

## Sunday Morning Message

June 26, 2022

*The Feeding of the Five Thousand*

*The Gospel According to John*

Text – John 6:1 - 21

Congregational Reading – John 6:1 - 14

### Introduction

As Christians, it is our responsibility to represent the Lord to the rest of the world. We are to shine the light of His gospel and be His ambassadors to a culture that is increasingly becoming less knowledgeable and less approving of God. Our job is to take what God gives us and to distribute it to the world around us.

Illustrate – The company my dad and uncle started are distributors. They receive various candy and nut products from around the world and distribute it to stores here in New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania.

God saved us and has given us His Word, and we are to take that Word and share it with others. God has also given us tangible resources, such as money, food, clothing, and shelter, which we also should be willing to give to (or at least share with) others who have those needs. The fascinating thing is that God can take the little that we sometimes have to give and multiply it so that it can do so much more than it would have done had we kept it for ourselves.

In our passage today from John Six, we read of a little boy who had a lunch basket, perhaps prepared for him by his mother, and gives it to the Lord so that He can multiply it and use it to feed many others. He really was just giving back to the Lord a portion of what the Lord had already given him since the Lord is one that supplies us with all our needs in the first place. The Lord initially gave the boy a little, and then the boy gave back to the Lord a portion of that which was given to Him. The Lord then took the little that was given back to Him by the boy and multiplied it and used it to be a blessing to many more people. This story illustrates exactly what you and I should be doing with what the Lord has given us.

The account of *the Feeding of the Five Thousand* is one of the most familiar stories in all the Bible. It is one of the few events that is covered in all four of the gospel accounts, so we have the advantage of studying this event from four different perspectives.

Notice in v. 1, we see the phrase, “after these things.” In chapter five, Jesus was in Jerusalem near the Pool of Bethesda when He healed the paralytic man. Here, is back in Galilee and it seems that He is headed back to Jerusalem for the Passover. So, a lot of time has passed from the event in chapter five to this event. Remember, John’s Gospel was not written to give us either an exhaustive or a chronological accounting of Jesus’ earthly ministry. John selects only a small portion of what Jesus did in the three-plus years that he followed the Lord on earth.

*“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” (John 20:30-31)*

The other gospel accounts fill in some of the gaps, but not all. In fact, in the period between John 5 and John 6, there are many things that take place that are recorded by the synoptic writers, Matthew, Mark, and Luke: events like the Sermon on the Mount, The Seashore Parables, the selecting and sending out of the twelve apostles, the healing of the centurion’s servant the raising of Jairus’ daughter, the casting out of a legion of devils in the demoniac of Gadara, and many, many more events.

For whatever reason, John leaves out many of these details, but he includes this story of the lad and his lunch that was used to feed a multitude of people.

### **I. The People (vs. 2 – 4)**

Word had gotten out about the Lord Jesus. Many people were just curious and wanted to see Him perform a miracle. Others had great needs that they were hoping Jesus could help them with. They had heard about, and some had seen the miracles that Jesus did, and they wanted to see more, so they followed Him. It was time to go back south and make the eighty-mile trek from Galilee to Jerusalem. As Jesus travelled, the crowds followed Him.

In our world, we also have multitudes of people, and many of them are confused, some are hurting, others are just curious. But they are interested in Jesus. They are searching for something. In my own life, for many years I was just doing my own thing, living my life, but then suddenly, I became interested in spiritual things. I know now that God, the Holy Spirit, was working on and in me. I needed something, but I wasn’t quite sure what it was. I became interested in God, in Jesus, and I began searching for the Truth.

There are many more people out there in our world that need Jesus, at some point, they may become interested and begin to search for the Truth about God. We need to be ready to receive and help these people whenever they come.

You may have come here today, and you need Jesus to meet your need. You need to hear from the Lord today. You need Jesus to do something miraculous in your life. Jesus is here, and He wants to help you with what you are dealing with.

## II. The Problem (vs. 5 – 7)

Multitudes of people are following Jesus, and logistically that becomes a big problem. There were perhaps twenty thousand people there in that remote area who needed food. How were they going to eat?

Illustrate – Alaska trip to Arctic Circle. It was a remote area. There wasn't enough food in that remote place to feed two hundred people, let alone twenty thousand.

Jesus poses the question to Philip, “where can we get food to feed all of these people?” The disciples want the people sent away so that they could get to a town and buy some food. Jesus tells the disciples that it was going to be their job to take care of this multitude.

### Practical Points

- People have needs.
- God wants to meet those needs.
- We are powerless to meet those needs on our own. Therefore, we hesitate to get involved – “send them away.” “Why weren't they better prepared?” “They should have packed more provisions.”
- We need to ask God and trust Him to provide the means to minister to the needs that are before us.

