

# Exalting Jesus Christ

## "Impossibilities are God's Specialty"

### INTRODUCTION:

- I. We live in a world of great possibilities.
  - A. Modern science and technology have made things that were once considered impossible become ordinary every-day experiences.
    - 1. And many of these things we simply take for granted because we've become so accustomed to them.
      - a. Imagine telling someone 200 years ago that they could instantly communicate with other people around the world with a simple device they can hold in a pocket – not only talk to them, but see them at the same time.
      - b. Or imagine telling someone two centuries ago they could sit down in a metal tube with wings and travel hundreds of miles an hour thousands of feet above the earth's surface, and be at a destination a thousand miles away in just a couple hours – that is after they go through a security check with metal detectors and body scanners.

B. But we also live in a world filled with impossibilities.

1. There are some things that modern science and technology simply cannot do.
  - a. I'm sure we could all make a list of those kinds of impossibilities.
2. In fact, our vocabulary is filled with words like "can't". . . "won't work". . . "no possible way."

II. However, the Scriptures teach us that things impossible for us are not at all impossible for God.

A. So, this tells us that impossibilities can be viewed from two different viewpoints – from a human perspective and from a divine perspective.

1. From a human perspective, Webster defines "impossible" as "incapable of being or of occurring. . . insuperably difficult. . . hopeless."
  - a. And so, when we look at many of our own circumstances from a human perspective, they may very well appear to be "impossible" or "hopeless."
2. But from the divine perspective, nothing is impossible.
  - a. The prophet Jeremiah proclaimed: **Jeremiah 32:17** – "*Ah, Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth*

*by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You."*

b. A few verses later, God speaks and confirms what the prophet said: **Jeremiah 32:27** – *"Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?"*

c. And with resounding clarity, the New Testament echoes this promise:

(1). An angel of the Lord told Mary: **Luke 1:37** – *"For with God nothing will be impossible."*

(2). Jesus told His disciples: **Luke 18:27** – *"The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."*

B. As we continue our studies through the gospel of John entitled "Exalting Jesus Christ," we find Jesus once again demonstrating "Impossibilities are God's Specialty."

1. We've already seen Jesus demonstrate His divine power and majesty three times by doing the impossible: turning water into wine; healing a child from a distance of some twenty miles; and instantly healing a man who had been paralyzed for thirty-eight years.

2. And now, as we turn to the sixth chapter of the gospel of John, we find Jesus about to do the impossible once again – feeding five thousand with only a few fish and loaves.

- C. The message for us is not understanding the miracle Jesus did here, but rather understanding that nothing is impossible with God.
  - 1. No matter how desperate your situation may be, no matter how hopeless, no matter how impossible, our God specializes in impossibilities.
  - 2. If the Lord can feed five thousand with a few fish and loaves, just imagine what He can do for you.
- D. And so, as we go through this study this morning there are some things we want to notice.
  - 1. First, we need to understand something about the setting in which this miracle of Jesus occurs.
  - 2. Second, we want to take a look at the opportunity Jesus was given here – a seemingly unsolvable problem that provided Jesus with an opportunity to once again demonstrate His divine nature and godhood.
  - 3. Third, let's notice the way Jesus used this seemingly impossible situation to test two of His disciples.
  - 4. And finally, let's talk about the response – of Jesus, of the disciples, and of the people who had just witnessed the impossible become possible.

**Body:**

- I. The setting of this event pits a seemingly immovable object of human impossibilities against the irresistible force of God's divine power.
  - A. The first four verses of John chapter six provide the backdrop for our scene.
    1. **John 6:1-4** – *After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. 2 Then a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased. 3 And Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat with His disciples. 4 Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near.*
    2. After His confrontation with the Pharisees over healing a man on the Sabbath, Jesus and His disciples retire north to Galilee for a little seaside rest and relaxation.
      - a. However, Jesus had gained a tremendous amount of fame as news of His healing those with diseases spread throughout the countryside.
      - b. Everywhere He went, crowds of desperate, miracle-seeking people followed him – all hoping to either see a miracle or be the recipient of one.

3. As Jesus and His disciples sat down on the slopes of a nearby mountain, they suddenly realize their plans for a little peace and quiet are going to be short-lived.
- II. Great opportunities are often disguised as unsolvable problems.
- A. This event is no exception.
    1. **John 6:5** – *Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?"*
  - B. Remember, we said earlier that impossible situations can be viewed from a human perspective as well as from a divine perspective.
    1. From a human perspective, all the disciples could see is a swelling wave of humanity approaching them like a tsunami.
      - a. In verse 10 we will discover that this great multitude numbered five thousand men – plus women and children.
      - b. In other words, there could have easily been somewhere in the neighborhood of eight-to-ten thousand people.
      - c. Just imagine what it would be like sitting quietly with Jesus and seeing a massive crowd numbering into the thousands coming your way.

