

Feeding the Five Thousand – The Power Over Quantity

John 6:1-14

Introduction

1. In **John 6**, Jesus performs what is the fourth recorded miracle of John's gospel where He feeds over 5,000 with only 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish.
 2. This famous miracle clearly shows the divinity of Jesus, along with His great compassion for people.
 3. It shows us that He has the power over quantity – that mere numbers do not limit Jesus, and His capacity for the world's needs is inexhaustible.
 4. The Christian should come to Jesus in faith, with full confidence that whatever we truly need, He can supply in abundance.
- I. The Miracle
- A. The Circumstances **(vv. 1-4)**
 - a. In John's gospel, this is recorded directly after Jesus made claims and argued via witnesses for His equality with God – including His miracles.
 - b. **(v. 2)** – multitude following because of miraculous signs.
 - i. There was something about Jesus that struck them different.
 - c. **Luke 9:11** – Jesus was teaching and healing.
 - d. **Mark 6:34** – does not mention healing but links His compassion to teaching them.
 - e. As Jesus will indicate on the following day, His greatest concern is the spiritual, as theirs should be.
 - B. The Test **(vv. 5-6)**
 - a. Test – this was with a positive view toward growing faith.
 - i. Jesus knew Philip and the others and knew the way they'd think.
 - ii. **(v. 10)** – about 5,000 – He knew that would pose a dilemma in their mind.
 - iii. He knew they'd think through it physically, and struggle to find the solution themselves.
 - iv. He was setting them up for this miracle to have its intended effect.
 - b. Jesus knew what He would do.
 - C. The Deficiency **(vv. 7-9)**
 - a. **(v. 7)** – not enough money.
 - b. **(vv. 8-9)** – not enough food.
 - c. As they sought to solve the puzzle, they found a deficiency among themselves.
 - d. Synoptics – ***“Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.” (Matthew 14:15)***
 - i. So many cannot be provided for by so few.
 - ii. However, if you tell them to fend for themselves, there will be no problem.

iii. **NOTE: Jesus' purpose – to supply or all; man's problem – can't even help himself, let alone others.**

D. The Provision **(vv. 10-11)**

- a. The account reads as oversimplified, but how can the unexplainable be articulated by John?
- b. **"about five thousand...as much as they wanted"** – this doesn't add up.

E. The Abundance **(vv. 12-13)**

- a. Not only did they have as much as they wanted, but there was an abundance remaining.
- b. This paints a picture relating to the nature of each and every miracle Jesus performed solving a problem – it was never barely, or an accidental success – the healing, etc. was always complete, and the power unexhausted.
- c. He does not draw from a reserve of power, or resources, but is Himself the very fountainhead of it all.

F. The Reaction **(vv. 14-15)**

- a. **(v. 14)** – The people gathered from the event that it signified He was the Messianic figure spoken of by Moses – **"The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear" (Deuteronomy 18:15).**
- b. **(v. 15)** – the effect on them was so strong, they sought to make Him king.
- c. Jesus later identifies their convictions as shallow by implication – they came from certain erroneous presuppositions, and their sincerity would be tested with the truth.

II. The Power Over Quantity

A. Physical – "all these things shall be added to you."

- a. The miracle:
 - i. Though it seems what attracted the crowd to Jesus at the first was His ability to heal, Mark and Luke record that Jesus taught them – **Mark 6:34; Luke 9:11**
 - ii. The synoptics record that this combination of Jesus' healing and teaching cut into the time when all would normally eat – **Matthew 14:15**
 - iii. Then Jesus provided them what they lacked after they had engaged in spiritual focus – as He had previously promised all disciples.

b. **The Principle of Provision for the Pious**

- i. Jesus' encouraged focus – **Matthew 6:33**
 - 1. It's sad and ironic how often people miss Jesus' point.
 - 2. This is not physical incentive to focus on the spiritual – whether for abundance, or simple necessities.
 - 3. This begins and ends with the spiritual – such is a promise of Jesus to ensure those with spiritual focus can and will maintain that focus.

