

Signs And Sayings

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[0 : 0 0] Well, if you could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if you could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read in the Gospel according to John, John chapter 6, and if we just read again at verse 35, the well-known words of Jesus, where Jesus says in John chapter 6 at verse 35, I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

You know, over the past few months, we've become accustomed to the signs and sayings of COVID-19. We've become accustomed to all these signs and sayings because the signs of COVID-19, which we've come across almost everywhere, whether we go into a shop or into a restaurant, we see all these signs that indicate and insist to us that we must wear a face covering, we must ensure two metres distance, we must sanitise our hands on entry, they're the signs of COVID-19 and we've become accustomed to them, but there's also the sayings of COVID-19. In fact, every year the Oxford Dictionary, it publishes words and phrases that have an impact upon, that have had an impact upon the English language that year, and there'll be no surprise to you that most of the popular words of 2020, they relate to COVID-19, because up until the beginning of this year, there are words and phrases that, well, none of us really used. We never used the word social distancing, we never really thought about self-isolating, we never ever thought that we'd be in lockdown or have a house bubble or stay at home or try and have the new normal, they're all the sayings of COVID-19 that we've had to become accustomed with, and over the past few months we've become accustomed to all these signs and sayings of COVID-19, because they indicate and they insist upon the identity of what we've come to know as the coronavirus. You know, in a similar way, John's Gospel is also full of signs and sayings, in fact there are seven signs and seven sayings of Jesus used throughout John's

Gospel, and John uses these signs and sayings because he wants to make sure that we get the identity of Jesus right, because if we get the identity of Jesus wrong, we'll misunderstand the Gospel, we'll fail to see that Jesus is the Son of God and the only saviour of sinner, and in this passage which we read, we see a sign and a saying of Jesus, we see one sign and one saying of Jesus, in fact it's the fifth sign and the first saying of Jesus, the fifth sign was when Jesus walked on water, the first saying was when Jesus said, I am the bread of life, and this morning I just wanted us to think about this passage under three simple headings, three simple headings, seeing Jesus, seeking Jesus and sending Jesus, seeing Jesus, seeking Jesus and sending Jesus.

So first of all, seeing Jesus, seeing Jesus, look at verse 16, says, when the evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, got into a boat and started across the lake to Capernaum, it was now dark and Jesus had not yet come to them, the lake became rough because a strong wind was blowing, when they had rode about three or four miles they saw Jesus walking on the lake and coming near the boat and they were frightened, but he said to them, it is I, do not be afraid, then they were glad to take him into the boat and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going. Now as we said, when Jesus walked on water, on the sea of, the water of the sea of Galilee, it was the fifth of seven signs, signs of Jesus in John's gospel. The first of these signs you'll remember was back in chapter two, where Jesus turned water into wine. Then the second sign was the healing of the royal official's son. The third sign was the healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda in chapter five. The fourth sign we saw at the beginning of chapter six, which was the feeding of the five thousand. This walking on water is the fifth sign and then we'll witness the sixth sign when we come to John chapter nine, where Jesus, he heals a man who was born blind. And then the seventh sign is actually the climax and culmination of John's gospel and Jesus's ministry because Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. And as we said, John uses these seven signs in order to indicate and insist upon the identity of Jesus, that Jesus is the Son of God and he's the Savior of Sinners. But as we see here, the fifth sign of Jesus's identity with him walking on water, it immediately follows the fourth sign of Jesus's identity, which we saw last week, where Jesus, he fed these multitudes with only five loaves and two fish. In the feeding of the five thousand or as we did last week, we added it all up and we worked out that with all these women and children, it was probably not the feeding of the five thousand, but the feeding of the 25,000.

And it was a remarkable miracle in which Jesus demonstrated his care and his compassion and his concern for not only the temporal needs, but also the spiritual needs of his community. And it was because of the fourth sign that the crowds were told they continued seeking Jesus. And we'll consider that in a moment. But before the crowds continued seeking Jesus, we're told that the disciples were seeing Jesus walking on water. But the only reason the disciples were in a boat seeing Jesus walking towards them on the water was because they had left Jesus behind. They had left Jesus behind.

[6 : 12] We're told in verse 15 that because the crowds wanted to anoint and appoint Jesus as king in Israel, we're told that he withdrew to a mountain by himself. Jesus withdrew from the crowds to pray.

