

“Feeding Five Thousand” (Part 2)

November 17, 2013

Text: John 6:12-15

**When man is in his right mind, he longs to hear from God,
because he does not like the feeling of being fatherless.**

Communication w/ God gives him the assurance that his
heavenly Father is there, that He listens, and that He
cares.

Before our forefather Adam sinned, he communed w/ God daily.

But sin so defiled his heart, that man came to love that which his

Heavenly Father abhorred, & evil unbelief separated him
from God, making communion w/ his Creator impossible.

Centuries passed, &, but for a few notable exceptions like

Enoch/Noah/Abraham, no one heard God’s voice.

God was silent & His silence should have brought dread to
man’s heart.

It seemed as if He had utterly forsaken mankind, leaving
this world to itself, & washing His hands of it.

Then in God’s grace, He made a covenant w/ 1 family, multiplied
that family into a nation, & set it apart for Himself.

He conferred on them the most gracious possible blessing,
by speaking to them, & revealing Himself to them.

He freed them from slavery in Egypt, & took them into a
wilderness, where they could commune w/ Him.

There God spoke to them from Mt. Sinai, and His voice came booming down like thunder from a pillar of cloud/fire atop the mountain.

And there they discovered that their sin had left them so spiritually weak/vulnerable to safely hear God's voice directly, so they cried out=> "*If we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer, then we will die*" (Deut 5:25).

Israel felt the need for a Mediator between them/God, because they couldn't endure the power of God's voice.

So they said to Moses=> "*Go near and hear all that the LORD our God says; then speak to us all that the LORD our God speaks to you, and we will hear and do it*" (Deut 5:27).

Moses would eventually die, & God would reveal His word/will to Israel, through other prophets.

But first, God promised Moses that, in a climactic act of mercy, He would someday send a special Prophet, a Prophet like Moses himself, by whom He would furnish Israel (& all mankind) w/ a full/final revelation of Himself, but one that would be gentle/harmless.

In Deut 18:18, God promised Moses=> "*I will raise up a prophet from among their [Israel's] countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them **all** that I command him.*"

In today's text, we'll hear some Galilean Jews acclaim Jesus, as that long-awaited Prophet like Moses—the One who would fully reveal to them the words/will/nature of God.

The setting of this historic acclamation will be the aftermath of Jesus' feeding the 5000, when He multiplied a few loaves of bread & 2 fish, brought to Him by a boy.

We began to examine that in last week's text, when the Apostle Andrew *discovered* this boy in the crowd; Jesus *directed* the multitude to sit down as the Apostles organized them into groups of 50/100; then Jesus multiplied the bread/fish, & *distributed* them through the Apostles, to all who were gathered there.

We also learned certain important insights/principles from this historical account of Jesus' feeding the 5000=>

1) Principles about Jesus Himself=> That the power displayed in this miracle showed Him to be the omnipotent Lord God—Creator of heaven/earth.

* Also that everything He did, & therefore everything we do, is to be done for the glory of God.

* And that our Lord is a God of order—not confusion.

2) A principle about the boy & his bread=> That Jesus can accomplish extraordinary feats thru common people/things when they are fully yielded/given-over to Him.

- 3) A principle about the multitude=> God sheds His grace indiscriminately on all kinds of people who don't deserve it, & who have nothing at all to offer Him by which to pay for it.
- 4) A principle about X's disciples—It is a great privilege to serve the Lord, because, as we do so, He does His work thru us, and the spiritual hunger of other people is fully assuaged/satisfied.

Today we'll consider the 2nd half of Jesus' feeding the 5000.

Having already mentioned the **discovery** of the boy, X's

direction of the crowd, & His **distribution** of the food;

John will now describe the disciples' **duty**, the crowd's **decision**,

and the Lord's **departure**.

*** The Disciple's Duty**

[**John 6:12**]=> *“When they [the multitude] were **filled**, He [Jesus] said to His disciples, ‘Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost.’”*

The fact that Jesus is a Source of infinite blessings, does not mean His people are free to waste those blessings.

Every scrap of bread/fish there, was the precious product of a direct act of divine creation.

