

a deeper dive

INTO YOUR FAVORITE BIBLE STORIES

11 - Give Me Your Eyes: Jesus feeds the multitudes

¹² *“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*

John 14:12-13 ESV

Let’s take a journey with Jesus this morning.

This particular journey was the beginnings of increased conflict. It is covered by all four Gospels, which signifies its importance for the overall mission and ministry of Jesus and all His followers.

The public ministry of Jesus has gotten off to a booming start. ⁱ

The “few” turned into crowds, and the demands grew with the followers – many of them had physical needs.

On this spring day in the second year of Jesus’ mission the gospels categorically define this day as very taxing on Jesus and His disciples.

Jesus had just received the news of John’s beheading at the hands of King Herod.

The disciples were just returning from their personal missions.

Jesus had sent them out in pairs to perform miracles, cast out demons and to teach the importance for repentance and that the essence of time.

They were told to travel lightly and to take no food on their journey.

They were instructed to accept the generosity of those who receive them and to stay as long as they were welcome.

When they met up with Jesus upon their return, they told Him all the things they had experienced.

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Out of His compassion for the disciples and His need to be alone He encouraged them, to get away to a desolate place and rest a while. ⁱⁱ

Their spiritual tasks were physically and emotionally taxing and their time to recuperate or to find nutrition was minimal, if non-existent.

And the crowds continued to seek Jesus.

The book of John tells us that Jesus retreated to a mountain with the disciples and looked out over the 15,000 to 20,000 people who were assembled on the shore of the sea of Galilee (Matthew 14:21).

When Jesus ¹⁴ *saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.* (Matthew 14:13b-14)

By now we must realize that Jesus was in “teacher” mode every moment of every day.

Everything Jesus said or demonstrated was a lesson to remember, or an action that would reflect the nature and purpose of God.

Jesus had compassion!

God’s reaction to a hungry and thirsty world - COMPASSION

The Son of Man will welcome the righteous into the Kingdom of God because they will be like Jesus... *“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.”*

Matthew 25:35-36

Luke 6:21 *“Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.”*

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Psalm 107:9 *“For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things.”*

Compassion requires ACTION

¹⁵ *Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves.”* ¹⁶ *But Jesus said, “They need not go away; YOU give them something to eat.”*

The disciples obviously had a sense of compassion. But it didn't go far enough.

Mark, Luke, and John include a reply from the disciples that seems a little snarky:

“And they said to him, ‘Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?’” (Mark 6:37).

Disciples: “So, Jesus. You want us to come up with eight months of wages to feed these guys? Are you crazy?! We don't have that kind of money!”

Jesus: “No you don't. Any you less faith!”

We all want to make sense of miracles, but that would be contrary to the very definition of a miracle.

Don't let the details get in the way. This is an act of trust.

We're on the same team as the God of the universe Who *“owns the cattle of a thousand hills.”* ⁱⁱⁱ

James 1:26-27 says, ²⁶ *“If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.”* ²⁷ *Religion*

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that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.”

Just like being a good listener is not an end in itself. “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says” (James 1:22).

The hearing of the Gospel introduces a new perspective in a person’s religious experience. It is the “*perfect law that gives freedom*” (James 1:25).

The law of Moses was reduced to ceremony, but life in Christ produces acts of service, especially to the neediest in our world.^{iv}

Just listening and suggesting is not an exercise of the will of God through faith!

Faith without CHRIST is no faith at all

John’s Gospel inserts a conversation with Jesus by one of the disciples: “*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?’*” John 6:8-9 ESV

Jesus: “Okay, disciples, listen up. What I’m about to show you is important. And there will be a test!”

Yes, indeed there was a test.

Just a couple chapters over in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark Jesus is posed with another hungry crowd (only about 10,000 to 12,000 this time).^v

Jesus again was compassionate for the crowd which had been with Him for three days without much to eat.

He wasn’t going to leave them hungry in a place so far away from next town.

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Upon announcing His intent to feed them the disciples... well, they failed the test.

³³ And the disciples said to him, "Where are we to get enough bread in such a desolate place to feed so great a crowd?" **Matthew 15:33** ESV

I guess we all know that it takes a while for habits to be formed... Lesson finally learned, I guess.

Meanwhile, back to the original miracle.

1. Jesus **organized the crowd** into manageable groups.
 - a. *³⁹ Then he [Jesus] **commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass.** ⁴⁰ So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties.* (Mark 6:39-40)

2. Jesus understood the human hunger.
 - a. It can be a free-for-all with aggression as destitution finds relief.

3. Jesus **invokes the maker of heaven and earth** – provider of all good and perfect gifts (James 1:17).

*⁴¹ And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he [Jesus] **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.*

- a. Jesus acknowledges where the bread has come from, and where all blessings originate.
4. Then He puts the task before those who follow Him.

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⁴¹ *And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he [Jesus] 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.*

Wait, did you catch that? He broke “**five loaves**” and “*divided the **two fish** among them all.*”

⁴² *And they all ate and were satisfied.”* Mark 6:39-42 ESV

How about you?

- Are you a follower of Christ?
- Is there satisfaction in your hungry soul?
- How’s your faith? Is it weak and forgetful?

ⁱ John 6:2

ⁱⁱ Mark 6:7-13; 30-31

ⁱⁱⁱ Psalm 50:10

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^v Matthew 15:32-38; Mark 8:1-9 *The Feeding of the Four Thousand*