

Feeding the 5000

Matthew 14 v 13-21

Context:

With the exception of his own resurrection, the feeding of the 5000 is the only one of Jesus' miracles recorded in all four Gospels in the NT. This may be an indication of its key importance in understanding the identity and mission of Jesus. So, let's look at what happened on that hillside that day, what it tells us about Jesus, and what it means for us today. We will base our study in Matthew's Gospel, but will inevitably draw on the accounts of Mark, Luke and John to help us.

Observation:

1. To which recent event is v 13a referring and what did Jesus do in response?
2. What did the crowds do according to v 13b?
3. What was Jesus' reaction when he landed (v 14)?
4. What did the disciples tell Jesus to do and why in v 15?
5. How did Jesus respond in v 16?
6. What food supplies did they have according to v 17?
7. What say in v 18 and what did he do in v 19?
8. What was the outcome for the crowd and the disciples according to v 20?
9. How many people partook of the feast (v 21)?

Meaning:

1. Putting all four Gospel accounts together, we can see that *two* events preceded Jesus and the disciples withdrawing by boat to a solitary place. First, the disciples had been sent out on a preaching and healing mission by Jesus and had just returned, tired but full of stories of the amazing things God had done through them (see Mark 6 v 30-31). But second, according to v 13 in our passage, while they were away, Jesus' cousin and ministry forerunner, John the Baptist, had been cruelly beheaded by Herod, having languished in prison for weeks beforehand. So, bearing these two events in mind, why do you think Jesus took the disciples away by themselves and how do you think he and they would have been feeling at this time?
2. Why do you think the crowds followed him (v 13b)? see John 6 v 2 for a clue.
3. Are you surprised by Jesus' reaction on landing (v 14, see also Mark 6 v 34 & Luke 9 v 11)? How would you have reacted? What does this tell us about Jesus?
4. What do you think the disciples would have been thinking and feeling when Jesus told them to feed the crowd (v 16-17 – see also Mark 6 v 37)?
5. John 6 v 6 tells us that Jesus already knew what he was going to do and was deliberately testing the disciples, especially Philip. Why do you think Jesus did this and what was he aiming at? Do you ever experience Jesus doing this with you?
6. None of the Gospel accounts tell us *exactly* what happened when Jesus gave thanks for the food (v 19), except that everyone had enough to eat. So, what do you think happened - do you think the bread and fish suddenly multiplied so that enough food for 5000+ miraculously appeared in one hit, or do you think the food continuously multiplied as Jesus and the disciples broke it?

7. What do you think was the significance of there being *twelve* baskets of leftovers (v 20 – see also Mark 6 v 31)? What does this tell us about Jesus' care for those who serve him?
8. John tells us in his account that this miracle was a 'sign' which pointed to a deeper spiritual truth about Jesus – see John 6 v 25-40. What is this deeper spiritual truth and what is its significance for us?
9. John also tells us that the crowd was so impressed by Jesus' miracle that they intended to make him king by force (John 6 v 15). Why do you think Jesus rejected their wishes and withdrew again?

Application:

1. What difference does it make to your daily life to know that *nothing* is impossible for Jesus?
2. What impact does the truth that Jesus cares for *both* your material and spiritual needs have on your life?
3. Do you ever feel weary from serving the Lord? If so, what encouragement can you take from the end of v 20?

Pray:

- Thank Jesus that all things are possible for him and that he cares for *all* your needs.
- Lift all your needs to him now.
- Pray for God's grace to continue to serve him faithfully, even if you are weary, trusting that he will provide for you in every way.

Sermon Notes: