

Third Sunday of Lent - March 8, 2026

Video Online Bible Study with Rev. Gary E. Mathiesen

“Tell Me Something Good”

~ *Grounding Ourselves in the Good News of Lent* ~ “*The Good News Is ... Together, the Impossible Is Possible*”

Mark 6:32-44 (Ephesians 3:20-21)

NOTES ON THE TEXT ~ Mark 6:32-44 ~ “THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND”

~ THE PRELIMINARIES ~

☞ This event is the ONLY miracle of Jesus recorded by all four gospel writers (in contrast, Mtt, Mk & Lk record ten other similar miracles) ... plus, there is a remarkable number of similarities between the four writers (see attachment “Gospel Comparison ...”). Mtt, Mk & Lk describe the feeding at the end of Jesus’ Galilean ministry as he moves into Gentile areas and starts his journey toward Jerusalem (John puts the feeding in a large group of sermons/miracles ch 2-11 without regard to location).

☞ We are at a transition - Jesus brought the “bread” of good news to his people in and around his hometown with mixed results ... even rejection. This feeding opens the “bread” of God to all people.

~ THE SETTING ~ A TOUGH WEEK !!!

☞ Jesus continues his ministry of teaching and healing close to his hometown of Nazareth in the area known as Galilee and adjacent areas to the Sea of Galilee (see maps “The Decapolis and the Lands Beyond the Jordan” and from session #1 “Jesus in Judea and Samaria”).

☞ The days leading up to the feeding of the five thousand were very difficult ...

* vv. 1-6a Sad Note. Jesus goes back to his hometown of Nazareth but he is not able to heal many people and many question his authority to teach “*Jesus was amazed at their lack of faith.*” v. 6 “Isn’t this the carpenter?” v. 3).

* vv. 6b-13 Encouraging Development. Jesus sends out the Twelve into the area villages in groups of two with specific instructions. “*They drove out many demons and annointed many sick people with oil and healed them.*” v. 13)

* vv. 14-29 Shattering News. John the Baptist is beheaded by Herod Antipas (son of Herod the Great; see chart “House of Herod”). John is Jesus’ cousin who was murdered because Salome (the daughter of Herodias/Herod’s brother’s wife) danced in a way that gained her anything she wanted up to half his kingdom. Herodias despised John and wanted his head delivered to her on a platter ... which Herod did as he promised in front of all his guests. “*The King was greatly distressed ... and beheaded John in the prison and brought back his head on a platter ...*” A shocking story of violence, corruption, power and vengeance.

* vv. 30-31 Overwhelming Need. The apostles come back from their mission and report all that had happened. But the people crowding around them are so demanding that the disciples do not even have time to eat, so Jesus takes them away for a retreat of rest.



* vv. 32-44 The feeding of the five thousand.

* vv. 45-56 Overwhelming Need - Again! Jesus walks on water (Sea of Galilee) to the disciples as he attempts (again!) to try and get his disciples alone for a retreat. However, they end up teaching and healing many people. [Mark mentions the loaves from the feeding story "... *for the [disciples] had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.*" v. 52]

~ THE FEEDING AND THE PROBLEM WITH CROWDS ~

☞ v. 44 "*The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.*"

- Why "men"? Similar to times in our own country's history when only wealthy landowners voted or when only free white men voted.
- The size of the crowd is amazing in light of the fact that the neighboring towns of Capernaum and Bethsaida probably had a population of about 2,000-3,000 people.
- Matthew mentions women and children, but does not number them as part of the crowd.

☞ vv. 30-34 First Problem - Chaotic. "*... so many people were coming and going ...*" "*... many ran on foot ... and got there ahead of them*" "*... they were like sheep without a shepherd ...*" Jesus is looking for a solitary place to be alone with the disciples for some rest and quiet but instead encounters a chaotic scene. Ironic: Jesus and the disciples leave one place because they are so busy they can't eat, only to go to another place and to feed 5,000 people who have nothing to eat.

