

(Read John 6: 1-13) When we started this series, we talked about a scene in John chapter 6. Great crowds were traveling with Jesus. By now, He was at the height of His popularity. Word had spread about miraculous healings and inspirational teaching. So huge crowds had gathered to cheer Him on. We're told that there were about 5,000 men. But that was just the men. Likely the crowd was in excess of 15,000. After a full day, Jesus knows the people are getting hungry, and so He turns to his disciples and asks what all these people will do for food. 15,000 is a lot of mouths to feed.

One of the disciples, Philip, tells Jesus that even if they had eight months wages it wouldn't be enough money to buy bread for everyone to have a bite. From Philip's perspective, this isn't their problem and even if it was, there really isn't anything they can do. But another disciple, Andrew, has been scanning the crowd and he tells Jesus of a boy in the crowd that has five loaves of bread and two small fish. I can picture Andrew making this announcement with a smile and a sense of expectation of what Jesus might do next. And Jesus doesn't disappoint. He takes the boy's sack lunch and he feeds the entire crowd. The Bible tells us that even after everyone had their fill there was still plenty of food left over.

After dinner the crowd decides to camp out for the night so they can be with Jesus the next day. They are committed fans. But the next morning the crowd wakes up and they're hungry again. Ready for a little breakfast. They look around for Jesus, a.k.a. their meal ticket, but he's nowhere to be found. Eventually they figure out that Jesus and his disciples had crossed over to the other side of the lake. Instead of going home they make the trip to the other side of the lake to be with Jesus. The crowd seems to have no higher priority than being with Jesus. Maybe these are more than just fans after all.

(Read John 6: 23-29) By the time they catch up to Jesus they're starving. They've missed the chance to order breakfast and they are ready to find out what's on the lunch menu. But Jesus has decided to shut down the all you can eat buffet. He's not handing out any more free samples. In verses 26-27 Jesus says to the crowd: *"I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill"*

And Jesus decides to have the DTR talk with this crowd. He knows that these people are not going to all the trouble and sacrifice because they are following him, but because they are following the food. These are fans of Jesus but how would they respond when the drive through window closed? In verse 35 Jesus offers himself, but the question is, would that be enough? Then Jesus declared, *"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."*

1) When Jesus is the Only Thing on the Menu, You Find Out if He's the One You Were Really Hungry For.

When there are no other options, that's when you find out if Jesus is enough. The names will be changed – but I want to tell you about some of the people I've known of over the years that have gone from fan to follower. These are people who found out what it meant that Jesus was the bread of life.

Ed was let go from his job. He was an executive living an executive lifestyle. He wasn't sure how he would pay the bills. The stress was taking its toll, not just on his marriage, but also on his health. For the first time in his life, he was not self-sufficient. For the first time in his life, his prayers weren't just repetitive phrases he learned as a child – he was really in need. Desperate, he turned to God in a way that he never would have had he not lost his job. It was easy enough for him to be fan of Jesus, making a half-million dollars a year. But for the first time in his life, it wasn't enough to be a fan. Now he's a follower.

Kate was married for more than twenty years when her husband decided he wanted to be single. Since she was a girl she had gone to a different church and went with her husband as well. Because of the divorce, she was no longer welcome there. She came to a new church broken and bitter. But for the first time, this life-long churchgoer began to see how the Bible spoke directly to her. Each weekend she said she felt like God was speaking right to her. And she decided to listen. In her loneliness – in her bitterness – in her depression – she heard the message of Jesus saying “Come to me all who are weary and I will give you rest.” And she became a follower.

Then there was June. Her car was struck by a semi and she died instantly. A wonderful Christian lady – she was always at church – always praying for her husband Bob. Bob would visit the church once a year on Mother's Day to appease his wife. His eyes would be closed during most of the sermon – his arms would be crossed and it would be clear he would rather be somewhere else. At the funeral, for the first time Bob seemed to be really listening, like maybe God was speaking to him. Later that night a friend goes to Bob's house and is invited in. June's Bible is out and he has been reading it. And a few weeks later he walked forward down the same aisle his wife's casket had been carried – and with tears in his eyes he said, “I'm ready.”

There are plenty of stories I could tell you – a daughter is diagnosed with cancer, parents get divorced, the addiction seems unbeatable, a future seems overwhelming, a relationship falls apart...and something happens. Suddenly having a little bit of religion isn't enough. Suddenly the spectacle, the fish and loaves, the one hour on Sunday doesn't cut it. And in those moments, those times that Jesus is the only thing left on the menu, they find out that He's exactly what they need. He becomes more than a guy wearing a blue sash – He becomes the only hope.

So here in John 6, the crowd has to decide if Jesus is enough. Are they hanging around for the perks, or is it really about the relationship? Do you remember what happened? The fans turn and go home. And here's what we read at the end of the chapter: John 6:66, “*From this time many of his disciples turned back AND no longer followed him*”.

