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Have You Given Your Life to Jesus?



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1. The practical lesson is clear: whenever there is a need, give all that you have to Jesus and let Him do the rest. The question is not what can I do with the lunch, but what can God do with the lunch!
2. It is significant that twice John mentioned the fact that Jesus gave thanks ([John 6:11](#), 23). Matthew, Mark, and Luke all state that Jesus looked up to heaven when He gave thanks. By that act, He reminded the hungry people that God is the source of all good and needful gifts. This is a good lesson for us: instead of complaining about what we do not have, we should give thanks to God for what we do have, and He will make it go farther. [1]
 - Start with what you have.
 - Give what you have to Jesus.
 - Obey what He commands.
3. How like many of God's people today. For some reason, it is never the right time or place for God to work. Jesus watched His frustrated disciples as they tried to solve the problem, but "He Himself knew what He was intending to do" ([John 6:6](#), nasb). He wanted to teach them a lesson in faith and surrender. Note the steps we must take in solving life's problems.
 - Christ can take our little and make it much.
 - Whatever He blesses, He breaks. Are we willing to be broken?
 - People today are in the wilderness of sin (v. 15) and need Christ.
 - Christ can overcome every difficulty and feed the multitudes. The disciples had many excuses—not enough money, the wrong place, the wrong time—but Christ took what they had and met the need. He will do this today! [3]
4. Jesus still has compassion on the hungry multitudes, and He still says to His church: "Give them something to eat." How easy it is for us to send people away, to make excuses, to plead a lack of resources. Jesus asks that we give Him all that we have and let Him use it as He sees fit. A hungry world is feeding on empty substitutes while we deprive them of the Bread of Life. When we give Christ what we have, we never lose. We always end up with more blessing than when we started. [2]
5. John 6 makes it clear that the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 was a sermon in action. Christ, through His Word, is the Bread of Life on whom we feed. It is the privilege—and responsibility—of His servants to give this bread to the hungry multitudes. The servants receive that bread personally from Christ, then pass it on to others. There are other lessons from this miracle:
 - Christ can take our little and make it much.
 - Whatever He blesses, He breaks. Are we willing to be broken?
 - People today are in the wilderness of sin (v. 15) and need Christ.
 - Christ can overcome every difficulty and feed the multitudes. The disciples had many excuses—not enough money, the wrong place, the wrong time—but Christ took what they had and met the need. He will do this today! [3]
6. Barley bread was the cheapest and the coarsest of all bread. They had two fishes, which would be about the size of sardines. Tarichaea—which means the salt-fish town—was a well known place on the lake from which salt-fish went out to all over the world. The little salt-fishes were eaten as relish with the dry rolls. If we put ourselves into the hands of Jesus Christ, there is no telling what he can do with us and through us. [4]
7. Thus, the setting of the miracles, the participants, and the manner in which the miracles were performed consistently pointed to a greater spiritual revelation than is apparent at first sight. This is certainly true in the case of the feeding of the 5,000. It teaches far more than Jesus' power, for it presents him as a second Moses who brings salvation to his people. We see this for several reasons.

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- The location of the miracles before a great crowd in a "solitary place" (literally, "a desert place") was parallel to the wilderness in which Moses performed his miracles.
- Jesus' proclaiming himself the Bread of Heaven corresponded to the manna.
- The orderliness of the people in seated regimentation before receiving the bread was reminiscent of the Mosaic camp in the wilderness.
- The provision of food by Jesus symbolized what it symbolized with Moses—God's saving grace in rescuing his people from bondage.
- This great miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 teaches us how the second Moses, being far greater than Moses, meets the needs of his people and indeed the whole world.

8. A God who can do that can do anything! Think about it: Jesus with a word multiplied the molecular structure of those humble barley cakes and pickled fish! It is this creation power that he brings to our lives. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

9. Nothing is impossible physically or spiritually for Jesus Christ. No one is beyond his redemption. Christian, if you are willing, there is no moral flaw in your life which God cannot heal.

10. Christ's provision was and is complete, total, and satisfying.

11. This gives us some grand insights into participating in God's program. First, we understand that God wants to use us to bring the Bread of Life to a needy world. He can do perfectly well without us if he chooses to do so. He did not need the little boy's bread. He did not need to use his disciples to distribute it. He could have done it all and had it float down to the group of fifties and hundreds on pink parachutes. But wonder of wonder, he delights in including us in his work! "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

12. Second, we learn from this that he can use a very small thing if it is committed to him. It has been said: "God must delight in using ordinary people with ordinary gifts because he made so many of us!"