It might be taken along as a snack to be eaten later on, or it might be saved as a souvenir of the occasion, but it wasn't to be left on the ground to be lost/destroyed.

So man has a duty (or responsibility) to preserve the things God has created for him—in this case, that included the bread/fish.

And when we are involved in ministry, we have a duty to use whatever is entrusted to us, responsibly.

When it comes to our own personal resources, we are free to splurge for the Lord, just as the woman did who broke the expensive alabaster box of nard perfume and poured it lavishly on Jesus' feet.

But when God's people entrust us with money or any other valuables, to be used in service to Him, we must use them w/ heightened care/caution/discretion.

John informs us that the people had been “filled”—satisfied.

Before Jesus fed them, they were famished, having been with Him all day, & having brought nothing to eat themselves. They were tired/hungry, & there was a good possibility they would faint from hunger on their way home. Jesus had alleviated the misery of that hunger, & had filled them to the point of satisfaction/comfort.

God created hunger so that every living creature on earth would always depend on Him for nourishment.

Mt 6:26=> *“Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow nor reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.”*

God feeds the birds!

* In the Sinai wilderness God fed His people manna day after day.

* Clear back in the Garden of Eden, God had told Adam=>

*“Behold, **I have given you** every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be **food** for you” (Gen 1:29).*

By God’s design, living creatures must have food to survive.

He didn’t have to create us like that, human metabolism and the 2nd law of thermodynamics notwithstanding.

But He provided a plethora of food in the garden.

Here He would always be able to demonstrate His faithful love for man by nurturing/satisfying him w/ food, gift after gift after gift.

Because of man’s sin, however, God cursed the ground from which our food supply grows.

That added hardship to man’s acquisition of the food he needs, and always left him just 1 famine away from starvation.

In Gen 3, after Adam sinned, God said to him=>

*“Cursed is the ground because of you; In **toil** you will **eat** of it All the days of your life. / Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; / By the **sweat of your face** You will **eat bread**” (Gen 3:17-19).*

But God promised that someday, thru His Servant, the Messiah, He would restore the earth, so that it would be as productive as the Garden of Eden had once been.

In Isaiah 51, He said=> *“The LORD will comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places. And her wilderness He will make like **Eden**, And her **desert** like the **garden** of the LORD; Joy and gladness will be found in her, Thanksgiving and sound of a melody”* (51:3).

When X fed the 5000, He was giving them a taste of the satisfying abundance that God’s people will someday enjoy in the Kingdom era, when no one will ever go hungry again=>

No man, no woman, & (contrary to this era) no child. Jesus *“filled”* them, because such filling brings joy/gladness to man’s heart, and that is something God has always desired for man—the satisfying of both his body & his soul.

Even in spite of the curse caused by man’s sin, Paul told the people of Lystra, that God=> *“did good and gave you rains from heaven & fruitful seasons, **satisfying** your **hearts** with **food** and gladness”* (Acts 14:17).

God desires for us to take the principle of physical hunger and to learn from it, that we also have a need for spiritual filling/wellbeing, which only He can supply.

Just as physical hunger is a good thing, in that it warns us, our bodies need food, spiritual hunger warns us we have an equally urgent need to fill/satisfy the spiritual emptiness w/i us.

That man doesn’t live by bread alone, but by everything that comes from the mouth of God.

And only God can provide that.

That makes spiritual hunger a good thing too—not a bad thing.

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount=> “**Blessed** [happy]

*are those who **hunger** and thirst for righteousness,
for they shall be **satisfied**” (Mt 5:6).*

Anyone who never experiences hunger can starve to death
w/o knowing it.

In fact, if we aren’t spiritually hungry, we should pray that
the Lord will give us that hunger.

**Recognizing their duty to protect from loss/destruction any
left over food X had created, the disciples gathered it all
up.**

[Verse 13]=> “*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.*”

**There must be some significance to the 12 basketfuls of food
left over after the 5000 had been fed, because this fact is
mentioned in every one of the Gospels.**

- * Some believe it represents the Lord’s provision for all 12 tribes
of Israel, since the word “*basket*” may somehow be
associated w/ the Jewish people.
- * Others say John was pointing out that, having distributed food
to the multitude, the 12 Apostles had additional provision,
not only for themselves, but also for continued ministry of
this sort to the people they met the next day.

