

“The Feeding of the Five Thousand”  
Mark 6:33-44  
(Preached at Trinity, February 2, 2011)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Last time we saw the account of the death of John the Baptist. In verse 29 we read that the disciples of John came and took away his body and buried it. In Matthew’s Gospel we are told that the disciples of John then came and told Jesus of his death.  
**Matthew 14:12** – “His disciples came and took away the body and buried it; and they went and reported to Jesus.”
2. In addition, the disciples of Christ came and reported the experiences from their missionary journey. Jesus and His disciples departed from the region for a period of much needed rest.  
**Mark 6:31** – “And He said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while.” (For there were many *people* coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.) They went away in the boat to a secluded place by themselves.”
3. In **verses 33-44** we find the account of the feeding of the 5000. This miracle is recorded in all four gospels, which very few of Jesus’ miracles are. For this reason we must give it careful attention.
4. Jesus’ fame continued to spread. Although He was rejected by His own God continued to exalt Him according to the Scripture. Multitudes were flocking to see Him and hear Him.  
**Mark 6:33** – “*The people* saw them going, and many recognized *them* and ran there together on foot from all the cities, and got there ahead of them.”
5. It should be noted that this multitude of unbelievers followed Jesus in spite of great personal difficulty.
  - A. They followed Him out of the cities – away from the traveled streets. Away from provision, into the desert (heat with little water). These are unbelievers!
  - B. How many Christians today lack such passion? How many will not be inconvenienced? This is the great travesty of our day.
6. There are several other things we need to see in this account in the life of our Lord
  - I. Although this was a great multitude that had come to see Him most of them would continue in unbelief
    - A. The Scriptures tell us there were 5000 men besides the women and children  
**Matthew 14:21** – “And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.”
      1. This means there were most likely over 10,000 people present
        - a. They came with great zeal and passion
        - b. They came in spite of the inconvenience
      2. And almost all of this great multitude would leave in unbelief
      3. They came to Jesus because of a momentary zeal  
Jesus had created quite a stir – the news had even reached the ears of Herod.

- B. Why were they coming in such large numbers?
1. For some it was the excitement of the crowd. They had heard so much about Jesus. This moment had become a sensational event.  
Sensationalism has never been a means of grace
  2. For some they came because of a personal needs. There were many in the crowd who needed healing from their infirmities.  
**John 6:2** – “And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.”  
**Matthew 14:14** – “When He went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and felt compassion for them and healed their sick.”  
**Luke 9:11** – “He *began* speaking to them about the kingdom of God and curing those who had need of healing.”
  3. Some were fascinated by His words  
**Mark 6:2** – “When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, “Where did this man *get* these things, and what is *this* wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands?”  
**Mark 6:34** – “When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things.”
  4. Later Jesus would accuse them of following Him only because He fed them  
**John 6:26** – “Jesus answered them and said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves, and were filled.”
  5. People come to Jesus for many different reasons. But there is only one way to be saved. It demands receiving Him as your Master.
  6. Eventually all would forsake Him

II. We see the great compassion of Christ – **Verse 34**

- A. Though our soul is of infinite value, Jesus cares for our physical needs
1. He healed their sick. He was concerned about them not having anything to eat.
  2. When Lazarus died and his sisters mourned John tells us “Jesus wept”
  3. He would provide for their daily bread – in the model prayer we are told to pray for our daily bread.
- B. We find the compassion of Christ in receiving sinners
1. Jesus was grieved at the lack of spiritual leadership in Israel. They were like sheep without a shepherd  
**Mark 6:34** – “He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd”
  2. The disciples said in **Verse 36** “send them away”  
But Jesus didn’t send them away
  3. Jesus is merciful. He doesn’t send away sinners who come to Him  
**Matthew 11:28** – “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”
  4. The requirement is that we come empty handed

**Mark 10:15** – “Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it *at all*.”

- a. This was the problem of this great multitude. They weren't following Jesus for Himself—for His own excellence.
  - b. This is the problem of most people. They are not willing to have Jesus as their one and only treasure
4. Jesus is compassionate, yet He demands that we follow Him alone. This will be clearly seen in **Chapter 10** with the rich young ruler.
- Mark 10:21** – “Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."
5. The multitudes came with nothing and Jesus showed them compassion. But they still considered Jesus insufficient. God continues to show compassion, yet people will not have it. The people came with nothing and they left with nothing.
- Luke 14:33** – “So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.”

