

Father in heaven, as we come to your word this morning, we look to you to send blessing and help from the sanctuary, that in your light we might see light, that you would give us to drink of the river of your delights, O Lord, from the abundance of your house, that we might learn that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes out of your mouth. We offer these prayers. in Jesus' name, that you would save the lost and restore the backslider and build us all up in your ways, for Christ's sake. Amen. Please take your seats and turn with me in your copy of the Word of God to John's Gospel, chapter 6. I'm going to read the first 15 verses to the praise of God. Please listen carefully. After this, Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. The large crowd was following him because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. Lifting up his eyes then and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, where are we to buy bread so that these people may eat? He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, 200 denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, there's a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many? Jesus said, have the people sit down. Now there was much grass in the place, so the men sat down, about 5,000 in number. Jesus then 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. And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, gather up the leftover fragments that nothing may be lost. So they gathered them up and filled 12 baskets with fragments from those who had eaten. sorry, from the five barley loaves left by those who'd eaten. 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. Amen. The grass withers and the flower falls off, but the word of God endures forever. When we find Jesus this morning in the wilderness, Matthew calls this place a barren, desolate land, and he's there with his people. And it occurs to me as we walk alongside Jesus this morning that you and I, we spend most of our life in the wilderness. wandering between the Egypt we've been redeemed from, the world, and the promised land, the new heavens and the new earth, which we have been redeemed to and for, but we've not yet reached there. And the wilderness, as it was for Israel in the days of Moses, is so often a place where God tests his people, where our tank is empty, and our resources

are meager, and our options are, shall we say, limited. Perhaps you find yourself in

the wilderness this morning. Perhaps you find your resources dwindling and your strength flagging. Perhaps you find yourself confronted by needs that are too great for you to fulfill and burdens that are too heavy for you to carry and problems that are too complex for you to solve. Perhaps you have no idea this morning how you're gonna cope And perhaps that slimy, slithering serpent is saddling up alongside you and whispering in your ear, are you sure you can trust Jesus? Is he enough? And what's he done for you lately? Well, as you look at these verses with me this morning, if you're noticing a parallel between Israel in the wilderness and the disciples, And Moses in the wilderness and Jesus, you're on the right track. Now, if you read the whole chapter, you'd see it much more clearly. But one of the great themes in John's gospel is the contrast between Moses and Jesus. The law came through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. Christ is set forth as the new tabernacle in the first chapter of the book, you remember. The word became flesh and tabernacled amongst us, the Greek says, and we beheld his glory, the Shekinah glory that followed Israel as a pillar of fire by night, brightening their gloomy darkness, and a pillar of cloud by day, leading them steadfastly from Egypt to the promised land. Jesus has replaced the temple, the tabernacle complex, and he is that presence of God in our midst. And he's leading us on a new exodus, not out of Egypt, but out of the world. Not delivering us from the bondage of Pharaoh and slavery, but the bondage of sin and our rebellion. And as you read the book of John, you'll constantly see these interplays comparing Jesus with John, or Jesus with Moses. If you look at the end of the last chapter, the very last words in John 5 were about Moses. If you'd believe Moses, Jesus said, you'd believe me. Chapter 6, it's the time of the Passover, reminiscent of Israel's exodus. Interesting that John skips over lots of months, maybe nine months, between John 5 and John 6 to get to a Passover time. Just like Moses, Jesus leads people up to a mountain, Mount Sinai in Exodus, the Golan Heights here in John 6. Just like in the days of Moses, whenever they were led out of Egypt on Passover night, they had a difficult river crossing, the Red Sea, and a stormy wind separated the waters. Well, similarly, after this Passover time, Jesus leads the people across a stormy passage of water. And then once they got across the water into the wilderness wanderings proper, there was the constant problem about food and God sent manna from heaven. If you read on in John 6, you'll see that Jesus is the manna of heaven. I am the bread come down from heaven who gives my life as the life of the world. Lots of interplay. Also, Jesus, in Deuteronomy 18,

