

The Bread of Life

Jay Kim · The Gospel of John (Part 2) · John 6:1-5; John 6:6-13; John 6:16-21

AT A GLANCE

Jay Kim reads John 6 through the shape of the Exodus — sea, mountain, bread — to argue that the restlessness beneath our chasing after achievement, comfort, and answers is really an ache for deliverance, presence, and provision, and that Jesus meets each one not with the specific solution we picture but by being who he is: the God who walks on water, sees us in the dark, and turns scarcity into abundance.

- Jesus doesn't just part the sea for us the way God did for Moses — he walks on water, ruling over the storms themselves.
- Even in the pitch-black silence of waiting, Jesus sees you with total clarity from far away, straining at your oars.
- God's provision often looks like 'what is it?' rather than what we asked for — trust it anyway, one day at a time.

“Jesus doesn't just part the waters, Jesus walks on water. Jesus doesn't just call us up the mountain, Jesus comes down to us.”

EXPOSITION

Scripture engaged

John 6:1-5 — Later, Jesus went across Lake Galilee (also known as Lake Tiberias). A great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he did in healing the sick. Jesus went up on the side of the hill and sat there with his followers. It was almost the time for the Jewish Passover festival. Jesus looked up and saw a crowd of people coming toward him. He said to Philip, “Where can we buy enough bread for all these people to eat?” (ERV)

John 6:6-13 — He asked Philip this question to test him. Jesus already knew what he planned to do. Philip answered, “We would all have to work a month to buy enough bread for each person here to have only a little piece!” Another follower there was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter. Andrew said, “Here is a boy with five loaves of barley bread and two little fish. But that is not enough for so many people.” Jesus said, “Tell everyone to sit down.” This was a place with a lot of grass, and about 5000 men sat down there. Jesus took the loaves of bread and gave thanks for them. Then he gave them to the people who were waiting to eat. He did the same with the fish. He gave them as much as

they wanted. They all had plenty to eat. When they finished, Jesus said to his followers, “Gather the pieces of fish and bread that were not eaten. Don’t waste anything.” So they gathered up the pieces that were left. The people had started eating with only five loaves of barley bread. But the followers filled twelve large baskets with the pieces of food that were left. (ERV)

John 6:16-21 — That evening Jesus’ followers went down to the lake. It was dark now, and Jesus had not yet come back to them. They got into a boat and started going across the lake to Capernaum. The wind was blowing very hard. The waves on the lake were becoming bigger. They rowed the boat about three or four miles. Then they saw Jesus. He was walking on the water, coming to the boat. They were afraid. But he said to them, “Don’t be afraid. It’s me.” When he said this, they were glad to take him into the boat. And then the boat reached the shore at the place they wanted to go. (ERV)

The argument

Sea, Mountain, Bread: John Retells Exodus to Identify Jesus — The chapter's opening details aren't incidental description — they're a citation of Israel's founding story.

Jay Kim opens by noting that John 6's first lines echo, almost point for point, the shape of the Exodus: a crowd near a sea, Jesus ascending a mountainside, hunger needing bread, all arriving at Passover, the feast that commemorates that very story. He compares this to the Sistine Chapel's walls, where the life of Moses on one side is deliberately painted to mirror the life of Jesus on the other, done, he says, 'to make a theological point that what God did for his people through Moses way back in the Exodus story, God has now done for all people through Jesus.' John, he argues, is doing the same thing with words: 'It's a story about the sea, the mountain and the bread.'

Insight — Recognizing the shape of a familiar story can reveal that a new story is claiming its authority and fulfilling its promise.

Deliverance Escalated: Not Through the Water but On It — Where Moses needed the sea parted, Jesus needs no path at all.

In Exodus, God splits the sea so Israel can cross on dry ground while pinned between an army and an ocean. Jay Kim invites listeners to sit in that same bind — 'between a rock and a hard place,' a diagnosis, a collapsing relationship, an addiction that won't break — before pointing out what changes in John 6: Jesus doesn't part the water for disciples caught in a storm three or four miles from shore; he walks on top of it. 'God can part the impossible sea before you,' he says, but the deeper claim is that Jesus 'rules and reigns over literal waters, over literal storms, which means he rules and reigns over the storms of your life.'

Insight — The God who once made a way through impossible circumstances now stands sovereign over them without needing a way at all.

Presence in the Pitch-Black Wait — Being seen precedes being rescued.

Forty years of wilderness wandering taught Israel to wonder whether God had abandoned them, and Jay Kim names that ache plainly — 'maybe what you're desperate for today is not even a solution or an answer, you're just desperate for an assurance' that you haven't been forgotten. He traces God's answer from Moses' 'my presence will go with you' through Joshua's commissioning into Jesus, who repeats the same promise. He then turns to Mark's detail from the same night: Jesus watched the disciples straining at their oars from land, three or four miles across a dark lake, a feat beyond ordinary sight. 'Even when you cannot see him, he sees you.'