13. God uses common clay jars like us so that there will be no mistake as to where the power comes from. We so often think he wants and needs our strengths, and he does use them when they are committed to him. But what about our barley loaves, our ordinariness, our weaknesses? The truth is, these are harder to give to God. If you are eloquent, it is easy to say, "God, here is my eloquence. Take and use it." If you are a good business person, it is simple to say, "God, you can have my administrative ability." But it is another thing to give God your weaknesses. Elizabeth Elliot expresses the idea this way:

14. If the only thing you have to offer is a broken heart, you offer a broken heart. So in a time of grief, the recognition that this is material for sacrifice has been a very great strength for me. Realizing that nothing I have, nothing I am will be refused on the part of Christ I simply give it to Him as the little boy gave Jesus his five loaves and two fishes—with the same feeling of the disciples when they said, "What is the good of that for such a crowd?" Naturally in almost anything I offer to Christ, my reaction would be, "What is the good of that?" The point is, the use He makes of it is His blessing.

15. One final point: Jesus only worked when the loaves were put into his hands in willing consecration. We are only required to bring what we have. Will you give? This is the way the Bread of Life goes out to the world.

Remember how simple were Christ's offers:

- **To the seeking** He said COME to ME [John 5:40](#) yet you refuse to come to me to have life.
- **To the hungry** He said EAT ME [John 6:48-51](#) I am the bread of life. 49 Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. 50 But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."
- **To the thirsting** He said drink me [John 7:37-38](#) On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."
- **To the fearful** He said trust me (Ann Landers says she gets 10,000 letters per day and the vast majority are expressing fear of death, disease, disaster, despair, desolation, debt, etc.) [John 8:51-52](#) I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death." 52 At this the Jews exclaimed, "Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that if anyone keeps your word, he will never taste death."

I AM the Bread of Life

So what does Jesus say in [John 6:48](#)? I AM the Bread of LIFE. I am all you ever need. And, just like the bread of God that came down from heaven, I can deliver my bread of life anywhere you ever get! WOW!

Twenty-three times in all we find our Lord's meaningful "I AM" (*imie oge*, Gr.) in the Greek text of this gospel (4:26; 6:20,35,41,48,51; 8:12,18,24,28,58; 10:7,9,11,14; 11:25; 13:19; 14:6; 15:1,5; 18:5,6,8). In several of these, He joins His "I AM" with seven tremendous metaphors which are expressive of His saving relationship toward the world. IN other words, the Christian life may be described in these seven declarations of Jesus. A believer is described by Jesus in seven profound ways. The perfection of Christ our God is seen in the seven "I AM'S" in John's record of Christ's life and ministry. Christ has given His own eternal life ([John 17:2](#)), but He has also given them the revelation of the Father's name ([John 17:6](#)). The Old Testament Jew knew his God as "Jehovah," the great I AM ([Ex. 3:11-14](#)). Jesus took this sacred name "I AM" and made it meaningful to His disciples: "I am the Bread of Life" ([John 6:35](#)); "I am the Light of the world" ([John 8:12](#)); "I am the Good Shepherd" ([John 10:11](#)); etc. In other words, Jesus revealed the Father's gracious name by showing His disciples that He was everything they needed.

- A Believer is: HUNGERING FOR JESUS AS MY BREAD OF LIFE. "I AM the Bread of life" (6: 35,41,48,51).
- A Believer is: WALKING WITH JESUS WHO LIGHTS MY PATH OF LIFE. "I AM the Light of the world" (8:12).
- A Believer is: ENTERING THROUGH JESUS WHO IS MY DOOR TO LIFE. "I AM the Door of the sheep" (10:7,9).
- A Believer is: stayING with THE GOOD SHEPHERD WHO IS THE SAVIOR OF MY LIFE. "I AM the Good Shepherd" (10:11,14).
- A Believer is: RESTING IN JESUS WHOSE RESURRECTION GAVE ME ENDLESS LIFE. "I AM the Resurrection and the Life" (11:25).
- A Believer is: FOLLOWING THE WAY OF JESUS, BELIEVING THE TRUTH OF JESUS, AND LIVING THE LIFE OF JESUS. "I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (14:6).
- A Believer is: ABIDING IN JESUS WHO IS MY SUPPLY OF ALL I EVER NEED. "I AM the true Vine" (15:1,5). Psalm 92

1. I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE (6:35) - He FEEDS OUR STARVING SOULS, but apart from Him is only unsatisfied hunger. The internal gnawing pain that hunger brings is the illustration of our condition apart from Christ. He alone feeds our soul and satisfies our hungers, all else is emptiness, hopelessness and empty mirages. *Jesus said I am your food that satisfies, I am the Bread you need. I have settled the longings of your soul, I can satisfy all the hungers of your life. What do you really hunger for?*

2. I AM THE LIGHT OF WORLD (8:12) - He LIGHTS OUR DARKENED SOULS, but apart from Him is only impenetrable darkness. *Jesus said I am the Light, I have settled the darkness of fear, the darkness of death, the darkness of dying, it is all settled by Me!*

3. I AM THE DOOR OF life to my SHEEP (10:7,9) - He INVITES us lost sheep back into God's Family, but apart from Him is only hopeless exclusion. *Jesus said I am the Door of Life, all your security and access needs are settled, by Me! In the ancient world there were sheep folds built of stones or made from caves, dotting the hills and valleys of Israel. The door was made so that the shepherd himself would lay down at night and become the door so that no sheep could wander out without stumbling over him and no predator could slip in without stirring him. So Jesus says I keep you safe from harm and secure from wandering away from my salvation!*

