

Feeding the Five Thousand

Sermon by Andy Sochor

Text: Matthew 14:13-21

Throughout Jesus' earthly ministry, He performed various miracles to demonstrate His divine power. The miracle we are discussing here was when Jesus fed over five thousand with just five loaves and two fish. As we study this miracle, as with every Bible passage, it is important to understand the context. This miracle teaches us certain things about Jesus and provides an important lesson for us.

The Context

- Right before this, John the Baptist was beheaded (Matthew 14:1-12) – he had condemned Herod for having his brother's wife; John's disciples reported this to Jesus
- After hearing the news, Jesus withdrew to a secluded place (Matthew 14:13) – understandable for one who is grieving; this was not the only time Jesus withdrew like this (cf. Luke 5:16), showing us the need for time alone in prayer
- Word got out about where Jesus was (Matthew 14:13) – people from the surrounding cities came to Him; this was a large crowd and Jesus "felt compassion...and healed their sick" (Matthew 14:14)
- The crowds were going to completely miss the point about this miracle – at first, they wanted to take Jesus by force and make Him king (John 6:15); afterward, Jesus rebuked them for focusing on being fed rather than on faith (John 6:26-29)

The Miracle

- This occurred at evening (Matthew 14:15) – at the end of the day after people had traveled and Jesus spent the day healing the sick; the disciples probably believed they were being thoughtful in their suggestion to send them away (the crowds need food, let them get it); Jesus told His disciples to feed them (Matthew 14:16); this was to test them (John 6:5-6)
- All they had on hand were five loaves and two fish (Matthew 14:17) – this was not even theirs; it belonged to a boy who was present (John 6:8-9); evidently he was willing to share
- This was all done in an orderly manner (Matthew 14:19) – the crowd sat in groups (Mark 6:40) so that none were missed; "they all ate and were satisfied" (Matthew 14:20)
- At the end, the scraps were collected (Matthew 14:20) – filled twelve baskets; much more than the original amount; what Jesus had to work with at the beginning was more than enough

The Lesson

- The disciples said, “We have here only...” (Matthew 14:17) – they were focused on their limited resources; on one hand, we need to be good stewards (cf. Luke 15:13); on the other hand, we often do not know how much can be done with the blessings God has given us; God judges us according to what we have, not what we do not have (2 Corinthians 8:12)
- The lesson was that we do not need to underestimate what good can be accomplished from meager resources – the churches of Macedonia were in deep poverty, but overflowed with liberality (2 Corinthians 8:1-5); the church in Philadelphia had little strength, but great opportunity (Revelation 3:7-8); this can apply to us as individuals as well (cf. Ecclesiastes 4:13; 9:14-15)

Conclusion

- This miracle is less about food and more about using what we have in the Lord’s service – we have no way to know the good that could be done when we commit to serving the Lord
- But we trust Him that our commitment will be worth it – not necessarily for food, but for eternal life (John 6:27)