

Jesus Feeds the Multitudes

Scripture: John 6:1-15

Code: 43-32

Now this morning, we're going to go back to the gospel of John that we left a long time ago, it seems, and pick it up where we left off in chapter 6...the Gospel of John chapter 6, which takes us, as you probably know, to one of the most familiar stories in all the Bible, what is called the feeding of the five thousand. This is a story that may have been one of the first stories you ever heard in Sunday School when you were a little child. It seems as though everybody knows this story, people who have been in the church and out of the church. And there's a reason for that. Of all the miracles that Jesus ever did, this is the most massive miracle in sheer number. When you add up everybody, five thousand men, plus women and children, Matthew adds, you've got between twenty and twenty-five thousand people and He creates a meal for them. And they're not really spectators of the miracle, they're participants in the miracle because they eat the meal. So this is a very intimate experience. There's no other miracle that Jesus did that involves so many people. The closest one would be a subsequent feeding of four thousand which He did a little later in the area of Decapolis on the east side also of the Sea of Galilee. But the massive nature of this miracle makes it remarkable and that's why all four gospels included. It's the only miracle other than his own resurrection recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

It is unique because of its sheer volume and because of the participation of the eye witnesses in the miracle itself. It is unique because it is a created miracle. There are restorative miracles where He gives back sight to blind people, and hearing to deaf people, and restores paraplegics and heals diseases...we could call those restorative although they obviously have a creative element to them cause you get new organs and new limbs and all of that. There are some transformative miracles. You could say that's what happened when He changed water into wine. But this is just creation. This is creating food out of nothing to feed twenty-five thousand people. It is a staggering testimony to the identity of Jesus Christ as God in human flesh, and that's why it's in all four gospels. And it can't be debated and it can't be argued because of the sheer mass of eyewitness participants in the miracle. It really never has been denied until more modern times when critics have decided that it really wasn't a miracle at all, what really happened was a little boy gave up his lunch and everybody said, "Wow, let's all share." And so everybody reached into their knapsack and pulled out whatever they had. And you had this great spiritual experience of sharing. We're going to see that that's an absolute utter impossibility and would only come up in the minds of unbelievers and skeptics who were trying to discredit the Bible and deny the deity of Jesus Christ.

This is a monumental miracle and it suits John, this is the fourth miracle that John has recorded in his gospel. The first one was creating wine at the wedding in Cana. The second one, as you remember, was in chapter 4 and that was the healing of a nobleman's son. And the third one was in chapter 5 and that was the man at the pool who had been there for so many years and Jesus healed him and told him to pick up his bed and walk. This is miracle number four in the presentation of the gospel of John as he writes the biography of Jesus.

Now John begins this inspired history of the Lord Jesus inspired by the Holy Spirit, by establishing the identity of Jesus at the beginning. Go back to chapter 1 verse 1, he identifies Jesus by the term

“Word.” He is identified as the Word. He bears that title. “In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word was God.” So John begins by telling us Jesus is God. The man Jesus is also God. In fact, that is evident because He was in the beginning with God. That is evident because everything that was created was created by Him, verse 3, and without Him was not anything created that was created. That is evident because he is not the recipient of life as verse 4 says, but He is the source of life. He is life itself. Verse 14, “The Word,” that is the eternal Son of God, “became flesh and dwelt among us and we saw His glory and we recognized that it was the glory as of the only begotten, the *monogenes*, the premier one from the Father, full of grace and truth. Verse 18 adds, “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father,” he has explained Him, and there Jesus is called the only begotten God the *monogenes*, the premier representation of God who has come in human form. So that’s John’s purpose. He’s introducing us to Jesus, obviously a man, a man with a history of living on earth but important and maybe not so obvious is that He is also fully God, and that is John’s purpose and intent.

Why does that matter? Well if you look at the end of the gospel of John, and the reason for his writing, you read this, “Many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book.” That’s to tell us that the miracles John records are only representative. Why are these written? Why the record of the miracles? “These have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.” Why is it important that you believe that this man, Jesus, who is the Messiah is also God the Son? Why is that important to believe? Because in believing you may have life in His name. The only way to have eternal life, John presents to us, is through believing in the God/Man Jesus Christ. “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.”

