



July 25, 2020. John 6: 1-21. 2 Kings 4:42-44

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#### ENTERING THE SCENE:

Morton Kelsey tells us; "In approaching either a parable or an actual event, the secret is to become silent and concentrate on the picture or scene that is presented until it comes to life and begins to move."

Pick out one person in this story and stay with them until "it comes to life and begins to move". What happened?

Did your quiet time with this gospel enlarge your understanding of God, and God's love for you? How?

#### John 6:1-21

1 Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), 2 and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the **miraculous signs** he had performed on the sick. 3 Then Jesus went up on a **mountain side** and sat down with his disciples. 4 The Jewish **Passover** Feast was near. 5 When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to **Philip**, "Where shall we **buy bread** for these people to eat?" 6 He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. 7 **Philip** answered him, "**Eight months' wages** would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" 8 Another of his disciples, **Andrew**, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, 9 Here is a boy with **five** small **barley loaves** and two small **fish**, but how far will they go among so many?" 10 Jesus said, "Have the people **sit down**." There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about **five** thousand of them. 11 Jesus then took the **loaves**, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the **fish**. 12 When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are **left over**. Let nothing be wasted." 13 So they gathered them and filled **twelve baskets** with the pieces of the **five barley loaves** left over by those who had eaten.

14 After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is the **Prophet** who is to come into the world." 15 Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him **king** by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself. 16 When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, 17 where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for **Capernaum**. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. 18 A **strong wind** was blowing and the waters grew rough. 19 When they had rowed three or **three and a half** miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were terrified. 20 But he said to them, "It is I; don't be **afraid**." 21 Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the **shore** where they were heading.

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Jesus took care of the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of the people who came out that day. If you were there, what need might you have brought to the seaside?

**PRAYER:** Don't be afraid. Lord, you say that over and over again. It is almost as if fear is the most important adversary to deal with in your estimation. Fear of not having enough. Fear of death. Fear of change. Always, fear. You came to be with us to reveal that we have nothing to fear because of the Father's unconditional love. Help me as I try to trust you when you say; "don't be afraid." Amen.

## WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

**MIRACULOUS SIGNS:** (SEE INFORMATION BELOW) Although miraculous signs were by their very nature uncommon, they were also part of the faith life of the Jewish people and were even recorded by an historian. The big question of the day was; what was the source of the power of the one performing the sign.

*Does the awareness of other miracle workers help or hinder your understanding of these episodes? Do you think they helped or hindered the people in Jesus' day?*

**MOUNTAINSIDE:** The mountainside was the traditional meeting place between the human and the divine.  
*Is there any traditional meeting place like this today? Where do you go with the expectation of encountering God?*

**PASSOVER:** This is the second Passover recorded in John's gospel. This was the time when the people's religious hopes were at their highest pitch. John wants us to begin to think of Jesus as the agent of the new Passover from bondage to freedom.

*What is binding the people and preventing them from seeing Jesus for who he really is? What in this text helps you answer this question?*

**PHILIP:** This scene takes place in Philip's home area. At one level it makes sense to ask the one most familiar with the territory such a question.

*Do you think this got in the way of Philip being able to hear the real question Jesus is asking? Might another of the disciples done better in catching Jesus' real intent? If so, why?*

**BUY BREAD:** Even after all this time, Philip is still thinking in 'logical' categories, rather than in faith categories. *When was the last time you responded to a faith question with a factual answer? If you were able to move beyond this 'common sense' response to a 'uncommon sense' one, what helped you to do this?*

**EIGHT MONTHS WAGES:** Philip reveals his lack of understanding by even calculating the cost of buying such an immense amount of bread that would only give each person a mouthful.

*What does this tell you about Philip? Would you have probably done the same?*

**ANDREW:** Andrew seems to now begin to grapple with the question at another level, but bumps up against the same limits. He is somewhat closer in that he is looking toward the resources at hand rather than going outside to buy them.

*Is this the same process you go through when trying to go beyond the common sense solutions to the uncommon sense ones?*



**FIVE:** In the language system of the day, people used numbers to indicate more than simply facts. The number five is often used to symbolize incompleteness.  
*What is incomplete in this situation, the amount of resources or the amount of faith?*

**BARLEY LOAVES:** Barley was the first to ripen and often at the Passover season. It was also the grain of the poor people. Only John's gospel gives us this information.  
*What does this add to the story for you?*

**FISH:** A staple of the diet of the day was fish that was dried and therefore available at all times. In the days of Jesus, bread, wine, and fish was what you took along if you left the house for any period of time.