He wanted to pray to his heavenly, heavenly father. You know, R.C. Sprohl, he makes this interesting observation when he comments on Jesus's actions of withdrawing. He says, here we see the importance of prayer in Christ's own life of devotion to the Father. As a second person of the Trinity, an eternal communion with his father, Jesus nevertheless knew success in his ministry, that his success in his ministry required dedicated time and prayer. This was particularly key at a moment when others sought to give him premature acclaim, just as Jesus promised him the kingdoms of this world. Therefore, in an hour of temptation, and for the sake of his continuing ministry, our Savior turned to his father in prayer. We need to learn from Jesus, says Sprohl, that when we're faced with temptation in life and in ministry, we must turn to God in prayer. But you know, what we see that actually happened here is that when Jesus withdrew to pray, the disciples withdrew to paddle.

When Jesus withdrew to pray, the disciples withdrew to paddle. Jesus left the crowds behind, but the disciples, they left Jesus behind because instead of staying with Jesus and praying with Jesus, the disciples left Jesus behind. And you know, my friend, the only reason the disciples were in a boat seeing Jesus walking on the water towards them was because they had left Jesus behind.

They left him on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. They left Jesus behind. And you know, thinking about it in another way, we can often be guilty of doing that, can't we?

Where instead of staying with Jesus and praying with Jesus, we leave Jesus behind. Sometimes, you know, my friend, we start the day without Jesus, and we go into our day without Jesus, and we journey through our day without Jesus. We forget to have fellowship with the Father at the beginning of the day. But the strange thing is, we don't forget to have fellowship with our phone or with Facebook. And instead of reading the Bible, we're always left rushing out the door, having our breakfast, rushing out the door, and we leave Jesus behind.

[8 : 49] But as you know, my friend, we should never leave Jesus behind. We should never start the day without Jesus. We should never go into our day without Jesus. We should never journey through our day without Jesus. We should never forget to have fellowship with the Father. Rather, we should seek to stay with Jesus and pray with Jesus and take Jesus into the day ahead.

You know, my good friend, J.C. Reil, he said, read the Bible daily. Make it part of your everyday business to read and meditate on some portion of God's Word. Gather your manna fresh every morning, he says. Choose your own seasons and hours. Do not scramble over and hurry your reading. Give your Bible the best and not the worst part of your time. But whatever plan you pursue, let it be a rule of your life to visit the throne of grace and the Bible every day.

My friend, the only reason the disciples were in a boat seeing Jesus walking towards them was because they had left Jesus behind. They had left Jesus behind. But we're told that while they were on their boat and while they were crossing the Sea of Galilee, which was in many ways, as you know, a sea loch, where the disciples, they're caught up in this rough storm. The disciples were caught up where the wind was picking up and there was a bit of a swell and it was hindering the disciples as they were trying to row across the Sea of Galilee. And we read that they had only managed to row about three or four miles. They'd only rode three or four miles across this 13 mile long wide sea loch. So they're in the middle of the sea and they see Jesus walking on water towards them. And of course, this sign of Jesus, it was a clear indication as to the identity of Jesus as the Son of God and the Saviour of Sinner. But as you know, over the years, there have been many magicians and illusionists who have claimed that like Jesus, they can walk on water. One illusionist in particular is a young man. I don't know if you've heard of him before. He's a young man called Dynamo. And maybe you've seen a video of him, the video of him walking across the River

Thames in London. And he walked across the River Thames in full view of all these tourists who are standing there on Westminster Bridge. And they're all watching Dynamo as he walks out into the middle of the Thames. And he's walking out and then he's actually picked up by the police in a police boat. And he's taken away. But of course, what Dynamo doesn't give away to his audience is that the police were actually actors. And the people around him, well, not all of them were tourists. And he didn't really walk on water. Instead, he was walking on this perspex structure that was slightly below the waterline to make it look like he walked on water. But when it came to Jesus, when it came to Jesus walking on water, he didn't have a perspex structure to stand on, because he was four miles out at sea. Jesus didn't have calm waters, the calm waters of the River Thames to tread through.

He only had the rough seas of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus didn't even have daylight to watch where he was stepping, because it was the middle of the night. My friend, the point is Jesus walked on water not because he was a magician or an illusionist, but because he was the God man. He was both God and man. He was God and man in two distinct natures and one person forever. And John gives us this sign of Jesus in order to emphasize to us the identity of Jesus, that as the God man, he's not only the savior of sinners, he's also the creator and controller of creation. He's Lord over the land. He's sovereign over the seas. He's powerful in all of our providences. This is the Jesus whom John says that all things were made through him and without him, there was not anything made that was made. And John, he's giving to us this fifth sign in order to indicate and insist upon the identity of Jesus, that he is the Son of God and he is the savior of sinners. And for that reason,

[13 : 11] John is saying to us, it's to him you must come and it's to him you must look and it's in him you must trust because there's no one else to come to but this Jesus. And you know, the wonderful thing about this passage and what these disciples discovered is that even when you leave Jesus behind, he's the one who comes to you and he's the one who says to you, it is I. Do not be afraid.