* The most likely reason why these 12 basketsful of leftover food are mentioned, is to demonstrate the super-abundance of God's gracious provision for His people.

Jesus had not overestimated the amount of food needed.

He had over-created, just to show the Apostles His limitless creative power.

Here the miraculous abundance of food gave them all ample reason for trusting Him.

In Mt 16, Jesus chides His disciples for the weakness of their faith after watching Him feed thousands of people=>

*“You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread? / Do you not yet understand or remember the **five** loaves of the **five thousand**, and how many baskets full you picked up? / Or the **seven** loaves of the **four thousand**, and how many large baskets full you picked up? (Mt 16:8-10).*

This mention of 7 loaves, refers to a 2nd miraculous feeding, of 4000 people, later on.

Jesus' providential care, in His followers' lives, makes them responsible for trusting Him all the more, based on past evidence of His faithfulness.

* The Crowd's Decision

[Verse 14]=> *“Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, ‘This is truly **the Prophet** who is to come into the world.’”*

Having seen Jesus' miracle of feeding the 5000, the people who were there decided He might actually be the Messiah.

Their words, "*who is to come,*" were usually reserved for references to the Messiah.

But they had no doubt at all that He was at least the great Prophet, promised in Deut 18:15-18.

God had described for Moses several qualities of that Prophet=>

1) He'd be a Jewish man (*from among their countrymen*).

**2) He would be like Moses himself.

3) God would put His own words in the Prophet's mouth—implying this man would have close/unparalleled communion w/ the Lord.

I.e., he would be able to do for all mankind, what Moses had done for the nation of Israel—deal w/ the unutterable/unapproachable glory of God, to converse w/ Him, & then to declare His words to mankind.

It was that glory which had caused the Apostle John himself to write=> "*When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man*" (Rev 1:17).

Jesus was indeed, that Prophet like Moses, promised in Dt 18.

1st, like Moses He was a man—born in Bethlehem of flesh/blood.

He was not an angel, or just a thunderous voice out of heaven.

He took upon Himself our human weaknesses, and mingled
w/ common people—publicans/sinners.

He died w/ His arms outstretched—a vivid visual image of
His own words=> “*Come unto Me, all who are
weary and heavy laden*” (Mt 11:28).

If you have never rested your own faith in Jesus, His
arms are still stretched out, in welcome to you.

Heb 2:11 says, “*He is not ashamed to call [us] brethren,*”
as fellow humans who believe in Him.

Though now exalted in Heaven, He pleads for us still as a
man, our one/only Advocate, “*For there is one God,
and one mediator also between God and men, the
man Christ Jesus*” (I Tim 2:5).

2nd, Moses was given unprecedented access to the mind of God,
entering right into the very pillar of cloud/fire (Ex 24:18)
that manifested God’s presence, & remaining there for
40-days/40-nights.

He had closer communion w/ God than any other prophet.

In Num 12, God said=> “*If there is a **prophet** among you,
I, the LORD, shall make Myself known to him in a
vision. I shall speak with him in a dream. / Not so,
with My servant **Moses**, He is faithful in all My
household; / With him I speak **mouth to mouth**, Even
openly, and not in dark sayings, And he **beholds the
form of the LORD**” (12:6-8).*

Prob. no one (not even Adam) had ever had closer
communion with God than Moses.

Yet even Moses' extraordinary communion with God was surpassed by that of Jesus, because X is of the same divine essence as the Father, so He enjoyed constant/unbroken communication w/ Him.

Thus, Paul could write=> *"In Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form"* (Col 2:9).

And Jesus Himself could say to the Father=> *"I knew that You always hear Me"* (Jn 11:42).

3rd, because Jesus was a Prophet like Moses, & therefore loved His fellow men, He was willing to sacrifice His very life to save His people, but unwilling to go back to heaven w/o us.

In this too, He was like the prophet Moses, who said to

God=> *"If You will, forgive their [his people's] sin—and if not, please blot me out of Your book [take my life]"* (Ex 33:32).

When God's anger burned against the Israelites because they'd worshiped the golden calf, God threatened to destroy them, but Moses identified w/ Israel & pled w/ God to spare them.

