



“Feeding the Multitude”

Matthew 14:13–21

The Authority of the King

Introduction:

The Authority of the King (Chapters 14–20)

The Feeding of the Multitude (Matthew 14:13–21; cf. Mark 6:30–44; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:1–14)

Matthew 14:13–21 – “Now when Jesus heard about John, He withdrew from there in a boat to a secluded place by Himself; and when the people heard of this, they followed Him on foot from the cities. ¹⁴When He went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and felt compassion for them and healed their sick. ¹⁵When it was evening, the disciples came to Him and said, ‘This place is desolate and the hour is already late; so send the crowds away, that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.’ ¹⁶But Jesus said to them, ‘They do not need to go away; you give them something to eat!’ ¹⁷They said to Him, ‘We have here only five loaves and two fish.’ ¹⁸And He said, ‘Bring them here to Me.’ ¹⁹Ordering the people to sit down on the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed the food, and breaking the loaves He gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds, ²⁰and they all ate and were satisfied. They picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve full baskets. ²¹There were about five thousand men who ate, besides women and children.”

The Three Synoptic Gospels: The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke

synoptic = “seen together” = the same story from three different perspectives

The Gospel of Matthew presents Jesus as the King.

The Gospel of Mark presents Jesus as the Servant.

The Gospel of Luke presents Jesus as the fully human Son of Man.

The One Supplemental Gospel: The Gospel of John

The Gospel of John presents Jesus as the fully divine Son of God.

I. The Full Story: Who? What? Where? When? How? Why?

II. The Life Lesson: So What?

Colossians 3:16 – “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another...”

Life Lesson #1: Jesus uses the little things to do great things for God.

John 6:9 – “...what are these for so many people?”

- Jesus used a little boy’s small lunch of loaves and fish to feed a great multitude of some 15,000 hungry people (Matthew 14, Mark 6; Luke 9; John 6).
- Almighty God used Moses’ simple staff to get Pharaoh’s attention on the authority of God who was about to deliver His people from bondage (Exodus 4 and 7).
- The Lord used a plowing instrument called an ox-goad...in the hands of Shamgar the Judge...to strike down 600 Philistines (Judges 3).
- God used Gideon’s small army of 300 men with 300 trumpets and 300 torches to route the giant army of 135,000 Midianites (Judges 6).
- The Lord used the jawbone of a donkey in the hands of Samson to demonstrate His power over the Philistines who were oppressing the people of God (Judges 15).

- God used young David’s sling and a few stones to rally the armies of God against the mighty enemies of God (1 Samuel 17).
- Jesus, the Son of God, used the story of a widow giving a few pennies to teach us about the value of giving our all, no matter how small (Luke 21).

Exodus 4:2 – “What’s in your hand?” Little is much in the hands of a Mighty God.

- Isaiah 60:22 – “The smallest one will become a clan, and the least one a mighty nation. I, the Lord, will hasten it in its time.”
- Proverbs 15:16 – “Better is a little with the fear of the Lord...”
- Philippians 4:13 – “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”
- Luke 16:10 – “He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much.”
- 1 Corinthians 1:27–31 – “God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God. But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, “Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

Life Lesson #2: Jesus is the Compassionate Shepherd.

In Matthew 14:15, we are told this is a desolate place. The word desolate is the Greek word *eremos*. It speaks of a lonely wilderness unfit for living. It also refers to people who are neglected and deserted by others...i.e., people who are deprived of protection.

- Matthew 14:18 – “Bring them here to Me.”
- Mark 6:34 – “...He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd...”
- Matthew 11:28 – “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”
- Matthew 14:16, 18 – “They do not need to go away....Bring them here to Me” (Matthew 14:16, 18).

Life Lesson #3: Jesus provides for us.

Jesus’ disciples ask to send the crowds away to go and buy food for themselves. Jesus then says to His disciples....somewhat tongue-in-cheek, “You give them something to eat...” (Matthew 14:15).

Ephesians 2:8–9 – “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

Titus 3:5 – “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit...”

The gospel accounts tell us that people were filled and satisfied. The Greek word used is *chortazo* which means to be full. John 6:11 reminds us they had “as much as they wanted” and more.

- Psalm 23:1 – “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”
- Psalm 23:5 – “My cup runneth over...” – “My cup overflows.”
- Philippians 4:19 – “And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”
- Matthew 5:6 – “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied.”
- Luke 6:21 – “Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied.”
- Ephesians 3:20 – “Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us...”

Life Lesson #4: Jesus provides for us so we can provide for others.

Jesus breaks the loaves and gives them to His disciples and then the disciples gave them to the crowds (Matthew 14:19; etc.).

i.e., He provides for His disciples so His disciples can provide for others...

John 14:12 – “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.”

Life Lesson #5: Not every hungry person wants help.

Jesus ordered the people to sit down on the grass (Matthew 14:19).

John 6:11 tells us that Jesus provided for “those who were seated.”

Might we gather from this that Jesus didn’t feed those who refused—those who refused to even listen to a simple command from Jesus “Sit down.”

Some of the Jewish leaders that day went away hungry, in more ways than one.

Jesus says to us, “Come to Me.” Some of us are saying, “No.”

Then again, some of us may be sitting down on the outside but standing up on the inside.

Life Lesson #6: Jesus is the Bread of Life.

cf. John, Chapter 6

After feeding the crowds, Jesus compares Himself to the manna and declares Himself to be the true bread of heaven that gives life to the world. Whereas their ancestors ate manna and still died. He is the living bread.

John 6:58 – “This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever.”

Life Lesson #7: Be a doer; not just a hearer.

Hebrews 5:11 – “...you have become dull of hearing...”

dull = Greek: *nothros* = to be sluggish and slow...to be a lazy listener!

James 1:22 – “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.”

These accounts of the miraculous feeding of the multitudes are not just for our benefit. They give us the substance to declare to the world that Jesus is the Prophet, Provider, and Protector. They give us the impetus to do what He calls us to do...to sit down and let Him feed us and to get up and let Him use us.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & ACTION ITEMS:

1. When would you say was the first time you heard the story of the feeding of the multitudes?
What lessons have you learned in the past from this story?
2. In what way was the merging of all four gospel accounts helpful or distracting?
3. What did you get most out of this message?
4. Which of the many lessons from this account would you like to share with your loved ones and friends? When?