# John 6:1-27 – The Provision of God

2020 has been an unusual year. Whether protests or riots, floods or fires, viruses or economic problems, I doubt if anyone in America has had a normal year. Sports were cancelled, and even when they reopened, it was with restrictions galore. Perhaps the most striking difference to me was the graduation open houses.

Coming from Colorado, I always thought the open houses were over the top. Sure, we had graduation parties in Colorado, but they generally only involved the graduate’s friends. Around here the graduation open houses tend to be large events with extended families and every acquaintance invited to attend. This year the open houses have been replaced by drive by open houses. Frankly, I think it might be a move in the right direction.

To plan a drive by open house, choose a time and let everyone know that the graduate will be outside at that particular time, then stand by the street and wave at the people honking to celebrate. If they bring gifts, walk up to the car, collect the gift and move on. If you really want to go all out, give each person who drives by a bag of cookies for 50 cents or a dollar a bag.

Planning a true open house is a totally different situation. Several months in advance you have to find a location large enough to hold everyone you hope will come. You then book the location for a specific date and start planning decorations and how to feed the people. Catering even a small event can become extremely expensive. To provide food for 50 people can cost between $300 and $1,000. You have to shop long and hard to find the good deals. If you wait until the last moment, you often pay even more. Once the party is over, you then have the work of cleaning up the venue so that you can get your security deposit back, or if you used your own home, cleaning up so you have a place to live.

Imagine I announced that I invited all the people in DeWitt township to come by for a free meal this afternoon and that we had 7,800 people that you had to serve starting in about 15 minutes. After you get over the hearty laugh you realize I’m not joking and that the grass all the way around the building is filled with people waiting to be fed. Now the panic comes. What will we feed them? How can we afford to feed them?

What you are feeling thinking about this is what the disciples faced as Jesus asked them to feed 5,000 men. From the events surrounding the feeding of the 5,000 we learn about God’s provision. We learn about the dangers of Provision Expected, making Provision for Ourselves, Provision of God’s Abundance, Provision in the Storm and the Purpose of Provision.

## Provision Expected John 6:1-2

“**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.

Jesus had healed many and now the crowds followed Him. They didn’t follow because they believed, but because they were amazed. It doesn’t say the crowd listened to Him, or even believed Him, only that they followed Him. Imagine David Copperfield or Penn and Teller were to come to Lansing and have a free event. I know they are only performing tricks, I disagree with most of their political and philosophical beliefs, but I would still go to the show because I like to be entertained. This is the way the crowd is treating Jesus. Likewise, I can’t stand Oprah Winfrey, but if I was given tickets to one of her give away shows, I consider would sitting through the show to get some freebees. They are following because the wanted to see Him perform and because they thought they could get something.

When someone comes with an expectation of receiving material provisions, they are coming with the wrong motives. They are not coming out of a love for God, but out of a love for themselves. Ultimately, this is nothing more than greed. Do you, or someone you know, follow Jesus to get His blessing? Matthew 6:19-21 tells us that when we seek the treasures of this world, we also tie our hearts to this world…

**19** Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. **20** But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. **21** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Do you want to be tied to this world, or to God? Invest in what ties you to God.

## Provision for Ourselves John 6:3-4

**3** Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. **4** The Jewish Passover Feast was near.

Seeking material provision, health and wealth is improper, but by His example, Jesus shows us that we do need to make provision for our basic needs. By this time, it has been almost a year that Jesus has been with His disciples. This is the second Passover that Jesus had spent with them and He knew that it would be a busy time, so Jesus takes the disciples up on a mountain to sit with them. Sure, there would be teaching, sure there would be interaction, but the focus was sitting.

Psalm 46:10 tells us to:

Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.

If John is not clear enough on what Jesus was doing, look at Mark 6:31-32 where Jesus tells His disciples to rest:

**31** Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." **32** So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.

There are times that the best way to know God’s presence is to be still. There are also times that our bodies just need rest to accomplish what God has asked of us. Jesus provides by encouraging us to rest and fulfill other NEEDS. If someone in the crowd following Him had a genuine need, and not just a seeking for entertainment, I don’t think Jesus would have turned them away.

## Provision of God’s Abundance John 6:5-14

**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 renough 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."

This miracle is so significant that it is the only one recorded in all four of the gospels. The crowd is coming to Jesus, many out of wrong motives, some out of proper motives, but, in any way, they are coming. For us, it is easy to think, everyone go home and get something to eat, but many of these people probably walked hours to get here. Even if they went into the nearest town, it is not likely that they would find enough food for all of them to eat. Some of the lucky or privileged, would eat, some of the unluck would be hungry. Jesus looks at the crowds and asks the disciples what their plans are to feed them. There are 5,000 men there. The bible doesn’t record how many women and children, but the total crowd could have been anywhere from 5,000 up to 20,000 people. Remember the panic when thinking about feeding half of DeWitt Township? This is what the disciples experienced at this moment. Philip was vocal, but I am sure he spoke for everyone when he said 8 months wages would not feed everyone. In today’s money feeding a crowd that size would take $40-80,000 dollars in today’s economy.

