

Gamma – Gospel of John

Book	Gospel of John
Topic	From Famine to Feasting: the confrontation of miracles
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Speaker	Dr Peter Ng

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A. THE MIRACULOUS FEEDING AND NATURE OF JESUS MIRACLES

The scene is at the sea of Galilee or otherwise known as the sea of Tiberias. Jesus went there. They had a large crowd following them because of the signs. It was now near the Passover, it is when they celebrate the escape of Israel from Egypt. They would have had the Passover Lamb and then when they went to the desert they had manna bread and the quails.

1. Miracles Are a Response to a Real Need

5 Therefore, Jesus, lifting up His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?"

Historically, it was estimated to be about 20,000 people. Then Philip asked, where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat. He asked the faithful question.

2. Miracles Are Begin When We Recognize Our Weaknesses

6 This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do.

So basically miracles begin when we recognize our weakness. The important thing about this miracle is that, we actually have to acknowledge there is a higher power. The trouble is

what we do is we always think that we can do everything and even if you have the most successful organization in the world for the treatment of alcoholic addiction is Alcoholic Anonymous and they have 12 steps

- We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable.
- Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
- Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
- Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
- Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
- Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
- Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
- Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
- Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
- Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
- Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

This is a non-Christian kind of program and it all points people to God, that you cannot do this alone.

7 Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little."

So this is weakness. He has actually acknowledged his weakness. Now weakness isn't bad. If you look at apostle Paul,

2 Corinthians 12:8-10 (ESV) Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. **9** But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power

of Christ may rest upon me. **10** For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

So it cast light on the issue of weakness. So when you are actually weak and the weakness is due to pure insulting you or persecuting you or having calamities happen to your family, disease or hardships, things that you cannot avoid and it is ironic. When you are weak, he says we are strong. It doesn't include bad choices. If you eat carbohydrate every day, stuff your face until your cholesterol goes over the moon and then you got a stroke and heart attack, don't say 'when I am weak than I am strong', which means the more bad choices you make in your life then you will be strong. The Bible doesn't mean that. These are things which are put upon you not because of your bad choices. So why was the reason weakness

[2 Corinthians 12:7 \(ESV\) So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.](#)

So there is a reason why the weakness is given, the weakness is given because he had a revelation and this is vision, he actually saw heaven and he was taken up and because of that he could be greatly conceited. So this can happen to anybody. So therefore the purpose of weakness is twofold,

1. Secure his humility,
2. To display Christ's power in his love.

That is what happens when you have got a miracle, you acknowledge your weakness because in that weakness God will minister miraculously, God will minister supernaturally and will display his power and your humility.

John Piper says, "Don't focus too much on finding your strengths. Give attention to identifying and exploiting your weaknesses."

Jon Piper describes he has got a weakness, compared to all his contemporaries, he cannot read fast. He reads very slow, so therefore you cannot go for further education to do Ph.D. because you have got to read huge amounts of literature. So he can't read fast but he can read slow and so what he did was, concentrate on reading slow and taking more out of the passage from the Bible that other people would have. His sermons are very-very deep in exegesis. So you don't have to lament the fact that you have weakness. Weaknesses are way in which God keeps us humble and yet he can display his power through your humility.

Nicodemus and Woman, woman was weak and God displayed his power in this woman immediately. She went back to her hometown and told everybody about Jesus Christ.

3. Miracles begin when as you put your resources at his disposal

8 One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, 9 "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?"

So it is a common person's fish and they had barley loaves which is the bread for the poor.

10 Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. 11 Jesus then took the loaves, and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise, also of the fish as much as they wanted. 12 When they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost." 13 So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten.

It shows us that God has provided extravagantly, generously, over and above. The lesson here was that you only got five loaves of poor bread and two fishes and that was enough for God to use for his fantastic miracle and if you look in the Christian church itself, much of the progress of the entire Christian church, usually on the back of one person or very few people. So George Mueller is one such person, he lives in the 1800s. He was actually instrumental and inspiring people like Hudson Taylor to go to China. He started of a scripture knowledge institute home and abroad and there were five sections

- 1) Schools for children and adults to teach Bible knowledge,
- 2) Bible distribution,
- 3) missionary support,
- 4) tract and book distribution, and
- 5) "to board, clothe and Scripturally educate destitute children who have lost both parents by death

He started orphanages at a time when there were about only 3600 orphans in the whole of England. He himself started the homes and there were 10,000 orphans in his lifetime, more than in the entire nation of England. 50 years after his death, he is so stimulated other people to follow in his works that there were rooms for 100,000 orphans after that, all started by one man that's all he did.

