

## Feeding the 5000

### Matthew 14:13-21 July 27-28, 2019

#### Introduction

- Only two miracles found in all four gospels the resurrection and the feeding of the 5000 – signifies the climax of Christ's ministry to the people of Israel in all four accounts

#### Account

- Jesus has been ministering all over Galilee for several years now and his fame has grown far and wide – becoming a threat to the religious leaders and to Herod. He's been rejected in his hometown, yet he continues to minister to multitudes of people who come to him. He also has been training and teaching His disciples and had recently sent them out by themselves to do signs and wonders in Jesus's name. They have now returned and are in need of some rest.
- Additionally, word has reached Jesus that John the Baptist – his cousin – has been beheaded by Herod Antipas. Saddened by the news, and not seeking to have a confrontation with Herod, Jesus sought solace and comfort by leaving the crowds and finding time alone in prayer with His disciples.
- Our text picks up here in **Matthew 14:13-21** "13 Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. 14 When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick. 15 Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves." 16 But Jesus said, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." 17 They said to him, "We have only five loaves here and two fish." 18 And he said, "Bring them here to me." 19 Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. 20 And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. 21 And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children."
- Now, as I previously mentioned, each of the gospels gives us detail on this miracle, so I want to kind of synthesize the accounts and then we'll look at some points of application.
- **Mark 6:33** tells us that the people saw Jesus and disciples get into the boat and head across the Sea of Galilee and the crowd hurried to meet them on the other side. The Sea of Galilee is not very large – you can see across it on a clear day – and it basically sits at the bottom of a bowl as hills rise up around most of it. So its easy enough to walk along the hills and track the progress of a boat going across.

- So even though Jesus wanted to grieve in peace, and the disciples needed a rest after being sent out by Jesus to minister, the people wouldn't relent and continued to seek the miracles and signs of Jesus.
- **John 6:4** tells us that this was in the spring at the end of the rainy season, which is why there was grass around for the people to sit down upon. This is also right after barley harvest, during passover, which is when the people are remembering their deliverance out of Egypt. So its no coincidence that the type of loaves available are barley.
- We know that the people followed him from Galilee, so these people were Jewish and there were 5000 men, meaning that there were likely upwards of 20,000 Jewish people when you add in the women and children. This was a huge multitude of Jews out in the wilderness.
- Yet, when we break down the 4 accounts of this miracle, the focus isn't really on the people. Like most other instances, the multitude is seeking Christ because of what they believe they can get out of Him. This is nothing new. The people are selfish and only see Christ as a miracle worker who can give them stuff. They have little understanding of who He really is.
  - So despite the fact that Christ feeds these people out in the wilderness during passover, just as the Lord fed the people in the wilderness with mana once he delivered them out of Egypt, the primary focus of Christ really isn't on the Jewish people who He is ministering too, but rather in teaching His disciples several valuable lessons of what it means to be a servant of Christ.
- According to **Mark 6:34** and **Luke 9:11** , Jesus begins to teach the people that are there about the kingdom of heaven. As He does so our text tells us that Jesus is moved with compassion – Gk, literally moved in the bowels – and so he also heals the weak and sick among them. Even though Jesus knows His miracles are all most of them are there for, He still meets their selfish and self-indulgent motivations by ministering to their felt needs.
  - But its improtant that we see Jesus didn't just start doing miracles right away, He first sought to teach and inform them of truth so that those who had ears to hear would receive spiritual nourishment alongside physical, mental, and emotional nourishment.
- Now before Jesus even begins to teach and heal, He recongizes the large crowd early in the day and knows that these people will need to eventually eat. According to **John 6:5**, Jesus asks the disciples as they see the crowd approaching how they are going to feed them. Aagain, this shows us that while Jesus desires to minister to the people and show that like God the Father, He can and will provide for them in the wilderness, the primary motivation here is to teach his disciples through this experience.
- So Jesus asks the disciples early in the day how they are going to feed them all and they don't have an answer. **John 6:6** tells us that Jesus asked them this question in order to

test them, because He knew what He was going to do. Phillip recognized that 8 months' wages (200 denarii) wouldn't be enough to feed the crowd while Andrew was able to find 5 loaves and 2 fish from a boy, but he knew that wouldn't even feed the disciples let alone the crowd.

- After asking them this question, Jesus goes about his teaching and healing, and let's the disciples think about this conundrum all day long. He doesn't give them the answer, but goes about ministering to the needs of the people as they wonder how they'll all eat.
- **Matthew 14:15** tells us that it was growing late and that evening had arrived. In Jewish culture there were two evenings. The first was late afternoon from 3:00 – 6:00 which was the end of the day, and the second was late evening from 6:00 to 9:00. This was the first evening – nearing 6:00 – as the Jewish day was ending. So everyone would have been ready for dinner.
- And the disciples have their answer as to how the people would be fed; they tell Jesus to send the people away to find food for themselves. Though they had seen Jesus do many amazing miracles, and He had been healing the sick all day, they had no other answer than to make the people fend for themselves.
- Of course, Jesus had different plans. He directed the disciples to feed the people themselves. In the Gk, "you give" in **Matthew 5:16** is a command. They immediately objected, noting again the small amount of food they had. Failing the final test, Jesus commanded the disciples to bring the people to Him (**Matthew 14:18**).
  - Jesus ordered the people to sit down in the grass in groups of 50 and 100. In the Greek "sit down" meant to recline, and the grass could also refer to a garden patch. One would only recline at a full meal or a banquet, so in telling the disciples that it was time to recline in the garden with a group of people, he was basically preparing them for a feast.
- Jesus takes the meager amount of food they have, gives thanks to the Lord for it and blesses it, and then gives it to the disciples to distribute. In **Mark 6:41** Jesus broke the bread and give it to the disciples. The Gk for gave them (*didōmi*) is in a tense which means Jesus continually gave it to them. So I want you to picture Jesus thanking the Lord for the meal, and then continually tearing the loaves in half and handing out the pieces together with the fish to the disciples.
- And when they began to distribute the broken loaves and fish, all 20,000 or so people that were there ate and were satisfied. The greek word for satisfied (Gk *chortazo*) means wanting for nothing, and is the same Gk word found in the sermon on the mount (**Matthew 5:6**) when Jesus said "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied".
- All the leftovers were picked up, and it was enough to fill 12 baskets, one for each of the disciples, and one for each of the 12 tribes of Israel.

- Now remember, this was around Passover and nationalism was running high in the Jewish people. **John 6:15** tells us that the multitude of people wanted to come and make Jesus king at this point, but he withdrew to the mountain by himself to finally have some rest with His Father. And when Jesus made his way back to Capernaum the crowd was waiting for him there asking to be fed again (**John 6:22-34**), it was at this point that Jesus told them He is the bread of life (**John 6:35**) and that they need to trust in Him to satisfy their spiritual hunger above all else. At this many turned away from following.

### Application

- Lessons Jesus taught the disciples through this story:
  - Importance of avoiding needless conflict
  - Importance of rest and solitude
  - Importance of compassion for those in need – even when unworthy and acting selfishly and don't deserve anything
    - But not just called to meet felt needs, taught them importance of ministering to spiritual needs first while also meeting the felt tangible needs of the people
  - Importance of obedience – even when don't know exactly what the whole plan is (had people sit down before making plan known to the disciples)
  - Importance of order and organization in ministry
  - Importance of generosity (gave away all they had) and stewardship (no waste)
  - Importance of not giving in to cultural pressure (rejected being made king and didn't give the crowds what they wanted when they came to Him in Capernaum)
  - Most important lesson was to look to Christ first and foremost and always bringing people to the Lord to have their needs met.
    - Not to focus on your limitations and inability (no prideful, self-reliance), but to bring people to Jesus for His answer
    - What we can offer by ourselves is always spiritually inadequate.
      - 3 responses to inadequate resources
        - Despair (disciples chose this option)
        - Feverishly push ourselves to try to meet the need with our own strength
        - Go to Jesus and humbly do our part in His provision