

FEEDING OF THE 5000

Date: March 27, 2020

Scripture: John 6:1-14; Mark 6:31-44

Hey there! My name is Caitlin Armstrong and I am the equipping minister here at The Church of Eleven22. This Lent season we are working through some of the miracles of Jesus shared with us across the gospel accounts. We are looking at how each of these miracles points us to the greatest of all miracles, which is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

The miracle of Jesus we are focused on today is the feeding of the 5000. We will be looking at two of the accounts of this miracle found in John 6:1-14 and Mark 6:31-44.

6 After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. ² And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. ³ Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. ⁴ Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. ⁵ Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" ⁶ He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. ⁷ Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little." ⁸ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, ⁹ "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?" ¹⁰ Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. ¹¹ Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹² And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost." ¹³ So

they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. ¹⁴ When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"

John 6:1-14

Now as I read the account in Mark I want you to listen for similarities and differences.

³¹ And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. ³² And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. ³³ Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. ³⁴ When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things. ³⁵ And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. ³⁶ Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." ³⁷ But he answered 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 it to them to eat?" ³⁸ And he said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." And when they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." ³⁹ Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰ So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. ⁴¹ And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all. ⁴² And they all ate and were satisfied. ⁴³ And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. ⁴⁴ And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men.

Mark 6:31-44

As you can see each account has some different details and when we piece them together we get a fuller picture of what happened. Just like you and I would recount an experience differently, both John and Mark write about the miracle with slightly different perspectives.

When reading Scripture it is important to look at what happens before and after an event. In the book of John, before the feeding of the 5000 we see that not only did Jesus heal a man on the Sabbath, but He was also saying that God was His father. This made the religious people very angry. Jesus was breaking the religious people's rules and was claiming to be God's Son. The religious people wanted to kill Him because of this. Then Jesus starts talking about how the people want a Savior and the fact that He is standing right in front of them, but they still don't believe.

Then in chapter six we arrive at the setting of the feeding of the 5000. Jesus goes to the other side of the Sea of Galilee and a large crowd follows Him because they saw that He was healing the sick.

Now before we move on let's look at the context of the account in Mark 6. Right before the feeding of the 5000 is written about we see that John the Baptist has been beheaded and the disciples lay his body in a tomb and then return to Jesus and tell Him all that has happened. Jesus tells His disciples to come with Him to a desolate place so they can all rest, but many people see them in their boat and run ahead of them.

Now in both accounts the scene is set with a large crowd of people wanting to see more from Jesus. From John we know that the Passover feast is going on and from Mark we know that the 5000 represent men so there could have actually been 15000 people including women and children present.

In Mark 6:34 it says that Jesus had compassion on the people because they were like sheep without a shepherd. You can imagine the issues that arise when thousands of people are hungry and traveling together and yet Jesus looked on them with compassion. He knew they needed guidance and protection. He knew they needed a good shepherd.

After Jesus tested the disciples to see what they would do in order to feed the crowd we find out in John 6:8 that a boy has five loaves of bread and two fish. It is interesting to think that in a crowd of that size that there was only one boy who was willing to give everything he had. These loaves and fish were not grand or special in any way. They were very common and ordinary and Jesus would use them to show His power.

Numbers have strong symbolism in the Bible so we should pay attention to them when we read them. Historically the number five has been associated with grace and the number two can have associations with union or division.

Concerning the number five, all of Jesus' miracles are filled with grace because we don't deserve to even see them. When Jesus multiplies the bread and fish to feed the hungry people it is a beautiful picture of God's grace. The people did not do anything to deserve to be fed. They just showed up and not only walked away with full bellies, but also a glimpse into the power and authority Jesus has.

Now concerning the two fish, Jesus used fish to represent a lot of things in the Bible. In Mark 1, He called some of the disciples from their jobs as fisherman to follow Him and be fishers of men. In John 21, He appeared to His disciples after His resurrection, gave them nets full of fish and then ate fish and bread with them by the fire. Perhaps the number two in the feeding of the 5000 represents the union Jesus has with His disciples and even bigger than that, with His church. Or maybe it represents the reality of the division of those who would believe that Jesus was who He said He was and those who would not believe.

Some of the people who received this miracle may have finally understood a little bit better about who Jesus was and would actually trust Him, but for probably the majority, they were so amped up on the miracle itself that they just wanted to get their own desires met. Maybe even some of the people Jesus fed were some of the people yelling crucify Him later on.

Not only did the miracle impact the people, but it also impacted the disciples. In Mark's account it says that Jesus gave the disciples the food to hand out to the people. Jesus could have snapped His fingers and everyone could have had a plate in front of them, but He chose to use His disciples to partake in the miracle. Jesus used the small, plain ingredients of bread and fish and the weak vessels of His disciples to distribute it to show off His great power. We also know from the text that there were 12 baskets of food left over. The number 12 is significant. 12 tribes, 12 disciples, 12 baskets. There was one basket leftover for each disciple. Jesus was showing them that He would provide exactly what they needed.

The beautiful thing about Scripture is that it all, from cover to cover, points to the gospel. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus did not come to just give bread, but to be the bread of life.

²⁷ Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.” ²⁸ Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” ²⁹ Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”

John 6:27-29

⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

John 6:51

Jesus died the death we deserve. He was crushed on the cross for the payment of our sins and He rose from the grave because He is who He says He is. He is the Son of God, the Savior of the world, the imperishable bread of life.

Jesus, thank You for Your compassion. Thank You for Your grace. Thank You for enduring the cross and conquering death, sin and Satan with the empty tomb. Help us believe that You are the only nourishment for our soul. Help us to desire You and not just what You can give us. We love You. Amen.