Reasons for the orphanage

1. That God may be glorified, should He be pleased to furnish me with the means, in its being seen that it is not a vain thing to trust in Him; that thus the faith of His children may be strengthened.
2. The spiritual welfare of fatherless and motherless children.
3. Their temporal welfare

He is the only minister that never asked for a single cent for anyone. All he did every day was get on his knees and asked God for his needs and somehow the door opens and somebody will give money. He did it entirely by prayer. His 10,000 orphan centers never lacked anything. So when we start a home here, it is not number one to provide for the welfare then go to spiritual, actually when we start a home it should be that God should be glorified, so that whatever number of children come in we can see God supplying them. We don't have to go and beg people for the money, we should get on our knees and beg the father. So that when God supplies it miraculously, his name is glorified. So this man just whatever was at his disposal, all he did was get on his knees and all these things actually happened to just one man. So therefore it tells you the power of God, we don't realize when we are weak we are strong. As long as our motives are correct, God will use us as a channel of power.

4. Miracles point to Jesus as Son of God.

So when Jesus does miracles he doesn't levitate, it is always according to a need. If you have a need he will do a miracle. He is never going to do a miracle just to impress you. So when you look at ministry, you look at the kind of miracles that happen, it is always done in response to a need, and it is coherent with the Old Testament. Old Testament God provide manna for 40 years and Jesus does that. The difference between Jesus bread and other bread, the manna spoils, Jesus one doesn't.

BACKGROUND OF THE MIRACLE

"You shall not find manna in this age but you shall find it in the age that is coming"
(Midrash Melkita)

"What did the first redeemer do? He brought down the manna, the last redeemer will also bring down manna" (Midrash Rabba on Eccles 1:9)

Which means in Jewish writing, they are already expecting the redeemer to come, the Messiah to come. When the Messiah will come, he will bring Manna and that's why Jesus fed the 5000 at this time, to fit this kind of expectations that he is the Messiah.

B. JESUS IN THE STORM

John 6:16-21 (ESV) When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, **17** got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. **18** The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. **19** When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. **20** But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." **21** Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

So there are some translation problems here. If you look at the ESV says,

20 But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." (ESV)

20. But he saying to them do not be afraid"I am " Greek original

'I am' means he is God. We see this in Exodus

Exodus 3:14 (ESV) God said to Moses, "**I am who I am.**" And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I am has sent me to you.'"

So when Jesus walks by the water they are terrified. Sometimes we expect God to do things which we want. Two ways, Jesus deals with storms, he either says, stop or he gets into the boat with you. But when we go to trails in our life, we always want Jesus to stop this. But many times Jesus doesn't stop the storm. He gets inside the boat together with you. When he gets inside the boat together with you, you regain the confidence in life. This passage tells us that storms, even in the midst of a great victory which we see 20,000 people being fed, right after that they encountered a storm. The disciples have seen a huge miracle done by God, storm comes and they are afraid. So God gives them a huge miracle to build up their faith but to test their faith he has got to send a storm. And when there is a storm, Jesus doesn't stop the storm because he actually set the storm. So all he does is that he stands there and says, I am and he gets into the boat together with them. For them they were relieved it was okay. So many times in our lives we will go through the exact situation, you cannot say God why don't you stop the storm, it is enough for God to come in to your boat and say, I am, I am the solution, I am your savior, I am the one who will bring you peace in your life. So don't think God will only act in one particular way when they have a storm.

C. THE RESPONSE TO THE MIRACLE: A REALISTIC LOOK AT THE NATURE OF HUMAN FAITH

1. The political crowd

John 6:14-15 **14** Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world." **15** So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king ...