4. I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD (10:11) - He LEADS US HOME, but apart from Him is only aimless wandering. *Jesus said I am the Good Shepherd who died, I have settled the issue of the unknown. I am your companion through life and death. Jesus gives us the perfect example of how to live and how to die!*

5. I AM THE RESURRECTION AND LIFE (11:25) - He pours upon US endless LIFE, but apart from Him is only endless dying. *Jesus says I am the Resurrection, I am the Life. I have settled the issue of Hope, you can count on me, hope in me all through life and into death!*

6. I AM THE WAY, TRUTH & LIFE (14:6) - He secures us in the way of endless life, but apart from Him is only endless lostness. *Jesus said I am the way, I have settled the issue of your home. I am making it, your very own room, and the minute that it is ready I am coming to get you!*

7. I AM THE TRUE VINE (15:1) - He NURTURES us through life, apart from Him is only continual withering. *Jesus says I am the Vine, your source of life and health. The state of your health is all in my hands. I will provide for you living grace, enduring declining life grace, and dying grace. Each just when you need them! If the vine speaks of all of life as one growing season, then we should get more fruit filled the older we get (ala Psalm 92), if it is many seasons then life is a succession of growing /pruning /bearing /resting and then growing/pruning...*

Now this morning, meet Jesus who is the great I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE!

Jesus Feeds the Multitude (John 6:1-14)

The problem, of course, was how to meet the needs of such a vast crowd of people. Four solutions were proposed.

First, the disciples suggested that Jesus send the people away ([Mark 6:35-36](#)). Get rid of the problem (see [Matt. 15:23](#)). But Jesus knew that the hungry people would faint on the way if somebody did not feed them. It was evening ([Matt. 14:15](#)), and that was no time for travel.

The second solution came from Philip in response to our Lord's "test question" ([John 6:5](#)): raise enough money to buy food for the people. Philip "counted the cost" and decided they would need the equivalent of 200 days' wages! And even that would not provide bread enough to satisfy the hunger of all the men, women, and children ([Matt. 14:21](#)). Too often, we think that money is the answer to every need. Of course, Jesus was simply testing the strength of Philip's faith.

The third solution came from Andrew, but he was not quite sure how the problem would be solved. He found a little boy who had a small lunch: two little fish and five barley cakes. Once again, Andrew is busy bringing somebody to Jesus (see [John 1:40-42](#); [12:20-22](#)). We do not know how Andrew met this lad, but we are glad he did! Though Andrew does not have a prominent place in the Gospels, he was apparently a "people person" who helped solve problems.

The fourth solution came from our Lord, and it was the true solution. He took the little boy's lunch, blessed it, handed it out to His disciples, and they fed the whole crowd! The miracle took place in the hands of the Saviour, not in the hands of the disciples. He multiplied the food; they only had the joyful privilege of passing it out. Not only were the people fed and satisfied, but the disciples salvaged twelve baskets of fragments for future use. The Lord wasted nothing.

The practical lesson is clear: whenever there is a need, give all that you have to Jesus and let Him do the rest. The question is not what can I do with the lunch, but what can God do with the lunch! Begin with what you have, but be sure you give it all to Him. That little lad is to be commended for sharing his lunch with Christ, and his mother is to be commended for giving him something to give to Jesus. The gift of that

little snack meant as much to Jesus as the pouring out of the expensive ointment (John 12:1ff).

But did Jesus really perform a miracle? Perhaps the generosity of the boy only embarrassed the other people so that they brought out their hidden lunches and shared them all around. Nonsense! Jesus knows the hearts of men (John 2:24; 6:61, 64, 70) and He declared that the people were hungry. Surely He would have known of the existence of hidden food! Furthermore, the people themselves declared that this was a miracle and even wanted to crown Him King! (John 6:14-16) Had this event been only the result of mass psychology, the crowd would not have responded that way. John would never have selected this as one of the "signs" if it were not an authentic miracle.

It is significant that twice John mentioned the fact that Jesus gave thanks (John 6:11, 23). Matthew, Mark, and Luke all state that Jesus looked up to heaven when He gave thanks. By that act, He reminded the hungry people that God is the source of all good and needful gifts. This is a good lesson for us: instead of complaining about what we do not have, we should give thanks to God for what we do have, and He will make it go farther. [5]

How like many of God's people today. For some reason, it is never the right time or place for God to work. Jesus watched His frustrated disciples as they tried to solve the problem, but "He Himself knew what He was intending to do" (John 6:6, nasb). He wanted to teach them a lesson in faith and surrender. Note the steps we must take in solving life's problems.

