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NT 624 Gospel of John

Journal Week 6-10

As I begin to study the book of John, I realize John wrote about the signs Jesus demonstrated during his ministry. I believe John called symbolic events signs because the people observed the extraordinary power of Jesus. Jesus feeding many people was one notable sign in the Synoptic gospel. These signs demonstrated Jesus's spiritual role as the Messiah. There were many similarities discussed in the synoptic gospels regarding Jesus feeding the crowds of people. The gospels documented the crowds of people who followed Jesus and the opportunity that Jesus had to tell the people about his role as the 'Bread of Life'. The Bread of Life was symbolic of Jesus's body dying and being used as a ransom to redeem the lives of people past, present, and future. The similarities in the gospels also included the discussion that Jesus was in an isolated place, the large crowd followed him and Jesus feed the crowd of people with 5 loaves of bread and two fishes. Mark and Luke indicated that the crowd should be dispersed to the surrounding countryside because there was not enough food to feed the people. John and Mark asked Jesus specifically if they should go out to buy bread with 200 silver coins. Mark and Luke mentioned the words "should we go and buy" Luke and John mentioned the number of people as 5000. Mark and Luke discussed the idea of sending the crowd to an isolated space to get food. Only John discussed the idea of having the people sit down on the grass to eat the food. The feeding of the crowds with bread occurred close to Passover when Jesus offered up himself as a sacrifice. It was an opportunity for Jesus to emphasize his role as a spiritual savior rather than a political savior.

I believe that Jesus was both God and man so he used physical human signs to demonstrate the might and power of the things of God. As humans, we mainly view things from

a human perspective. Therefore, the people in Jesus's time were concerned with a meal to fill their hunger and a political leader to deliver them from Roman rule. Jesus is the ruler of our souls for all eternity and he was persistent in emphasizing his role as God to the crowds of people that he met. In the world today as humans we are similar to the people in Ancient Near East, we are very concerned with our financial needs, the vanity of our physical bodies, the desire to gain earthly recognition, and currently the state of social and political issues in our country. Life is more than physical things. Jesus's goal was to focus on redemption for our soul and I believe now more than ever every person should shift our focus to our spiritual wellbeing.

Jesus never neglected the physical but he always promoted the spiritual agenda of his ministry. This was evident as John the evangelist did an excellent job in detailing the event when Jesus had no food to feed the people and a little boy offered his lunch which comprised five loaves of bread and two fishes. Jesus blessed the meal and fed 5000 people. Then the leftovers were collected and it filled twelve baskets. John the evangelist documented the work of Jesus's ministry which began in the late phase of Jesus's life. Jesus healed many sick people and when he needed a moment to rest, he went to the mountain to rest as a way to renew himself. The visit to the mountain was an allusion similar to Moses going to the mountain to communicate with God. After the period in the mountain, Jesus reconnected with the crowd of people who followed him. The concept of breaking bread was a custom that was common in Jewish Culture and Jesus thought it was important to feed the people who were following him. God had provided manna from heaven when the children of Israel were in the wilderness. It was noted that Jesus was aware the people were more concerned with eating to feed their physical body in contrast to seeking Jesus to learn about gaining eternal life. Jesus explained that he was the bread of life that was sent down from heaven so that humans may gain eternal life. This was another opportunity

to highlight Jesus's role as the sacrificial lamb who was going to use his body to die for the sins of the world.

John 6:14-15- states 14 “When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, this is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.” 15 “When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself”. Many people believed that Jesus was the savior and they were following Jesus because of the extraordinary signs they saw him perform. In contrast, Jesus used the sign to demonstrate to the crowd that he was the son of God. The people looked at the sign and they believed Jesus was the prophet that was predicted in Deuteronomy 18:15 which states “The Lord your God will raise for you a prophet like me. He will be one of your people. You must listen to him” Jesus later walked on the water as a sign to show that the winds and the waves obey him and he was the creator of the universe. Ultimately Jesus was aware that his purpose on earth was to bring enlightenment to people by showing them the signs that he was their messiah. Each dramatic sign that Jesus performed has helped to imprint an image on the mind of the people so they will remember that Jesus was the son of God sent down from heaven to redeem man from sin and for eternal life. The people wanted a political savior but it was also important for Jesus to continue his word as a savior of the soul rather than being forced by the people to become a political savior which was what the people desire.