God even offered to make Moses the inheritor of His covenant promise to Abraham, & the patriarch of new race that would have taken Israel's place as God's chosen people—but Moses declined the offer, out of his self-sacrificing love for Israel.

This involves the most significant characteristic X shared w/ Moses=> the fact that He's man's Mediator w/ God.

He speaks to man for God, as no other mediator (not even Moses) ever could, because He is the exact representation of God's nature, enabling man to see/understand God's glory (Heb 1:3).

Just as importantly, Jesus speaks to God for man, & it has cost Him dearly to be able to do so, but He does it out of His love for us.

Moses could say to Israel, "*The LORD was angry with me also on your account*" (Deut 1:37).

But not even Moses understood what it was to suffer God's wrath for man's sake, as Jesus did, who cried out from the cross=> "*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*" (Mk 15:34).

* **The Lord's Departure**

The people Jesus had just fed were thinking of Him as the great Prophet, and as the Messiah, but not the kind of Messiah-King Jesus intended to be—which brings us to=>

[Verse 15]=> "*So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, **withdrew** [departed] again to the mountain by Himself alone.*"

Passover time was approaching, & the Jewish people tended to become very excitable during the Passover season.

It was a time of heightened emotions, just as Christmas is for us.

These folks were ready to seize Jesus (w/ or w/o His agreement), take Him to Jerusalem, and there crown Him king of Israel. They had seen Him perform the miracle of creating bread for the whole multitude, just as they thought Moses had given their ancestors manna in the wilderness.

They had declared Him to be that Moses-like Prophet whom God had promised in Deut 18.

They understood that such a Prophet would also serve in the role of Israel's King, just as Moses had once filled that role in the theocracy where God was King.

Moses had delivered the original Israelites from oppression and slavery in Egypt.

The Jews whom Jesus had fed believed He was capable of delivering them from the oppression of Rome, whose army had invaded/conquered their land.

These people had no idea that Jesus' Kingdom is not of this world (as He would later tell Pilate—18:36).

His Kingdom would triumph through His death & resurrection—not by military-coup or political revolution.

But they had their own thoughts about the kind of king Jesus should be.

As they saw it, He was not only capable of
liberating them from Rome;
He could/should provide a social welfare system, to
keep them healthy, well fed, and protected from
incursions by hostile foreign nations.

**Neither the Father/Son/H.S. allows any man to manipulate
Him.**

When we pray, we always humbly add the qualifier to our
prayers, “If it be Thy will.”

James warns=> *“You ask and do not receive, because you ask
with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on
your pleasures”* (Jms 4:3).

Evangelists who reconfigure the gospel message to make it more
marketable—portraying it as a way to gain health/wealth—
make a mockery out of the true gospel.

They, in fact, are offering people a false gospel, selling it
that way, because what X actually offers is something
most sinners don't really want—deliverance from
their sin.

It's true that He offers joy/peace to the troubled heart, but
through a salvation that involves mourning over one's sin,
believing in Jesus w/ repentant faith, taking up one's cross,
& following Him daily.

It entails submitting oneself to Him as Lord, permanently
adopting the attitude, “Not my will for my life, Lord,

but Your will be done, whatever that may be. I trust
You to work all things together for good.”

Faced w/ any other attitude, Jesus withdraws from a person.

E.g. when He told the rich young ruler to repent of his greed by
selling everything & giving his money to the poor, the man
went away grieved, unwilling to obey X, and our Lord
didn't pursue Him, but withdrew.

And Jesus let him walk away, not changing His message to
make it more appealing.

In the case of the people in our text, who wanted to make Jesus
king, He withdrew from them, & went back up into the
mountain from which He'd originally come down, to them.
But first, according to Mk 6:46, He told the crowd farewell,
and instructed His disciples to go on ahead of Him,
back across the lake.

Then He withdrew into the mountain, to spend time alone
in prayer w/ His Heavenly Father (Mt 14:23).

**What can we take for ourselves from John's account of Jesus'
feeding the 5000?**

1st, that our Savior is a mighty God, who can perform miraculous
deeds that would be impossible for anyone/everyone else.
Philip was sure it was impossible to feed so many
thousands of people.