- **Start with what you have.** Andrew found a lad who had a small lunch, and he brought the lad to Jesus. Was the boy willing to give up his lunch? Yes, he was! God begins where we are and uses what we have.
- **Give what you have to Jesus.** Jesus took the simple lunch, blessed it, and shared it. The miracle of multiplication was in His hands! "Little is much if God is in it." Jesus broke the bread and gave the pieces to the disciples, and they, in turn, fed the multitudes.
- **Obey what He commands.** The disciples had the people sit down as Jesus ordered. They took the broken pieces and distributed them, and discovered that there was plenty for everybody. As His servants, we are "distributors," not "manufacturers." If we give what we have to Him, He will bless it and give it back to us for use in feeding others.
- **Conserve the results.** There were twelve baskets filled with pieces of bread and fish after the people had eaten all they wanted. But these pieces were carefully collected so that nothing was wasted (Mark 6:43; John 6:12). I wonder how many of the pieces the lad took back home with him? Imagine his mother's amazement when the boy told her the story!

The Apostle John recorded a sermon on "the Bread of life" that Jesus gave the next day in the synagogue in Capernaum (John 6:22ff). The people were willing to receive the physical bread, but they would not receive the living Bread—the Son of God come down from heaven. The miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 was actually a sermon in action. Jesus is the Bread of Life, and only He can satisfy the spiritual hunger in man's heart. The tragedy is, men waste their time and money on "that which is not bread" (Isa. 55:1-7). People today are making the same mistake.

Jesus still has compassion on the hungry multitudes, and He still says to His church: "Give them something to eat." How easy it is for us to send people away, to make excuses, to plead a lack of resources. Jesus asks that we give Him all that we have and let Him use it as He sees fit. A hungry world is feeding on empty substitutes while we deprive them of the Bread of Life. When we give Christ what we have, we never lose. We always end up with more blessing than when we started. [6]

John 6 makes it clear that the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 was a sermon in action. Christ, through His Word, is the Bread of Life on whom we feed. It is the privilege—and responsibility—of His servants to give this bread to the hungry multitudes. The servants receive that bread personally from Christ, then pass it on to others.

There are other lessons from this miracle:

- (1) Christ can take our little and make it much.
- (2) Whatever He blesses, He breaks. Are we willing to be broken?
- (3) People today are in the wilderness of sin (v. 15) and need Christ.
- (4) Christ can overcome every difficulty and feed the multitudes. The disciples had many excuses—not enough money, the wrong place, the wrong time—but Christ took what they had and met the need. He will do this today! [7]

And He said, "Bring them here to Me." And ordering the multitudes to recline 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 to the multitudes, and they all ate, and were satisfied. And they picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve full baskets. And there were about five thousand men who ate, aside from women and children. (14:18-21)

Here is the primary focus of the story, in which the disciples' dullness of perspective is overruled by Jesus' display of power.

No doubt with sadness in His eyes, Jesus said, "Bring them here to Me," referring to the loaves and fish. He had to tell the disciples to do what, by this time, should have been second nature to them. He was saying, in effect, "I knew that you did not have sufficient food or money to feed the people, and I knew that you had no way of getting it. I never expected you to feed them from your own resources or by your own power. In asking you to feed them I was asking you to trust Me. Without having to tell you, I was giving you the opportunity to bring to Me what little you had and trust Me for the rest."

The northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee is often beautiful and green with grass in the spring of the year. But instead of sitting, the people had been standing up in order to see and hear and Jesus better. He therefore ordered **the multitudes to recline on the grass**, to make themselves more comfortable and to make distribution of the food easier. He sat them *iaisarp iaisarp* (which literally means "garden bed by garden bed"), in **groups of hundreds and fifties** (Mark 6:40), allowing paths between the groups for the disciples to walk while serving. In their brightly-colored garments the crowd must have resembled an enormous mosaic of flower beds or a gigantic quilt spread across the hillside.

The people probably had little if any idea why they were so carefully seated in groups. The disciples may have guessed why, but they still did not know how. When the people were seated, Jesus **took the five loaves and the two fish**: but before He performed the miracle He had planned all along, **looking up toward heaven, He blessed the food**, giving thanks to His heavenly Father (John 6:6, 11; cf. 1 Tim. 4:3-5).

Then the Lord broke **the loaves and gave them to the disciples**, who, in turn, **gave to the multitudes, and they all ate**. We are not told exactly at what moment the miracle took place. Apparently it was a continuous multiplication that occurred as the disciples walked among the groups distributing the food. The men could not possibly have carried containers large enough to hold all the food, even with it divided into twelve parts. There was no fanfare and no dramatic change from little to much. The miracle was all but invisible, its magnitude being evident only as the thousands of people **all ate**.

(*μoζatpoh* to be **satisfied**) was used of animals who stayed at the feed trough until they wanted nothing more to eat. Jesus uses the same term in the Beatitudes when He promises that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness "shall be satisfied" (Matt. 5:6). Because the multiplied barley **loaves and fish** were divinely created, the satisfaction the people experienced must have been like no other in their lives. This food was perfect, not tainted by the Fall and its consequent corruption of all the earth through sin.

There was more than enough food to satisfy the multitudes, and a considerable amount **was left over of the broken pieces, twelve full baskets**. After the food had been distributed among the groups, each disciple had a basket of food left for himself, out of which he could share with Jesus! In the great economy of God, there was neither too little nor too much.