So that’s the whole purpose of the Gospel of John, to demonstrate that the man, Jesus, who lived in the nation of Israel, born in Bethlehem, lived His early life in Nazareth, came to Jerusalem, ministered across the nation, died, buried, rose again, ascended and promised to return is God, fully God in human form. Believing that, you may have eternal life, believing in His person and His work. Everything in the Gospel of John then is designed to fit that theme to demonstrate that Jesus is the eternal God in human form. That’s why He introduces it the way he does and he starts out giving testimony from the early disciples, then testimony from John the Baptist, the last of the Old Testament prophets, then in chapter 2 he launches into the miracles that validate that claim. John claims Jesus to be God. Jesus throughout the gospel of John Himself claims to be God. Repeatedly He says, “I am...I am...I am,” and that is the tetragrammaton, the four Hebrew letters that identify the great I am, God Himself. Jesus then declares Himself to be God. He says, “If you’ve seen Me, you’ve seen the Father.” He says, “I and the Father are one.”

So you have the testimony of John and the testimony of Jesus. And then you have the evidence of the miracles and this miracle in chapter 6 is very, very unique. By the way, several times in the gospel of John, it is reiterated that the miracles are the evidence that prove His deity. For example, you remember back in chapter 5 verse 36, “The testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John,” Jesus says, “for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish, the very works that I do testify about Me that the Father has sent Me.” The evidences of His deity are bound up in the miracles that He did. This is the testimony not only of John, this is the testimony of Matthew in Matthew 11, this is the testimony of Luke in Luke 7, this is the testimony, the familiar testimony of Peter on the Day of Pentecost in Acts when he declares that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, as evidenced by the miracles, signs and numbers which He did, God giving testimony to His deity.

Now the miracles are so convincing, they are so widespread, they're so ubiquitous, in fact, the Gospel of John itself ends with a most interesting comment, verse 25 of the last chapter. "There are also many other things which Jesus did which if they were written in detail I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written." So you only have a sampling of what the world couldn't contain if everything was written out in detail. But the sampling is convincing enough. And for the people who lived during the life of Jesus, they didn't just get the sampling that we get in the Gospels, they saw this going on every day, miracle after miracle, after miracle, after miracle. Never is there any testimony that they rejected the miracles as real. There's no doubt expressed by the leaders or the people as to the integrity of these miracles. Nobody claims they were fake, fraud, fictitious, that they were trickery, that they were some kind of sleight of hand, or some kind of magic. No. Because it would be impossible to do that. There were just too many of them, too open, too public, and too demonstrably divine without a human explanation.

Never then, in the New Testament, any attempt on the part of unbelievers to deny the miracles of Jesus. And that's very important to say because since the New Testament, there have been lots of writers who wanted to deny the miracles of the New Testament, but they need to face the reality that none of those who lived in the New Testament time have left us any record as to those miracles not really happening. So they had to face the fact that the miracles were real. The power was from God. Even Nicodemus, what does Nicodemus say? "Nobody can do what You do unless God is with Him." We don't know how to process this. Remember, they're monotheists, they believe in one God. They're not yet fully able to grasp the Trinity that God is one, and yet three. He is three and one at the same time. They can't grasp that in their rabid monotheism, the Lord...the Lord is one. They are not able to process how Jesus can be God and God be God. And so they reject that.

Remember now, they've got generational apostasy deeply imbedded in their minds. And it's in their religion, and the religion is in the fabric of how they think. And when somebody comes along and says, "I'm God," that sounds to them like somebody competing with God. So they while the signs all evidence that He is God, they had a hard time with that. In fact, they rejected it. They rejected it, I think, on religious grounds. They rejected it sort of on theological grounds. But more importantly, they rejected Him because they didn't like His message. If they were to affirm that in spite of the way they thought theologically, maybe there's another way to understand God, hey, maybe we can go back to Genesis and grasp the pronoun "we" or "us", Let us make man in our own image. Maybe there's more going on there than we fully come to understand. And we do know in the Old Testament there's the Spirit of God, and there is the Lord saying to My Lord, so we also know that God made man in His image and man is relational and therefore does that mean God is relational, there's more than one person? They might have processed all that and sort of changed their view of God. But the problem was, they hated what Jesus said because Jesus denounced their hypocrisy and their works/righteousness and the idea that they can earn salvation by being moral and by being religious.

So, in spite of the evidence which was obvious everywhere, they rejected Jesus. In fact, they determined that He was the most extreme blasphemer because He claimed to be God and He took terrifying liberties with their Sabbath, which essentially was to attack the system. So they tried to kill Him. Never denying the miracles, they denied the miracle worker. Never rejecting what He did, they rejected Him. This is the stubbornness of the human heart. This is the deceptiveness of false religion.

