

The Feeding of the Five Thousand

Mark 6:30-44

April 28, 2013

Introduction

At this point in Jesus' ministry, Mark gives us a very familiar story, the feeding of the five thousand. It is the only miracle other than the resurrection to be mentioned by all of the gospel writers. The feeding of the five thousand is another power display from Jesus. Remember, He has healed the sick, calmed the storm, cast out demons, raised the dead. At this point of Jesus' ministry (which is the third Galilean tour, right before He goes north to Tyre and Sidon to focus on training His Twelve Disciples), people are very much aware of what Jesus has been doing. He has been traveling through the cities and villages of Galilee and preaching the kingdom of God, telling people to believe in Him and repent of their sins.

The feeding of the five thousand is the last public miracle that Jesus does in the Galilean area. Mark records in chapter 8 that He feeds the four thousand, but that is in the Decapolis region (east of Galilee, not of Galilee itself). The three gospels tell us that there are five thousand men, and Matthew adds that there are women and children present (but uncounted). If we are to estimate how many people that are there that day, we can estimate the number as between 25 and 30 thousand people. This is a huge crowd. To feed this massive amount of people requires massive quantities of food, and this is something that only the Creator can provide. And Jesus our Lord is the Creator in flesh!

John 1:3 *All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.*

Colossians 1:16-17 *For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.*

How important is this miracle? As mentioned before, this is the final miracle, in a very large and public setting, in Galilee. This is a turning point in Jesus' ministry because Matthew 15 says that He leaves Galilee to go to Tyre and Sidon and travels east of Galilee to minister in Judea in His last few months before crucifixion. It is through this miracle that we see the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ and the wonder of His person. Mark holds this scenery as a model that we can imitate Jesus' character.

2 Corinthians 3:18 *And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

Mark 6:30-44 *The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to Him all they had done and taught. ³¹Then, 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." ³²So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. ³³But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. ³⁴When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, He had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So He began teaching them many things. ³⁵By 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. ³⁶Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." ³⁷But He answered, "You give them something to eat." 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?" ³⁸"How many loaves do you have?" He asked. "Go and see." When they found out, they said, "Five-and two fish." ³⁹Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. ⁴¹Taking 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. ⁴²They all ate and were satisfied, ⁴³and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. ⁴⁴The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

Note: The feeding of the five thousand is found also in **Matthew 14:13-21**, **Luke 9:10-17**, and **John 6:1-15**.

I. The Background (30-32)

³⁰The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to Him all they had done and taught. ³¹Then, 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." ³²So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.

- **Mark 6:7-14**—Jesus delegates authority to Apostles and sends them out
 - Apostles were sent out to do ministry in the Galilean area
 - They were given power to:
 - Heal the sick
 - Cast out demons
 - Raise the dead
 - Mostly they were there to preach the message of the kingdom of God
 - Repent from sins
 - Believe in Jesus as the Messiah promised in Scripture
 - Gone for several weeks to several months (Gospels do not say how long)
 - They come back to give Jesus the report on what they have done
 - They were tired and hungry
- Secluded place
 - Jesus offers them rest and lead them to a secluded place

Luke 9:10b *Then He took them with Him*

- Jesus is the one leading them to a particular place

Luke 9:10c *and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida,*

- Bethsaida
 - Small town northeast corner of Sea of Galilee (map)
 - Small fishing village
 - Home to Peter, Andrew, Phillip, and Nathaniel

John 1:43-44 *The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, He said to him, "Follow Me." ⁴⁴Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida.*

- This town was very familiar with Jesus' teaching and power
- This was also a town that faced judgment of Christ because of its rejection of Him

Luke 10:13 *"Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.*

II. The Crowd (33-34)

³³But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. ³⁴When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, He had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So He began teaching them many things.

- Ran on foot
 - If Capernaum is where they met, then boat trip to Bethsaida is about 4 miles
 - On land, it is about 8 miles from Capernaum to Bethsaida
 - They were running to meet with Jesus
 - Why?

John 6:2 and a great crowd of people followed Him because they saw the miraculous signs He had performed on the sick.

- They were thrill-seekers, wanting to see Jesus perform miracles

Note: This is an aggressive crowd—they followed Jesus from all over the area to where He lands. They were only interested in the miracles that He performs, not His teaching. In fact, John 6 describes completely what happened the next day. The people wanted free breakfast and Jesus was not willing to give them. He tells them that they needed the bread of life—eat His flesh, not the physical bread. They reject His teaching, and many do not follow Him.

John further says that they were intending to take Jesus by force to make Him their king!

John 6:15 Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make Him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by Himself.

- He welcomed them

Luke 9:11 but the crowds learned about it and followed Him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.

- Why?
- He began to teach them the kingdom of God
- He was interested in them receiving spiritual truth
- Compassionate Savior (**34**)
 - He healed those who needed healing

Matthew 14:14 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, He had compassion on them and healed their sick.

- He experienced their pain
- He had compassion for their physical suffering and for their souls
- Sheep without shepherd
 - Sheep are dumb animals
 - If no shepherd, they will die
 - They cannot feed themselves
 - They cannot protect themselves

- If on their back, they are not able to turn over
- They cannot clean themselves
- This is how God sees us!
 - We have no teachers of the truth
 - We have no water
 - We have no bread

Note: Again, this complements beautifully with John 6 when Jesus tells the crowd that He is the bread of life and if they eat of Him, they will never hunger again. He is the Chief Shepherd who teaches us, feeds us, waters us with eternal life!

III. The Feeding (35-44)

³⁵By 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. ³⁶Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat."

- Disciples see the need
 - Late in day—Jesus had been teaching and healing all day
 - Desolate place—remote place—far from nearest city
 - Disciples were hungry themselves—they probably have not had much to eat in a while
- Common grace
 - Our Lord feeds them regardless if they were good or evil
 - Followers or rejecters—doesn't matter! He feeds them!

Matthew 5:45 *He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

³⁷But He answered, "You give them something to eat."

- You feed them
 - Our Lord basically asks the disciples to go ahead and feed them
 - Could they have done it? Miraculously provided for the people?
 - Why not? He delegated the power to them (cast out demons, heal the sick, raise the dead)
 - Consider Elijah

1 Kings 17:14 *For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD gives rain on the land.'*

- But for some reason they could not do it (Beyond their experience or too massive a problem)

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?"

- We cannot spend money

John 6:5-7 When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward Him, He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" ⁶He asked this only to test him, for He already had in mind what He was going to do. ⁷Philip answered Him, "Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!"

- Phillip says we have 200 denarii—8 months wage
- Not enough money
- Where can we buy this amount of food for everyone!

³⁸"How many loaves do you have?" He asked. "Go and see." When they found out, they said, "Five-and two fish."

- Loaves and Fish

John 6:8-9 Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, ⁹"Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"

- This is what they find—a boy's lunch
- 5 loaves—not Wonder bread loaf, but biscuit sized crackers or flat bread
- 2 fish—pickled fish, probably sardine sized or slightly bigger

Luke 9:13b They answered, "We have only five loaves of bread and two fish—unless we go and buy food for all this crowd."

³⁹Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties.

- Blessing

- They did as Jesus told them to do—command that had to be obeyed
- Think of it! 25 to 30 thousand people settling in orderly!
- Separate in 50s and 100s
- They sit on green grass (John says that this was nearing Passover, so this is early spring in Galilee—which would indicate that the grass is green at that time)

⁴¹Taking 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.

- Jesus thanks the Lord for providing the crowd with food
- He breaks bread and serves people and continues to serve
- He is creating new bread and new fish

⁴²They all ate and were satisfied,

- Leftovers

- Satisfied—*chortazo*

Revelation 19:21 The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the Rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged (*chortazo*) themselves on their flesh.

- They gorged the bread and fish until they stuffed themselves full!

⁴³and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. ⁴⁴The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

- When all finished—twelve baskets full
 - Baskets—*kophinos*—small baskets—enough for their meal for the next day!
 - This is the implication—Jesus perfectly created the quantity of fish and loaves and made enough for everybody + 12 meals to go for the Apostles!
 - This is staggering!
- The day after
 - This should be a spiritual awakening among the people, but this is not what happened

John 6:26 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for Me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill."

John 6:29-31 Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the One He has sent." ³⁰So they asked Him, "What miraculous sign then will You give that we may see it and believe You? What will You do?" ³¹Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

John 6:35-36 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me will never go hungry, and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty. ³⁶But as I told you, you have seen Me and still you do not believe."

John 6:41-42 At this the Jews began to grumble about Him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." ⁴²They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can He now say, 'I came down from heaven'?"

John 6:51-52 "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." ⁵²Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?"

John 6:60, 66 On hearing it, many of His disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" ⁶⁶From this time many of His disciples turned back and no longer followed Him.

John 6:67-69 "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. ⁶⁸Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹We believe and know that You are the Holy One of God."