on that answer (*What do you think about that?*), etc.

The repeat the same conversation pattern by asking—*What’s your “take-away” from the message and our discussion? What is one thing you can take-away and put into action?*