So when we come to chapter 6, we're going to see this again. The pattern of six is exactly as it was in 5. In chapter 5 there was a miracle, the man at the pool. The miracle was followed by a discourse

on the deity of Christ drawn out of that miracle. The discourse was followed by rejection and rejection was followed by plans to kill Jesus. Same thing in chapter 6, absolutely the same thing. It starts with a miracle, the feeding of the crowd, followed by a discourse, followed by rejection and defection, followed by the desire to kill Him, which is what it says in the first verse of the subsequent seventh chapter. So let's look then at this miracle.

Verse 1, "After these things, Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, or Tiberius. A large crowd followed Him because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick. Then Jesus went up on the mountain and there sat down with His disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near. Therefore, Jesus lifting up His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him, said to Philip, 'Where are we to buy bread so that these may eat?' This He was saying to test him for He Himself knew what He was intending to do. Philip answered Him, 'Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little.' One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, 'There's a lad here who has five barley crackers,'" Actually that's not loaves the way you think of them, that's a cracker, small little hard biscuit. "And two fish," typically they would be pickled for preservation,' and that's all we found, but what are these for so many people?" "Jesus said, 'Have the people sit down.' Now there was much grass in the place so the men sat down in number about five thousand. Jesus then took the loaves and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated, likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted. When they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost." So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley crackers which were left over by those who had eaten. Therefore, when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, 'This is truly the prophet who is to come into the world.'"

"So Jesus perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him King, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone."

You know, if Jesus had been a guy who was just trying to get power, this would have been His shining moment. He would have let them make Him King. Twenty-five thousand people or so, pretty big force and there would have been others coming from other places who had seen His miracles who might have swelled the coup and made it successful. This was His moment. If what He wanted was power and authority, if as some people say He was some kind of a revolutionary who...who tried to bring about a noble revolution, this would have been His moment. But at the very moment, the high point of His popularity, He disappears to make sure that doesn't happen.

Now again, this miracle that we just read about is the most extensive miracle Jesus ever did and it's the highest participation level of any miracle He ever did. These people are not watching this happen, these people are eating the food. They are in the middle of the miracle. Nothing like it except the subsequent miracle that occurs a little while later in Decapolis which is recorded, by the way, in Matthew 15 and then in Mark 8. You can read about that one.

Well let's just get into it and break it down. The fickle crowd, first of all, very important to understand this, there's no question about the popularity of Jesus. His popularity is staggering. There's a kind of tsunami, a tidal wave of popularity sweeping across Galilee of interest in Jesus. There's no question about His being a miracle worker. You know, fake miracle workers can gain crowds. They can draw massive crowds on the deceptive promise and sleight of hand and the chicanery and the deceit that they purvey. But here is a true miracle worker. He had power to draw thousands. He had power to draw tens of thousands of people. And that's exactly what was happening. Of course their interest

was all superficial. Their interest was all self-serving. And that sort of sets up the picture here. "After these things," *meta tauta*, that means nothing in terms of time. After these things is just a very generic statement that we're now leaving the subject of chapter 5 and moving to a completely different scenario. And by the way, if you want to know how much time had passed, you could go back to chapter 5 verse 1 because what happened in chapter 5 occurred at a feast of the Jews. Jesus had gone up to Jerusalem, that's when, you remember, He went to the pool of Bethesda, when He had gone to Jerusalem for the feast. Okay. That might be Passover, we don't know. If it's Passover, then go to chapter 6 verse 4 and you see, "Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews was near." So that would mean a whole year had gone by. "So after these things" could encompass a year.

If on the other hand, the feast in chapter 5 was the feast of Tabernacles, it would then have been six months. But in any case, it's a long period of time, enough time, by the way, that He is no longer in Judea in the south, He is no longer in Jerusalem in the south. He is now in Galilee as verse 1 tells us. He is in Galilee on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. He has gone there for a number of reasons. He's gone there for the Galilean ministry, but He's also gone there because He's very, very much aware of the leaders of Israel desiring to execute Him. And in order to avoid an untimely death, He wants to stay on God's clock, He leaves to find the isolation of Galilee. He also is very much aware that John the Baptist has been executed. So the heat is on and He's up there in that rural area away from the heat of Judea. And He carries on His Galilean ministry. And what's He doing? Capernaum is His headquarters and He's going around the villages and towns of the Galilee which He does for a prolonged period of time, a huge chunk of His ministry, over a year, and He is healing and teaching concerning the Kingdom of God. In the process of doing miracles, healing all kinds of people, casting out demons, He is drawing this massive level of popularity that causes the crowds to be huge.