During the feast of Sukkoth Jesus avoided the crowd because he was aware that Pharisees wanted to kill him for indicating he was the messiah. Jesus identified himself as I am for example “I am the light or I am he” This was Jesus's way of enlightening humans of his identity. As I read John’s account of Jesus's ministry, I was able to review several instances when Jesus verbally identified himself as God by using the term I am for example “Very truly, I tell you (pl),

before Abraham was, I am." I believe Jesus was making a mental imprint on people's minds as he reminded them that he is the Messiah and using "I am". The Pharisee disliked the idea that Jesus claimed to be God so this would be a reason for them to plot to kill him. John the evangelist referred to the disciples, the Jewish and the Pharisee people as plural you for example John 8:12 Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, "I am" the light of the world. If you follow me, you will never walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life." In my daily walk with God, I think about my daily struggles and my accomplishments and feel that I am who I am because of the grace of God and the strength that he has given me to endure the challenges in life. I think about Jesus when he was on the earth and I imagine there were days he just wanted everyone to know that he is the Son of God. Jesus's mission in life was to redeem man from sin and his goal was for all people to have eternal life because of the sacrifice that he made as the messiah and the Son of God.

Jesus was known as a healer when he was on the earth and many people benefited from the signs that he demonstrated. Jesus used healing as a way to show the world his power as the Son of God and his ability to do things that seemed impossible. While there is no direct connection between sin and sickness, Ancient Near East Cultures continues to believe that sickness is a punishment for sin. The Pharisees questioned both the man who was blind and his parents to discredit the healing and to condemn Jesus for healing on a Saturday or the Jewish Sabbath. Jesus used the story as an opportunity to confirm to the man that Jesus was the Messiah. Many times, when a person is ill people may desire to assign blame for the illness. Therefore, it may seem easy to accept that the illness is caused by sin. In counseling, I will explain that God wants everyone to be in good health so there is no need to punish a person with an illness. Also, illness is caused by diseases and this is the best logical explanation. In contrast, spiritual

blindness is caused by a lack of awareness or acceptance of the truth. This spiritual blindness has kept the Pharisees in a state of ignorance so that they will not accept Jesus as the Messiah. In our present world, I believe some people continue to believe that sickness is a punishment. I believe that while God may allow sickness as in the case of Job God can use every incident to bring glory to his name. The healing can be physical healing on earth or spiritual healing when God calls the person home to be with the Lord because absent in the body is present with the Lord. I pray daily for the people who desire to live in spiritual blindness because they refuse to believe that there is a God who is the creator of the universe and he sends his son to die for their sins. It feels sad that a person would rather live a hopeless life than to allow themselves the opportunity to find out more about the possibility of life eternal with God. Spiritual blindness is meant to hurt the soul for all eternity. My prayer is that more people will care about their soul salvation and their relationship with God.

The last phase of Jesus's ministry was to confirm to the world he was the Son of God in the flesh and his mission was to die for the sins of the world. Jesus described himself as the good shepherd whose sheep hear his voice. A shepherd is a symbol of leadership and Jesus was able to command the attention of thousands of people who participated in his ministry on earth. They saw the signs he demonstrated, he fed them and they listened to his teachings regarding who he was and his purpose on earth. Jesus is God who volunteered to come to earth to sacrifice his life for the sins of all people. He also had the power to raise himself from the dead. John 10:17-18 “For this reason the Father loves me because I lay down my life to take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have the power to lay it down, and I have the power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father” Jesus was aware he needed to demonstrate a major sign before his death so he chose the demise of Lazarus to

demonstrate the power of God and to bring glory to God for the ability to raise someone from the dead. The death and resurrection of Lazarus was a foreshadowing of Jesus's death and resurrection. The resurrection of Lazarus was a powerful symbol of authority over death. Many people fear death because of the unknown. Jesus demonstrated that he had power over death and the grave by raising Lazarus and himself from the grave. As humans on the earth, this is also a powerful symbol for us. I went to a funeral recently and I heard a person said that she greatly fears the thought of dying. I was not sure if it was the unknown that scared her, or that she did not have a relationship with God, or she was not ready to give up her experience as a human. As a child of God, I believe that as much as I desire to have a long healthy life, whenever the Lord is ready to take me home my prayer is that I will be ready to meet the Lord as the King of King's.

