

Pentecost 10—B
John 6:1-15
Leave It All To Jesus

You have probably all seen one of these little books. It's the kind you give your friends when they have their first baby or it's the kind you find in the office of a children's doctor. The one I remember most is the one that explained where milk comes from. First, there was this picture of beautiful meadow of green grass. This four-legged creature called a cow is there munching on that beautiful green grass. The next page has a farmer bringing this cow into his barn, hooking her up to machine, and then there's milk flowing through glass pipes to a refrigerated tank in his milk house. After that, the story continues with a big truck coming and hauling a load of milk to a factory. Then a delivery truck picks up the milk from the factory and carries it to a grocery store. The next scene is a picture of a little baby crying. Mom sends the Dad to the grocery store and he buys a bottle of milk. The last picture of this little book is of baby happily drinking that milk from his bottle.

Innocent little story and yet that little story illustrates the difference between how your neighbor looks at life and how you look at life as a Christian. You see, that story is God-less. There is no God in it. The Bible says that it is our Lord Jesus who sends the proper weather and then makes the green grass grow for that cow to eat. The Bible says it is the Lord Jesus who made the farmer in the story and the mother and the father and the baby. The Bible says that it is the Lord Jesus who allowed the milk factory and the grocery store to be built and blessed the labors of every one of their employees.

Now maybe it seems a little too picky to insist that you and I be reminded at every turn that the Lord Jesus is responsible for our well-being, but when little children grow up without regularly hearing that Jesus puts every glass of milk on the dinner table, those children begin to show their ignorance of the Lord's role in their lives when they are full-grown. How many of us grown-up children go to work each day without asking the Savior to bless our day's work? How many meals were gulped down without a prayer or how many table prayers were said out of habit instead of in love and thanksgiving? How many foolish pleasures were indulged in because we forgot as we were handing out the dollars that those were really our Lord's dollars and not ours? How much worrying and fretting have we done about our health, our money, and so many other things in our lives instead of remembering that our Lord Jesus promised to always take care of those who know that they can't take care of themselves? Yes, just maybe you and I have been taught too many times to foolishly believe that milk comes from a cow.

That's why this great story is here in front of us. It's no accident that this story has been recorded in each of the four Gospels. As we look at it now from the inspired pen of the apostle John, this story will hold before our eyes and our hearts an all-sufficient Savior to whom you and I can confidently entrust every challenge, every problem, and every circumstance of our lives. Today God's Word declares to you and to me: Leave it all to Jesus.

I. To recognize what our needs are

The great preacher of repentance, John the Baptist, had just been murdered by a drunken King Herod. Jesus had just had another one of those confrontations with his enemies, the Pharisees, because he had healed a man paralyzed for 38 years on the Sabbath Day. The

disciples had just returned from their first preaching tour. Jesus decided that they all needed a day off and so they got into a boat and traveled to a remote area on the other side of the Sea of Galilee where they would have some precious rest and quiet time together.

But that's not the way it worked out. Somehow word got out that Jesus had crossed the lake. When Jesus and his disciples reached their retreat, they discovered a mass of humanity who had beat them there. What did Jesus do? The majority of that crowd had followed him out there to the wilderness only because they were impressed with his miracles. Did Jesus say to them: "This is my day off. Come and see me some other time"? No, Matthew said that when Jesus saw this mass of humanity heading in his direction: "*He had compassion on them*" (14:14). Literally those Greek words mean that Jesus' heart went out to them. Mark wrote that Jesus saw this mass of humanity as "*sheep without a shepherd*" (6:34). This Shepherd doesn't just leave these sheep alone and hope they'll come home wagging their tails behind them. This Shepherd recognizes their greatest need. This Shepherd goes on an all out search and rescue mission for these lost sheep. This Shepherd puts first things first. Mark wrote that "*Jesus began teaching them many things*" (6:34). Luke wrote that Jesus "*welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing*" (9:11). What a blessed afternoon this must have been for these people. But before you know it, the mountains to the west began to cast their evening shadows across the landscape. The people have been listening all day without eating. There was no EconoFoods, McDonald's, or even a Quick Trip for them to visit out here in this wilderness. It would be cruel and maybe even fatal to send 15,000-20,000 men, women, and children back to their villages on an empty stomach. After tending to their spiritual needs, Jesus now turns his attention to their bodily needs. John said that Jesus "*knew what he was going to do*" (6) but first Jesus arranged a learning session for his disciples—and for us.

Jesus asked the test question: "*Where can we buy bread for these people to eat?*" (5) This was Philip's answer: "*Two hundred denarii (eight month's wages) worth of bread would not buy enough for each of them to have just a little*" (7). Philip looked in front of him and saw all these hungry people and Philip looked behind him at a treasury with not enough cash and Philip flunked the test. You see, Philip didn't look up. Andrew did the very same thing. Like Philip, he looked in front of him and saw all these hungry people and he looked behind him at a little boy with some bread and fish saying "*but what is that for so many people?*" (8) Andrew flunked the test. You see, Andrew didn't look up. Twelve men who had seen Jesus perform all kinds of great miracles were now telling him: "We've got a problem here that can't be solved." They forgot that someone was there with them who can solve any and every problem, no matter how small or how gigantic it is.

