

The Feeding Of The Five Thousand

No. 237

Introduction.

- I. During the life of Jesus He performed many great and wonderful miracles. He healed the sick and afflicted, walked on water, and even raised the dead.
 - A. One of the most impressive miracles of Christ is the "The Feeding Of The Five Thousand." It is recorded in all four gospel accounts. It is the only miracle, with the exception of the resurrection, that is recorded in all four gospels. The fourfold repetition in the Gospels reveals that the inspired writers wanted to put special emphasis on this impressive miracle.
 - B. The inspired record states in the gospel of John. (Jn. 6:1-15).

1 After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias). 2 And a great multitude was following Him, because they were seeing the signs which He was performing on those who were sick. 3 And Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat with His disciples. 4 Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. 5 Jesus therefore lifting up His eyes, and seeing that a great multitude was coming to Him, said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, that these may eat?" 6 And this He was saying to test him; for He Himself knew what He was intending to do. 7 Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little." 8 One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, 9 "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?" 10 Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. 11 Jesus therefore took the loaves; and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted. 12 And when they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments that nothing may be lost." 13 And so they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves, which were left over by those who had eaten. 14 When therefore the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, "This is of a truth the Prophet who is to come into the world." 15 Jesus therefore perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force, to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.

- II. In this account of Jesus feeding the five thousand, there are several very important lessons for us to learn.

I. **Jesus Saw Problems As A Door Of Opportunity** - The first lesson we learn from this account is that Jesus saw problems as a door of opportunity. (Jn. 6:5).

A. Philip saw the great multitude of hungry people as a great problem. He could not see how they could be fed. There were too many people for the limited resources they had.

B. Jesus viewed the situation entirely differently. He viewed the situation not from an earthly perspective, but from a heavenly perspective. He viewed the problem as a door of opportunity.

C. **It is sad that we often view things from the wrong perspective.**

1. Perspective makes a big difference in the way we view life. Some look pessimistically at half-full glass and call it half-empty. Others look at the same glass and call it half-full. They look on every problem as an opportunity, as an open door.

2. **I once read a humorous story that illustrates the vast difference between an optimist and a pessimist.** There were two farmers. One was very negative. He was always down and gloomy. The other farmer was always happy and full of joy. The positive farmer would get up in the morning and say, "The sun is so bright, it is going to be a wonderful day." The negative farmer would say, "It is going to burn up the crops." Well, one day the positive farmer decided he was going to cheer the other guy up and prove to him that it was all right to be an optimist. He got a bird dog and trained his dog to do things no other dog on earth could do. He invites his farmer friend to a duck hunt so he could watch is wonder dog at work. They got in the boat and went and hid in a duck blind. The ducks flew over and they knocked several ducks out of the sky. Once the ducks hit the water the farmer told his dog, "Sick'em." That wonder-dog jumped out of the boat and walked on the water over to the ducks and picked them up and brought them back to the boat. That positive farmer looked at the negative farmer and said, "Well, what did you think of that?" The pessimistic farmer exclaimed, "Well, he must not be able to swim."

3. Some people are just that way. They are always negative. They see every thing as a problem rather than a challenge or opportunity.

4. One man wrote, "I remind you that every miracle began on a platform of a *problem*. I dare you to find a miracle that did not begin in a problem. If we could ever see that, we would have an entirely different attitude toward our problems. Problems are those situations engineered of God to bring us face to face with our deficiencies so we might view His sufficiency as our only alternative...We should learn to love our problems. Every problem is an opportunity to trust the lord and watch him step into circumstances to his glory...You HAVE A PROBLEM. GOOD!" (Jack Taylor, God's Miraculous Plan of Economy, pp. 86,87).

5. Chuck Swindoll writes, "We are all faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as impossible situations." (Three Steps Forward Two Steps Back, pg 74).

6. It is vital that we learn to view our problems as opportunities for God to use us for His glory. God can take our problems and turn them into blessings beyond our imagination.

II. **Thanksgiving** - The second lesson we learn from this account is that of thanksgiving.

A. Before the food was distributed to the hungry multitude, Christ gave thanks for it. Christ made it a practice to always thank God for His blessings.

B. The scriptures command us to give thanks for our blessings. (Psa. 100:4,5; Col.3:15; 1 Thess. 5:18).

1. Yes, we are to give thanks and when we thank God **let us not thank Him is abstract.** Often we use phrases such as “Thank you for all the spiritual and material blessings you have given us.”
2. This is scriptural, but it would be much better to enumerate the blessings of God and be more explicit in our prayers of thanksgiving.

C. Soon millions of Americans will celebrate Thanksgiving Day.

1. While the scriptures do not teach us to observe any special day of thanksgiving, it is proper for Christians to thank God Thanksgiving Day and every day throughout the year. And indeed we, as Christians, have much to be thankful for. God has blessed us with a Savior, with loved ones, food, clothing, warm homes, health, freedom and with hundreds of other blessings that we often take for granted.
2. **One cold winter day** a little boy and girl, with ragged out-grown coats, knocked a ladies’ door and asked: “Lady, got any old papers.?” Her first impulse was to send them away because she was busy cleaning house and preparing a delicious meal, but one look at their damp feet and sad eyes caused her to change her mind and invite them inside by the warm fire. She went to get the papers but her mind was not on the papers. She thought only of food to fortify those little bodies against the winter chill. She brought them the papers and a cup of hot chocolate and some bread and jam. She went back to the kitchen to check on her dinner while they were eating. When she returned to the living room the little girl held up the cup and saucer and said, “Lady, are you rich?” “Oh, my, no. Why do you ask?” The little girl replied, “Your cups match your saucers.” This woman said she had never thought of herself as rich until she met these poor little children who lived in a shack and had little to eat. Their visit led her to count her blessings. She had so many things that matched, also roast and brown gravy, bread and potatoes, a warm house and furniture, a good husband with a job. The lady said she did not remove their muddy prints from off the hearth that they might serve as a reminder of how richly blessed she was.
3. Perhaps if these children were to visit our homes it would cause us to be mor thankful. May each one of us count our blessings, name them one by one. It will surprise us what the Lord has done. It will fill us with grateful hearts.
4. Bob Wear has written these meaningful lines entitled, **“Be Ye Thankful.”**