Christian theology is unique because we believe that our God came to earth, died to redeem humans from sin and he is resurrected from the grave and return to heaven to prepare a place where people who believe can be with God for all eternity. We also believe that God has promised to be with humans at all times so he has given us his word which existed from the beginning and the Holy Spirit who also existed from the beginning to reside with humans, to guide our decisions and to give us the fortitude to continue to worship God. I believe that it can be a challenge to have such faith because we are constantly bombarded with ideas in the media and other sources regarding shifting our priority from spiritual things to physical things.

However, Jesus reminded us before he died, he is the resurrection and the life John 11:24-26, 24 "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." 25 "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" Prayerfully and humbly I believe the promise of salvation and eternal life that Jesus has promised to all who believe.

As I continue in my journey in life and if I had an opportunity to develop a vision for a church my goal will be to inspire an atmosphere of love and kindness where people can learn the word because it existed from the beginning and live by the precepts of the word because the word is eternal. I believe in worshiping God the Father creator of the universe, Jesus the son who is an example of leadership or the good shepherd and Lamb of God who died for the sins of the world. A church that believes in worshiping God because Jesus died so all can have eternal life, the church will believe in a servant-leadership philosophy. A servant-leader will demonstrate the desire to serve the people with integrity. The church will believe in the Holy Spirit who will be an advocate for all people. The church will participate in the Lord Supper using bread and grape juice as a reminder of the sacrifice that Jesus gave his body and his blood as he died on the cross to redeem humanity from sin. I believe the church is people assembling to worship God, in preparation for worshiping Jesus in eternity. John 3:16, 5:24, 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 5:24 24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. John 13: 1-2 Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The purpose of the church is to be of service to each other just as Jesus did by washing the feet of his disciples and demonstrating servant leadership. John 13:5 Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. The church will be committed to the gospel or good news of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit as explained in John 15:26-27 26 "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from

the Father, he will testify on my behalf. 27 You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning”. The church will be committed to uniting as one body and loving each other similar to the way Jesus wants us to love as explained in John 13:34 34 and John 14 5-7 “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another”. “And I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit because apart from me you can do nothing. 6 Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. 7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you”.

I believe Jesus is the son of God who is fully God and full man. Jesus took on human form and born from a virgin birth. Jesus lived among humans and he had human experiences which included the need for food, clothing, shelter, and human connection. Jesus began his ministry by healing, teaching, and demonstrating extraordinary signs to crowds of people to confirm he was the Messiah. Jesus is a leader who describes himself as the “Good Shepherd” and the one whose purpose was to die on a cross to takes away the sin of the world. I believe Jesus was a good example of how we should live as humans and how we should be passionate about the things of God. It is okay to have human desires and enjoy activities on earth. Jesus was a very socially conscious person but he knew his priority was his father’s business. We too can establish the work of God as an important priority in our life.

After Jesus visited my make-believe congregation an addendum to the farewell speech will include a word of encouragement to the church. The church will be inspired to worship God daily, be kind to people all over the world, be generous, spread the good news of Jesus to everyone, continue to believe that Jesus came to the world to redeem humanity from sin and he

will return to God the Father to prepare a place where the soul will reside in peace. John 16: 22-23 “So you have pain now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. On that day you will ask nothing of me”. There will be no more pain, no more sorrow, no more sickness, no more death and we can live an abundant life because of the sacrifice that Jesus made to allow his body to die and he shed his blood for the remission of the sin of all humans. The goal of the church is for all humans to experience the saving grace of Jesus and to earn eternal life.

Answering the questions this week has helped me to develop a clear mission statement for the church and identify the importance of developing clear theology for the church. I was able to reaffirm past information regarding Jesus's ministry on earth and Jesus's account during the last supper. This assignment has reaffirmed my faith in God and doing my work in ministry. The study questions and completing the journal has helped me to reflect on the life of Jesus and his struggle to convince the world that he was the Messiah. Jesus used signs to get the attention of people, Jesus explained his role as the light of the world or the son of God who came to die for the sins of the world. Many people including the Pharisees ridiculed Jesus and they were not open to listening to his message. Many preachers and teachers continue to receive a similar response when the word is preached and people do not respond to the word and sometimes people are critical of the work of Pastors and teachers. I will encourage every person to trust in the Lord, keep the faith, and continue with the work God has called you to do. I believe in God all things are possible and the Holy Spirit will give us the strength to endure the difficult challenges. The Lord is the one who saves, heals, delivers, and transforms for all eternity.