And, in the long run, that's what will happen. Scripture tells us that wide is the road that leads to destruction. In the end, whether we like it or not, most people just won't accept Christ's invitation. They like the idea of heaven. They like the miracles. They like the bread. They like the free show. They like the chance to be around a lot of people. They like the excitement. But when Jesus wipes all that off the table and offers Himself, they aren't interested. After we read in John 6 that many of his followers had left, Jesus turns to his 12 disciples and asked in verse 67: “*You do not want to leave too, do you?*”

I don't know how He said that. I don't know if he was frustrated or angry. My guess is he spoke with a tone of disappointment and sadness as it became clear why so many were following Him. And even though He was God, that must have broken His heart. How would it feel if you started

to date someone, and you took them to the movies for the first date? You paid for the popcorn, the drinks, all the snacks. You paid for the tickets. And after the date, you ask them out again. They say yes. So you take them somewhere nicer this time. Maybe a nice restaurant. You let them order anything they want off the menu, and when the bill finally comes, you pick it up and pay. And with each date, you have more and more fun with this person, and you feel a real connection.

And just when you think things are going to get really serious, you ask them out on a special date. They agree, and you pick them up. You surprise them by taking them to the park. You go on a walk, and you talk. You stop to sit at a bench, and you pour out your heart to this person, telling them how much you care about them, how much you want to help make them happy and fulfill them. And just as you finish pouring out all of your affection for them, they look at you and ask, "Is this the date? When are we going to go do something?" And pretty soon, you realize they were just hanging around for the things you'd get them. For the movie tickets. For the nights of free meals and entertainment. Wouldn't that break your heart?

I can imagine that might be how Jesus felt. So He asks his disciples, the men He's grown closest to, whether or not they'll leave. Would His most devoted disciples turn out to be fans who weren't willing to stick around when the teaching got tough? Was this group more focused on the crowds Jesus attracted than on His message of life? Would they abandon Jesus? In John 6:68-69, we read their response. *Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."*

2) When You Really Know Jesus as Lord, You Don't Want to Leave Him.

Peter's answer sums it up. "To whom shall we go?" That one question seems to ask thousands of questions. Who could lead us like you could? Who could teach us with wisdom like yours? Who could possibly bring us closer to God? Why would we ever want to leave the Messiah? Who else is worth following compared to you? How could we ever find someone else like you?

See, fans will bail on Jesus when His teaching gets difficult. When He asks them to sacrifice, when He asks them to take up their cross, when He asks them to die to themselves, fans take off. And I don't think they do that just because they prefer comfort.

Because if they knew for certain, I'm convinced their actions would reflect that knowledge. If they were convinced they were guaranteed a ticket to heaven, if they had full assurance that Jesus was the Son of God, if they could be completely and one hundred percent positive that following Jesus would lead to an eternity of bliss and worship and joy in the presence of the Lord, I'm confident they would stick with it. Who wouldn't, right? If all of us believed and knew with every ounce of our being, we'd have a much easier time swallowing some of the tougher portions of Scripture. If all of us knew and believed that Jesus was Lord, I think we'd approach sharing our faith in a very different way. But here's the problem:

3) We Don't Know the Way We Wish, So We Don't Believe the Way We Should.

Let me repeat that: we don't know the way we wish, so we don't believe the way we should. The first half of that is a tough fact to face: we really can't know for sure that Jesus is Lord. There's evidence both for and against our beliefs, and the bottom line is that we can't know the way we wish. Because we wish we could have it all laid out. We wish God would write it in the sky. We wish He'd give us a vision. We wish He'd speak directly to us. We wish He'd send an

angel or give us some kind of unmistakable sign that He is alive and in charge and Jesus is His son.

But life's not like that, is it? And it wasn't like that for the disciples, either. Sure they were there for the miracles. But at that point, they chose to know and believe that Jesus was the Messiah. Choosing to know and believe is a choice we have to make, just like the disciples made. Because if we would believe with the same fire and passion that the disciples had, I think we could do some amazing things in our community. But in the end, it comes down to whether Jesus is enough for you. And it comes down to whether or not you'll choose to move from being a fan to being a follower.

Video: Sermonette #6

4) We Don't Know the Day, But We Know His Name

It's true, we don't know the day Christ will return. We don't know when health might fail or finances might plummet or when we'll die. And we never will. But even though we don't know the day, we know His name.

I know none of us want to be declared fans on judgment day. And I know we aren't offered the guarantee that we'd really like, but Jesus does offer a different kind of guarantee. Jesus guarantees that if you put your trust in Him, He will never fail you. He guarantees that if you stake your life on His message of truth, He will stake His life on your eternity in Heaven. Jesus guarantees that if you put your trust and hope in Him, He'll guide you to an eternity with God the Father. We don't know the day, but we know His name. And as Scripture tells us, by his name alone are people saved.

But you have to decide. Are you a fan or are you a follower of Jesus? Because all of those guarantees are for the followers who refuse to leave His side, the followers who ask, "To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One sent from God."