God promised to raise up a prophet like Moses. And at the end of our passage this morning, we find the people wondering, is this the prophet that God spoke about back then in the day of Deuteronomy? So lots and lots of interplay between Jesus and Moses. Now, if you remember the time of the wilderness wanderings, we've been thinking about that in our Wednesday lunchtimes, that there were times of testing. And God tested Israel, and you can see that in Deuteronomy 8. No time to go there now, but if you read that this afternoon, you see the big take-home of the wilderness wanderings was there were times of testing. God tested their obedience. He tested their commitment to worship, and he tested their trust. And so it's no surprise, given all those interplays, that in the middle of this passage we find a test, as Christ tests Philip and the rest of the disciples to see what they would do. Well, whenever you're in the wilderness and we're battling with trial, getting things we don't want to have and losing things we want to keep, when we're suffering in the wilderness, we face two key questions. The first question is, what kind of savior do you have? And the second is, what kind of king do you want? Let's walk through these two questions together this morning. First of all, what kind of savior do you have? And we'll see this being teased out in the testing of the disciples. Three things to see under this first point. First of all, he's the kind of savior who is kind to those who seek him impurely." A large crowd come to Jesus. But notice why they came, verse 2, and a large crowd was following him because they saw the signs he was doing. They came because of the signs they saw. They did not come because of the words they heard. They weren't coming to Christ so much for instruction. They were coming to be dazzled by His miracles. Their motives, in a sense, are more carnal. They see Him as a Savior who can do great things for them, who can deliver them from Rome, who can lead them to a better earthly life, perhaps. who can heal their diseases, supply their needs, and so forth. And Christ can do all those things. But that's not the chief reason why he's come. And we've seen this dynamic, the people following him because of his signs, we've seen that already caused Jesus a measure of holy frustration. Remember the end of John 4, Jesus kind of blurts out in holy frustration, unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe, right? And so people are following Jesus for the wrong reasons. But they're coming to him anyway. And when they come, what does Jesus do? Does he make a whip out of rope and drive them away? Does he send them home hungry? Does he say to them, if you'd come to me with proper faith, you'd believe with all your heart, and wanted me to be a savior

to save you from your sins, then I'd feed you. But forget it, guys. Go find your own Chick-fil-A today for lunch. No, Christ doesn't do that. Even though they come with impure motives, even though they come in the wrong way, you might say, He still receives them and He still feeds them. And I should encourage you, because some of you worry about that. Some of you worry about your faith. Have I believed enough? And you put so much focus on your faith, faith almost becomes a work that if you can believe well enough, if you can believe hard enough, if you can believe sincerely enough, oh, then God will save you. It's like those old clap-o-meters in the game shows when the audience clap and the lights rise, and they get to the top of the lights, you know, the top of the level, and you think it's like that with faith. If you can get enough faith, then Christ will receive you. If that was the case, none of us would be saved. Our faith, even the best of us, is so filled with unbelief. Never forget, it's not the strength of your faith that saves you, but the strength of your Savior. There's no power in faith. Faith's only power comes from its object. And as John Owen loves to say, a weak faith brings a strong Christ. Or repentance, you think if I repent sincerely enough, oh then God will, but our repentance needs to be repented of. Now it's important to believe, it's important to repent, Don't make those into works and somehow decide whether or not Christ will receive you. These people came to him just as they were, and they came in the wrong way and for the wrong reason, and yet Christ still received them, and he still fed them. And I think that speaks volumes of our Savior's character. What kind of Savior? He's kind to those who seek him impurely. Secondly, under this first point, he is good to those who forget him completely. Jesus sees the crowd. And seeing the crowd was large, Jesus said to Philip, where are we to buy bread so that these people may eat? Now, what does Philip, how does Philip answer that question? Now remember what Philip had seen. Philip had seen the wedding of Cana, Jesus turned the water into wine, effortlessly. In John 4, he saw Jesus speak a word to a man besotted with signs and miracles, coming to Christ for a miracle, and Christ simply gives him a word, your son will be well. And the man walked away clinging to that word. And that word had pierced space and time and traveled all the distance back to that man's house and had made that child well. And Philip saw that. Philip saw the word of Christ obliterate 38 years of a man's paralysis. He'd been lying by the pool of Bethesda for 38 years. Nobody could help him. He couldn't even help himself. Remember, he wasn't dead in the water. He couldn't even get to the water. He was stuck. And Christ came and said, pick up your bed and walk. And immediately, the man was made well again. Philip had seen all of that. And Jesus says to him,

now, it's

amazing how often I even forgot to say this in the first service. What did Philip hear Jesus say? Where are you to buy bread? Is that what Jesus said? No, where are we to buy bread? But Philip didn't hear the we, he heard the you. Where are you gonna go and buy bread? Is there a fast food restaurant? Is there a Lowe's or a Food Lion or somewhere to go and get some food for these people? And immediately, Philip says, Lord, if we had