So here we see a political crowd. When they see he is so powerful, there is this prophet which Moses talked about in Deuteronomy 18:18. So when Jesus performs this miracle, they say Jesus is the one, so they want to take him and make him king.

Deuteronomy 18:18 **18** 'I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

They wanted to take him by force and make him king. Because they have an agenda, Jesus is what you want him to be. Because if we say Jesus is the answer, if you are poor then Jesus will provide you the answer, must be finances. If you are sick, he will heal you. If you are afraid, he will bring you courage, if you are lonely he will be your friend, but the problem is with this kind of Jesus is that the character and dimensions of Jesus will be largely limited by your own needs. So if you are sick, Jesus is the healer that is all He is. If you are poor, Jesus is your banker. So basically your God is very small, if Jesus is only described as your answer then it is a very self-centered kind of depiction of God. God is so huge; he is much bigger than the dimensions of your world. You cannot define God by your own agenda. We come to a 21st century kind of church setting where we are actually feeding people this kind of Jesus and our programs are dedicated to showing that Jesus is answer for all their needs, we fit people felt needs.

We circumscribe theological terms within our own experience and Jesus doesn't respond to you if you have your own political agenda,

2. The Materialistic Crowd

John 6:25-27 **25** When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You get here?" **26** Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.

So there are lots of people like that who are basically materialist. We all struggle. This is a survey from Princeton University

- 89% agree that "our society is much too materialistic,
- 84% also say, "I wish I had more money than I do."
- 71% believe "being greedy is a sin against God," yet
- 76% say, "having money gives me a good feeling about myself.
- 69% admire those who "take a lower paying job in order to help others."
- And 52% want to reduce their work hours.
- Still, 68% would be willing to work longer hours if it meant more pay.
- 71% said that society could be improved, if people placed less emphasis on money.
- At the same time, 80% admire those who "make a lot of money by working hard."

On one hand you think earning less money is good, on the other hand totally opposite. We are totally materialistic, we are conflicted. There is a story by William Willimon, actually told of a class where there is a sales person who was used to work for this company and the company said to him.

"We're asking you to do this for your wife and daughter. Don't you want to be a good father? It takes money to support a family these days. Sure, your little girl doesn't take much money now, but think of the future. Think of her future

This is how we treat people. You got a raise from your boss, you got a bonus, jackpot blessing. You are weak no blessing. Jesus doesn't do that.

Jesus challenge to materialism

[John 6:27 \(ESV\) Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal."](#)

[John 6:53-54 53 So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. 54 "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.](#)

Jesus is saying here that, instead of eating to live or living to eat he should be the central figure of your life. Jesus says when you want to eat my flesh and drink my blood and you want to take the bread of life, you actually have to put Jesus at the center, every pore of your body, you DNA just oozes Jesus. That's a tall order, that's why a lot of people walk away. They cannot put Jesus in the middle of their life. So life is more than food. Jack Ma of Alibaba says, *"it's not about making money ...it's about changing the world"*.

[John 6:28-29 28 They said therefore to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."](#)

So therefore don't work for things that will perish away. Work for Jesus, what kind of work. The concept of work in the gospel is believe in Jesus, you get salvation and when you do salvation because you believe in Jesus, you will actually have a life of good works, which is an evidence of the faith that you actually have in Jesus Christ.

The work then is believing and the believe is not an isolate intellectual accent but is a belief that results in a life of good works. It cannot be separated. That's why when Jesus talks in Matthew 25 about judgment he doesn't talk about belief, he talks about those who treated the poor well, who visited the ones in prison, who fed the poor, that's basically this. He is not saying, he is judging by works, he is judging works which is evidence of faith.

In Greek there are two words that are very important to learn today. One is 'bios' which is physical life. The other word is 'zoe' and that is the quality of life that is from heaven. Whenever Jesus talks about eternal life, it never talks about bios, he never talks about life that is physical for ever and ever, it is the quality of life that is from heaven. When we are

talking about 'zoe' life, we are talking about a life of meaning, exhilaration, joy, a life that is actually from heaven and if you put Jesus in the centre of your life, you wake up and you will experience this eternal life.