Now you also have another issue. This is east of the Sea of Galilee which was pretty much a route that people would take to go to Jerusalem, and the Passover is near, so pilgrims would be coming that way as well to go down to Jerusalem for Passover. So now you've got a flow of humanity coming down the trails on the eastside of the Sea of Galilee, as well as a massive crowd pouring out to find Jesus, wherever He is. And that's the scene as we come to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Tiberius was a Caesar. The Sea of Galilee in the Old Testament is called Gennesaret or Chinneroth. It had by the time of John's writing at the end of the first century changed the name to the Sea of Tiberias because the main city on it was Tiberius which was named after the emperor Tiberius. So John is simply footnoting that this Sea of Galilee, that had been commonly known, had now become the Sea of Tiberius.

He goes to the other side. How does He get to the other side? We know that because we have accounts of this, as I said, in Matthew, Mark and Luke. And His disciples and Himself go on a boat. They take a boat to the other side. Why the other side? The Twelve had just returned from a preaching and teaching mission recorded in Mark 6, so they've been out preaching and teaching, and Jesus wants to pull them back and regroup and find out what happened.

Furthermore, while they were on their preaching mission, Matthew 11 talks about Jesus having literally been exhausted in the weariness of His own ministry through that period of time. He's exhausted. They're exhausted. They need time together. They need some isolation because the heat is on. John the Baptist has been executed. The rulers are after them. This is an important time.

So they go to the eastside. The populous was west, it was the western shore of Galilee where Tiberius was, the big city where Nazareth was and other cities. Much more rural on the eastside, must more scattered population, so that's where you went to retreat. You could slide up the foothills of the Golan Heights which is just east of the Sea of Galilee where the six-day war was fought back in 1967 between Israel and Syria. So that's where they went for a little bit of retreat. And as was Jesus' custom, He wanted to go up, verse 3 says, into the mountain to sit with His disciples and go through everything that had been happening.

However, verse 2 says, "A large crowd followed Him." They walked on the shore. That is reported to us that while Jesus is going across with His disciple in a boat, there is this massive crowd, Matthew 14 says, from all towns and villages everywhere following. And Mark 6:33 says they're coming along the north shore. Jesus would have crossed the north part of the lake on a boat, and they're just walking on that north shore. You could see from the water itself easily a large massive crowd of people walking along, and that's what was going on. The crowd is gathering.

By the time Jesus arrives out the other side to get a little seclusion, the crowd's already forming, they're already gathering, according to Matthew 14:14. What drew them? What drew them? Verse 2, "Because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick." It was the healing. Look, everybody wants healing. That's the most marketable, religious commodity. That's where the liars and the deceivers go, to promise that because that's where people are desperate. And there's nothing worse in my mind than somebody promising healings they can't do and consequently extracting money and preying on the hope of hopeless people when in reality, you can't deliver. And then doing it in the name of Jesus. I've never heard of it, by the way, being done in the name of Buddha. I've never heard of it being done in the name of Mohammed. It is always done in the name of Jesus because Satan always wants to discredit Him.

The people were attracted. Sure, they were attracted just like they were in chapter 2 verses 23 and 25, they saw the signs, they wanted healing. Look, you're living in a primitive world. It would be two thousand years before a disease was every diagnosed correctly. They didn't know what was wrong with them. Pathology hadn't been discovered. There were no true diagnoses of issues other than those things which might be mechanical. So they just had no hope. There was no medicine. It was hopeless. Naturally if you prey on that, you can draw a crowd.

In chapter 6 verse 26 Jesus said, "You seek Me because you ate the loaves and were filled." This is all temporal, physical food, it's personal well-being, personal fulfillment, personal satisfaction, personal ease. You know, the battle for bread was a lifelong battle in those days. Didn't have supermarkets and didn't have preprocessed foods, didn't have refrigerators. I mean, it was a battle for every meal. Somebody had to work to get every meal to acquire, to prepare to cook and then back up from that to plant, to grow, to harvest...they were all in the food chain at a very primitive level and life was not easy for them. If somebody came along who could heal all their diseases and give them free food, you know, this is nirvana for them. So this crowd is following Him, even though they haven't had a feeding miracle yet, they're coming because they're attracted by the healing because, I suppose, virtually to one degree or another, all of them had something wrong. They came for temporal miracles, not the eternal words. When He started to speak eternal words by the end of chapter 6, they're running. Even those who were His followers, many of His disciples walked no more with Him, verse 66. They just bailed out.

