

21. Jesus Fed the Five Thousand

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the effects of guilt in the life of a person. In the previous topic, we saw that Jesus had sent out the Twelve to preach that people should repent. In our topic today, we will see what happened when the disciples returned from their preaching trip.

Mark 6:30-32 says, “Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. And He said to them, ‘Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.’ For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat. So they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves.” We saw in an earlier topic that Jesus had taken the disciples with Him as He preached throughout the cities of Galilee. Jesus had shown them what to teach, and had shown that He came from God by doing many miracles. Then, in Mark 6:7-13, Jesus had sent out the Twelve to do what they had seen Him do. Mark 6:12-13 says, “So they went out and preached that *people* should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed *them*.” Now, we see that they had returned, and Jesus gave them time to report about their ministry trip.

We see that the disciples reported two things in particular about their ministry trip. First, they told Jesus what they had done. They had seen Jesus cast out demons and heal the sick as they traveled with Him. Now, they told Jesus that they had also cast out demons and anointed the sick with oil and the sick were healed. In Hebrews 2:3-4, we read, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?” Jesus confirmed the message of the apostles by signs wonders and various miracles. Later, Paul was called to be the apostle to the Gentiles. He wrote, in 2 Corinthians 12:12, “Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.” In these verses, we see that the apostles were given these signs to verify their message.

Second, the disciples reported what they had taught. Jesus had told them that they should preach that men should repent. 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 explains the meaning of repentance, when those verses say, “For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *even* Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.” Here, we see that “repentance” means *to turn to God from idols* to serve the living and true God. The message of repentance became the message the disciples preached both before and after the resurrection.

Christ reminded the disciples of the importance of preaching repentance before He returned to heaven, after His resurrection. Luke 24:45-48 says, “And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you

are witnesses of these things.” On the day of Pentecost, as Peter was finishing his sermon, the people asked what they should do, and Peter said, “Repent.” Later, Paul explained his message when he said to the elders at Ephesus, in Acts 20:21, “Testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” In the same way, we are to call people to repent.

Jesus knew that the disciples needed rest after their busy time of preaching. There were so many people around, they did not even have time to eat. As a result, Jesus, and the disciples, got into a boat to go to a deserted place to rest. However, Mark 6:33-37 says, “But the multitudes saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them and came together to Him. And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things. When the day was now far spent, His disciples came to Him and said, ‘This is a deserted place, and already the hour *is* late. Send them away, that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat.’ But He answered and said to them, ‘You give them something to eat.’ And they said to Him, ‘Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give them *something* to eat?’” The disciples had time to rest while they were crossing the Sea of Galilee, but that time of rest was cut short, because the multitudes went to the other side to meet them

When Jesus came out, He had compassion on the people, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. Ezekiel had written about Israel, in Ezekiel 34:5, “So they were scattered because *there* was no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered.” Then, Ezekiel 34:11, 15-16 says, “For thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out... I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down,’ says the Lord GOD. ‘I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment.’” Jesus saw the people that day as sheep without a shepherd, and so He began to teach them many things.

Toward the end of the day, the disciples came to Jesus and told Him to send the people away, because they were in a deserted place where there was no food and the day was getting late. Instead of sending the people away, He told the disciples, “You give them something to eat.” 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.’” Instead of doing what Jesus said, Philip told Jesus that they had a problem. The problem was a lack of money. Remember that, earlier in the day, the disciples had just told Jesus about the miracles of healing they had done. However, we see that the disciples were not able to apply what they had learned about the power of God working through their lives. They had anointed the sick with oil and saw the Lord heal the sick even though He was not traveling with them, but all they could do here was give a financial report.

Mark 6:38-44 says, “But He said to them, ‘How many loaves do you have? Go and see.’ And when they found out they said, ‘Five, and two fish.’ Then He commanded them to make them all sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in ranks, in hundreds and in fifties.

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. So they all ate and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of fragments and of the fish. Now those who had eaten the loaves were about five thousand men.” Here, we see that Jesus told the disciples to find out 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?’” Andrew brought a boy who had a lunch with five rolls and two small fish to Jesus.

Andrew knew that was about enough only for the boy, so he said that was not much considering the large crowd. Andrew did not think about it, but Jesus had more to start with that day than when He spoke the entire creation into existence. Jesus understood that the disciples could not yet make the connection between the fact that the Lord had already worked many other miracles and the need of the people that day. Jesus then told the disciples how they could participate that day. Jesus told the disciples to have the people sit down in groups of hundreds and groups of fifties. This probably meant there were fifty groups that each had one hundred people in them. The Jews often divided into groups like these for their various feasts. This would mean that each of the twelve would be responsible for about four groups, and two of the disciples would have five groups to which to distribute food.

Once the people were all arranged in separate groups, Jesus looked up to heaven and blessed the lunch of the boy. Then, Jesus began to break the five loaves and two fish into pieces. He then gave the disciples baskets of food to take to the various groups that were scattered around the hillside. Here, we see that Jesus performed the miracle but included the disciples in the distribution. That is exactly the same thing the Lord does in the lives of people today. Titus 3:5-7 says, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” In these verses, we see that all three members of the Trinity are involved in the ministry of regeneration. However, Christ gave us the responsibility to take the Word of God to the people. Mark 16:15 says, “And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.’”

Jesus performed the miracle and all of the people ate and were filled that day. In fact, there was more than enough for the entire group. We see that the disciples gathered up twelve baskets full of food that remained after everyone had eaten all they wanted to eat. We see that those who had eaten that day were about five thousand men. In addition, the disciples learned a very important lesson. They realized that Jesus had done the miracle and that He had involved them in distributing the food to the people. In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that only Christ can transform lives, but He wants to use them to share the Word. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to share the Word with others.