- ii. What they should want more than anything is heavenly/spiritual – **(vv. 19-21)** – but this does not erase physical needs.
 - iii. What they should focus on exclusively is the spiritual – **(vv. 22-23)** – but this does not erase physical needs.
 - iv. Who they should serve fully and exclusively is God – **(v. 24)** – but this does not erase physical needs.
 - v. **Verses 19-24** calls disciples to an extreme focus on the spiritual that would most certainly lead to the neglect of the physical, at least by prior standards – but do not worry – **(vv. 25-34)**
 1. A key difference to their life – **“heavenly Father” (vv. 26, 32), “God” (v. 30)**, not **“Gentiles” (v. 32)** – drawing on the difference of their makeup, and focus), **“the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (v. 33)**.
 2. Our Lord placed us in this physical world to have spiritual focus with understanding that the physical would be a certain distraction.
 3. To ensure that the spiritual focus would be protected, Christ promises to provide for necessities as we are preoccupied with our service to Him.
 - a. **“after all these things the Gentiles seek”** – they are beneath our important focus.
 - b. **“your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things”** – He does not belittle these things, but keeps them in their proper place.
 4. **Others worry and frantically grasp for these things as though there was a shortage, but Christians calmly let them take a back seat to more important matters, knowing the Lord can provide out of His abundance.**
- c. How does Jesus do this?
 - i. Providence
 1. Just prior – **Matthew 5:45 (cf. Acts 14:17)** – in Lystra) – it is God’s creation, and He supplies abundantly through it.
 - a. Some have anxiety concerning the finite resources of this world – they should be caused to focus on the Infinite.
 - b. With Christ there is an abundance by virtue of His activity.
 2. **Psalm 50:7-15** – God is not supplied with anything, because He is the supplier – in abundance – we need Him.
 3. **Philippians 4:6-7** – when we give it to God, God can take care of it.
 4. There is an established order through which God provides for everyone, and He operates through it to make sure His

children are provided for – there is an abundance and will be no lack.

- ii. Not without our effort – **2 Thessalonians 3:10** – Jesus’ promises do not support idleness.
 - iii. Brethren – **James 2:14-17; 1 John 3:17-18** – Jesus conditions His people to have proactive faith which becomes a channel of His blessings.
- B. Spiritual – “He who comes to Me shall never hunger”
- a. Jesus had departed when they attempted to make Him king, but the next day they found Him. Jesus exposed their physical mindset – **John 6:26-27**
 - i. **(v. 26)** – suggests their eating and being filled was not primary in the event.
 - 1. **Sign** – *sēmeion* – “a pointer to aid perception or insight” (ALGNT); “of miracles and wonders by which God authenticates the men sent by him, or by which men prove that the cause they are pleading is God’s” (THAYER)
 - ii. **(v. 27)** – what the miracle signified is that (1) there is something greater than physical food (2) Jesus is the One who knows what it is and has it to offer.
 - 1. The miraculous multiplication from 5 loaves and 2 fish to fill 5,000 with 12 baskets of leftovers was merely a package containing something far greater.
 - 2. The miracle was a spiritual phenomenon, but they were preoccupied with the physical.
 - 3. This is like a child who plays with the box instead of the toy that came in it.
 - b. Jesus is both the giver of this spiritual food, and the spiritual food itself:
 - i. **John 6:27, 35** – He will give you, He is the bread of life.
 - ii. **John 6:45, 47** – involving spiritual teaching, and believing – a belief which the context requires to be more than mere assent.
 - iii. **John 6:51, 56** – Jesus is the bread that must be consumed – He will then abide in that one.
 - iv. **John 6:63, 68** – Jesus is speaking of His words.
 - v. Compare – **John 4:34** – as Jesus’ food was to do His Father’s will, Jesus is saying His will is the food He offers to those who would follow Him.
 - 1. Not just do what I say, but do what I do – **John 13:15, 17**
 - 2. Essentially, Jesus is saying that we must make Him a part of us – to the extent that He takes control (**cf. Galatians 2:20**) – such is the substance of spiritual life.
 - c. The spiritual food is in abundance:
 - i. What Jesus gives is in abundance – **Ephesians 1:3; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Luke 16:29; John 10:10**

- ii. **John 6:12** – abundant leftovers but gathered that **“nothing is lost.”**
 - 1. **Lost** – *apollymi* – to destroy.
 - 2. Same – (**vv. 27, 39**) – food which perishes vs one who eats the spiritual food never being lost (not perishing – **cf. John 3:16**).
 - 3. It overflows, but is not lost or wasted – **John 4:14; 7:38**
 - 4. It is something we constantly need more of, and is never exhausted – its abundance always supplies the need, no matter how great the need is, so the need is sufficiently met, and we ourselves will not be lost (**v. 39**).

Conclusion

- 1. Jesus is a single Man in history that can abundantly supply the needs of all human history because He is not just a man, but the Son of God, the Savior of the world.
- 2. This very miracle demonstrates that, while Jesus can and will provide for the physical in every way we need, where His children will not lack, it is the spiritual provision that He wants us to focus on.
- 3. Let us come to Jesus who can supply us with everything we ever needed, and more.