Drawn by His miracles and sent away by His words. You know, they were wanting physical

wellness, physical fulfillment, physical satisfaction. You could put it simply this way, they wanted what all unregenerate people want. These weren't noble aspirations, they wanted what their lusts demanded. And that's what the crowd still does. You can always draw a crowd if you promise people that, even if you can't deliver it because the level of desperation is always there. This is the lie, that, you know, you can come to this guy and give him your money or you can come to Jesus and you'll have healing, and you'll have success, and you'll have wealthy, and you'll have well-being. You can get a crowd doing that. Oh, you can get a massive crowd promising that. It's going on all the time, huge, massive crowds.

But, if you're calling for self-denial, self-hatred, leaving father/mother and all that you possess, if you're calling on people to repent, to be broken, to mourn over their sin, to realize their spiritual bankruptcy, to humble themselves, to sacrifice their lives, to maybe take up a cross, to be obedient to Christ, to pursue holiness, to endure tribulation, to be persecuted and perhaps suffer and even die as a martyr...nah, you're not going to get such a crowd. Not going to get a big crowd. You've got to keep the message exactly where they want it to be.

Jesus was demonstrating His power to show His deity so they would listen to His words. But they never got past their fleshly desires. Verse 3, "When He arrived on the other side, for a little while, maybe a few hours, He went up on the mountain and sat down with His disciples and they did what they had intended to do." It was around the season of Passover, as we noted, which would have added to the crowd. But as always, Jesus eventually is drawn to the crowd. He is, after all, an evangelist. He is a preacher of the good news and the Gospel and they need to hear it. So He lifts up His eyes from His time with His disciples, He gives His attention elsewhere and sees that a large crowd was coming to Him. They know where He is now. They're going to come at Him. There's no escaping. They're coming to Him.

This is very important again to remind you, what drew them was not the Kingdom, was not salvation, it was not repentance, it was not sound doctrine, it was not a true understanding of sin, was not a longing for forgiveness, was not the hope of escaping judgment, or escaping hell. What drew them was they saw the healings. Any faithful preacher and any faithful evangelist has to know that that's the default position of all sinners, give me what I want now the way that I want it. Give me the life I now want.

If you offer that, you have prostituted yourself to that defective, temporal desire. And so many did that in past history and are doing it today. I don't know whether they thought Jesus for sure was going to be their Messiah, was their Messiah. But as this thing began to unfold and they saw this miracle, they came to that conclusion and they stated that down in verse 14, this is truly the prophet who is to come into the world. That's a Messianic reference taken from Deuteronomy 18 where Moses promises the Messiah who would be like him, another prophet greater than himself. So there was that messianic fever. And remember, pilgrims are headed to Jerusalem and that sort of elevates the messianic fever because going to celebrate the Passover means you're going to remember Moses and his deliverance. You're going to remember Moses, the great deliverer, and that's going to excite the hope and anticipation that maybe that prophet like Moses will come and deliver us again, not from the Egyptians but from the Romans and from all of our adversaries, and all of our miseries.

So that's the setting. People with earthly interest, temporal interest, personal well-being, national well-being. They want what unregenerate people all want. And Jesus is riding this tsunami of

popularity and they're all there.

So we meet the fickle crowd. Then we meet the faithless disciples, starting in verse 5, the faithless disciples. Jesus goes into the crowd...by the way, you need to know that when He went into the crowd, He was there a long time, probably all day because Matthew 14:14 says He spent the day healing the sick, really healing the sick. Luke 9:11 says He spent the day speaking to them concerning the Kingdom of God, salvation. And Mark, not to be left out, says, He did this because He was moved with compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

So His heart goes out to the crowd. He goes out to them because of their suffering in the physical world. It goes out to them because of their desperate spiritual condition. So He heals them and He preaches salvation in the Kingdom. He's doing it all day. But this is kind of a daily routine, moving among these thousands and thousands of people.

As the day begins to draw to an end, it's late afternoon and the disciples, according to Matthew 14:15 come to Him and say, "This place is desolate. We're in nowhere. We're in nowhere. We went up in a mountain to get away, the crowd came up to find us, here we are nowhere. This is desolation."