As already noted, the fact that **there were about five thousand men who ate, aside from women and children**, indicates the total crowd could have been as large as twenty-five thousand. [8]

It is a notable fact that no miracle seems to have made such an impression on the disciples as this, because this is the only miracle of Jesus which is related in all four gospels. We have already seen how Mark's gospel really embodies the preaching material of Peter. To read this story, so simply and yet so dramatically told, is to read something that reads exactly like an eye-witness account. Let us note some of the vivid and realistic details.

They sat down on *the green grass*. It is as if Peter was seeing the whole thing in his mind's eye again. It so happens that this little descriptive phrase provides us with quite a lot of information. The only time when the grass would be green would be in the late springtime, in mid-April. So it is then that this miracle must have taken place. At that time the sun set at 6 p.m., so this must have happened some time in the late afternoon.

Mark tells us that they sat down in *sections* of a hundred and of fifty. The word used for *sections* (*iaisarp*) is a very pictorial word. It is the normal Greek word for the rows of vegetables in a vegetable garden. When you looked at the little groups, as they sat there in their orderly rows, they looked for all the world like the rows of vegetables in a series of garden plots.

At the end they took up *twelve basketsful* of fragments. No orthodox Jew travelled without his basket (*sonihpok*). The Romans made a jest of the Jew and his basket. There were two reasons for the basket which was a wicker-work affair shaped like a narrow-necked pitcher, broadening out as it went down. First, the very orthodox Jew carried his own food supplies in his basket, so that he would be certain of eating food that was ceremonially clean and pure. Second, many a Jew was an accomplished beggar, and into his basket went the proceeds of his begging. The reason that there were *twelve* baskets is simply that there were *twelve* disciples. It was into their own baskets that they frugally gathered up the fragments so that nothing would be lost.

The wonderful thing about this story is that all through it runs an implicit contrast between the attitude of Jesus and the attitude of the disciples.

(i) It shows us *two reactions to human need*. When the disciples saw how late it was, and how tired and hungry the crowd were, they said, "Send them away so that they can find something to eat." In effect they said, "These people are tired and hungry. Get rid of them and let someone else worry about them." Jesus said, "You give them something to eat." In effect Jesus said, "These people are tired and hungry. We must do something about it." There are always the people who are quite aware that others are in difficulty and trouble, but who wish to push the responsibility for doing something about it on to someone else; and there are always the people who when they see someone up against it feel compelled to do something about it themselves. There are those who say, "Let others worry." And there are those who say, "I must worry about my brother's need."

(ii) It shows us *two reactions to human resources*. When the disciples were asked to give the people something to eat, they insisted that ten pounds, or what the Authorized Version calls two hundred "pence" was not enough to buy bread for them. The word the Authorized Version translates *penny* is *denarius*. This was a Roman silver coin worth about 3½p. It was the standard day's wage of a working man. In effect the disciples were saying, "We could not earn enough in more than six

months' work to give this crowd a meal." They really meant "Anything we have got is no use at all."

Jesus said, "What have you got?" They had five loaves. These were not like English loaves: they were more like rolls. *John* (6:9) tells us they were barley loaves; and barley loaves were the food of the poorest of the poor. Barley bread was the cheapest and the coarsest of all bread. They had two fishes, which would be about the size of sardines. Tarichaea—which means the salt-fish town—was a well known place on the lake from which salt-fish went out to all over the world. The little salt-fishes were eaten as relish with the dry rolls.

It did not seem much. But Jesus took it and worked wonders with it. In the hands of Jesus little is always much. We may think that we have little of talent or substance to give to Jesus. That is no reason for a hopeless pessimism such as the disciples had. The one fatal thing to say is, "For all I could do, it is not worth my while trying to do anything." If we put ourselves into the hands of Jesus Christ, there is no telling what he can do with us and through us. [9]

The Feeding of the 5,000

Mark 6:30-44

Having preached now for a considerable number of years, and having preached on many of Christ's miracles, I have come to see that the miracles themselves were not only divinely directed, but also the surrounding details. Thus, the setting of the miracles, the participants, and the manner in which the miracles were performed consistently pointed to a greater spiritual revelation than is apparent at first sight.

This is certainly true in the case of the feeding of the 5,000. It teaches far more than Jesus' power, for it presents him as a second Moses who brings salvation to his people. We see this for several reasons.

- The location of the miracles before a great crowd in a "solitary place" (literally, "a desert place") was parallel to the wilderness in which Moses performed his miracles.
- Jesus' proclaiming himself the Bread of Heaven corresponded to the manna.
- The orderliness of the people in seated regimentation before receiving the bread was reminiscent of the Mosaic camp in the wilderness.
- The provision of food by Jesus symbolized what it symbolized with Moses—God's saving grace in rescuing his people from bondage.

This great miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 teaches us how the second Moses, being far greater than Moses, meets the needs of his people and indeed the whole world.