like \$15,000, which is eight months wages roughly, I suppose, for any low paid position, but \$15,000 maybe for it would be equivalent to denarii, denarii was the day's wage for a day laborer, minimum wage maybe. And 200 denarii is 2/3rds of a year of day's wages. \$15,000, thereabouts. If we had 15 grand, we wouldn't have enough money to buy each person a little piece of shortbread from a communion table. There wouldn't be enough to give them a bite. And he wants to feed them all. Philip Leon Morris says, does not point to a solution, but to an impossibility. Andrew is a bit more practical. He goes out into the crowd and tries to rustle up some packed lunches. And he comes back with one packed lunch, we boys, packed lunch. Five loaves, five barley loaves, which were the cheapest kind of bread, the cheapest, cheapest bread you could get in Walmart, the cheapest bread, right? The barley loaves, the bread of the poor. Five loaves and two fish to make the loaves taste a bit better. Two little sardines. And Andrew goes, but what are

these for so many? And it's amazing, do you notice?

Their words betray a heart that's forgotten Jesus Christ completely. They don't even factor Christ

into the problem at all. They don't mention him. Don't speak about his power. Don't say, Lord, we have no idea how to feed these people, but surely you know we can't feed these people, Lord, but surely you can. They don't say that. They're just saying, they speak as if it was all down to them and what they could do, what they could buy, what they could provide. And I put it, it's not exactly

the way you and I are. When you're a pastor, this two weeks ago, We had the trial of the dishwasher.

Dishwasher broke in our home on a Thursday afternoon, which is a big sermon day for me back in Greensboro, studying like mad. I'm in the study. And I could hear the distress.

There was a pile of crockery in the sink and dishes to be done, and the dishwasher's broken, and five kids are at home, which is bad enough at the best of times. But when you're showing a house, you have to have the house perfect. It's a medical emergency in the house. And so I jump up, run in, I think, it's not draining, I can fix this, it's the pump. So I pull out the dishwasher, eventually took a while getting it out, it was stuck under the cabinet. We've got new flooring, long story. Anyway, we get it out into the kitchen and I clamber under it and I'm fiddling with it and take it apart, get down to the pump. I'm just sure it'd

be a piece of Lego, a little Lego head stuck in the pump. But there's no Lego head, and it's fine. And I put it back, I blew out the blinds, thinking maybe they're blocked, they're not blocked. Put it all back together again, turn it on, and press the button, and nothing happens. Wasted the whole afternoon. Bought a new dishwasher this week and installed it yesterday, just in case you're wondering. But here's the point, right? Not once in that whole story escapade did I think to pray to God. Now, if I had, I'm not saying he would have fixed the dishwasher, excuse my lack of faith, he might not have done it. He would have done more than not praying to him, but I never once thought to pray. All I could think of was, what am I going to do for my sermon? Let's go have a good time. I was stressed out. And I never once thought to pray to God. Now, it mightn't have made any difference to the situation, praying. It doesn't always do, but it would have made a difference to me, wouldn't it? It would help me connect my trial to God and His providence and this moment an opportunity for Him to step in and do what I could not do and provide what I did not have. But I just focused on the dishwasher

and the trouble and the inconvenience and the frustration and the mounting sense of And is that not the way you and I are as well? We so often, especially in the small trials of life, which are the little foxes that ruin the vines, we forget to connect them to God. End up like a cockroach struggling on his back when we do. He is kind to those who seek him impurely. He is good to those who forget him completely. And he is sufficient for those who need him desperately. Notice the effortless majesty. The disciples have completely dropped the ball. He was testing them. They didn't know that, by the way. Maybe God's testing you this morning, and you haven't realized he's testing you, but you're being tested. And Jesus isn't at a loss. He knows what he's going to do. They didn't know, but he knew. And Christ knows how he's gonna supply your need or give you grace to endure the lack of what you want. Christ is not at a loss, though you may feel yourself to be this morning. But notice the effortless majesty. They've completely failed the test. They've completely dropped the ball. And Jesus says, Have the people sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about 5,000 in number. Jesus then 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. Effortless majesty. The disciples were all need, all failure, all forgetfulness, and Christ steps forward and effortlessly provides not just enough, but more than enough. When they gather the baskets, there are enough to fill 12 distinct baskets of leftovers. Now, why does that detail mention? Well, don't forget the parallel is Israel in the wilderness.