## III. The Provision (vs. 8 – 11)

There is a small boy there who is willing to give up his lunch of five barley loaves of bread, and two fishes. I suspect that there were others there as well who had some food but were unwilling to share it. I can understand that because sometimes when the need is so great, we feel that our little bit is not going to make enough of a difference to help the problem.

Illustrate – In our building program, I bet there are many who are hesitant to give the little that they can because that amount seems so small compared to the great need. Example – “I can give a hundred bucks toward the building, but that won’t even make a dent on the \$750,000.00 that we need. But what we don’t understand is that it is not our job to meet the need, it is our job only to simply do our part, to do what we can. It is God’s job to meet the need, and He meets the need by multiplying the little that we have to give. God does a lot with a little.

Jesus tells the disciples to organize the people in groups consisting of hundreds and fifties, and He first prays and blesses the meal that He is about to distribute.

Practical note – when we pray for a meal, we are thanking the Lord for His provision and asking Him to bless it for the nourishment of our bodies.

The Lord then breaks the bread and then distributes it to the disciples who then in turn distribute it to the multitude.

Illustrate – In the local church, the people individually give to the Lord, and then the Lord gives back to His servants more than what was given. The servants then distribute to the people what the Lord has given to them.

Note – the disciples were not to hold on to it. They were to distribute it.

#### **IV. The Product (vs. 12 – 14)**

The best part is that the people ended up with more than they started with. There were twelve baskets full of bread and fish left over. Who got it? I believe the little boy who gave it got a crazy return on his initial investment. Like the woman who gave her two mites, the boy didn’t have much to give, but he was willing to give it, and that little gift was multiplied and used greatly by the Lord to help others, and then was given back to the boy with a great return on his investment.

Practical Point – You cannot outgive God. He gives back to us far more than He takes from us.

#### **Illustrations**

J.L. Kraft, head of the Kraft Cheese Corporation, who had given approximately 25% of his enormous income to Christian causes for many years, said, "The only

investment I ever made which has paid consistently increasing dividends is the money I have given to the Lord."

J.D. Rockefeller said, "I never would have been able to tithe the first million dollars I ever made if I had not tithed my first salary, which was \$1.50 per week."

W.A. Criswell tells of an ambitious young man who told his pastor he'd promised God a tithe of his income. They prayed for God to bless his career. At that time, he was making \$40.00 per week and tithing \$4.00. In a few years his income increased, and he was tithing \$500.00 per week. He called on the pastor to see if he could be released from his tithing promise, it was too costly now. The pastor replied, "I don't see how you can be released from your promise, but we can ask God to reduce your income to \$40.00 a week, then you'd have no problem tithing \$4.00."

Captain Levy, a believer from Philadelphia, was once asked how he could give so much to the Lord's work and still possess great wealth. The captain replied, "Oh, as I shovel it out, He shovels it in, and the Lord has a bigger shovel."

A 16-year-old named William left home to seek his fortune. His earthly possessions were tied in a bundle carried in his hand. One day he met an elderly canal-boat captain who listened to his story that his family was too poor to keep him, and the only skill he had was making candles and soap.

The old captain knelt and prayed for the boy's future and afterward gave him some advice.

"William, someone will be the leading soap-maker in New York. It could be you. Be a good man, give your heart to Christ, pay the Lord all that belongs to Him, make an honest soap, give a full pound, and I'm certain you'll be a prosperous and rich man."

The 16-year-old who listened to godly counsel was William Colgate, who not only prospered beyond his wildest dreams but was able to give millions of dollars to the Lord's cause.

Our family believes in giving back to the Lord. Long ago, we made it a practice to tithe and give offerings to the Lord's work. And God has given back to us abundantly. He takes really good care of us.

## V. The Postscript (vs. 15 – 21)

The disciples were no doubt flying high from seeing the Lord do such an awesome miracle, but as they were sent out across the Sea of Galilee by the Lord, they began to experience yet another trial. Jesus stayed up on the mountain by Himself to pray. The disciples found themselves in the middle of a storm on the water, and they were afraid that they were going to capsize.

Marks gospel tells us:

*"And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them." (Mark 6:48)*

Jesus was up on a mountain. The disciples were in a boat in the middle of the sea. It was the fourth watch of the night, which is between 3 and 6 in the morning – it was very dark. Jesus saw them. He was watching.

And He is watching us as well. He sees the storms that we go through.

Jesus walked out on the water to where the disciples were. At first, they were afraid and didn't recognize Him, but soon He calmed the sea and assured them that He was there with them always.

I emphasize this, because we need to be reminded often, and even after the great victories in life – the mountaintop experiences where God does the miraculous – that new challenges are coming our way, and we need to learn to trust that Jesus already has the problem solved. He will always take care of us. He will always meet our need. He is with us "always." He will never leave us or forsake us. We can trust Him.

We can trust Him with our provisions as this little boy did.

We can trust Him with our problems as the disciples learned on the boat.

Are you trusting Him?