

## John 6.1-21

1 Μετὰ ταῦτα ἀπῆλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς πέραν τῆς θαλάσσης τῆς Γαλιλαίας τῆς Τιβεριάδος.

<sup>NRSV</sup> After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias.

<sup>MGVH</sup> After these things, Jesus went away across the Sea of Galilee. (That is, the [Sea of] Tiberias).

- Jesus had gone to Jerusalem in 5.1, and there is no mention that he had returned to Galilee. Traditionally, the feeding of the 5000 is commemorated at Tabgha, about two miles west of Capernaum. Apparently, in light of 6.17, this story does begin somewhere near Capernaum, but since they cross back over to Capernaum in 6.17, the location of the feeding is more likely further east somewhere near Bethsaida. On the other hand, since 6.23 makes reference to “boats from Tiberias,” some locate the feeding somewhere closer to Tiberias on the western shore.

2 ἠκολούθει δὲ αὐτῷ ὄχλος πολὺς, ὅτι ἐθεώρουν τὰ σημεῖα ἃ ἐποίει ἐπὶ τῶν ἀσθενούντων.

<sup>NRSV</sup> A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick.

<sup>MGVH</sup> Now a large crowd kept following him, because they were seeing the signs that he was doing for the sick.

3 ἀνῆλθεν δὲ εἰς τὸ ὄρος Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἐκεῖ ἐκάθητο μετὰ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ.

<sup>NRSV</sup> Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples.

<sup>MGVH</sup> So Jesus went up the mountain and he was there sitting with his disciples.

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4 ἦν δὲ ἐγγὺς τὸ πάσχα, ἡ ἑορτὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων.

<sup>NRSV</sup> Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near.

<sup>MGVH</sup> Now the Passover was near, the Jewish festival.

- This would be the second Passover during Jesus’ ministry. Cf. 2.23. The third would be during his final week in Jerusalem. What is the point of this detail? Cf. v 5.

5 Ἐπάρας οὖν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ θεασάμενος ὅτι πολὺς ὄχλος ἔρχεται πρὸς αὐτὸν λέγει πρὸς Φίλιππον· πόθεν ἀγοράσωμεν ἄρτους ἵνα φάγωσιν οὗτοι;

<sup>NRSV</sup> When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?”

<sup>MGVH</sup> Therefore, when Jesus looked up and saw that a large crowd was coming toward him, he says to Philip, “Where are we going to buy bread so that these people can eat?”

- The οὖν indicates that there is some conclusion to be drawn from the preceding statement. John is pointing to a connection between what Jesus will do here shortly in feeding the crowd and with the Passover festival. Keeping in mind that Jesus’ last supper in John is not a Passover meal, this feeding story (and its further implications in the rest of chapter 6) serves as the commentary in John on the early Christian practice of a shared meal. I.e., the synoptic gospels explicitly depict Jesus’ last supper as a Passover meal and invoke Passover connotations in doing so. In John, Jesus is connected with the Passover lamb (and Jesus is crucified on the day before Passover when the lambs are being sacrificed), but the meal connotations are made clear here in ch. 6.

6 τοῦτο δὲ ἔλεγεν πειράζων αὐτόν· αὐτὸς γὰρ ᾔδει τί ἔμελλεν ποιεῖν.

<sup>NRSV</sup> He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do.

<sup>MGVH</sup> (Now he was saying this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do.)

- Note that this is a narrative aside directed to the reader.

7 ἀπεκρίθη αὐτῷ [ὁ] Φίλιππος· διακοσίων δηναρίων ἄρτοι οὐκ ἄρκοῦσιν αὐτοῖς ἵνα ἕκαστος βραχύ [τι] λάβῃ.

<sup>NRSV</sup> Philip answered him, “Six months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.”

<sup>MGVH</sup> Philip answered him, “Two hundred denarii, more than a half year’s wages, would not be enough for them for each to get a little.”

8 λέγει αὐτῷ εἷς ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ, Ἀνδρέας ὁ ἀδελφὸς Σίμωνος Πέτρου·

<sup>NRSV</sup> One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him,

<sup>MGVH</sup> One of his disciples, Andrew, Simeon Petros’ brother, says to him,

9 ἔστιν παιδάριον ὧδε ὃς ἔχει πέντε ἄρτους κριθίνους καὶ δύο ὀψάρια· ἀλλὰ ταῦτα τί ἔστιν εἰς τοσοῦτους;

<sup>NRSV</sup> “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?”

<sup>MGVH</sup> “There’s a little boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are those among so many people?”

10 εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς· ποιήσατε τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἀναπεσεῖν. ἦν δὲ χόρτος πολὺς ἐν τῷ τόπῳ. ἀνέπεσαν οὖν οἱ ἄνδρες τὸν ἀριθμὸν ὡς πεντακισχίλιοι.

<sup>NRSV</sup> Jesus said, “Make the people sit down.” Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all.

<sup>MGVH</sup> Jesus said, “Make the people sit down.” Now there was lots of grass in that place, so they sat down, about five thousand of them.