How many tribes were there in Israel? Twelve, how much leftovers were there? A basket of leftovers for each of the tribes of God's people. More than enough for all of them. More than enough for you and for me. Now, it's important to realize that Jesus is not a vending machine. It's not that, the lesson of this story is not you look to Jesus and he'll provide for you what you want or what you need even. If you lose your job, he'll give you another job tomorrow if you trust him enough. That's not the lesson of this story. The lesson is that Christ is enough and we forget him at our peril and at our poverty. So what kind of savior do you have? One who is kind to those who seek him impurely, good to those who forget him completely, and sufficient for those who need him desperately. But then we come to the second question, and we'll be quick here. Jesus has come through for this people, he's just fed them this glorious feast. Which leads into the next question we face in the wilderness, which is, what kind of king do you want? Let's say Christ comes through for you on a physical level. You get the job you didn't have. He heals your cancer to the surprise of the doctors. He redeems your marriage. Your wife starts loving you again, and you start loving your wife back. He saves your son who was lost in his soul. He rescues your business. He comes to your aid, right? Here's the question, though. Is that all you want him to do for you? When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, this is indeed the prophet who has come into the world. Yet they don't sit at his feet to hear his words. They take him by force to make him king. 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. R.C. Sproul says, they were looking for the kingdom of man, but Christ came to bring the kingdom of God. It was his mission to provide his people with so much more than bread and fish. And so we see here Jesus, these people completely mistook the nature of Christ's kingdom. They saw him principally as a king to deliver them from the jackboot of Roman oppression. It was a nightmare being under the Roman jackpot. The taxes were high. I think taxes are bad now. Back in those days, it was a nightmare. Crucified corpses lining the road to Jerusalem. The Romans were not kind taskmasters, and God's people wanted to be free of them. That was their top priority, and they thought it was Christ's priority, too. But they forgot that Christ came not in the first place to rule the nations of men, but their hearts. He will rule the nations one day, but today he's come not just to fix our culture, he's come to fix you. Not to give you your best life now, but to give you a new soul and a new heart, to rescue you

from spiritual death, We are dead in trespasses and in sins and under the judgment of God and we need to be saved. Not from human oppression. So many churches, the thrust of their ministry is to rescue men from human injustice. And human injustice is a terrible thing. Getting what you don't deserve from another human being. But there's something worse. And that is getting what you do deserve from Almighty God. And only the church can help with that, with the gospel. Christ came to die in your place and for your sins to rescue you from hell, yes, and from sin, yes, but to rescue you from God. And these people don't realize that. It's not the kind of king they want. And so Christ withdrew from them. He withdrew. They were left without him. Leon Morris says, he who is already king has come to open his kingdom to men. But in their blindness, men try to force him to be the kind of king they want. Thus they fail to get the king they want and also lose the kingdom he offers. Don't reduce Jesus to a vending machine to give you a better marriage, to give you successful children, to put the right person in the White House in October. Those are all important things.

I bless God for a governor who's a Christian, who strives for the glory of God among human beings. But Christ's chief focus is not rescuing America, to be America, but to rescue Americans to be his. Not to save you from the Democrats or from the Trumplings, if you're on the other side of the political divide, but to rescue you from yourselves and me from myself and to bring us home to God. It's amazing how much of the life we spend between the mountaintop and the wilderness. We love being in the mountaintop

with Christ, His power, His glory, His presence, feeling His nearness, drawn to our knees in worship. But we need to spend much more time in this current world in the wilderness, otherwise the Father wouldn't send us there so often. In the wilderness where our sense of need, our sense of poverty, our sense of distress and danger are much more palpable than God's presence. And yet in that place, we're not drawn to our needs, but we're driven there in a sense of dependence upon Christ. And in that sense of dependence, we learn the most basic lesson of all in our discipleship, that Christ really is enough for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in life and in death. in weal and in woe as our fathers used to say, Jesus Christ really is enough. Enough when he does come through for us and help us. And enough also when he, to our minds, doesn't come through and leaves us hungry and thirsty and weary. And we can still look up to him and say, Lord Jesus, I might not have what I want, in this world, but I have you. And I'd rather have you with my cancer than be free of cancer and not have you. I'd rather have you in my current straightness of financial circumstances than be wealthy as Jeff Bezos and be without you. That's the lesson Christ has



for us this morning. Let's pray together. Our Father in heaven, we thank you for Jesus and the lessons he teaches us in the valley, in the mountaintop, and in the wilderness between. We pray, Lord Jesus, you would give us eyes to see the spiritual nature of your kingdom, to look beyond this world for life, to the Christ who gave it and the Christ who died that we might recover it. In his name, amen.