Andrew couldn't believe the boy's bread/fish were
sufficient to be of any use in trying to feed them all.

And the Apostles had all told Jesus just to send the multitude away hungry.

Then once they knew for sure it was impossible, Jesus fed them all.

This should remind us that our Savior has sufficient power to do the impossible in our lives too.

2nd, in Jesus Christ, we have the supreme Mediator w/ God.

The chasm between us (in our weakness/sin) & God (in His unapproachable holiness/glory) has been bridged in Jesus.

To make this possible, He emptied Himself, sacrificed the glories of heaven, became a man like us, & died to reconcile us to God—and so we worship Him.

3rd, we see here that Jesus is not only capable of meeting all our needs—He is willing to do so, out of His great compassion.

The multitude needed food, & they were in danger of fainting on the way home, so Jesus fed them.

And out of His love/compassion for His people, He providentially meets all our needs as well.

He is personally/emotionally affected by our troubles.

4th, this passage teaches us that God can use people who seem to have nothing to offer, if they are simply available to Him.

In all likelihood, the boy with the bread/fish would have been overlooked by everyone else in that multitude.

But Jesus knew he was there, with food & an unselfish
heart, willing to give X the little that he had.
If our hearts are really open to being used by the Lord, He
can do wonderful things through us too.

“Feeding Five Thousand” (Part 2)

November 17, 2013

Text: John 6:12-15

1. Before Adam sinned, he communed with God daily; but sin defiled his heart, and evil unbelief separated him from God, making [20 communion] with his Creator impossible.

Deut 5:25

2. Israel felt the need for a Mediator between them and God because they couldn't endure the [12 power] of God's voice.

Deut 5:27; 18:18

3. In today's text we will hear some Galilean Jews acclaim Jesus as the long-awaited Prophet who would fully reveal to them the words, the will, and the [14 nature] of God.

Today we will consider the second half of Jesus' feeding the 5000; John will describe the *disciples' duty*, the *crowd's decision*, and the *Lord's departure*...

*** The Disciple's Duty**

[John 6:12]

4. Man has a duty or responsibility to preserve the things God has created for him—in this case that included the [12 bread] and fish.
5. God created hunger so that every living creature on earth would always depend on [8 Him] for nourishment.

Gen 1:29; 3:17-19; Isa 51:3; Acts 14:17

6. God desires for us to take the principle of physical hunger and to learn from it that we also have a need for spiritual filling and wellbeing which only [6 He] can supply.

Mt 5:6

[Verse 13]

7. The most likely reason why these twelve basketsful of leftover food are mentioned is to demonstrate the super-abundance of God's gracious [22 provision] for His people.

Mt 16:8-10

*** The Crowd's Decision**

[Verse 14]

Deut 18:15-18; Rev 1:17

Jesus was indeed the Prophet like Moses promised in Deut 18...

* 8. First, like Moses He was a [8 man].

Mt 11:28; Heb 2:11; I Tim 2:5

* 9. Second, Moses was given unprecedented access to the mind of God....
Yet even Moses' extraordinary communion with God was surpassed
by that of [12 Jesus].

Num 12:6-8; Col 2:9; Jn 11:42

* 10. Third, because Jesus was a Prophet like Moses, He was willing to
sacrifice His very [10 life] to save His people.

Heb 1:3; Deut 1:37; Mk 15:34

*** The Lord's Departure**

11. The people Jesus had just fed were thinking of Him as the great Prophet and as
the Messiah, but not the [10 kind] of Messiah Jesus intended to be.

[Verse 15]

Jn 18:36

12. Neither the Father, the Son, nor the Holy Spirit allow man to
[24 manipulate] Him.

Jms 4:3; Mt 14:23

What can we take for ourselves from Jesus' feeding the 5000?

* 13. First, that our Savior is a mighty God, who can perform
[24 miraculous] deeds.

* 14. In Jesus Christ we have the supreme [18 Mediator] with God.

* 15. Third, Jesus is not only capable of meeting all our needs, He is
[16 willing] to do so.

* 16. God can use people who seem to have nothing to offer if they are
simply [20 available] to Him.