2. From a divine perspective, Jesus saw a wonderful opportunity to reveal His glory, while at the same time, stretch the faith of His disciples.
  - a. And so, Jesus decides to put His disciples to a test – beginning with Philip: **John 6:5b** - *"Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?"*
- C. This wasn't intended to humiliate or demean Philip, but rather to stretch his faith in Jesus, helping him to grow stronger.
  1. In fact, in the very next verse we read: **John 6:6** – *But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.*
    - a. Jesus was not only in control of the situation, He was actually several steps ahead.
    - b. Like a brilliant chess player, Jesus plots a strategy to build the faith of His disciples.
  2. Perhaps this is why James wrote: **James 1:2-4** – *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*
    - a. When we realize our circumstances, no matter how overwhelming and impossible, are under the control of a God

who seeks our highest good, we can truly "consider it all joy" when we encounter various trials.

b. The Lord's "end-game" is to allow the testing of our faith to produce patience and complete trust.

3. Therefore, the next time you're faced with a seemingly impossible situation just remember the Lord may be putting you right where He wants you so that He can build your faith and trust in Him.

III. Notice how Jesus conducts His test. Actually, two disciples take the test this day – Philip is specifically chosen by the Lord, while Andrew volunteers.

A. Philip, with the speed of a computer, analyzed the situation and gives Jesus the answer He expected.

1. **John 6:7** – *Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little."*

a. A denarius was approximately a day's wage for the common laborer in the days of Jesus – as we learn from the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard (cf. Matthew 20:2).

2. Philip is quick to come to the bottom line in terms of dollars and cents – dollars and cents which they apparently didn't have to spend on feeding a crowd.



- a. However, Philip's balance sheet didn't show the infinite wealth and power of God, who owns the world and everything in it.
  - b. He is the God, as Paul tells us: **Ephesians 3:20** – . . . *who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think. . .*
3. So, how does Philip do on his exam? Not all that well. He fails in three areas:
  - a. One, he sees only the situation – not the solution, Jesus.
  - b. Two, he's more concerned about the odds against them than the incredible divine odds in their favor.
  - c. And Third, he calculates only for the bare minimum – so *"that every one of them may have a little."* (**John 6:7b**)
- B. So, what about Andrew? He actually volunteers to take the same test without realizing it.
  1. **John 6:8-9** – *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 small fish, but what are they among so many?"*
  2. Andrew scores a little better than Philip.
    - a. While Philip is feverously working his pocket calculator, Andrew shows some initiative by going through the crowd looking for food.

- b. But Andrew is what we might call "a careful optimist" – he at least seeks a solution, even though it's a human one.
  - 3. Andrew finds a boy with a lunch of five flat barley loaves and a couple of tiny fish.
    - a. This was the kind of lunch that would barely ease the hunger of an active young boy.
    - b. At least we have to give Andrew credit for talking this boy out of his lunch.
  - 4. Just when it seems Andrew has solved the problem, by bringing a few loaves and fishes to Jesus, he fails the test when he looks at the boy's lunch and concludes, "*but what are they among so many?*" (**John 6:9b**)
- C. How many times do we fail similar tests when confronted with similar impossible situations?
  - 1. How many times are we like Philip or Andrew?
    - a. Philip saw the impossible circumstances surrounding them and looked first at the budget.
    - b. Andrew sees the same circumstances and checks the pantry.
    - c. But neither of them thought to look to the Lord.
  - 2. Seems strange doesn't it? Especially since these same disciples had just witnessed Jesus perform an incredible miracle of healing a man with a thirty-eight-year-long paralysis.

3. But aren't we a lot like this?
  - a. We've all seen the Lord change lives just as powerfully as He changed water into wine.
  - b. We've all had the Lord answer prayers and demonstrate His mighty power – all the way from heaven itself.
  - c. And we've all seen Him restore those who have been crippled by the cares and worries of this world, just as thoroughly as He restored strength to the legs of the paralyzed man.
  - d. And yet, when we are faced with the impossible, how soon we forget the power of our God.
4. The next time you're faced with an impossible situation, rather than look at how you're going to solve the problem, try looking first to Jesus – who can do *"exceedingly abundantly beyond all we ask or think."*

IV. Well, this brings us to the response. There are three responses we read about in John chapter six.

A. First, notice the response of Jesus.

1. **John 6:10-13** – *Then Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. 11 And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples,*

*and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted.*

*12 So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost." 13 Therefore they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten.*

2. Look at how Jesus handles this situation.
  - a. First, Jesus calmly and methodically sits the people down, and according to Mark's account (**Mark 6:40**), divided them into manageable groups of hundreds and fifties.
  - b. Taking the five barley loaves and the two tiny fish, Jesus turns to God in prayer, thanking Him for what He has supplied.
  - c. Not only does the boy's lunch give everyone "*a little*" (**cf. John 6:7**), it was enough in the Lord's hands to give everyone "*as much as they wanted*" (**cf. John 6:11**).
  - d. Not only that, but there were twelve baskets full of leftovers – one for each of His disciples!
3. Can you imagine the look on their faces as each disciple brings back a basket full of leftover loaves and fishes?