Jesus is the one who comes after you, seeking you, saying to you, it is I. Do not be afraid. You're my friend, don't leave Jesus behind today. You come to him, you commit your life to him, you trust in him with all your heart because there's no better person to trust in than Jesus.

And so the disciples, they were seeing Jesus, but then we see the crowds, they were seeking Jesus. That's what we see. Secondly, seeking Jesus, so seeing Jesus and seeking Jesus. Now look at verse 22. It says on the next day, the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had only been one boat there and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. Other boats from Tiberius came near the place where he had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum seeking Jesus. When they found him on the other side of the lake, they said to him, Rabbi, when did you come here? Jesus answered them, truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. In these verses, John tells us that the crowds are still seeking Jesus. Because you remember the day before, which we looked at last week, they were on the other side of the lake of Galilee. Jesus had, he had moved with care and compassion and concern towards these multitudes. And Jesus had fed them, he had fed them with only five barley loaves and two fish. But when the crowds woke up the following morning, we're told that they realised that Jesus was gone. And they start in search of Jesus. They do some detective work. They realised that there's only one, there was only one boat that had crossed the sea of Galilee at night, and Jesus wasn't on it. And maybe they thought to themselves, well, surely he didn't walk across the water.

But the crowds they don't give up, we're told, because they cross the sea of Galilee, seeking and searching for Jesus. In fact, we're told that they go to great lengths to find Jesus because they borrow boats and they sail the seas and they journey all the way to find Jesus. And you know, looking at this, we might be tempted to think that things looked promising and positive for the crowds.

It might look to us like a positive step for the crowds when we see them crossing the sea of Galilee seeking Jesus. We might think that it was hopeful and heartening to see this, to see the crowds seeking Jesus. But as John explains, the crowds were seeking Jesus for all the wrong reasons. And this is something we touched on last week, that John not only emphasises that bread is an important theme in this chapter, but that the crowds are also an important theme in this chapter. Because at the beginning of this chapter, we're told that the crowds, they were following Jesus. But by the end of this chapter, we're told that the crowds walked with Jesus no longer. And that's because the crowds who followed Jesus, they witnessed the miracles, he, they heard the sermons he preached, they saw the signs he presented, but they only followed Jesus because he was this new phenomenon. He was the new fad and fashion of the day. The crowds followed Jesus because everyone was doing it. Everyone was going to see this miracle worker.

[17 : 23] Everyone was gathering to hear this preacher speak with authority. Everyone was following Jesus in the crowds and human nature being what it was. The crowd was attracting an even bigger crowd.

And for many people in these crowds, it was easy to go along. It was easy to go along in the crowds. It was easy to follow Jesus in the crowds. It was easy to blend into the crowds. It was even easy to get lost in the crowds. But for John and the other three gospel writers, the crowds who followed Jesus were a negative thing. Because as we said before, Jesus isn't into crowds. Because there are crowds in hell. Jesus isn't into the numbers game of counting church attendance or counting views on YouTube or counting likes on Facebook. My friend, Jesus isn't into crowds. Jesus wants commitment.

Jesus wants commitment. Jesus wants individuals to commit their life to him. Jesus wants committed Christians. Jesus wants committed Christians who will love him and look to him and live for him.

My friend, Jesus doesn't want crowds. He wants commitment. And that's why John explains that the crowds were seeking Jesus for all the wrong reasons. He says in verse 26, Jesus says, truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Jesus gets right to the heart of the problem, which was the problem of their heart. Because the truth was the crowds were unsatisfied. And they still wanted more. They wanted more of the sensational and the spectacular rather than silent and simple faith in Jesus Christ.

But they were seeking Jesus for all the wrong reasons. They were seeking Jesus not because they had discovered that he was the Son of God and the Savior of sinners and that they needed to come and confess their sin and commit their life to him. No, they were seeking Jesus because he was able to satisfy their stomach and not satisfy their soul. They thought that Jesus was all about filling their stomach and not their soul. My friend, the crowds were thinking about their stomach instead of their soul and Jesus, he says to them, verse 27, do not labor 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. And you know, my friend, the truth is, you know, you know that the things in this life, they will never satisfy your soul. They'll never fill that void in your heart, apart from Jesus. Because you know today that whether it's food or fun or finance or fashion or fitness or flirting, you know that none of these things will bring lasting satisfaction to your soul. But that's not what Jesus was talking about when he addressed the crowds that followed him. Because you know, when it came to the crowds, you know, we could actually say that their mission in seeking Jesus was right. But their motive in seeking Jesus was wrong.