Insight — Assurance of being seen, not immediate resolution, is often the provision the anxious heart most needs.

Provision That Doesn't Match the Order — 'What is it?' names both the manna and how grace usually arrives.

Jay Kim traces manna's name back to the question Israel asked on first seeing it — 'what is it?' — and turns that into a diagnosis of prayer itself: 'when I ask for my daily bread from God, typically what I am asking is my preconceived, pre-constructed notion of what the best resolution to this particular problem would be.' God's provision, he argues, usually isn't the specific thing requested but something unrecognizable at first that nonetheless sustains. He ties this to the feeding of the crowd, where Jesus multiplies a boy's five loaves and two fish into abundance: 'Jesus almost always does his best work in the midst of lack.'

Insight — Provision rarely arrives as the answer we specified, but it still sustains — if we're willing to trust what we don't recognize.

I Am: Jesus as the God of Moses, Not a New Moses — The Greek behind 'it is I' quietly claims the divine name from the burning bush.

When Jesus tells the frightened disciples in the boat, 'It is I, don't be afraid,' Jay Kim points to the Greek phrase behind it, ego eimi, and connects it to the Septuagint's rendering of God's self-disclosure to Moses at the burning bush, 'I am who I am.' The parallel, he suggests, is deliberate: Jesus is not merely repeating Moses' pattern but claiming Moses' God's identity. 'Jesus is declaring to his people, he is declaring to us today, listen, I'm not just a new Moses, I am the God of Moses.' This reframes everything preceding it — sea, mountain, bread aren't just echoes of an old story but evidence that its original author is present in person.

Insight — The identity behind the miracles matters more than the miracles themselves — they point to who is doing them.

Cross-references

- [Exodus 14:13-22](#) — background for the Red Sea deliverance that Jesus' walking on water escalates

- [Exodus 24:12](#) — God calling Moses up the mountain, paired with Jesus meeting the crowd from the mountainside
- [Exodus 33:13-14](#) — Moses' request for assurance and God's promise, 'my presence will go with you'
- [Joshua 1:5](#) — the promise of unbroken presence extended to Joshua and, by application, to today's reader
- [Exodus 16:14-15](#) — the manna named 'what is it,' illustrating unexpected provision
- [Exodus 3:14](#) — God's self-revelation 'I am who I am,' behind Jesus' 'it is I'
- [Mark 6:48](#) — the added detail that Jesus saw the disciples straining at the oars from a distance

DEVOTIONAL

There is a particular kind of exhaustion that comes not from lacking, but from getting the thing and finding the hollow still there — the promotion that doesn't quiet the ache, the win that fades by Monday. Jay Kim's turn to John 6 names three older aches beneath every private one: to be delivered, to be seen, to be fed. Israel knew all three in the wilderness — sea before them, army behind, hunger in a place where nothing grows. Centuries later, John writes Jesus into the same landscape on purpose: crowd, mountain, bread, so that we would recognize the shape of an old rescue happening again, only larger. Picture the disciples three miles out, oars straining, no shoreline light to steer by. That darkness is honest — most of us know it by another name: the diagnosis, the silence after the argument, the years that don't resolve. Into that darkness walks someone who does not need the water parted, because he has authority over the water itself. He does not shout across the distance; he simply sees, with a clarity no eye should have, straining at your oars long before you spot him coming. And when bread finally comes, it rarely resembles the order you placed. It looks, at first, like a question — what is it? — before it reveals itself as exactly enough. Grace so often arrives unrecognized and sustains anyway. Perhaps the invitation this week is not to solve your wilderness, but to let yourself be seen in it, and to receive, one day at a time, whatever it is he sets before you.

Reflection

- Where in your life right now do you feel caught between an impossible ahead and an unrelenting behind — and what would it look like to hold on rather than force a way through?
- When have you mistaken silence for absence, and what might change if you believed Jesus was seeing you clearly in that very darkness?

- What is the 'bread' you keep asking God for by name, and could you recognize his actual provision if it arrived looking like a question instead?

Closing prayer

Jesus, we believe you can make a way where there is no way. We trust that you see us even when we can't see you. We know you are with us. Give us today our daily bread, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

FORMATION

One thing to remember

Jesus meets your ache for deliverance, presence, and provision not with the answer you expected, but with himself.

This week

This week, read John 6:1-21 slowly with your actual need in view, then each morning pray: 'Jesus, I believe you can make a way where there is no way; I trust you see me even when I can't see you; give me today my daily bread.'

Return to [John 6:1-21](#)