11 ἔλαβεν οὖν τοὺς ἄρτους ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ εὐχαριστήσας διέδωκεν τοῖς ἀνακειμένοις ὁμοίως καὶ ἐκ τῶν ὀψαρίων ὅσον ἤθελον.

<sup>NRSV</sup> Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted.

<sup>MGVH</sup> Then Jesus took the loaves, and after he gave thanks, he distributed them to the ones who were seated; so also with the fish, as much as they wanted.

- The *Textus Receptus* > KJV has a textual variant that parallels the feeding of the 4000 story in Matthew 15.36 where Jesus gave the bread to the disciples, and the disciples give it to the crowd.

12 ὡς δὲ ἐνεπλήσθησαν, λέγει τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ· συναγάγετε τὰ περισσεύσαντα κλάσματα, ἵνα μὴ τι ἀπόληται.

<sup>NRSV</sup> When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, “Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.”

<sup>MGVH</sup> And further, when they all had their fill, he says to his disciples, “Go gather the leftover pieces, so that nothing is wasted.”

- The δὲ is more than a simple connective (“and”), so I’m using “and further” here to indicate that an extension of the previous verse is intended. Note all the δὲ’s John uses throughout this section that indicate more than simple conjunction (as would usually be done with καί).
  - δέ: 6.2, 3, 4, 6, 10, 12, 16, 20

13 συνήγαγον οὖν καὶ ἐγέμισαν δώδεκα κοφίνους κλασμάτων ἐκ τῶν πέντε ἄρτων τῶν κριθίνων ἃ ἐπερίσσευσαν τοῖς βεβρωκόσιν.

<sup>NRSV</sup> So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets.

<sup>MGVH</sup> So then, they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets from the pieces of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had consumed them.

- Note all the οὖν’s John uses throughout this section (three in a row starting here in v13) that indicate progression and result of what previously happened.
  - οὖν: 6.5, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 19, 21
- “Twelve” is an important symbolic number in Israelite religion.
- βεβρωκόσιν < βιβρώσκω: This is the only time this verb for eating is used in the NT. (The cognate noun, βρῶσις, is used 11x, 3x here in John 6.) This word has the sense of “eat, consume, devour” but John appears to be using it intentionally as a synonym for the more common ἐσθίω used 11x in John 6. This is all leading up to the use of τρώγω in 6.54, 56, 57, 58 which has a more graphic sense of “gnaw, bite, chew, crunch.” I.e., as elsewhere in John, the verbs used in the dialogue increases the intensity of the conflict or misunderstanding.

14 Οἱ οὖν ἄνθρωποι ἰδόντες ὃ ἐποίησεν σημεῖον ἔλεγον ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ἀληθῶς ὁ προφήτης ὁ ἐρχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον.

<sup>NRSV</sup> When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, “This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.”

<sup>MGVH</sup> Then, when the people saw the sign which he had done, they began saying, “This is truly the Prophet who is coming into the world!”

- σημεῖον = “sign”: Rather than use the typical word for a miracle (δύναμις), John always refers to Jesus’ miraculous actions as “signs” that point to his identity.
- “The Prophet who is coming into the world” is likely an allusion to the “prophet like Moses” promised in Deuteronomy 18.15.

15 Ἰησοῦς οὖν γνοὺς ὅτι μέλλουσιν ἔρχεσθαι καὶ ἀρπάζειν αὐτὸν ἵνα ποιήσωσιν βασιλέα, ἀνεχώρησεν πάλιν εἰς τὸ ὄρος αὐτὸς μόνος.

<sup>NRSV</sup> When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

<sup>MGVH</sup> Then, when Jesus understood that they were going to come and grab him in order to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain, by himself, alone.

- “...he withdrew again to the mountain, by himself, alone.”: This serves to refer back to 6.3 and frame the incident. (Jesus and his disciples had already gone up the mountain, and the people came to them there, so apparently Jesus went up higher with an emphasis on him going alone by himself.)

16 Ὡς δὲ ὀψία ἐγένετο κατέβησαν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὴν θάλασσαν

<sup>NRSV</sup> When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea,

<sup>MGVH</sup> Now when evening came, his disciples went down to the sea,

- They “went down,” because they had gone up the mountain with Jesus in v3.

17 καὶ ἐμβάντες εἰς πλοῖον ἤρχοντο πέραν τῆς θαλάσσης εἰς Καφαρναοῦμ. καὶ σκοτία ἤδη ἐγεγόνει καὶ οὐπω ἐληλύθει πρὸς αὐτοὺς ὁ Ἰησοῦς,

<sup>NRSV</sup> got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them.

<sup>MGVH</sup> and they got into a boat and began going to the other side to Capernaum. And it had already become dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them.

- John uses a circumstantial participle (ἐμβάντες) and a string of καὶ clauses to quickly set up the scene.

18 ἢ τε θάλασσα ἀνέμου μεγάλου πνέοντος διεγείρετο.