Then they said, "The hour is late already, You've got to send these people away because they need time before dark to get to some town or some village where they can have some food. Send them away." Literally it says in Matthew 14:15, "So that they may go into the villages," that were scattered all over that more rural eastern part of Galilee, so they can get food.

So Jesus says to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread so that these may eat?" They're telling Him to send them away. And Jesus is saying, "Where can we go to get bread to feed them?" Why does He say that? What's in His mind? Why is He saying that?"

This is the introduction of Jesus articulating an impossible situation. He wants to verbalize an impossible situation. He wants to make it clear for this narrative for all time that this was an impossible situation. There were no resources. This is a desolate place, there's nowhere to go to buy bread for this many people. That's absolutely not possible. Immediate food for twenty thousand-plus, are you kidding? And He's really not looking for help from Philip. He's not looking for some suggestion. What is He doing? Verse 6, "This He was saying to test him, for He already knew what He was going to do."

What was the test? The test was to find out how much faith Philip had. It would have been a different story, perhaps if Philip had said, "Lord, what are You...why are You asking me? You made everything. Without You was not anything made that was made. You are the Creator. We've seen You create. For all these months, we've seen You create. Why are You asking the question?" Ah, he would have passed the test if he had put his trust in the power which he had seen displayed day after day, after day, after day, after day. He could have said, "Surely, You can do all these other things, You can make lunch or dinner for everybody."

True to form, the weakness of the disciples shows up again. They see miracles all the time, so many that the books of the world couldn't contain them. And they can't believe for a miracle in this situation. So this is all about testing disciples and building their faith. Jesus knew exactly what He was going to do. Philip's answer showed that He failed the test. There's some sarcasm in this

answer, two hundred denarii, denarii...a denarius was a one-day's wage for a Roman soldier or a worker, so that's what? Eight month's pay? That's a lot of money...that kind of money, if we had that much worth of bread, it wouldn't be sufficient for them for everyone to receive a little. You know, if we had the money and we could take the money and buy the bread, we don't have the money and there's nowhere to get the bread, and even if we had the money, and got the bread, everybody would get a small bite. That's not going to do it. These people have been exercising all day, milling around in a crowd, they've got to walk back home, that doesn't make sense. So now we know this is an impossible situation. They're in an impossible place. They don't have the money. They don't have the available bread.

One of His disciples, Andrew, verse 8, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, "There's a lad here who has five barley crackers and two fish. But what are these for so many people?" Now why does he pop up out of nowhere? Well, according to Mark 6:38, Jesus told the disciples to go into the crowd and find out what they **could...what they** could take. Go search the crowd, see what might be available.

That tells you a little bit about the crowd, that they hadn't planned very well, cause here they are and they went through the crowd and Andrew's the spokesman and he comes back and says, "Okay, we've got one boy who brought his lunch, five crackers and two pickled fish." Andrew gives the report. This is...I mean, he's got to be laughing. So again, the Holy Spirit is narrating this to us in a way that just continues to repeat the impossibility of the situation. There's no human explanation for this...none. It's not a lesson in sharing cause they couldn't find anything. Five crackers and two pickled fish, but what are these among so many people? This is sarcastic. Are you kidding? This is way beyond reality, or any reasonable solution. And by the way, that was a pretty typical lunch. They grew grain and they had fish in the sea and that would be a typical meal, some barley crackers and some fish.

Jesus says in verse 10, here we come to the third little part of the story, we saw the fickle crowd and the faithless disciples, here's the full meal. Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." They just told Him to send them away...send them away, get them out of here, it's going to be dark, there's not going to be any food, this is not going to be a happy group. They need to eat. This is part of compassion. I mean, this is a kind thing to do, get them out of here so they can get somewhere in the daylight and find something to eat.

Jesus says, "No, just have them sit down. Sit them down." Mark 6:40 says, "Jesus said, 'Sit them in groups of 50 and a hundred, sit them in blocks, fifty here, fifty here, fifty here, a hundred here, a hundred here, a hundred here, a hundred here with little aisles in between.'" That's what you do if you segment them out, you've got little aisles.