Only the manna given by Jesus will not spoil, everything else will spoil. If you go after the world, recently Japanese reported died after clocking 159 hours of overtime. If you work for the food that doesn't endure, it will exhaust, it will wipe you out.

4. The Sensation Seeking Crowd

John 6:30-31 ³⁰ So they said to Him, "What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform? ³¹ "Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'HE GAVE THEM BREAD OUT OF HEAVEN TO EAT.'"

Jesus just fed 20,000 people, you are now asking him for another sign. I mean they are like never satisfied.

John 6:32 Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven.

Purpose of miracles is to point beyond the miracle to God, and they were all talking about Moses. Actually, it wasn't Moses who brought bread from heaven, it is actually God.

³⁵ Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. ³⁶ "But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe.

So basically Jesus is not giving them anything else, they come to Jesus on his terms and in Matthew 12 it says,

Matthew 12:39-41 ³⁹ But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; ⁴⁰ for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

So Jesus said, I am not going to give you a sign, the next sign I will give you is resurrection.

Some people asked a rabbi,
"Is it a miracle if God does exactly what our rabbi asks of him?"

He said, "my people think it is a miracle when our rabbi does exactly what God asks of him."

So it is obedience that's the miracle. That's why Jesus said to them

29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

What God was looking in response to the miracle was for them to obey and believe in Jesus not to force Jesus to do more signs. God is looking for a response to the miracle and the response what you are looking for is obedience. That is the response to miracle. So Jesus did not respond to people who came to with their own terms, own agenda, material gain, need for sensation miracles to affirm their faith, he doesn't do that.

John 6:41-42 41 Therefore the Jews were grumbling about Him, because He said, "I am the bread that came down out of heaven." 42 They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, 'I have come down out of heaven '?"

John 6:60-61 60 Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?" 61 But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble?"

So there is a part of the crowd that is materialistic, they have their own agenda, sensation seeking and the last crowd is skeptical, whatever Jesus does or say stumbles them.

D. THE FAITHFUL REMNANT AND THE POWER OF GRACE

John 6:36-40 (ESV) But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. **37** All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. **38** For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. **39** And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. **40** For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

This is the reason why there are different responses in the crowd. How come so many people in it for money or material gain, some might have their own agenda, sensation seeking and some people are skeptics, this is the reason.

John 6:64-66 **64** "But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. **65** And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father."

So you cannot believe, you cannot respond to the miracle unless God grants you the faith to accept the miracle. That's why so many of them didn't qualify.

66 As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore

In real life very few actually follow Jesus anymore. So therefore you actually have two things, the sovereignty of God and the free will of man. John writes it side by side.

V 37 All that the Father gives me will come to me	V 37 All that the Father gives me will come to me
V 39 I should lose nothing of all that he has given me	V 40 everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life
V 65 no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father."	66 As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore

On one hand John tells you about free will, you either choose him or you don't choose him, you believe in him or you don't believe in him, on the other hand you can't believe him, you can't come to him unless the father draws you. This is paradoxical but yet John puts in the same sentence. This is the paradox of Christian life which is something that we need to learn to accept the sovereignty of God exists side by side with a free will of man.

How do we come to God?

John 6:45 (ESV) It is written in the Prophets, and they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.

Example in Peter.

Matthew 16:16-17 (ESV) Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." **17** And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

Anyone of us reading the Bible, the father thus brings you to Jesus Christ, opens up the word that's why you can understand.

John 6:37-39 (ESV) All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.

So if you are a Christian and you are sitting here and you are coming and you actually have a genuine faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, there is a promise he will never cast you out. He who believes in him, so there is eternal security. Every single one of us will be raised on that last day that the promise Jesus makes.

The Bible gives us warning passages, that if you don't likewise repent you will also perish. You cannot go to Jesus unless the father draws your heart. Only the father can draw you near to Christ and when he draws you he will never lose you.

[John 6:67-68](#) **67** So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?"
68 Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.

A miracle happened and 19,989 walked away, only left 11. Sometime you think miracles are happy occasions, brings faith, most miracles don't bring faith. 99.99% of left left because of the miracle, they construed it in different ways but not in the correct way. Only 11 stayed back, because you have the words to eternal life, hang on to the word, it will save your life.