<sup>NRSV</sup> The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing.

<sup>MGVH</sup> What’s more, the sea was churning due to a strong wind blowing.

- The τε indicates an extension of the previous thought > “What’s more...”

19 ἐληλακότες οὖν ὡς σταδίους εἴκοσι πέντε ἢ τριάκοντα θεωροῦσιν τὸν Ἰησοῦν περιπατοῦντα ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης

καὶ ἐγγὺς τοῦ πλοίου γινόμενον, καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν.

<sup>NRSV</sup> When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified.

<sup>MGVH</sup> Then, when they had rowed about twenty-five or thirty stadia (about three or four miles), they see Jesus; walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were afraid.

- From somewhere near Bethsaida (cf. v1) to Capernaum is less than 2.5 miles, so if the geography is to be taken as realistic, we must imagine a location starting further to the south and east of Bethsaida and landing (v21) somewhat west of Capernaum. I am unaware of any symbolic significance for “twenty-five or thirty.”
- The details about Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat are almost offhandedly expressed using participles. The main verbs refer to the disciples who “see, behold” (θεωροῦσιν using a historical present) and “were afraid.” I.e., this scene is not focusing on the miracle of walking on the sea, and it is not referred to as a “sign.” Still, 6.22 indicates that people knew that something strange happened for Jesus to have gotten to the other side without taking a boat.

20 ὁ δὲ λέγει αὐτοῖς· ἐγὼ εἰμι· μὴ φοβεῖσθε.

<sup>NRSV</sup> But he said to them, “It is I; do not be afraid.”

<sup>MGVH</sup> But he says to them, “I am [Jesus]. Don’t be afraid.”

- ἐγὼ εἰμι = “I am”: The phrase echoes God’s proclamation to Moses in Exodus 3.14.

21 ἤθελον οὖν λαβεῖν αὐτὸν εἰς τὸ πλοῖον, καὶ εὐθέως ἐγένετο τὸ πλοῖον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἰς ἣν ὑπῆγον.

<sup>NRSV</sup> Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

<sup>MGVH</sup> Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat arrived at the land toward which they were going.

- It is not clear what is intended here.
  - The disciples had been afraid, but once they were assured it was Jesus, they wanted to take or willingly took him into the boat.
  - The disciples wanted to take him into the boat, but they suddenly reached the shore, and Jesus did not need to get in.

**John 6.1-21** mgvhoffman translation

<sup>1</sup> After these things, Jesus went away across the Sea of Galilee. (That is, the [Sea of] Tiberias).

<sup>2</sup> Now a large crowd kept following him,  
because they were seeing the signs that he was doing for the sick.

<sup>3</sup> So Jesus went up the mountain  
and he was there sitting with his disciples.

<sup>4</sup> Now the Passover was near, the Jewish festival.

<sup>5</sup> Therefore, when Jesus looked up  
and saw that a large crowd was coming toward him,  
he says to Philip,

“Where are we going to buy bread so that these people can eat?”

<sup>6</sup> (Now he was saying this to test him,  
for he himself knew what he was going to do.)

<sup>7</sup> Philip answered him,  
“Two hundred denarii, more than a half year’s wages,  
would not be enough for them for each to get a little.”

<sup>8</sup> One of his disciples, Andrew, Simeon Petros’ brother, says to him,

<sup>9</sup> “There’s a little boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish,  
but what are those among so many people?”

<sup>10</sup> Jesus said,  
“Make the people sit down.”

Now there was lots of grass in that place,  
so they sat down, about five thousand of them.

<sup>11</sup> Then Jesus took the loaves,  
and after he gave thanks,  
he distributed them to the ones who were seated;  
so also with the fish, as much as they wanted.

<sup>12</sup> And what’s more, when they all had their fill,  
he says to his disciples,  
“Go gather the leftover pieces, so that nothing is wasted.”

<sup>13</sup> So then, they gathered them up  
and filled twelve baskets from the pieces of the five barley loaves  
which were left over by those who had consumed them.

<sup>14</sup> Then, when the people saw the sign which he had done,  
they began saying,

“This is truly the Prophet who is coming into the world!”

<sup>15</sup> Then, when Jesus understood that they were going to come  
and grab him in order to make him king,  
he withdrew again to the mountain, by himself, alone.

<sup>16</sup> Now when evening came,  
his disciples went down to the sea,  
<sup>17</sup> and they got into a boat  
and began going to the other side to Capernaum.  
And it had already become dark,

and Jesus had not yet come to them.

<sup>18</sup> What's more, the sea was churning due to a strong wind blowing.

<sup>19</sup> Then, when they had rowed about twenty-five or thirty stadia (about three or four miles), they see Jesus;

walking on the sea

and coming near the boat,

and they were afraid.

<sup>20</sup> But he says to them,

“I am [Jesus]. Don't be afraid.”

<sup>21</sup> Then they were willing to take him into the boat,

and immediately the boat arrived at the land toward which they were going.