- Jesus' response: v. 34 "*[Jesus] had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.*" Kindness in Action - Jesus didn't just feel sorry for them (thoughts and prayers; spiritual platitudes "God loves you"). Jesus' compassion moved him to action in which he engages with the crowds. Kindness is compassion in action.
- Kindness is "getting the grace to just deal with the bumps in life. Kindness is bending the rules for the sake of love." (See Seattle Times article). Jesus does NOT run and hide or turn people away. He stops. He teaches. Kindness opens the door to possibility.

☞ vv. 35-37 Second Problem - Unprepared. "*... it was late in the day ...*" The disciples complain that "*This is a remote place! it's already very late.*"

- v. 36 The disciples response: "*Send the people away.*" "*...[let them] buy themselves something to eat.*" The disciples are not letting this be their problem. This problem is not their fault.
- v. 37 Jesus' response: "*You give them something to eat.*" Sounds like an outrageous response to the problem. Jesus is humanizing the problem. The system says "you go get your own bread", but Jesus puts a face on hunger. Jesus is breaking the cycle of the injustice of the moment: people are hungry (and it does not matter who's fault it is).

~ THE FEEDING AND THE POSSIBILITY WITH CROWDS ~

☞ v. 38 "*[What] do you have?*" The disciples roam the crowd and find five loaves and two fish. Not much for 5,000 + people! Jesus does not comment on the amount of food found, but simply has the people sit in groups of 50 and 100, gives thanks to God, breaks up the bread and fish and has the disciples distribute the food. No grand pronouncements. No blame or shame. Jesus quietly goes about the task of feeding the crowd ... with leftovers!

☞ v. 42 "*They all ate and were satisfied.*" Perhaps the most understated conclusion to any miracle recorded by the gospel writers. No shouting or accolades or shock or jumping for joy. The crowd ate and were full from the meal. Done.

☞ v. 43 "*And the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish.*" Once again, abundance!

~ **THE IMPOSSIBLE IS WHERE GOD STARTS** ~ (Rev. Lizzie McManus-Dial / Sanctified Art Contributor)

- * God starts with **what God has**. God does NOT start with the problem (How do we feed these people? There is NOT enough food!).
 - focus on the problem is only to focus on the moment ... which is what I don't have ... not enough! But what does God have? God always has something.
 - * God also starts with **what God has given us** ... what we already have in our possession (five loaves and two fish).
 - not enough becomes more than enough.
 - the tendency is to start with why something won't work (money, time, etc.) ... creative thinking looks for possibilities. The disciples saw constraints and limitations (who wouldn't!) From what they didn't have. Jesus took what the disciples had in hand and it became enough for all ... Jew or Gentile ... man or woman or child.
- ☞ v. 42 *"They all ate and were satisfied ..."*

NOTES ON THE TEXT ~ EPHESIANS 3:17b-21 ~ "A SPONTANEOUS PRAYER FOR THE EPHESIANS":

"And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now - to the ONE who is able to do immeasurably more than all [you] can ask or imagine, according to God's power that is at work within [you], to God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."

☞ This is the second of two prayers Paul has for the Ephesian Christians (1:15-23) as he describes what it means to be made alive in and one with Jesus Christ. This prayer precedes Paul's instructions on what it means to live together as a person in Jesus Christ.

☞ v. 19 *"... that you may be filled ..."* Paul is praying that these people may experience and know the full measure of Christ's love ... a sense of dwelling that means being completely at home where all is at peace and harmony.

☞ 'Ohana is the Hawaiian word for "family". Further, in Hawaiian culture, 'ohana means: A sense of belonging - No one is alone; everyone has a place. Loyalty and unconditional love - Family (both given and chosen) is always there. Responsibility and support - Helping one another through good times and bad. With 'ohana, the circle of family of kinship extends beyond what sociologists call the nuclear family: a mother, father, and their children. In fact, this term encompasses extended family across the generations and may even include people who are not biologically related, like friends and neighbors. One aspect of 'ohana means ensuring that no one in the family gets left behind. Growing 'ohana involves ensuring that everyone in the family has what they need to survive and live with joy. This is the sense of Paul's prayer ... the connection we have with each other and with God through Christ Jesus.