B. But how did the disciples respond to this miraculous demonstration of the Lord's power?

1. Immediately after feeding the five thousand, Jesus once again tests his disciples to see how well they learned their lesson.
  - a. Let's go to Mark's account to find the expanded version of this story.

2. **Mark 6:45-51** – *Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitude away. 46 And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray. 47 Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He was alone on the land. 48 Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them.*

*Now about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea, and would have passed them by. 49 And when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed it was a ghost, and cried out; 50 for they all saw Him and were troubled. But immediately He talked with them and said to them, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."*

*51 Then He went up into the boat to them, and the wind ceased. And they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled.*

3. We would think these disciples would have learned their lesson.
  - a. Jesus had performed four powerful miracles – all demonstrating His love and concern for others:
    - (1). Preventing newlyweds from being embarrassed by running out of wine at the wedding reception.
    - (2). Healing a boy while miles away.
    - (3). Enabling a paralyzed man to get up and walk
    - (4). And feeding five thousand with five barley loaves and two small fish.
4. But as soon as these same disciples find themselves in a threatening situation, what do they do? Row harder!
  - a. Rather than turn to prayer and trusting in the love and power of God to deliver them, they resort to trying to remedy their situation by the strength of their own hands.
5. So what does Jesus do? He provides them with another vivid demonstration of His divine power – Jesus comes walking across the waves toward their floundering boat.
6. Their reaction? After being terrified out of their minds?
  - a. Well, obviously *"they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled."*
  - b. This is just another way of saying, their jaws dropped to the deck! They were shocked beyond belief!

7. And it's this reaction that tells us just how poorly the Lord's disciples passed this little test.
  - a. **Mark 6:52** – *For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened.*
    - (1). **Mark 6:52** (NASV) – . . .*for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened.*
  - b. Their hearts were hardened by their own unbelief – they still had not learned to place absolute and complete trust and confidence in Jesus.
8. Aren't we just like this at times?
  - a. Even though we believe in Jesus Christ, don't we occasionally make the same mistake of being blinded by our own unbelief?
  - b. Don't we sometimes forget that Jesus can calm the storms in our lives just as He calmed this storm?
  - c. Instead, we're just like the disciples – we just try to row harder rather than stop rowing and get on our knees in prayer.
  - d. We are so much like them aren't we?
- C. So, what was the reaction of the people to being fed? Let's go back to John chapter 6.
  1. **John 6:14-15** – *Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the*

*world." 15 Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.*

2. The people clearly see the miracle Jesus had just performed, and they recognized Him as someone great – a Prophet – perhaps even the Messiah.
  - a. There was a common belief among the Jews in the days of Jesus that when the Messiah came, He would miraculously provide for all their needs – which would include miraculously feeding them.
3. But Jesus could see they wanted to make Him a King and a Messiah on their terms – not on His.
  - a. Jesus had not come to be the kind of Messiah they were seeking. He had not come to take care of their physical needs.
  - b. Jesus came to heal the people of Israel, and eventually the whole world, of the spiritual sickness that kept them separated from God.
  - c. In the end, Jesus would even give up His own life to pay the price necessary to redeem the world from the clutches of Satan.



## **CONCLUSION:**

- I. As we bring this lesson to a close, I want you to think for a moment about your reaction to these wonderful demonstrations of Jesus' deity and awesome power.
  - A. You've seen what Jesus did here, and on three other occasions before this. What's your reaction?
    - 1. Are you like Philip – perhaps filled with pessimism that Jesus can heal your broken life?
    - 2. Or could you be like Andrew – realizing that the Lord has the power to do wonderful things, but lacking the confidence to actually place your situation in His hands?
    - 3. Or could you be like the other disciples – struggling to deal with life's overwhelmingly impossible situations all on your own, by just rowing harder?
    - 4. Or maybe you're like the crowd – trying to force Jesus to fit into your own narrow concept of how He should care for you on your terms, while refusing to allow Him to take care of you on His terms?
  - B. This Jesus, who performed all these wonderful examples of His love and power, is the same Jesus who is asking you to place your trust and confidence in Him to bless your life with wonderful things.

1. For some of you, Jesus wants to demonstrate His power to cleanse you from every sin you've ever committed.
  - a. But first, you must be willing to truly believe in Him, come to Him repenting of those sins, and then be baptized into Christ for the remission of those sins.
  - b. He is asking you to do this His way – not your way.
2. For others, Jesus is willing to demonstrate His great love for you in cleansing you once again from sins you've committed.
  - a. All He asks is that you come to Him, repenting of those sins, and confessing them to God.
  - b. Again, He is asking you to do this His way – not your way.
3. And for others, Jesus is willing to demonstrate His power in calming the storms in your life.
  - a. All He asks is that you trust in His love and care for you, and bring all the needs of your life to Him – to cast all your cares and burdens on Him.
  - b. And again, He's asking you to do this His way – quit trying to row harder, just simply trust in Him to calm the storms of your life.