As the situation developed, there was nothing unusual to suggest that something so remarkable would take place that it would be talked and sung about in the coming centuries. It began with some harried disciples. Verses 30 to 32 tell us:

The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

The Twelve had just returned from their special preaching and healing missions, which may have been terminated by news of the death of John the Baptist. Whatever the case, they reported to Jesus the remarkable results. It appears the report did not last too long because they were wonderfully "peopled-to-death" by those who had seen their great ministry. They did not even have time for a snack! This was wonderful, but draining on the tired men. Ministry/church life can be like that!

Mary had a little lamb,

'Twas given her to keep,

But then it joined the local Church,

And died for lack of sleep!

They needed a time away. So Jesus suggested that they retreat to the other side of the lake. Luke tells us that they withdrew to Bethsaida (9:10), near where the Jordan empties into the Sea of Galilee—a solitary, deserted place. There they were going to be refreshed, but not as they expected. It was about four miles direct sailing and about eight miles by foot to that site. When the people saw the familiar sail headed toward Bethsaida, the young and strong began to charge north along the edge of the lake. Hundreds more from the lakeshore villages joined them, calling out to one another in excited gestures, so that finally thousands converged on Bethsaida in noisy, shoving expectation. Perhaps the winds were contrary or the sea was becalmed, thus allowing the crowd's arrival before Jesus and his men.

JESUS' COMPASSIONATE CARE FOR SEEKERS (v. 34)

When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd [perhaps 7,000 to 8,000 including women and children], he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

Here we see the first thing about how the second Moses meets the needs of those who come to him: with "compassion." This was an intense word which had at its root in the ancient Greek the meaning of *areciv* the stomach. The New Testament had this original sense, but added the idea of tender emotions—"tender mercy," sympathetic emotion. Jesus felt this in the pit of his stomach, so deep was his tender compassion. He saw the thousands as shepherdless sheep, defenseless, lost, unable even to feed themselves. "So he began teaching them many things." More exactly, he taught them at great length.

An old man whose son had been convicted of gross crimes in the army and sentenced to be shot came to plead with Lincoln. As the boy was an only son, the case appealed to Lincoln; but he had just received a telegram from Butler which read: "Mr. President, I beg you not to interfere with the court-martials of this army. You will destroy all discipline in the army."

Lincoln handed the old man the telegram, and he watched the shadow of disappointment and sorrow come over the man's face as he read the message.

He suddenly seized his hand and exclaimed, "By jingo! Butler or no Butler, here goes!"

He wrote out an order and handed it to the father. The man read the order, which was as follows: "Job Smith is not to be shot until further orders from me. Abraham Lincoln."

"Why," said the father, "I thought it was going to be a pardon. You may order him to be shot next week."

"My old friend," said Lincoln, "evidently you do not understand my character. If your son is never shot until an order comes from me, he will live to be as old as Methuselah."

Regardless of whether you are a believer or not, if you cannot imagine that Jesus has tender compassion for you, you simply do not know what he is like. Jesus "felt it," and may we reverently understand that though he is glorified he still does (Hebrews 4:15). **Nine times in the New Testament we read of Jesus having this deep compassion.** Sometimes it was when he saw someone ill, at other times because of the effects of sin. Jesus has merciful compassion toward you and toward the needy world, just as he did toward the 5,000. Jesus' deep-felt compassion propelled him among the people, and he labored long and intensely among them in self-forgetting ministry.

JESUS' OMNIPOTENT CARE FOR SEEKERS (vv. 35-41)

As Jesus ministered, the shadows drew up and then began to lengthen eastward. The disciples came to him with an idea:

By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." (vv. 35, 36)

It was spring, probably mid-April, and the sun set at **about 6:00** in Palestine at that time of year. So, perhaps it was **around 4:00** that the Twelve approached him with their suggestion. They were hungry, and so was the multitude. None, in their haste, had bothered to pack a meal. Thus it would certainly be best to disperse immediately. But Jesus had a better idea: "You give them something to eat" (v. 37a). The "You" is emphatic and imperative. What an astonishing command! They said to him, "That would take eight months of a man's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?" (v. 37b).

Their tone was disrespectful. This was a little "too much," even if he was the Master. Any bean-counter could see the foolishness of what was being propounded. Jesus pressed them further: "How many loaves do you have?" he asked. "Go and see." When they found out, they said, "Five—and two fish" (v. 38).

They had only five small barley cakes and two salted sardine-like fish! The impossibility of the situation was firmly established, and all in the apostolic band were witnesses. It is good to understand our limitations and weakness, because then there can be no mistake as to where the power comes from.

The second Moses then miraculously provided for his children in the wilderness:

Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. (vv. 39-41)

The seating. Jesus' direction that they all sit down in groups on the grass recalls the order of Moses' camp in the wilderness. Interestingly, the almost contemporaneous Qumran documents used these subdivisions to describe how it was thought true Israel would assemble in the desert in the Last Days. The word for "groups of hundreds and fifties" literally means "garden plot." This is a beautiful picture of clusters of colorfully clad people sitting in orderly groups like flower beds cut in a green lawn.