Andrew brings up a boy with a small lunch. Barley bread was a staple for the poor, but even here, it was small loaves. The 2 fish are small as well, probably heavily salted and pickled sardines. This was enough for a young boy to have a meal, or at most two, it was the sack lunch of the day. Today’s equivalent would be a boy with 3 bologna sandwiches to feed thousands of people. Maybe Andrew thought Jesus could at least eat, even if no one else could.

Imagine what is going through the minds of the disciples as Jesus tells them to have the crowd sit. Is he getting them quiet to teach them before sending them away? Is he going to eat in front of them? What is he doing? Then Jesus gave thanks for the loaves and fish and begins the distribution.

Everyone eats until they are satisfied and then they collect 12 baskets of the leftover pieces. Why 12 baskets left over? After the feeding of the multitude, there was one basket for each disciple. Each basket contained more food than they started with. Each disciple had proof in his own hands of the miracle - he didn't need to rely on the testimony of another. Some people speculate that, based on the Greek word κόφινος, each basket was 5-6 gallons, about the size of this bucket.

When God provides, He is not chintzy. There is more than enough for our needs because it flows from His abundance. But at the same time, He provides for our needs, not our vanities. The bread was still barley bread. The fish were still salted sardines. In the late 90s, prosperity gospel preacher John Arnott started telling how through His prayers God was turning people’s dental fillings from amalgam into gold. This seems to be the imagination of a limited human mind. Any dentist will tell you that fillings, even gold fillings, are not as good as the original tooth. If God were to heal a cavity in the tooth, I think He would restore the tooth to its original design, not give us something that is flashy but inferior. When God provides, He provides for our needs and not for our vanity.

## Provision in the Storm John 6:15-21

**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.

Once again, Jesus takes separates Himself to provide for His own needs. Meanwhile, the disciples go across the lake because, according to Mark 6, Jesus said He would meet them in Bethsaida. Bethsaida was a small town, just across the Jordan valley from the city of Capernaum, from the south, the safest way to travel (especially at night) was to aim for the glow of the city of Capernaum and then go east from there to Bethsaida. This also had the advantage of keeping them within theoretical viewing distance of the shore.

As it gets dark, a storm breaks out. They have already gone about 3 ½ miles of the 7-mile journey to Capernaum, so they had been rowing for about an hour and were at their maximum distance (about 2 miles) from the nearest shore. The predominant winds in the area were blowing them further away from shore and giving them a headwind to row into. The disciples were exhausted. Many of the disciples are professional fishermen, but they get concerned about drowning. Exhaustion in the storms of life often leads to distress.

Now they see Jesus walking on the water. Is this a ghost? Are they seeing things? They have now gone from concerned to downright frightened. Jesus provides for their biggest need when He says, “It is I, don’t be afraid.” Their biggest need at that moment wasn’t calming the winds, it was calming their hearts. There is no indication that the storm stopped, but now they had peace to let Him into the boat. When He gets into the boat, they are immediately where they were heading. This too is a miracle, as was Jesus walking on the water, but in my mind these miracles are not as big as the miracle of Jesus providing peace. The real provision is God’s peace with Him and in our hearts, additional miracles are a bonus.

## The Purpose of Provision John 6:22-27

 **22** ¶ The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone. **23** Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. **24** Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus. **25** When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" **26** Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. **27** Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."” (Joh 6:1-27 NIVUS)

It is tempting to think that God provides for the same reasons we would. What’s wrong with following Jesus because He meets our needs? The problem is that it put the focus on me instead of Him. Jesus wants to give us bread that is lasting and eternal, but that bread is not barley loaves, it is a relationship with Him.

If you are using God to provide your needs, you have changed God into a servant instead of a Lord. A good Lord will provide for the needs of His followers, but He does it because He is good, not because they demand it. Jesus has the Father’s seal of approval. The Father said, this is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, listen to Him. The Holy Spirit descended on Him like a dove. As we will see next week, Jesus is the bread of life.

Jesus is setting the stage, the Passover is coming up and the bread is the focus of the Passover. As we will see next week, Jesus wants to change the focus. He is the Passover lamb. The bread represents Jesus because He is the bread of life.

God’s provision is focused on eternity. He may choose to provide for our temporal needs because it is hard to hear God’s voice over the rumbling of our stomachs, but when He provides, we can sure that He wants us to consider more than the next meal. The purpose of provision is to turn our hearts to God.

# John 6:1-27 – The Provision of God

## Provision \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ John 6:1-2

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Do you want to be tied to this world, or to God? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in what ties you to God.

## Provision for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ John 6:3-4

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Jesus tells His disciples to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Mark 6:31-32

Jesus provides by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ us to rest and fulfill other NEEDS.

## Provision of God’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ John 6:5-14

This miracle is so significant that it is the only one recorded in \_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the gospels.

Each disciple had \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the miracle.

When God provides, He provides for our needs and not for our \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

## Provision in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ John 6:15-21

Exhaustion in the storms of life often leads to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Their biggest need at that moment wasn’t calming the winds, it was calming their \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

The real provision is God’s peace \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Him and \_\_\_\_ our hearts, additional miracles are a bonus.

## The Purpose of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ John 6:22-27

The bread represents Jesus because He is the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

The purpose of provision is to turn our hearts to \_\_\_\_\_\_.