

THE BREAD, THE CROWDS AND THE KINGDOM - WAT SOEK JY?

SERIES:

Stories for the Heart – a closer look at the words and works of Jesus.

16 March 2025 – Scottsville Community Church, 9 am

READING: John 6:1-15 (Jesus feeds the five thousand) – (**WORKS**)



SERMON OUTLINE

- The crowds for the miracle
- The miracle for the crowds
- The sign in the miracle

INTRODUCTION

What do you want? In Afrikaans, we say **wat soek jy?**

At high school, there was a boy who loved visiting our dormitory. He would often take two or three steps in and then stop...looking around, acting confused...and then quickly turn back **and walk away** without saying a word.

This used to happen a lot. **We noticed it.** On a particular day, he came in but this time we were prepared for him. As usual, he took two or three steps in, and **immediately and in one accord we asked him**, 'Machachamise, what do you want'? Since he was from the Free State, each time he came to our dormitory and performed this act, we would often ask him in **Afrikaans**, 'wat soek jy'? Eventually, his name was no longer Anthony to us but 'Wat soek jy'!

In today's story Jesus will perform a miracle that bears **his divinity**. But in this story **there is a subtle** 'wat soek jy' that I would like you to listen to and try to answer it for yourself.

Let's now take **a closer look** at this story.

	What the 1 st century audience saw and heard	What we must see and hear in 2025
The Crowds for the Miracle	'And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick' John 6:2 Luke doesn't give us the reason the crowd followed Jesus, but his account is important: <i>'When the crowds learned it (that they were in Bethsaida), they followed him, and <u>he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God and cured those who had a need of healing</u>' Luke 9:11</i> Jesus, aware of their potential unsanctified reasons, ignores their ugly side and services their deepest needs. When Jesus saw the crowds, according to Mark, 'he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd' (Mark 6:34). While Jesus and his disciples used the boat to get to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, the crowds 'ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them' (Mark 6:33 & Matthew 14:13). Jesus' compassion for the crowds created the right atmosphere for a miracle.	1. Jesus often uses our needs. According to John, the crowds were following out of curiosity. They had seen him heal others and some were probably seeking a personal miracle. Little did they know it was a setup. Why are you here today. It might be for a selfish reason, boredom, feeling sorry for the pastor or some other reason. Don't feel bad! Your being here has nothing to do with you and your situation. It has to do with Christ who calls us to himself. Jesus is always the host in a Christian gathering. More often the sound of our boredom or need is louder than his gentle prompting of the Host. People gather in a church because Jesus has prompted them to come. Always! I pray to avoid what I call a 'small church syndrome'. In a small church people know each other and easily become friends. But then their friendship and good values become the hindrance to visitors because they scrutinise people. Every visitor must see things from their perspective and look like them. Leave people alone! 'He welcomed them' Luke 9:11. Did you notice the words 'Sea of Tiberias'? The One born in Bethlehem had 11 Galilean disciples. The 'friend of sinners' welcomes all: the mathematically