*Do you think that this boy was the only one with something along for the day? What could this suggest happened that day?*

**SIT DOWN:** Now the restless crowd does not let Jesus and the disciples out of their sight.

*What do you think they expected when they were told to sit down?*



**LEFT OVER:** A clue to the poverty of the crowd is they gathered up the leftovers. The rich are unlikely to do this. What is offered to God is not lost but multiplied.

*What information about this sign does this add? When the people remembered this event, what implications about God might they make? Have you ever gone from need to having leftovers?*

**TWELVE BASKETS:** Twelve represented completeness: twelve tribes, twelve disciples, twelve baskets of leftovers. The people went from scarcity to having gifts to share, and they interpret this as the awaited sign of God's messiah.

*If you had been there that day, would you have come to this same conclusion? Why?*

**PROPHET:** The shadow of Moses hangs over this event. God fed the people in the desert with manna, and now they have just been fed again. The long awaited day seems to be dawning. With the fervor of the Passover filling the air, and hearts of the people desperate for liberation, the time seems right to seize the moment and proclaim Jesus God's anointed one.

*Is there anything in today's struggles that might make you vulnerable to the same kind of response? What are the issues that you are looking for someone to come in and make it all right for you?*

**KING:** The people wanted miracles that asked nothing from them. They could hold on to their old ideas and ways and therefore not stretch to Jesus' understanding of God.

*Are there any ways or ideas that enable you to remain the same and not see the more-ness of God?*

**CAPERNAUM:** Capernaum was the base of operations for Jesus and the disciples in the first phase of his ministry. It was there that he often went to rest and instruct the disciples in private. Jesus had been alone after he fled to avoid the crowd (and quite possibly the messianic fever in the apostles eyes as well). The disciples do what most of us would do they went home. Once again they are out on the lake in a dangerous time of day.

*Jesus comes to them walking on the water. Try to imagine the confusion and fear they must have felt.*



**STRONG WIND:** Once again we have the strong wind causing trouble for the boat.

*Was the 'strong wind' or fear and confusion about who Jesus was the most troubling for these men? Would it have been that for you?*

**THREE AND A HALF-MILES:** Three and a half are half of the perfect number seven. The disciples are only half way there in their understanding of what is going on when they spot Jesus coming to them over the water.

*Have you ever been 'half way there' in your understanding of something when Jesus came to you 'across the water'? Did his*

*coming enable you to suddenly get to the shore of comprehension?*

**NOTE:** (A typical scene along the Sea of Galilee. At night, after sunset, the sea can become very rough and dangerous, because of the change in temperature as the air cools down.)

**TERRIFIED / AFRAID:** Over and over, the poor disciples find themselves in situations where they were terrified and afraid. It seems to be part of the process of growing in faith.

*How can fear open you to more understandings? Are you able to use the opportunities of danger to move beyond habitual responses?*

**SHORE:** Once Jesus joined the disciples in the boat they experienced the safety of the shore.

*How has Jesus joined you in the 'boat' and brought you safely ashore?*

**PARALLEL TEXTS:** Jn. 6:1-13 //Mt. 14:13-21; Mk. 6:32-44; Lk. 9:10-17; Jn. 6:4 //Jn. 2:13; 11:55; Jn. 6:11 //Jn. 21; 13; Jn. 6: 13 // 2 Kgs. 4:42ff; Jn. 6:15 //Jn. 18:36; Jn. 6:16 //Mt. 14:22-33; Mk. 6:45-54;

**OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK:** 2 Kgs. 4:42-44; Ps. 145:10-18; Eph. 4:1-6; Jn. 6: 1-15; Revised Common Lectionary: 2 Sam. 11:1-15; Ps. 14; Eph. 3:14-21; Jn. 6:1-21

#### **SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:**

The heart was made to admire. It admires attributes that another possesses and it lacks. This is how it affirms the good whether it possesses it or not. Its attention is always drawn to things greater than itself. When two or more hearts admire the same thing a bond develops. If one is arbitrarily excluded from that bond it can be confusing, not to mention painful. Everyone needs a community. Br. Jonah Wharff

We act in faith – and miracles occur. In consequence, we are tempted to make the miracles the ground for our faith. The cost of such weakness is that we lose the confidence of faith. Faith is, faith creates, faith carries. It is not derived from, nor created, nor carried by anything except its own reality.