[20 : 51] Their mission in seeking Jesus was right. But their motive in seeking Jesus was wrong. Because when they were seeking Jesus, they went to great lengths to find him. Their mission was to cross the sea of Galilee 13 miles to go and find Jesus. But their motive in seeking Jesus was all wrong.

Because they were seeking Jesus, not because they discovered he was the Son of God and the Savior of sinners and they needed him to be their personal savior. No, they were seeking Jesus because they wanted him to be king. We read that in verse 15. The crowds wanted to make Jesus king.

I find the crowds were seeking Jesus because when they saw all the signs of Jesus, they thought that he was the Messiah who would come and overthrow the Romans. They thought that Jesus would be this earthly king with an earthly kingdom and have an earthly rule. And that as a descendant of King David, that Jesus would be on the throne of the king of Israel. He would sit on the throne of King David and rule and reign in Israel. My friend, their mission in seeking Jesus was right.

But their motive in seeking Jesus was wrong. Their mission in seeking Jesus was right. It was good for them to seek Jesus. But their motive in seeking Jesus was wrong. Because they had completely misunderstood the identity of Jesus. They had failed to see that Jesus is the Savior of sinners and the Son of God. And you know, my friend, I look at these crowds and you know, you have compassion on them because I look at them and I think, well, they're just like my unconverted friend.

You know, I said, and you know, my unconverted friend, I sometimes wonder if that's why after all these years you are still my unconverted friend. Because like the crowds, you may have the right mission in seeking Jesus. But do you have the right motive in seeking Jesus? You may have the right mission in seeking Jesus, but do you have the right motive in seeking Jesus? Yes, you might have the mission of seeking Jesus on a Sunday morning. You might have the right mission of seeking Jesus and sitting down in front of your television set and coming before God's word.

[23 : 18] You might have the mission of seeking Jesus and reading the Bible daily or now and again. You might have the right mission of seeking Jesus by listening to sermons. You might have the mission of seeking Jesus when things aren't really going well for you. But you know, my friend, why do you do it? Why do you do it? What's your motive in seeking Jesus? Is it to comfort your conscience?

Is it to satisfy your self righteousness? Is it to even mask your motive? Is it because you want to be preserved from hell and presented in heaven? My friend, why are you seeking Jesus this morning?

Why do you bother putting your television set on and seek Jesus this morning? What's the motive of your mission in seeking Jesus? I hope your motive, my friend, is that you have an earnest desire to seek Jesus. Not out of any other desire, but a desire that you've come to a realization that you are a lost, hell deserving sinner in need of a savior. My friend, are you seeking Jesus this morning because you've come to the realization that this Jesus is not only your superior and your sovereign, but he also needs to be your savior. Are you seeking Jesus this morning because you've come to the realization that this Jesus has declared and demonstrated his love for you on the cross?

Today, my friend, are you seeking Jesus wholeheartedly, unreservedly? Because you've come to the realization that you love him because he first loved you. My friend, if you're earnestly and wholeheartedly seeking Jesus this morning, don't stop seeking him. Don't stop seeking him when this sermon finishes. You keep seeking him. You go on your knees and seek him. You seek him with your whole heart. Don't stop seeking him until you find him. Don't stop seeking him until you find him. And so we've considered seeing Jesus and seeking Jesus, but lastly, they're sending Jesus, sending Jesus. So seeing Jesus, seeking Jesus and sending Jesus. Now look at verse 28.

Then they said to him, what must we do to be doing the works of God? Jesus answered them, this is the work of God that you believe in him whom he has sent. So they said to him, then what sign do you do that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?

[26 : 06] Our Father, shate man and the wilderness, as it is written, he gave them bread from heaven to eat. Jesus then said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. They said to him, sir, give us this bread always.

Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet you do not believe.

You know, we said earlier that John's gospel is a gospel full of signs and sayings, the signs and sayings of Jesus. And throughout John's gospel, there are seven signs and seven sayings of Jesus.

