TODAY'S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Daniel Balch / Opening Prayer by: Ken Coleman
Morning Assembly Song Leader: Danny Balch

#742 When Upon Life's Billows
#615 He Keeps Me Singing

Scripture Reading by: Pierce Balch
#381 Years I Spent in Vanity

Communion Devotional by: Don Taylor
Lord's Supper and Contribution

#539 Higher Ground
Sermon: "Human Like Me"
James 5:17-18

#911 Bring Christ Your Broken Life
#753 Farther Along
Closing Prayer by: Jerry Mallernee

Bobby Rader's small group will meet today at
5:00 p.m. at the building

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 5:00pm — Worship
Wednesday: 6:30pm — Bible Study Classes

Jan. 12, 2025

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

Galatians 5:1

Growth vs. Bloat

After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little." One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?" Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the left-over fragments, that nothing may be lost." So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!" **(John 6:1-14)**

This is the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000, one of the most remarkable signs he performed in his ministry. In response, the astounded crowds declared that he was the prophet they'd been waiting for! The very next verse says that they were intending to come and make him king.

Isn't that exactly what we would want? Thousands of people who believe in Jesus and are ready to follow him! In our wildest dreams, we couldn't imagine that sort of success!

If Jesus approached things the way the way that we do, he would have been on his way. He would have kept the meals coming—in fact, he probably would have offered a variety of them, so that they did not become discontent like the Israelites in the wilderness. He would have had the apostles survey everyone to make sure each demographic was getting exactly what they felt they needed. He would have done whatever it took to keep those numbers up and tried his best to do whatever it took to get them to stick around.

Yet, interestingly, we find if we just read on that Jesus did precisely the opposite of that. First, he ran away from the crowd: *Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.* **(Jn 6:15).**

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

George Votaw had surgery Thursday and is at home.

Continued Prayers
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Steve Ward, Caitlin Smith, Virginia Cole, Ken Coleman, Joe Edd Stifflemire, Donna Wilson, Jo Ella McKewen, Oscar Cantu, Jennifer Stelly, Dr. Hugo Thomas, Steve Ward, Geri Cryer, Gloria McKelroy, Linda Frank, Scott Overton, Rickey Lucas, Debbie Lynn

Shut Ins
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Winona Angelle, Catherine Parker, Peggy McIntosh, Lois Watts, Willo Dean Ellis

Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Montepuez, Mozambique , Rod Kyle in the South Pacific, Mani Pagidopali in India

Upcoming Activities

Elders, Minister meeting Monday, Jan. 13th at 3:00 p.m.

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Thursday, 16th.at 8:00 a.m.

Elders	Deacons	Minister
Ken Coleman	Daniel Balch	Bryant Perkins
Bobby Rader	Danny Balch	
Don Taylor	Walden David	
Robert Ward	Gus Tristan	

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

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When they persisted, he told them in quite negative terms that they were only interested in the meal: *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."* **(Jn 6:26).**

Then he gave them some really strange and difficult teaching. *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 you."* **(Jn 6:53).** That really perplexed his audience. *When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?* **(Jn 6:60).**

In the end, *after this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.* **(Jn 6:66)**

By the time we get to **Acts 1**, the nucleus of the church is only 120 in the upper room. He turned a following of 5,000 into 120! That's less than 1/40th the original number of his adherents. All of the professional church growth consultants would be furious with him.

And that differs markedly from our typical approach. We rationalize that sure, they may be here for the wrong reasons—but they'll come around. If we can just keep them coming, if we can get them in the doors, we can turn them into real followers eventually.

But that isn't how Jesus thought; people had to accept him as Lord. It's the same reason why he turned away would be followers in **Luke 9:57-62.** It's the same reason he turned away the Rich Young Ruler despite his dedication to the Law. If people did not value him above all else, they were not fit for discipleship. He did not want customers who liked what he had to offer; he wanted those who were ready to take up the cross. You see, the problem is that the vast majority of that crowd was not interested in discipleship; they had no intention of being formed in the image of Jesus. They were not really following him at all; they were in it for the food or the spectacle or novelty.

Why did Jesus demand so much more commitment than we do? Maybe because he wasn't interested in amassing a crowd as an end in itself. Numbers for their own sake aren't the goal; that's not growth—it's bloat. He was trying to train people to be like him, to accept his Lordship, and to carry out his kingdom vision.

What makes us believe that he wants a church that sees success in completely different terms?

Note: this article is adapted from a section in Jack Wilkie's book "Church Reset," a valuable study that we went through on Wednesday evenings some years ago. It's worth thinking about.