II. To provide his solutions for them

When the disciples couldn't solve this problem out there in the wilderness, Jesus himself took over. He had the crowd sit down. He took the five loaves and two fish, said grace, and then handed it to his disciples to give to the crowd. See what happened to that little boy's lunch in Jesus' hands! It did not become less and less, but more and more, until everyone had eaten. This was not some skimpy luncheon or an in-between snack. This was a feast. Everyone who ate was full and there were twelve baskets of leftovers. Suppose you'd buy seven of the smallest loaves of bread you could find at EconoFoods and you catch two walleye from the Mississippi River.

Then try to imagine feeding a city the size of ours and still have twelve meals left over for you. Visualize that and you'll just begin to comprehend the greatness of this miracle.

"Where can we buy bread for these people to eat?" (5) That's a test question which has been repeated in our lives in many different ways since that day. Do you and I pass that test question any better than Philip and Andrew did? Like them, do we sometimes look forward and backward in our lives, instead of looking up? Do we look forward to next month's bills, to those car and house payments, to those grocery bills, to those doctor and dentist bills, to our children's education, to our summer vacation, and to our retirement? Then do we look back to see how much money we have now and how big our next paycheck is going to be? But we don't look up and we worry and we plan and we live as though our compassionate and all-powerful Savior was non-existent! Do we sometimes look forward at some of those problems in our family life, those trials and troubles we seem to have to struggle with day in and day out? Then do we look back at our feeble attempts to work them out or our feelings as to how we think it should be going in our lives? But we don't look up and we worry and we plan and we live as though our compassionate and all-powerful Savior was nowhere to be found. Like Philip and Andrew, how easy it is to let life and its many difficulties overwhelm us so that we give up and say: "This problem just cannot not be solved." All because we forget to look up and write our Lord Jesus into the daily stories of our lives. And what happens is that we end up believing that milk comes from cows.

But milk does not come from cows. Milk and all those other things we need in our lives that we call "daily bread" come from Jesus. This Jesus stands before today to teach us all that blessed truth once again. The Jesus who looked with such tender love at the mass of humanity who came to him then, is looking with that same tender love at you and me. The Jesus who recognized the needs of each person in that crowd is the Jesus who recognizes the needs of each of us here this morning. Jesus knows what is going on right now in our lives. Jesus understands what you and I are going through. And this Jesus who fed all those hungry people with just five loaves and two fish will always help us in our darkest moments and in our greatest needs. In his infinite wisdom our Jesus will always provide the best solution to even our most gigantic problem. We can't do it, but Jesus can. Don't worry. Jesus has the right solution to your problem. Trust him. You see, Jesus Christ always takes care of those who know that they can't take care of themselves. That's why the Bible says: *"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you"* (1 Peter 5:7).

"He cares for you." What a comforting sentence that is. Next time we doubt that remember the greatest of Jesus' miracles didn't happen on this hillside here, but on the hill we call Calvary. This miracle is why we can trust Jesus to solve all the other problems of our lives. It's this biggest miracle Paul so triumphantly pointed to when he said: *"If God is for us who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"* (Romans 8:31) You see, this miracle here only reminds us of Jesus' solution to our most important need. Even though this feast put on by Jesus takes up the majority of our sermon text, let us not forget what Jesus did first before he performed this awesome miracle. Before Jesus fed their bodies, Jesus fed their souls. Jesus told them about their sins and Jesus told them that he had come to pay for those sins and to take them away from them forever. What Jesus took care of first emphasizes what Jesus says to all of us: *"Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be given to you as well"* (Matthew 6:33). But this crowd didn't learn that lesson. A Savior who could solve life's biggest

problem wasn't on the top of their list. We read that this crowd wanted to take Jesus by force and make him into their kind of king, a king who'd dazzle people with miracles and maybe drive the Romans from their land and keep them all fat and sassy. That's not the king Jesus came to be. His crown would be made of thorns. His throne would be a wooden cross. The enemies he would crush would be sin, Satan, and death. Because this crowd wasn't hungry for such a king, Jesus had to leave them.

There is a crowd here today. All of us in this crowd want Jesus to take care of our health, our families, and everything else that has to do with our day to day survival on this earth. But does each of us in this crowd also want a Jesus to take care the things that really matter most of all? Is the eternal welfare of souls always the number one priority of our lives? There is one desperate need that you and I will always have. That desperate need is forgiveness. Just look back over this past week and see how desperate that need is. How many times did you and I use our minds and our mouths and our hands to anything but God-pleasing things? Now there's a problem far greater than paying all those other bills we have in our lives. For such a bill as our sins we have no solution, only an eternity separated from God in hell's fires and in Satan's company to face, but our Jesus has the solution. He took our place and was punished for our sins. Our soul and our body have been saved. Yes, Jesus has the solution—his mercy and his forgiveness. Jesus is there to receive you and me and to give us his best miracle for this life and the next one. The one who so miraculously fed a great crowd with a meager supply of food says to every troubled and burdened sinner in this crowd: *"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"* (John 6:35).

Milk does not come from cows. It comes from Jesus. So does the fact that we're fed, clothed, and housed better than any other nation on earth, the fact that seeds planted in our soil turn into wheat and corn and garden vegetables, the fact the sun shines on us each day and the clouds open up letting rain come down, the fact that what a paper boy makes is more than the annual salary of half the men on this planet. But best of all, coming from Jesus is his unending forgiveness for our sins, his wise and loving guidance in every detail of our lives, his strength and comfort for every rough day of our lives, and his taking us someday to live forever with him in the joys and glories of heaven. That's what Jesus' miracle of feeding over 5,000 souls with a little boy's lunch says to us this day. That is why, for those other days still to be given to us you and I really can leave it all to Jesus. Amen.

Hymns: 353, 349