And in this passage that we're looking at this morning, we see one sign and one saying. It's the fifth sign walking on water and the first saying of Jesus. The first saying was, I am the bread of life. And with each sign and saying of Jesus, John is insisting upon the identity, saying to us, this is Jesus. This is the Son of God. This is the one you must believe in. He is the Savior of He is the Savior of Sinner. But you know, what's really interesting is that when you consider the other gospels, the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, you know, they don't use signs and sayings to reveal the identity of Jesus. They use miracles and messages in order to reveal the identity of Jesus. And the question which arises from the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke is the question, who do you say that I am? Who do you say that I am? You remember, that's a question Jesus asked his disciples on the road to Caesarea Philippi. Jesus wanted to know what public opinion thought about his identity. And he asked his disciples, well, who do people say that I am? And the disciples explained to Jesus, they said, well, some think you're John the Baptist. Others say you're Elijah.

Some others say that you're one of the prophets. But the truth is, they said, we don't really know who you are. People don't really know who you are. And it was that with that that Jesus turned to his disciples and made the question very, very personal. And he asked the big question. He asked the question, who do you say that I am? Who do you say that I am? And in many ways, that's the big question of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Who do you say that I am? But when it comes to John's gospel, John doesn't ask us what public opinion says about Jesus. John doesn't even ask us for our personal opinion about Jesus. Instead, John just tells us who Jesus is. And he does so not only by using seven signs, but also by using seven sayings. Because in John's gospel, Jesus doesn't ask who do you say that I am? In John's gospel, Jesus just says, I am. And in this passage, we hear the first of these seven sayings. When Jesus declared to the crowd, I am the bread of life.

[29 : 24] And as you know, the other I am sayings of Jesus there to be found throughout John's gospel, where Jesus, he reveals his identity as the sinless Savior and the Son of God. He says, I am the light of the world. I am the door. I am the good shepherd. I am the resurrection and the life. I am the way, the truth and the life. I am the true vine. And you know, what we'll discover with each I am saying of Jesus is that he's insisting upon his identity. Jesus is saying to everyone around him, I am. I am the great I am. He's Jesus is saying, I'm the one who revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush. I'm the one who has revealed himself to people throughout the generations of history. And here is Jesus again, he's saying, I am the one who has revealed himself in person. I've revealed myself in person. And it's with that that Jesus says to the crowds who follow to him, it's not manna from sent from heaven that you need. It's me. I am the one you need.

It's not manna you need. You need me. Jesus says in verse 33, for the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. They said to him, Sir, give us this bread always.

Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger. And whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But you know, and with his all clothes, do you know when God fed the Israelites in the wilderness with bread from heaven?

They called it as we read there, they called it manna, which is the Hebrew word for what is it? That's what the Israelites said when the bread of heaven fell. When God provided manna from heaven, this bread of heaven had fell in the wilderness and they all began saying, what is it? Manna, what is it? And the same was true when Jesus, the bread of life, was sent from heaven.

The Israelites, the crowds, those who were seeking Jesus, they all said, what is it? Who is this Jesus? Who is it? And you know, today people are saying the same thing. They hear about Jesus. They hear about this through bread who has come down from heaven. They hear about the one who has come to give life to the world, a world that is dying in its sin. And they're still asking, who is it?

[32 : 01] Who is it? But my friend, with these signs and sayings, Jesus, he's insisting, he's insisting upon his identity that no one will ask, that you will not ask, who is it? Because Jesus, he's saying to us this morning and he's, he's unashamedly saying to us, I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me shall not hunger and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

And as you know, my friend, through our study of John's gospel thus far, we've discovered that believing in Jesus Christ for salvation is about receiving Jesus Christ for salvation.

And in order to receive Jesus as the bread of life for your salvation, you need to for your salvation, you need contrition of sin, you need confession of the Son, you need commitment to the Savior, you need to stop seeking the bread of this world that will never satisfy your soul. And you need to come to this Jesus and seek him with all your heart because he is the only one that will bring that through lasting satisfaction for the longings of your soul. Jesus is revealing himself to you this morning, I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me shall not hunger and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

Well may the Lord bless these thoughts to us and let us pray it again. O Lord our gracious God, we give thanks to thee that Jesus is revealed to us on the pages of Scripture, that he has made himself known, that he has revealed himself to us as the Savior of Sinner and the Son of God, that he is the great I am, the one who revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush and who now reveals himself to us on the pages of Scripture and help us, Lord, we ask that as we come this morning that we would see Jesus, that we would seek Jesus, that we would know that he is the one who has been sent from heaven and that we would come on bended knee and worship him in spirit and in truth. Lord bless us then we pray, bless us in the day that lies ahead, the Lord's day, help us to remember that it is the Sabbath day, to keep it holy and to enjoy Jesus in this day, to know that we would be able to feed upon him and find nourishment for our souls or do us good then we pray, go before us, take away our iniquity, receive us graciously for Jesus' sake. Amen.