124 Hammarskjold, Dag. [Markings](#). NY. Ballantine Books. 1964.

Kelsey, Morton. [The Other Side of Silence](#), Paulist Press, NY. 1976. A guide to Christian Meditation. A practical manual for those trying out this time tested way of going beyond the ordinary level of consciousness. "In approaching either a parable or an actual event, the secret is to become silent and concentrate on the picture or scene that is presented until it comes to life and begins to move." Pg. 215.

"We may gain some inkling of what God is if we attempt by means of every sensation to reach the reality of each creature, not giving up until we are alive to what transcends it . . ." - Clement of Alexandria, "Miscellanies"

That is why awe is the most reverent of feelings. You feel, when you are in awe, that you are human, that your mind is dwarfed by what it confronts, that you cannot capture it in a set of beliefs, and that you had best keep your mouth closed and your mind open while awaiting further disclosure. Pg. 147.  
Woodruff, Paul. [Reverence: Renewing a Forgotten Virtue](#). NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 2001.

The first century CE Jewish historian Flavius Josephus describes several Jewish miracle workers around the turn of the era. A certain Eleazar expelled a demon in the presence of the Roman emperor Vespasian (who was also said to be a miracle worker). Eleazar commanded the demon to overturn a nearby bowl of water, proving that the demon had in fact left the man. (Antiquities of the Jews 8.46-47)

Honi, a certain Galilean charismatic, is said to have made it rain after a long rainless period. Whereas Josephus says he did this simply by praying, (Antiquities 14:22), the Mishnah, an early rabbinic text, says he drew a circle and adjured God that he would not move from the circle until it had rained. (Ta'anit 3:8)

another Galilean charismatic, Hanina ben Dosa, was a famous healer. When the son of his community leader, Yohannan ben Zakkai, was taken ill, Yohann said to the healer, "Hanina, pray for my son that he may live!" Hanina put his head between his knees and prayed - and the boy was made well. (Babylonian Talmud, Berakot 43b)

Hanina could even cure from a distance. When Rabbi Gamaliel's son was afflicted with a very high fever, students were sent to Hanina's home in Galilee. Hanina went into his chamber, prayed, and upon returning, said, "Go home, his fever has departed from him." When the students came back, Galaliel confirmed that his son had been healed. (Babylonian Talmud Berakot 43b).

**SEE THE PICTURE INCLUDED IN LAST WEEKS GUIDE SHOWING JESUS WITH A WAND IN HIS HAND.**

Fossum, Carl. [Jesus' Miracles](#). Bible Review, 4/94. Pages 18-19.

**CAPERNAUM:** Capernaum is on the NW shore of the Sea of Galilee and is 7 miles N of Tiberias. During the early Roman period it was an important border village between Galilee and the Golan. The gospels report that Jesus had a close relationship with four prominent, wealthy families from the upper part of the city. Currently excavations are focusing on the first-century A. D. ruins along the shoreline near the all that separates the part of Capernaum held by the Greek Orthodox Church from the part held by the Franciscan order. The dig team will expand the excavation of the roman bath and the villa adjacent to it. Their long-term goal is to uncover information about the lives of the wealthy citizens of Capernaum and Jesus' relationship to them. Biblical Archaeology Review. Jan/Feb 2003. Pages 50-1.

You can find a good chapter on the synagogue in Capernaum in pages 33ff: Further on in this book you can find information on the churches that developed around the Sea of Galilee in pages 91ff.  
Hoppe, Leslie, O.P. [The Synagogues and churches of Ancient Palestine](#). Collegeville, MN. The Liturgical Press. 1994.

#### **SUGGESTED READINGS:**

Shea, John. [Stories of Faith](#). Thomas More Press, Chicago. THE INDISCRIMINATE HOST: 1980, Page 168.

White, William R. [Stories For the Journey](#). Augsburg Pub. House. Minneapolis, MN. A PARTY FOR COATS: 1988. Pages 67-8.

White, William B. [Stories For the Telling](#). Augsburg Pub. House, Minneapolis, MN. 1986. HEAVEN AND HELL: Pages 70-71.

[Mitchell, Stephen. The Enlightened Heart](#). Harper & Row, NY. 1989. TAO: Page 13.