

The Feeding of the Five Thousand
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Text: Mark 6:30-44 (see also Matt. 14:13-21; Luke 9:11-17; John 6:1-14)

Gospel of Mark: [Bibliography](#) or [Manuscripts and Greek Exegesis](#)

UBS 4th Edition Paragraph Topic: The Feeding of the Five Thousand

Central Idea of Message: Christians, like the disciples in this event, are not *manufacturers* of the miracles but *distributors* of the blessings Christ gives (cf. Wiersbe, *Exposition*, 1:132).

Introduction: Mark has just finished writing about the tragedy of the beheading of John the Baptist. But then Mark shifts gears and records the triumphant return of the twelve from their first mission trip and the feeding of the five thousand by Jesus. **In spite of setbacks, resistance, and even tragedies, God is still at work advancing his kingdom!**

I. The Twelve Return (vv. 30-32)

- A. The apostles gathered together with Jesus (v. 30)
 - 1. Jesus had sent the twelve out to do ministry (Mark 6:7-13)
 - 2. Now, they returned and reported to him in their own words what they had done and taught
- B. Jesus and the twelve retreat together (v. 31)
 - 1. To a lonely place where they could all rest
 - 2. But so many people were coming and going that Jesus and the disciples didn't even have time to eat
 - a) Rest seems to have been in short supply for Jesus and the disciples, yet it was absolutely necessary
 - b) This is a great model for helping us to avoid burnout
 - c) **Too much activity with not enough rest is a recipe for disaster**
- C. They went away in the boat to an uninhabited place by themselves (v. 32)
 - 1. Jesus cares about our mental, emotional, and spiritual condition

2. Jesus knew that these men needed some leisure time away from work!

II. **Five Thousand Are Fed (vv. 33-44)**

- A. The people saw them going in the boat (v. 33)
 1. They got "made"!
 2. They were recognized
 3. People were literally running from the cities, anticipating their destination on the shore, and arrived ahead of Jesus and the twelve
 4. The lonely place to which Jesus and his disciples had retreated turned out to be not so lonely!
 5. This was the height of Jesus' popularity, the "honeymoon" period, which, sadly, would soon rapidly decline
- B. Jesus went ashore (v. 34)
 1. Tired, somewhat spent, along with the twelve
 2. He saw the great multitude and felt compassion for them
 - a) Such a large crowd is probably explained by the fact that many were traveling to Jerusalem to observe the Passover Feast
 - b) He felt compassion because they were like sheep without a shepherd: hungry, vulnerable, hurting, bewildered with life, helpless, burdened with meaningless legalistic restraints put on them by their Rabbis, without good spiritual leadership, and at the mercy of every wild animal and fanciful teaching in the countryside
 - c) **Compassion is pity which expresses itself in active service**
 - d) And what is the first thing he did?
 - (1) Didn't start healing!
 - (2) Didn't feed them!
 - (3) Didn't even let them take a quick nap!
 - (4) He began to teach them!
- C. Time flew by (v. 35)
 1. It was quite late
 2. The disciples seemed to be concerned for the needs of all the people
- D. The disciples suggest that Jesus send the people away so that they could go into the surrounding villages and countryside [surrounding farms] and find food (v. 36)
- E. Jesus tells the twelve to give the people something to eat (v. 37)

1. They had just returned from their first mission trip!
 2. They had exercised the powers Jesus had given to them!
 3. But they were not thinking about miraculous feeding!
 4. The disciples respond by asking if they should go and spend 200 denarii on food
 - a) A denarius was a day's wage!
 - b) 200 denarii is 200 days' wages [just over six months]!
 5. **Often, we look at a situation and wrongly think that nothing can be done, but Jesus knows otherwise, because he can make a way when there seems to be no way so that our problem becomes an opportunity for both our faith and patience to be tested and strengthened**
- F. How many loaves do you have (v. 38)?
1. Not enough for all these people brother!
 2. They counted five loaves of bread and two fish and only John's gospel narrative tells of the boy with the fish
 - a) Enough fish for a couple of people
 - b) Enough bread for ten to fifteen, maybe, unless there were a lot of hungry teenagers!
- G. Jesus commanded the people to recline on the green grass by groups (v. 39)
1. Clearly, the references to sheep and green grass bring Psalm 23 to mind
 2. Jesus is portraying himself as the Great Shepherd having compassion for the hungry sheep and leading them to green pastures, because the spiritual nurture they had been getting from the Rabbis was poison
 3. How can a listener tell good teaching from bad teaching?
- H. The people reclined in groups (v. 40)
1. Of hundreds and of fifties
 2. **God's ways are orderly, not chaotic**
- I. The loaves and the fish in the hands of Jesus (v. 41)
1. He took them and looked toward heaven
 2. He blessed the food and broke the loaves
 3. He then began distributing the loaves and fish to the disciples
 4. And he kept distributing the loaves and the fish until everybody had some of each

5. The miracle took place not when the loaves and fish were in the hands of the disciples but in the hands of Jesus (cf. Wiersbe, *Exposition*, 1:132)
6. **Maybe we should just hand Jesus everything**
- J. The entire multitude ate and each was satisfied (v. 42)
- K. The disciples picked up twelve baskets full of leftover bread and fish (v. 43)
 1. Nothing should be wasted
 2. Presumably, a basket carried by each apostle
- L. There were 5,000 men who ate the loaves (v. 44)
 1. The number of women and children is not mentioned and Matthew specifically says these were present and ate as well (Matt. 14:21)
 2. Mark does not say specifically that the men ate the fish, but Matthew implies it (Matt. 14:21)
 3. **This miracle is the only one found in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John - all four gospels**

Conclusion: Principles.

(1) "Sheep without a shepherd" is a description of being lost, unprotected, under-nurtured, vulnerable, and helpless. This describes how we are before we come to Christ, and how we are if we come to Christ but stray away.

(2) People need spiritual instruction as badly, if not more, as they need food! We must make spiritual instruction a top priority.

(3) Christians, like the disciples in this event, are not *manufacturers* of the miracles but *distributors* of the blessings Christ gives (cf. Wiersbe, *Exposition*, 1:132).

(4) We frequently have more resources at our disposal than we think. We need to stop focusing on what we don't have and focus more on what we do have.

(5) Handing everything we have to Jesus is always the best choice we will ever make!