		inclined Phillips, the observant Andrews...and little boys! 2. Jesus only has full-time employees. Did you notice the timing of this miracle in Mark and Luke? The disciples are on a retreat with Jesus to rest, unwind and debrief following a mission trip. According to Matthew, this event took place immediately after a report that John the Baptist had been beheaded by Herod' (Matthew 14:13). A need arises, and Jesus performs a miracle. The disciples learn that Jesus is always at work. The servants of God are always at work for Jesus is always working. We serve at the master's invitation. We don't serve because it feels good or that we feel the timing is perfect. Jesus welcomes the crowds. He needs the crowds. If the crowds are needed for the miracle, we now turn to the miracle for the crowds.
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The Miracle for the Crowds	'Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat,' testing Phillip, 'for he knew what he would do' John 6:5-6 'Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little'. John 6:7 Phillip understands the extent of the challenge and has calculations to prove. Jesus doesn't make mockery of his Mathematics! His calculation is probably accurate because there were '5000 men'. John 6:10. Andrew: 'there is a boy here with 5 barley loaves and 2 fish'. He is not suggesting these might be a solution to the problem. 'But what are they for so many?' John 6:8-9. 'Have the people sit down' and 'the men sat down, about 5000 in number' John 6:10. 'Besides women and children' Matthew 14:21 According to Luke 9:14, 'in groups of 50'. Marks adds, 'and 'groups of 100' (Mark 6:40). The people are hungry but not too hungry to take the instruction and arrange themselves in an orderly fashion. A miracle will not be evident in a chaotic environment. Also, because they sat, they could be counted! 'Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, distributed to those who were seated...So also the fish...as much as they wanted...gather up the fragments that nothing may be lost' ... filled 12 baskets with fragments from the 5 barley loaves left...'John 6:11-13. The synoptics all agree: Jesus gave these to his disciples who then distributed to the groups. It looks like as he broke the food into pieces the food multiplied. At this stage, there is no doubt that a miracle has been performed. • Probably not every single person saw him take the loaves and fish and heard him give thanks. Many must have. • According to Luke 9:12, the disciples want the people to be sent away as they are in a desolate place. But where would they get so much bread and fish if not provided for by God miraculously? This seating posture was important for the verification of the miracle.	There is a lot we can say about this miracle: we must make much of the Lord's unmatched power to transform little things into big things, for His glory. We can also note how the boy's little lunch, in the hands on an Omnipotent God, was able to feed thousands, all because Jesus cared for the masses who had been with Him the whole day. But in the Christian calendar, we are in the middle of Lent. It began last Wednesday. Lent provides us with an opportunity to seek God, inner transformation and the transformation of our world. The life of Jesus has become foreign even to Christians! We need a miracle. But we can choose to excuse ourselves from praying, 'Daniel-fast ourselves', and give many academic reasons why we won't humble ourselves, fast and pray. It's all in the mind. We learn in this story that hungry people can discipline themselves! 'as much as they wanted'. Thy ate and were all satisfied. Warren Weirsbe: <i>'This (fourth) sign shows us that salvation satisfies the inner needs of the heart. Jesus is the Bread of Life'.</i> The need for belonging in a fragmented world with very lonely people. In the South African context, where are fathers are missing, God fills the void. In the church people find friends who stick closer than siblings and spouses! People progressively become whole in Jesus.
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Weirsbe continues:

'This miracle also reminds us that, while salvation is of the Lord and bestowed only by grace, God still uses human instruments to take the Gospel message to men'.

We are a **missional church**. God works in our suburb, but he wants us to **avail our time**, bodies, resources and will. **The young boy's lunch, a very personal thing**, becomes a catalyst for Christ's power to effect a change. We can't love God with our hearts and mouths only. He **wants our all** in his service. In his book 'What on Earth are you thinking for Heaven's sake', **Michael Cassidy** says, '...to the extent that we wrestle against giving away our money... we admit that money is our god and faithlessness our sad condition...**no one is fully converted to Christ until their pocketbook is fully converted**'. My **sermons notes** are available on the website for this reason. Yet, every Sunday God gives me something fresh to preach. As was in this story, the **multiplication is in the breaking and distribution!**

In this story, Jesus also taught the multitudes. But as the day drew closer, **he had compassion on them because they were hungry**. They needed food. In his commentary on Luke, **Warren Weirsbe** notes that, *'while the disciples were too eager to see the crowd leave' Jesus was not willing to let hungry people go without food*'. **This church's mission also includes** taking care of the