What's that about? They probably wondered, what is He doing? And by the way, it was really a nice place to sit down. It's just a little eyewitness note, there was much grass in the place. I mean, He made them comfortable, this is nice. Sit them down, nice grass, afternoon picnic, and all four gospels says there were five thousand men. Verse 10, five thousand men. Matthew 14:21 adds, "Not including women and children." Do we need to say it? Where there are men, there are women. Where there are men and women, there are children. We...I don't know what the total number is, but it's somewhere around twenty to twenty-five thousand, most would calculate. Sit everybody down. Sit them in groups of 50 and a hundred. You can do the math. All over the grassy hillside, these people are sitting down. How you got them to cooperate, how you could have such control

over that kind of a mass of people, can probably explain by the fact that they all knew He had done miracles and He had so much authority through the miracles that He had done, that they did whatever He told them to do.

And then in verse 11, this has to be the most understated act of creation every. "Jesus then took the crackers and having given thanks," this is...is this not bizarre? He's got twenty-five thousand people and He's got five little crackers in His hand, and He's thanking the Lord for this wonderful meal that they're about to partake.

And then with no fanfare, no voice from heaven, no lightning, no thunder, He distributed to those who were seated. He just kept passing out crackers and fish. He was creating it. These were crackers that never came from grain, that never grew, that never were in the dirt. Those were fish that never swam. He created them, those are the best crackers anybody ever ate, those were unfallen crackers. Those are uncursed crackers. Look, I like cursed crackers actually, so I don't know what uncursed crackers would be like. Maybe this is like manna, right? Came from heaven. And this is fish with no mama fish, this is...what kind of fish would God create if He created a perfect fish, never touched by the fallen world. This would tend to cause everyone to overeat, right? If not to be stuffing things in the folds of their clothes.

Consequently, He distributed to all that were seated and they were able to take as much as they wanted. That can't be a lesson in sharing. If some people have and some people don't, and you share...everybody gets less than what they want. He could divide it again, the emphasis here is this...there's no explanation for this. And you've got too many eyewitnesses to tamper with it. They all had all they wanted, and they were filled. I love that word "filled," it's a word used in animal husbandry, they were foddered up. They stuffed themselves on these crackers and fish. That's not a delicacy, it's not like a hummingbird's tongue like Caesar would be nibbling on. But this is...this is...this is food from heaven, food from the Creator. And you can remember back to perhaps a meal that you had sometime, that you couldn't forget, probably didn't come close to this one. How many of them told the story to their children about the greatest meal they ever ate? They were filled. As much as they wanted, foddered up like an animal that's had enough and turns away from the trough.

And then there was more. It not only was a complete meal and a full meal, it was a precise meal. They gathered up everything that was left, verse 13 says, and it filled twelve baskets with fragments from the crackers left over by those who had eaten. That would be enough for whom? For the disciples, for the twelve. This is a powerful creative miracle, but it's also a precise creative miracle. That's exactly what everybody wanted and exactly what the Apostles required as well. The precision of this miracle is stunning, it's as stunning as the power of this miracle.

You know, Jesus could do this any time He wanted. As I said, He does it a little later for four thousand. And then He even makes breakfast, John 21:9. John 21 ends the book of John with Jesus making breakfast for the Apostles again by the Sea of Galilee, smaller group, just them. They come from fishing, they come to the shore and He's made breakfast this way, by creating it.

How in the world could they ever possibly exhibit any lack of faith in Him? Having seen this, experienced this, and sat there, the twelve of them, munching through their food, by the way, that word "basket" means a food basket and they didn't have plastic bags or paper bags, so they had baskets which perhaps they carried in their own packs, we don't know. But they were filled. How could they possibly not believe in Jesus? How could they possibly not understand who He was?

In Matthew 15:29 it says, "Jesus went along by the Sea of Galilee, having gone up into the mountain, He was sitting there and large crowds came to Him, bringing with them those who were lame, crippled, mute, many others laid them at His feet, He healed them all. So the crowds marveled as they saw the mute speaking, the crippled restored, the lame walking, the blind seeing and they glorified the God of Israel."

The disciples saw all that on a daily basis and then they saw this. How do you explain the fact that in the moment of Jesus' arrest, they forsook Him and fled? Why didn't somebody say, "Whoa, whoa, guys. We know what He's capable of doing. Let's stand and watch Him do it:?" Such poor students they were, such really poor students. In fact, it was right after this, right after what I just read you from Matthew 15, that Jesus said to them, Matthew 16:8, "You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread?" What? Oh yeah, a little while later. It says they had gone to the other side of the Sea, on another occasion, they forgot to bring bread...they forget to bring bread. So they have a discussion, He said that, "Because we didn't bring any bread," Jesus aware of this says, "You men of little faith, do you not understand or remember the five crackers and the five thousand and how many baskets full you picked up. Or the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many baskets full you picked up?" I mean, this is really disappointing. What does it take? By then He had done the second feeding miracle.