III. God usually works through His appointed means, yet is sovereign over His works

- A. The multitude of people were in need of food – Jesus could have used any means to provide the food
  1. The disciples told Jesus to send them away to find their own food. He could have done so.
  2. Jesus told His disciples to provide for the multitude.
    - a. With one accord the disciples exclaimed that such provision was beyond their ability.  
**Mark 6:37** - "Shall we go and spend two hundred denarii on bread and give them *something* to eat?"
    - b. A denari was equivalent to a day's wage. In terms of our own day they were saying it would cost thousands and thousands of dollars.
    - c. Jesus could have provided them with the money. Peter found coins in a fish's mouth.
  3. Jesus could have fed them supernaturally without the loaves and fishes
  4. God is the first cause of all things yet usually works through second causes
  5. God made the heavens and earth of nothing – yet made Adam from the dust of the ground just as the other animals – which humbles us
  6. God brought plagues upon Egypt. He could have just destroyed Egypt and led Israel immediately into Canaan
  7. Israel had to take dominion over Canaan – yet the battles were of God
- C. God works through second causes in our life
  1. He used the preaching of the Gospel to bring us to Christ
  2. He uses trials to test and increase our faith
  3. He uses chastening to humble us and turn us from sin
  4. He uses pastors to edify the church
- D. THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING THAT HAPPENS WITHOUT PURPOSE – Nothing is left to chance

IV. Though in His compassion He provides our daily bread, we do not find that He will satisfy our carnal lusts. He sometimes blesses us with material wealth, but this must never be the focus of our life

- A. Notice the fare of the feast – There were no fleshly comforts
1. **Verse 39** – “And He commanded them to sit down on the grass”<sup>20</sup>  
Although they were in the presence of the King of kings this was no feast for a king
  2. There was no wine provided – we must assume they drank water
  3. There were no utensils, no cups, no plates – they ate with their fingers
- B. The Charismatics who focus upon materialism do not understand the focus of the Christian life.
- Matthew 6:19-21** – “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.<sup>20</sup> “But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;<sup>21</sup> for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”
- Matthew 6:31-33** – “Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?'<sup>32</sup> “For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.<sup>33</sup> “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”
- Colossians 3:1-2** – “Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.<sup>2</sup> Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.”
- 1 Timothy 6:7-8** – “For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either.<sup>8</sup> If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.”

V. We can see in this feast the nature of the gospel

- A. It must be initiated by God
1. Jesus was in control of the event
  2. The disciples said “send them away.”
  3. Jesus told them what to do and how to do it  
**Mark 6:41** – “And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed *the food* and broke the loaves and He kept giving *them* to the disciples to set before them; and He divided up the two fish among them all.”
  4. The gospel has never been left to our own designs – nor will it ever be
  5. We are commanded to “Preach the Word”
- B. He gave it to His disciples
- Verse 41** – “He gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude”
1. In **Verse 37** He commanded the disciples:  
**Mark 6:37** – “You give them *something to eat!*”
    - a. They exclaimed, “We can’t!” We don’t have the means. We are unable.
    - b. We don’t have the ability to save sinners

2. Yet, we shall always be God's instrument to take the gospel to the lost  
**Mark 6:41** – “and He kept giving *them* to the disciples to set before them”  
 The word translated “giving” is in the imperfect tense.  
 The imperfect tense shows continuing action in the past. Jesus gave and kept on giving the loaves and fishes.
  3. We are God's stewards – He equips us and continues to equip us. He saves and continues to save. We are merely God's stewards  
**1 Corinthians 4:1-2** – “Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. <sup>2</sup> In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.”
- C. The increase comes from God  
**Mark 6:42-43** – “They all ate and were satisfied, <sup>43</sup> and they picked up twelve full baskets of the broken pieces, and also of the fish.”
1. The disciples were only in charge of distribution  
NAS **1 Corinthians 3:6** – “I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.”
  2. They were not allowed to see the fullness until all was accomplished  
**Psalm 118:23** – “This is the LORD'S doing; it *is* marvellous in our eyes.”
  3. There will be sufficient for all of God's elect
- E. **Verse 42** – “They all ate and were satisfied”
1. Those whom Christ feeds shall be filled  
**John 4:14** – “but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.”  
**John 6:27** – “Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.”  
**John 6:51** – “I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.”
  2. Those who come to Christ shall find life abundant  
**John 10:10** - he thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have *it* abundantly.”