THE OBSERVANCE of a special day devoted to thanksgiving surely helps to remind us to the manifold expressions of a benevolent heavenly Father. Our thanksgiving, however, must not be limited to this special day. In fact, each day should be “thanksgiving day.” LET US FIRST be thankful for a thankful heart. Then, as we count our blessings, we thank of our homes, our friends, our lives, the right to choose the work we do, our freedom of speech, freedom of the press and our religious freedom, and we are thankful. WE Are THANKFUL for our system of free enterprise and for our system of public education and for what these two institutions mean to our way of life. WE ARE THANKFUL for the Bible, for the God it reveals, for the Savior it presents and for the hope that it offers through Christ and the Christian way. THE LIST OF BLESSINGS is almost endless, and these are blessings for which we should be everlastingly and humbly grateful. Our degree of

effectiveness in living is closely related to the degree of thankfulness with which we live.

4. Someone has written these lines of thanksgiving.

In Everything Give Thanks For all that God in mercy sends - For health and children, home and friends; For comforts in the time of need, For every kindly word and deed, For happy talks and holy thoughts; For guidance in our daily walk - In everything give thanks!	For beauty in this world of ours, For verdant grass and lovely flowers, For songs of birds, for hum of bees, For the refreshing summer breeze, For hill and plain, for stream and wood, For the great ocean's mighty flood - In everything give thanks!	For the sweet sleep which comes with night, For the returned morning light, For the bright sun that shines on high, For the stars glittering in the sky - For these and everything we see, O Lord, our hearts we lift to Thee; In everything give thanks!
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II. **The Sin Of Waste** - A third lesson we learn from the feeding of the five thousand is the sin of waste.

A. Jesus said, "Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, that nothing be lost."

1. Jesus teaches us here that it is wrong to waste the blessings of God. This is a sin most of us are guilty of everyday.
2. Americans are the most blessed people materially on the face of the earth. We are better clothed and better fed and better housed than any other people on the face of the earth.
3. **American are also perhaps the most wasteful people on the earth.** The average American throws away more food and wastes more money foolishly than many people have to live on. Is it right to waste money and food foolishly while others are starving and doing without the bare essentials of life? Every day thousands starve to death and millions of others live on a poverty level which is almost unbelievable while we waste the blessings of God.

B. **Let's test ourselves to see if we are wasteful.**

1. Do we waste **food** by cooking more than needful or by putting more on our plates than we can eat?
2. Do we waste **electricity** by leaving the lights on all over the house when no one needs them?
3. Do we waste **water and gas**?
4. Do we waste **money** by buying many times as many clothes as we need?
5. Are our **closets filled with good used or unused clothes** that some less fortunate person needs to keep warm?
6. Are we wasting our **time and talents** by failing to study and train for greater usefulness in the kingdom?
7. I'm sure our answer to some or all of these questions is yes. Let's determine in our hearts to conserve the blessings of God that we may have more to share with the less fortunate in the world. (Eph. 4:28).

III. **Miraculous Power** - A fourth lesson we learn from this account is Jesus had great miraculous power.

A. John tells us that Jesus fed 5,000 men with the 5 barley loaves and 2 fish. Matthew makes it clear that Jesus fed many others on that day. He informs us that the 5,000 men did not include the women and children. (Matt. 14:21). It has been estimated that the number fed could have been 20,000. Jesus was able to feed this vast

multitude with this small amount of food. The Bible indicates they all ate and were satisfied. Not only did He feed this vast multitude with this small amount of food, but 12 basketfuls of bread were taken up afterwards showing that truly a miracle had been performed.

B. This miracle had great effect on the multitude. It convinced them that Jesus was “the prophet.” (Jn. 6:14).

1. In order to understand the significance of this fact, we need to go back to the book of Deuteronomy and read a great prophecy of Moses. (Deut. 18:15-18).

"The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him.16 "This is according to all that you asked of the Lord your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, lest I die.' 17 "And the Lord said to me, 'They have spoken well. 18 'I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

2. Moses prophesied that God would raise up a great prophet that would speak the words of God and must be obeyed.
3. John affirms that Christ’s miracle convinced the people that Jesus was that great prophet. The definite article “the” is quite significant here. The multitude did not think Jesus was “a” prophet, but “the prophet” (the Christ) who would reign over God’s people.
4. **This miracles should also have great effect upon us.** It should convince us that Jesus is the Christ, the Lord of lords and King of kings. (Jn. 20:30, 31).
5. Not only should this miracle produce faith in our hearts, but it should lead up to submit our lives to Jesus. Merely believing Jesus was the Son of God or that He could do great things is not enough. (Lk. 6:46; Heb. 5:9).

Conclusion.

I. Without question the feeding of the multitude proves Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. If you are convinced in your heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, we urge you to come and give your life to Him. Be buried with him in baptism and then live daily for Him.

II. Come now to Jesus. Come as we stand and sing.

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