While the disciples were trying to get their faith together in the face of all of this, you come to a final point here, and we'll end with this, false coronation. You have the crowd, you have the disciples, you have the miracle meal, and you have the response of the crowd, the false coronation, 14 and 15. The people see what Jesus has done and they...they say, "Wow, maybe this is the one who is promised in Deuteronomy 18:15 to 19 in that great prophecy of Moses? This is the prophet who is to come into the world greater than Moses. This is our deliverer, this is our Messiah. Perhaps it is Him?"

By the way, Peter in his sermon in Acts 3 says it is Him, Acts 3:20 to 22. Jesus is that prophet who was to come. So the crowd gets that. Maybe this is Him. This is Him.

So what do they do? Do they say, "Let's listen to what He has to say? Let's hear His message since He's a prophet from God." No. They try to take Him by force, that's what they want to do and make Him King because He can have the ultimate welfare state. He can do all the miracles, heal everybody and feed everybody. And Jesus withdrew, whist, into the mountain. The other writers say He sent His disciples into a boat, told Him to go across the other side of the lake, dismiss the crowd, went into the mountain.

Jesus isn't willing to be a temporal provider. He's not willing to do that. It's astonishing to think about it, if He wanted to be Messiah, this would have been His moment if He was just a man with ambition. But He would not allow them to push Him to become the kind of King that they wanted. And that's the way it is today. The Jesus of the prosperity preachers is the false Jesus because the true Jesus isn't there. He's left. He's left. He will not be treated in that way. He withdrew into a mountain alone.

This was a staggering opportunity for them to affirm that He is the Son of God, that He is the prophet. And for them to say, "Teach us, teach us, what is the truth from God." And He will do that. He will do that later in the chapter, He will give that great discourse on Himself as the bread of life,

drawing off that experience in the meal. He will talk about eternal riches, heaven, salvation, and they will reject it. They will reject it.

Jesus does not acquiesce to whims and fancies. He comes to no man on that man's terms. People can't manipulate Him for their own selfish ends, He doesn't promise unregenerate people what unregenerate people want. Jesus will not be a quick fix for felt needs. He will not be the one who just gives you temporal satisfaction. And if you market Him that way, you're on your own because He's not there. People do not come to Christ for what they want. They come to Christ for what He demands. He calls on sinners to mourn for their sin, to be broken, penitent, acknowledge Him as sovereign Lord, be obedient to Him, live for Him, maybe die for Him, serve Him as His slave and suffer for Him and be persecuted for Him. And when He gave that message in the rest of the chapter, whist...they were gone...they were gone. Jesus always drives the superficial crowd away with the hard demands of the gospel.

So, wherever you find a fake preacher gathering a crowd that stays, it's because they haven't heard the hard demands of the gospel. We'll see how that unfolds next time.

Father, we thank You for our time in Your Word this morning. We are so grateful for the vividness of this incredible encounter, being passed down to us through the gospel writers. We acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. And we want from Him that which is eternal. We're thankful for provision in this life if He chooses to give it. We're thankful for health in this life if He chooses for His purposes to render it to us. We're equally thankful for deprivation, suffering, persecution, illness, even facing death, if that is for His glory who is our Master and whose slaves we are. We have come for the words of life. When Jesus said, "Will you also go away?" Peter said, "To whom shall we go, You and You alone have the words of eternal life."

We want Jesus for the words. We want Him for the truth. We can do without the health and wealth. But we cannot do without the truth. We embrace Him as Savior and Lord, because He is and because He speaks a gospel which we believe and desperately need, to rescue us from eternal hell and send us into glory with Him. Thank You, God, for the gift of Your Son, thank You, Christ, for coming. Thank You for being our Lord and Master. Thank You, Holy Spirit, for giving us the Word and the record of these things to guide us that our approach to the Savior might be the right one. We want to be among those who don't go away because we want the words because the words give eternal life. They cause us to believe and to possess the hope of heaven.

Thank You for our time together in worship. Bless every life and confirm the truth in every heart.

Father, now send us on our way with thankful hearts, grateful hearts, overwhelmed by again the richness of Your truth and the promise of life that comes through Your Son. We pray in His name. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2018 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with

Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<https://www.gty.org/about#copyright>).