The blessing. Jesus was in their midst, and around him were the apostles. Jesus lifted his eyes to Heaven and gave the traditional blessing: "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the world who brings forth bread from the earth." This was followed by a 5,000-voiced "Amen."

The miracle of distribution. As Jesus "gave" (imperfect tense) to his disciples, the bread kept multiplying. The Twelve and their cohorts saw it all firsthand. Thousands upon thousands of broken cakes and tiny fish were given out as the apostles walked on the green turf among the seated thousands.

A God who can do that can do anything! Think about it: Jesus with a word multiplied the molecular structure of those humble barley cakes and pickled fish! It is this creation power that he brings to our lives. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Nothing is impossible physically or spiritually for Jesus Christ. No one is beyond his redemption. Christian, if you are willing, there is no moral flaw in your life which God cannot heal.

JESUS' COOPERATIVE CARE FOR SEEKERS (vv. 35-41)

John gave us further details regarding the five barley loaves and two fish in his account. Andrew announced, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish" (6:9). Andrew had been out checking with the "brown-baggers" and discovered a little boy whose mom had packed him a lunch *and was willing to give it to Christ!*

This gives us some grand insights into participating in God's program. First, we understand that God wants to use us to bring the Bread of Life to a needy world. He can do perfectly well without us if he chooses to do so. He did not need the little boy's bread. He did not need to use his disciples to distribute it. He could have done it all *ollihin xead had it float down to the group of fifties and hundreds on pink parachutes.* But wonder of wonder, he delights in including us in his work! "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Second, we learn from this that he can use a very small thing if it is committed to him. It has been said: "God must delight in using ordinary people with ordinary gifts because he made so many of us!"

Consider Gideon, an unknown young man from the "least" family in his tribe (his own word). But God only used this ordinary man after he taught him not to depend upon human power (Judges 7). In the New Testament Paul gave voice to the truth that God does not need the extraordinary when he said:

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.... For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:9, 10)

Paul also explained why God delights to use us in our ordinariness and weakness: "But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us" (2 Corinthians 4:7).

God uses common clay jars like us so that there will be no mistake as to where the power comes from. We so often think he wants and needs our strengths, and he does use them when they are committed to him. But what about our barley loaves, our ordinariness, our weaknesses? The truth is, these are harder to give to God. If you are eloquent, it is easy to say, "God, here is my eloquence. Take and use it." If you are a good business person, it is simple to say, "God, you can have my administrative ability." But it is another thing to give God your weaknesses. Elizabeth Elliot expresses the idea this way:

If the only thing you have to offer is a broken heart, you offer a broken heart. So in a time of grief, the recognition that this is material for sacrifice has been a very great strength for me. Realizing that nothing I have, nothing I am will be refused on the part of Christ I simply give it to Him as the little boy gave Jesus his five loaves and two fishes—with the same feeling of the disciples when they said, "What is the good of that for such a crowd?" Naturally in almost anything I offer to Christ, my reaction would be, "What is the good of that?" The point is, the use He makes of it is His blessing.

One final point: Jesus only worked when the loaves were put into his hands in willing consecration. We are only required to bring what we have. Will you give? This is the way the Bread of Life goes out to the world.

JESUS' COMPLETE CARE OF SEEKERS (vv. 42-44)

Needless to say, when Jesus fed the multitudes they were completely satisfied: "They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand."

His provision was complete, total, and satisfying. We are "the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way" (Ephesians 1:22, 23). "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ" (Colossians 2:9, 10). *That is satisfaction!*

We taste Thee, O Thou living Bread,

And long to feast upon Thee still;

We drink of Thee, the Fountainhead,

And thirst our souls from Thee to Fill.

(Bernard of Clairvaux)

John's account of this miracle says that "The Jewish Passover Feast was near" (6:4). In addition, the mention of "green grass" in Mark 6:39 verifies the season. Thus, many among the crowd were Passover pilgrims. It was just after Israel celebrated its first Passover in the Promised Land with Joshua that the miraculous manna ceased (Joshua 5:10-12). Now, just before Passover, the Lord miraculously supplied bread. These associations were certainly in Jesus' mind.

The vocabulary in this miracle passage had a purposeful resemblance with that used at the Lord's Table in Mark 14, where many virtually identical terms and phrases were used. John's account of the miracle was followed by Jesus walking on water

(6:16–24), and then Jesus' Bread of Life Discourse in which Jesus identified himself as the "Bread of life ... the bread that comes down from heaven" (6:25–53, especially vv. 48–50).

The feeding of the 5,000 was meant to instruct us as to the meaning of Communion.

- The cup and the bread tell us that Christ's life was given as an atonement for our sins. It is from his death and resurrection that we have life.
- But the feeding of the 5,000 also tells us that he truly feels for us with *compassionate mercy*:
- That he *omnipotently provides* for us through his creative power;
- That he *fully satisfies* us with his bread; and finally
- That he calls us to give what we have to him, that he might share the Bread of Life with the multitudes who are like sheep without a shepherd.