		needy people in our vicinity. Some are students. Others are single. Some are married. Some are young and others are old. We need money to reach those people. That's why you have a job and a salary because we have a mission to fund. Jesus performed the miracle for the crowds. Lastly, we turn to the sign in the miracle.
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The Sign in the Miracle	Those who witnessed the miracle must have been reminded of a similar miracle performed by Prophet Elisha: <i>‘A man came from Baal-shalishah, bringing the man of God bread of the first fruits, twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. And Elisha said, ‘Give to the men, that they may eat. But his servant said, ‘How can I set this before a hundred men?’. So, he repeated, ‘Give them to the men’...so he set it before them. And they ate and had some left, ...’ 2 Kings 4:42-44</i> [barley loaf = individual serving...for the poor] ‘When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, ‘This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world. Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself’. John 6:14-15 Elisha fed 100 miraculously. Jesus here feeds more than 5000 people. Surely, One greater than Elisha was in their midst. This Good Shepherd, as R J Morgan observes, ‘had the sheep lay down in green pastures (v10!) and by still waters (v1!) while he prepared a table in the wilderness’. Psalm 23 came alive. God was standing in their midst and feeding them. The miracle was not an end in itself. It pointed to Jesus’ divinity. <i>‘For the works that the <u>Father</u> has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the <u>Father</u> has sent me’ John 5: 36</i> ‘The feeding of the multitude...is clear witness to the Person and the power of Jesus’. Kenneth & Karen Boa The miracle is not about food but a Person. The One who performs the miracle is God. Even the timing of the miracle speaks to this: <i>‘Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand’</i> John 6:4 This is the second Passover. Exactly a year later, observes R J Morgan, ‘Jesus would be broken to meet the eternal hunger and thirst in everyone who will come to Him’.	Is Jesus a Prophet (v14)? Is he a King (v15)? Yes. So why does he run away from being crowned? He is more! He is God. Warren Weirsbe: <i>The miracle was more than an act of mercy for the hungry. It was also a sign of our Lord’s messiahship and an illustration of God’s gracious provision for man’s salvation. The next day, Jesus preached a sermon on ‘the bread of life’ and urged the people to receive Him just as they had received the bread (and the fish). But they were interested in their stomach than their souls. Their desire was to make Jesus king so He could give them bread for the rest of their lives!’</i> Jesus, who welcomes all early in the narrative, runs away when the same crowds want to crown Him king! (v15) They are not looking for a Person, God. No, they seek a spiritual principle to live by, not a relationship with God. We exist, as a church, to worship a Person. We love Jesus. We want to make Jesus famous in Scottsville. Our knowledge of Him is all we want to give anyone. His glory must come from the Father and at the cross. The cross is his glory. It is his glory in the same way that our sanctification and deliverance can only come by prayer, self-denial and self-mortification! The miracle is the sign that points us to Christ’s divinity.
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CONCLUSION

- **Sheep without a shepherd.** I am praying that will help me so that at any given time **my wife and children** can be sure that I'm listening to them, **even when I sharply disagree with them all**, they have my full attention and that I'm never too busy for them. **You also are allowed to bother me.** But you also must allow other **people to bother you.** **Our economy** needs more people who allow themselves to be bothered by other people's concerns. We must work harder and longer to refine systems and make them efficient, and **not for the recognition and incentives** our employers give.
- **There is a boy with five loaves and two fish.** Look at the person next to you. Do you believe that this church needs them to fulfil her mission? What about the people you live with – **your spouse, close friends**, colleagues, employees? **Why did God give you such people?** Do they know you treasure them? When we sing the **benediction in few minutes' time**, you'll get a tiny opportunity to voice out your appreciation. There is a **dependency on people that glorifies** God.
- **Have the people sit down in groups:** People are never too hungry to sit orderly. We are not animals who cannot practice self-control. **Sanctification is always a miracle.** It is a miracle that Jesus performs with our **cooperation.**
- **This is indeed the Prophet!** He performs miracles today and the greatest of all is the miracle of being reconciled to God through Jesus. Jesus **welcomed all** and so must we. But what is the real reason you are following Jesus? **Are you seeking the bread that perishes** or the Bread of Life? **Wat soek jy?** We have the bread, the crowds and the kingdom of God's dear Son, Jesus.

Wat soek jy? Ufunani? What do you want?

NEXT SUNDAY: Jesus answers the question, 'who is the greatest'?

Amen.