



We live in a world of people with overwhelming needs. A world filled with people searching for something that helps make sense of it all. How do we respond to those needs around us?

Jesus interacted with all kinds of needy people during His earthly ministry. He could have used His miraculous power to levitate a boat or some other amazing display that would wow the crowds. Instead Jesus performed miracles that demonstrated His compassion for people in need. He healed the sick. He raised the dead. He turned water to wine in order to save a wedding host from embarrassment, and in our text today He created food to feed a hungry multitude.

It is of significance that Christ feeding the 5000 is the only miracle recorded in all four gospels (Mt. 14, Mk 6, Lk 9, Jn 6).

To keep us focused on why John includes this event in the Book of John, remember his purpose for writing this Gospel: That you might believe that Jesus is the Christ and that by believing you might have life through Him. (20:31). In Jn 14:11, Jesus said to His disciples, *"Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves."*

Jesus had received news of John the Baptist's execution (Mt. 14:12). Jesus and the disciples had been so busy in ministry that they did not even have time to eat, so Jesus wanted His disciples to get away and rest (Mk. 6:31).

They got into a small sailing vessel to travel up the Sea of Galilee (1). The crowds who had been following Him, seeing His miracles and receiving healing followed him, running along the roads that bordered the Sea (2).

So what can we learn from Jesus' ministry to the multitudes?

JESUS WAS MOTIVATED BY COMPASSION (2-7)

The genuine cause for concern

Jesus looked up and saw the people coming toward Him, and He saw past the inconvenience of ruined holiday plans - He saw their need (5).

1. They were lost, like sheep without a shepherd (Mk. 6:34). Like sheep who didn't know where to go wandering aimlessly with no direction in life.

Mark 6:32 - And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd.

2. They were sick. Jesus in compassion healed the sick among them and reminds us that spiritually all men are sick in "trespasses and sin". That spiritual sickness was why Jesus came in the first place.

Matthew 14:14 - And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick.

Isaiah 53:5 - But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

3. They were ignorant of truth. So many people today are without truth. They are lost and wandering, grasping for answers to the stresses and complexities of life.

Mk 6:34 - "He began to teach them many things."

Jesus was moved with compassion for these people (Mk. 6:32). Compassion is a visceral inner response that comes from "the seat of emotion" and moves us to intervene, to show care and concern. Compassion is "Your hurt in my heart."

The circumstance they were in.

1. It was a deserted place. This world is like that. It is an empty, unable to offer real satisfaction. Apart from Christ there is no satisfaction.

Mark 6:32 - So they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves.

2. They lacked their basic needs. They had nothing, they were not able to meet their own need.

Mark 6:35 - Send them away, that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat."

Because they had nothing the disciples reasoned that the crowd needed to go somewhere else to find satisfaction for their need. There is no indication that they once thought about Christ or His ability to meet the need!

People today are seeking to meet their own deep need through all kinds of means alcohol, sex, drugs, money, education, fame, power - the list can go on. The end of these options

3. The hour was late (Mk. 6:35) - The disciples concluded that the longer the people continued with Jesus the more hopeless their situation was becoming.

The human solution to the problem.

Ministry to the Multitudes: Feeding 5000

Get rid of the problem (Mk. 6:35-36)

Raise enough money to buy food (Jn. 6:9)

Their solutions were ones of unbelief (6:7). Philip spoke of providing “little” in the presence of the infinite power of God. He was occupied with the circumstances, the size of the crowd, the lack of resources, and the lateness of the hour. The situation is impossible!

But Christ had the situation already under control - *“He already know what he would do.”* (6)

There is an important lesson for us here: The trying circumstance you may be facing right now are not chance or accident but arranged by the hand of a loving God. It is through these circumstances that God will show you His greatness and His glory. He already has the problem solved.

Getting God’s perspective is everything! How often we look through our circumstances at God. He seems so small and distant! The disciples are about to learn that when you look at your circumstances through Christ, the impossibilities suddenly look very small.

JESUS REQUIRES WILLING SURRENDER (8-9)

He gave what he had (9)

The quiet hero in this story is the little nameless boy who gladly offered Jesus what He had (Mk. 6:38). Barley loaves was the food of the very poor! This little guy didn’t have much, but what he had he was happy to give to Jesus.

He gave all he had

Jesus accepted the loaves and fish (11). Our gifts may be small, our talents may be few, but in His hands they will be made sufficient to accomplish His purposes. Even 200 days wages worth of man’s wisdom and effort was insufficient without Him (7)!

God enjoys uses “little things.” He used David’s little sling to defeat the giant Goliath. God used the little tear of a baby to move the heart of Pharaoh’s daughter and prepare a leader for His people. God used Moses’ rod to work great miracles to deliver His people. God used jar of oil to supply a widow’s needs. The list could go on... Here is the point! God uses those the world considers foolish and weak and insignificant to fulfill His purposes:

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 - For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. 27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, 29 that no flesh should glory in His presence.

He gave willingly

He was willing to give what he had and trust Jesus! This quiet, simple, willing act is a great encouragement and challenge to us! Most of us have so much more to give compared to this young boy. What are we doing with our time, our talents our resources? Are we willingly and gladly and freely giving them up to Jesus?

THROUGH JESUS THE NEED IS ABUNDANTLY MET (10-14)

The command (10)

The command to sit down didn't make sense to the disciples. What was the use of having a hungry multitude sit down when there was nothing to feed them with?

Why must Adam & Eve not eat the fruit? Because God commanded them not to!

Why should Noah build a boat on dry land? Because God told him to!

Why should a Christian be baptized? Because God commands it!

Why should Christians be faithful to church? Because God says!

Why should husbands love wives? Because we are disobedient to God if we refuse!

The carrying out of God's purposes toward us are linked to our obedience to His commands.

As the disciples responded in obedience their faith was enlightened and every want of the multitude was supplied!

The provision (11-12)

Christ's provision was suitable - all could eat (11b). It was satisfying, they "were filled" (12a) and it was sufficient - "as much as they would (11c).

If they went away hungry it was not Christ's fault (13). There were twelve baskets of food left over.

In the atonement of Jesus the Son of God there is overwhelming provision for all. If you are not saved it is not because there is not enough for you! Believe and receive Jesus today!

And this is exactly where John is going in chapter 6! What began with a creation miracle of bread turns into a discussion where Jesus offers the multitudes Himself as spiritual bread.

The distributors (11)

Warren Wiersbe reminds us that the disciples were distributors not manufacturers.¹ Christ created the food, the disciples were responsible to give out the food and Jesus received all the glory.

These disciples were from different backgrounds, had very different personalities but the hungry multitude was fed by each one of them. It pleases Christ to use human instruments to accomplish His tasks! We are laborers together with God (1 Cor. 3:9).

¹ On Being A Servant of God, Wiersbe. Nelson Publishers, 1993. p5

CONCLUSION

In this miracle we see the compassion of Christ, using the willing surrender of the boy to meet the need of the multitude!

This miracle teaches us:

- To have compassion
- To look on problems as opportunities for God to work
- To give all we have
- To trust Him to meet the need

Jesus Christ is the Bread of Life to a perishing world! He must be passed on by His disciples. The multitudes in sin and indifference do not need to leave hungry! In Christ there is sufficient for all!