~ **POSSIBLE THEMES** ~

1. The disciples landed up with more leftovers than the original five loaves and two fish. Abundance.
2. The five loaves and two fish are not much food for 5,000 people. And yet ...!!! Scarcity.
3. The disciples are the only ones (?) who know of the miracle. People see free food! Kindness and Care.
4. Jesus has the people sit on the ground in groups and does not make the people go without provision into the nearby villages. Compassion.
5. The people are not sent away or ignored (so as to get on with the retreat). Jesus taught and interrupted the disciples' retreat. Flexible. Understanding.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION ...

1. Where do you see examples of God's still, small voice moving within SOTH perhaps multiplying the smallest offering into abundance?
2. Can you think of a time when you considered pursuing a practical and reasoned path only to be put on a different path that seemed impossible?
3. Mark's feeding story emphasizes numbers (200 denarii, 5 loaves, 2 fish, groups of 50/100). When is quantitative data helpful and when is it limiting?
4. Jesus acts in a secretive and understated way. Why?
5. Twice in this chapter, Jesus tries to get the disciples to a quiet place for rest, prayer and solitude. What place does rest have in your life?
6. How often have you felt like the task before you far outweighs the resources and time available? How does this story challenge your thinking?

NOTES ...

Addendum: "Gospel Comparison - Feeding of the Five Thousand"

Addendum: "More Than Just Loaves"

Maps: "House of Herod" "The Decapolis and the Lands Beyond the Jordan" "Jesus In Judea and Samaria"

Seattle Times Article: "Kindness At Work" by Cathy Bussewitz (AP) -

<https://www.seattletimes.com/business/kindness-at-work-includes-giving-honest-feedback-limiting-meetings-and-bending-rules/>

Gospel Comparison - Feeding of the Five Thousand

Matthew 14:13-21

- * Withdrew to a “lonely place”
- * Crowds ... followed
- * [Jesus] had compassion
- *[Jesus] healed their sick
- *Disciples want to send crowds away
- **”You give them [food] ...”
- *Five loaves/two fish
- *People sit down
- *Jesus blessed
- *All ate and were satisfied
- *12 baskets of broken pieces
- *5,000 men (besides women/kids)

Mark 6:32-44

- *Withdrew to a “lonely place”
- *Many saw ... and ran
- *Jesus had compassion
- *[Jesus] began to teach
- *Disciples want to send crowds away
- **”You give them [food] ...”
- *Five loaves/two fish
- *People sit down in groups
- *Jesus blessed
- *All ate and were satisfied
- *12 baskets of broken pieces
- *5,000 men

Luke 9:10b-17

- *Withdrew apart to a city
- *Crowds ... followed
- *[Jesus] welcomed them
- *[Jesus] spoke ... and cured
- *Disciples want to send crowds away
- **”You give them [food] ...”
- *Five loaves/two fish
- *People sit down in groups
- *Jesus blessed
- *All ate and were satisfied
- *12 baskets of pieces
- *5,000 men

John 6:1-15

- *Went to the other side
- *Multitude followed
- * - - - - -
- * - - - - -
- *Jesus tests Philip (feeding the crowd)
- *Philip - “Not enough money!”
- *A lad with 5 loaves/two fish
- *People sit down
- *Jesus gave thanks
- *They had eaten their fill
- *12 baskets with fragments
- *5,000 men

~ MORE THAN JUST LOAVES ~

☞ Barley loaves were small and flat. A person could eat several at one meal. It was cheap and basic bread. The food of the poor/average person.

☞ v. 43 “... *the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread ...*”
Bread was regarded by Jews as a gift from God and it was required that scraps that fell on the ground during a meal be picked up.



☞ vv. 30-38 Mark begins with a long introduction which is referred back to on two different occasions:

- v. 52 “... *for they had not understood about the loaves, their hearts were hardened.*” This occurred when Jesus came to them on the water. Jesus had authority over nature at the feeding and again upon the water, and yet their faith lagged.

- 8:17-19 The feeding of the four thousand with seven basketfuls of leftover pieces (see also Mtt. 15:32-39). Jesus warns the disciples against “the yeast of the Pharisees and Herod” who doubted/questioned Jesus but the disciples misunderstand and think Jesus is upset about their lack of planning in not bringing bread for the trip! “*Why are you still talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened?*” [8:17] This comes after the feeding of the four thousand (8:1-10).