Love so amazing, so divine, demands my life, my all. [10]

This is a story which tells us many things.

- *Jesus was concerned that men were hungry.* It would be most interesting to work out how much time Jesus spent, not talking, but easing men's pain and satisfying their hunger. He still needs the service of men's hands. The mother who has spent a lifetime cooking meals for a hungry family; the nurse, the doctor, the friend, relation or parent, who has sacrificed life and time to ease another's pain; the social reformer who has burned himself out to seek better conditions for men and women—they have all preached far more effective sermons than the eloquent orator.
- *Jesus' help was generous.* There was enough, and more than enough. In love there is no nice calculation of the less and more. God is like that. When we sow a packet of seeds we usually have to thin the plants out and throw away far more than we can keep. God has created a world where there is more than enough for all if men will share it.
- As always there is permanent truth in an action in time. *In Jesus all men's needs are supplied.* There is a hunger of the soul; there is in every man, sometimes at least, a longing to find something in which he may invest his life. Our hearts are restless until they rest in him. "My God will supply every need of yours," said Paul ([Philippians 4:19](#))—even in the desert places of this life. [11]

The Bread of Life

[John 6:35–40](#)

Jesus said to them: "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never hunger, and he who believes in me will never thirst any more. But I tell you, though you have seen me, yet you do not believe in me. All that the Father gives me will come to me, because I came down from heaven, not to do my will, but to do the will of him who sent me. This is the will of him who sent me—that I should lose none of those he gave to me, but that I should raise them all up on the last day. This is the will of my Father, that everyone who believes on the Son, when he sees him, should have everlasting life. And I will raise him up on the last day."

This is one of the great passages of the Fourth Gospel, and indeed of the New Testament. In it there are two great lines of thought that we must try to analyse.

First, what did Jesus mean when he said: "I am the bread of life"? It is not enough to regard this as simply a beautiful and poetical phrase. Let us analyse it step by step.

1. Bread sustains life. It is that without which life cannot go on.
2. But what is life? Clearly by life is meant something far more than mere physical existence. What is this new spiritual meaning of life?
3. Real life is the new relationship with God, that relationship of trust and obedience and love of which we have already thought.
4. That relationship is made possible only by Jesus Christ. Apart from him no one can enter into it.
5. That is to say, without Jesus there may be existence, but not life.
6. Therefore, if Jesus is the essential of life, he may be described as the bread of life. The hunger of the human situation is ended when we know Christ and through him know God. The restless soul is at rest; the hungry heart is satisfied.

Second, this passage opens out to us **the stages of the Christian life.**

1. We see Jesus. We see him in the pages of the New Testament, in the teaching of the church, sometimes even face to face.
2. Having seen him, we come to him. We regard him not as some distant hero and pattern, not as a figure in a book, but as someone accessible.
3. We believe in him. That is to say, we accept him as the final authority on God, on man, on life. That means that our coming is not a matter of mere interest, nor a meeting on equal terms; it is essentially a submission.
4. This process gives us life. That is to say, it puts us into a new and lovely relationship with God, wherein he becomes an intimate friend; we are now at home with the one whom we feared or never knew.
5. The possibility of this is free and universal. The invitation is to all men. The bread of life is ours for the taking.
6. The only way to that new relationship is through Jesus. Without him it never would

have been possible; and apart from him it is still impossible. No searching of the human mind or longing of the human heart can fully find God apart from Jesus.

7. At the back of the whole process is God. It is those whom God has given him who come to Christ. God not only provides the goal; he moves in the human heart to awaken desire for him; and he works in the human heart to take away the rebellion and the pride which would hinder the great submission. We could never even have sought him unless he had already found us.

8. There remains that stubborn something which enables us to refuse the offer of God. In the last analysis, the one thing which defeats God is the defiance of the human heart. Life is there for the taking—or the refusing.

When we take, two things happen.

- First, into life enters new satisfaction. The hunger and the thirst are gone. The human heart finds what it was searching for and life ceases to be mere existence and becomes a thing at once of thrill and of peace.
- Second, even beyond life we are safe. Even on the last day when all things end we are still secure. As a great commentator said: "Christ brings us to the haven beyond which there is no danger."

The offer of Christ is life in time and life in eternity. That is the greatness and glory of which we cheat ourselves when we refuse his invitation. [12]

extent, that the boundary line separating it from the Divine Personality is of the narrowest, so that, when the conviction of the reality of the Messianic manifestation in Jesus burst on their minds, this boundary-line was easily, almost naturally overstepped, and those who would have shrunk from forming their belief in such dogmatic form readily owned and worshiped Him as the Son of God" (Edersheim, *Life and Times*).

Essentially, the people were faced with a transition from the obscurity of traditional rabbinical teaching to the clarity of the divine Messiah concept, which was the central theme of true biblical Judaism. In the clearest possible terms, people were called upon to make their decision about the Godhood of Jesus Christ. We can now understand that the miracle was simply a window through which those who had eaten would view and decide about that true Bread "come down from heaven." [13]

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