

## Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

(John 6:1-15)

Hello Again Dear Listeners;

Jesus Christ is the most remarkable man who has ever walked on this earth. The Bible tells us many stories about the things which he did while he lived in ancient Israel during the time of the Romans. Four gospel writers tell us about different aspects of his ministry among the Israelites. The apostle John wrote his gospel so that you and I would know who Jesus is and believe that he is the Christ, the Son of God.

When Jesus lived on this earth, he attracted huge crowds of people because they saw the miracles which he did among them. He healed many who were sick, or paralyzed or blind or deaf or who were possessed by evil spirits. Just imagine if there was someone in your area who was able to heal everyone, no matter how serious their condition. In Jesus' work of healing it was clear that the kingdom of God had come to this earth. This had never happened before. The healing and restorative power of God was on powerful display.

Now it happened on a certain day that Jesus was giving instruction to the large crowd which had followed him. He was teaching them on a mountainside on the Sea of Galilee. In his gospel, John records that when Jesus saw the crowd coming towards him, then he asked Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" (John 6:5). Jesus knew what he was going to do but he wanted to test his disciples to see how they would answer him and what solution they would offer to the problem.

It was a significant problem because we read in John 6:10 that there were five thousand men. When you add in the women and children who were probably there as well, then you get to at least ten to fifteen thousand people; some estimate even more than that. That is a lot of mouths to feed. Even with the best supermarkets, that would be very difficult.

Philip answers Jesus in verse 8, “Eight months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!” Eight months’ wages of a working man wouldn’t even be enough for everyone to get a nibble. This small group of disciples who were following Jesus weren’t making any money. It is completely impossible for the disciples to buy food for all the people.

Philip fails Jesus’ test! Even though they had seen Jesus’ miracle at Cana and even though all these people are following Jesus because of the miraculous healings he is doing, yet they do not even stop to consider that Jesus would be able to feed all these people just like that. Even though their own Israelite history has examples of this, they do not think about the power of God. Their minds are closed to it. It is like a mind block. Their faith is not big enough to include miraculous provision of food.

Philip didn’t remember the times in Israel’s history when God miraculously provided for his people. Philip was just overwhelmed by what seemed to him to be completely impossible. And it was impossible when looked at only from a human perspective. But true reality is more

than only the human perspective. God is also part of true reality and the disciples had a front row seat in seeing this for themselves in all that Jesus was doing and yet they didn't get it.

Andrew has a different idea about how to solve this problem of feeding the crowd. He has found a boy who had perhaps brought his family's lunch along. There is a boy, maybe eight or nine years old, who is carrying five small barley loaves and two small fish. These barley loaves were like a small cake, the lowest of the low grade of bread. This is what the poor would eat. And the two fish which the boy had was not too spectacular either. They are described as "small fish". People in rural areas would eat these barley cakes with some fish on top for some flavouring.

Andrew's solution for feeding thousands of people doesn't look very convincing to say the least. Again the impossibility of the situation is made clear. As Andrew says, "But how far will they go among so many?"

But now look at what happens! See how Jesus reveals his majesty and glory in a very simple but such an effective way. Jesus tells the disciples to have the people sit down. They could all sit down on the grass. The Lord provides a comfortable place for them to sit and eat. We read in verse 11, "Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish."

The miracle is stated very simply. It is as if it is the most natural, normal thing in the world. Jesus just did it! No drama, no theatrics, no hocus pocus, no complicated rituals or spells. Jesus took the loaves, gave

thanks to God for the food and then handed out the bread and the fish. As he handed out the food more kept coming. He never ran out until everyone had received enough to eat.

The people could eat as much as they wanted. This is stated twice. It is not that the people barely got a few bites, a little snack. No, they got a full meal. They were completely satisfied and did not want to eat more. There was nothing skimpy about this meal.

After everyone was finished eating, Jesus said to his disciples, “Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.” When they gathered the pieces which were left over, they filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. They ended up with much more food than they started with. Twelve baskets full! How abundant is the provision of the Lord! And notice also that he is concerned that it does not go to waste. Every gift is from above and every gift is good and precious.

The fact that there were twelve baskets left over leads us to think of the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles. The one who can multiply a small amount of bread to feed five thousand men can also determine the number of baskets of left over pieces. The Lord is the God of his covenant people and he is the one who provides for them. If the disciples and the crowd had forgotten about the miracle food of old, surely now they remembered. The Lord had done

this before in the wilderness wanderings and he was doing it again. Jesus Christ is God the Son in the flesh. He is now on this earth directly

feeding his people and providing for their bodily needs. He does not only heal and forgive sins but he also gives food, daily bread for daily nourishment. He does this in an obviously miraculous way. He creates food for them on the spot in an unobtrusive, you could almost say, natural way. It is as if this is completely normal for Jesus and it is because he is the creator of all things. “Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made”, John writes in chapter 1.

John calls Jesus’ feeding a miraculous sign. The feeding of the five thousand men was meant as a sign for them. It was not simply about feeding the people because they were hungry. It was also meant as an illustration of a spiritual truth, namely, that Jesus Christ is the bread of life, the true heavenly bread. It is from him alone that we receive the bread of life. When we eat of his bread, we will never be hungry again.

The people who were fed by him tried to make him a king by force. But Jesus withdrew from them to be by himself for he is a spiritual king not an earthly one. Thousands of people could not capture him because that was not the will of his heavenly Father.

It was the will of his Father that he would give us the food that we truly need. He gives us peace and reconciliation with God the Father in heaven. He gives us the bread of life which we never paid for. This bread gives us true life forever. Jesus Christ our King constantly gives of himself in order that we might grow and flourish in God’s kingdom. Believe in Jesus Christ and trust in him alone. Receive his abundant provision with thanksgiving and go your way praising and worship God from whom all blessings flow! Amen, and thanks again for listening

