

Jesus Fed the Five Thousand

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why people can feel sorry for what they have done and still continue to do the same things. We saw that this is the result of being driven by fear, guilt and shame. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus fed a crowd of five thousand because they were in a deserted area where there was no food for them to eat.

The disciples of John the Baptist buried the body of John when they heard about his death. Then, they went and told Jesus what had happened. Matthew 14:13-15 says, “When Jesus heard *it*, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard *it*, they followed Him on foot from the cities. And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, ‘This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.’” Jesus and the disciples heard that John had been murdered. Then, Jesus and the disciples left that area and went to a deserted place.

However, the people also heard that Jesus had left the area by boat and immediately the people began walking around the north edge of the Sea of Galilee to get to the area where Jesus had gone. Luke 9:10-11 says, “And the apostles, when they had returned, told Him all that they had done. Then He took them and went aside privately into a deserted place belonging to the city called Bethsaida. But when the multitudes knew *it*, they followed Him; and He received them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who had need of healing.” Here, we see that Jesus heard about the murder of John the Baptist about the time that the disciples arrived back to report to Jesus after He had sent them out two-by-two to preach the kingdom of God. The disciples gave Jesus a report of what they had done and what they had taught.

Then, Jesus took them aside into a desert place so that they could get some rest. This deserted area was in the general area of Bethsaida, which was on the northeast corner of the Sea of Galilee. The people arrived in the deserted area at the time when Jesus and the disciples were coming out from the place where they had rested and talked. We see that this was a very large crowd of people that had gone around the north end of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus was moved with compassion for the people as He saw them there. He healed their sick that needed healing and then He spoke to them about the kingdom of God. In Luke 17:20-21, Jesus was asked a question. Those verses say, “Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, ‘The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, “See here!” or “See there!” For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.’” The Pharisees were asking about the future kingdom when Christ will rule and so Jesus pointed out that the present kingdom is within the heart of those who trust in Him.

Jesus spoke to the people for the rest of the day. As it was getting closer to evening, the disciples became concerned because they thought about the fact that the large crowd of people would soon be hungry. As a result, the disciples reminded Jesus that this was a deserted area. They then said, “Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.” Instead of telling the people to leave, Jesus gave the disciples an answer. Matthew 14:16-21 says, “But Jesus said to them, ‘They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.’ And they said to Him, ‘We have here only five loaves and two fish.’ He said, ‘Bring them here to Me.’ Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.” Here, we see that Jesus chose instead to teach the disciples an important lesson.

Jesus told the disciples that the people did not need to leave. Instead, Jesus told the disciples to feed the people. That caused the disciples to make various responses. Jesus asked Philip, “Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” John 6:6 says, “But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.” Here, we see that Jesus was continually training His disciples by asking the disciples questions that would make them think and learn to look to Jesus for guidance. Instead of answering the question, Philip gave a financial report and said they could not afford to buy food for all of the people. John 6:7 says, “Philip answered Him, ‘Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little.’” Andrew gave a different answer. He told Jesus what was available. John 6:8-9 says, “One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to Him, ‘There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?’”

We see that Jesus took the five loaves and two fish. Then, He gave the disciples the responsibility to gather the people in groups so that the food could easily be distributed to them. Luke 9:14-15 says, “For there were about five thousand men. Then He said to His disciples, ‘Make them sit down in groups of fifty.’ And they did so, and made them all sit down.” Here, we see that Jesus used this opportunity to help the disciples learn that they could organize large crowds by dividing them into smaller groups. Jesus then prayed and blessed the loaves and fish. Mark 6:41 says, “And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves, and gave *them* to His disciples to set before them; and the two fish He divided among *them* all.” Here, we see that Jesus helped the disciples learn that they could participate in ministry even though Jesus had to do the miracle that made that ministry possible.

We see the size of this miracle when we read that all of the people ate until they were filled. Jesus then had the disciples gather up the food that remained. John 6:12-13 says, “So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, ‘Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost.’ 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.” At the close of His ministry, Jesus would tell the disciples that He was sending them out to make disciples. He wanted them to understand the principle that every person is much more important than bread. Every person who repents of

sin and turns to Christ needs to be gathered into a body of Christians where the new Christian can grow and mature. Jesus made it clear to the disciples that He did not want anything to be forgotten. We see that there was enough food left over that the disciples were able to gather twelve baskets of leftover food. Matthew 14:21 says, “Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.” Jesus continually used everything that happened to teach and train the disciples to prepare them for future ministry.

Once the people had all eaten and were satisfied, Matthew 14:22-23 says, “Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there.” Here, we see that Jesus had other lessons that He was teaching both to the crowd and to His disciples. With the entire crowd still in that place, Jesus told the disciples to get into the boat and go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. As a result, the crowd all saw the disciples get into the boat and start across the water.

Once Jesus had sent the disciples on their way, Jesus turned to the crowd of people and told them that it was time for them to go home as well. The crowds all listened to Jesus and headed back around the north side of the Sea of Galilee to get back to the towns where they lived. Once the crowds were gone, we see that Jesus went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Jesus often showed, by His example, the need to get alone to spend time in prayer to the Father. Early in the public ministry of Jesus, Mark 1:35 says, “Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.” On that particular morning, the disciples had gone looking for Jesus and found Him praying. John 18:1-2 says, “When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples over the Brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which He and His disciples entered. And Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place; for Jesus often met there with His disciples.” Here, we see that the disciples had often gone with Jesus when He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Jesus teaches us a very important lesson about our own prayer life by His example. Jesus made it clear that we also need to spend time alone with the Father in prayer. Matthew 6:6 says, “But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.” We see that as the evening came, Jesus was alone praying to the Father. Jesus knew the importance of spending time alone in fellowship with the Father. This was a time of intimate fellowship with no other interruptions. We will see in our next topic that Jesus actually spent several hours in prayer that night. Jesus shows us, by His example, the importance of having regular times of fellowship with the Father and the Son. 1 John 1:3 says, “That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to enjoy regular fellowship with the Lord as they spend time in prayer and meditation on the Word of God. That is a key in helping them in their spiritual growth and development. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children, by your example, the importance of fellowship with the Lord.

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