

=MIRACLES OF CHRIST=
Lesson 5
The Feeding of the Five Thousand

AIM: to teach my pupils the truth concerning the feeding of the five thousand.

POINT OF CONTACT: Bring some bread and fish with you to class—maybe five pieces of bread and two sardines, maybe a loaf of bread and a can of sardines. This way, each member of the class could eat a piece of bread and a portion of a sardine. You could actually act out this story with this kind of arrangement.

INTRODUCTION: This miracle is the only miracle mentioned in each of the first four books of the New Testament—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; hence, it must be one of tremendous importance. Let us notice its teachings.

I. MAN'S PART IN THE MIRACLE.

1. Let us notice the crowd that followed Jesus. (John 6:2-4) There are at least two reasons given why these crowds followed Him.
 - 1) They followed Him because they wanted to see His miracles. (John 6:2) If we want to see the miracles of Christ, we must follow Him. A person cannot follow after the world and Satan and see the miracles of Christ. We must follow Him; we must go where He goes, do what He would have us do, and be what He would have us be if we would see miraculous things in our lives.
 - 2) There was a Passover observed. (John 6:4) Some have advanced the theory that many of these people were on their way to the Passover when they followed Christ. If this be true, it certainly teaches us that miracles come to those who are faithful to God's house. Let us teach faithfulness to the house of God!
2. Notice the unbelief of the disciples. (John 6:5-7) Philip and the other disciples had no idea that Jesus was about to perform a miracle. Perhaps they did not stop to realize what Moses had done, giving to the people bread from Heaven in the wilderness, and the notable miracle which Elisha, though on a smaller scale, had performed in II Kings 4:43, 44. Let us always believe that with Christ nothing is impossible!
3. The disciples, no doubt, could have performed this miracle. (Matthew 14:16) Notice the words, "...give ye them to eat." If they had had the faith, they could have taken care of this. It is yet to be seen what we could do if we had faith in what God could do through us! Most of us limit our work for God because of looking at ourselves and our limitations rather than looking at His limitless power. Many people do very little for God because they feel they can do very little. Yet if they would realize the potential wrapped up in the power of God through them, no doubt they would attempt more for Him.
4. We can have miracles when we give all we have to Christ. (Matthew 14:17, 18) Notice, man had to give all he had before Christ would do what He could. God's miracles are performed when we have done our best and have given all that we possess. Someone here may have had 50 loaves and 25 fishes, but they did not help in the miracle because they did not give it all. Someone might have been able to give ten loaves and four fishes, and yet would have had some left over for himself. God does not work miracles through us because of how much we have, but rather because of how much of it we give to Him. When we give our all, He will intercede for us and perform miracles through us. This is certainly an encouragement to those of us who have little. It is not how much we give to Christ, but how much we give of what we have that counts. This especially should be encouraging to class members who are not as talented as others, or not as beautiful, handsome or gifted as others. (Stress this point very carefully.)
5. Notice the importance of a children's worker in this miracle. (John 6:8, 9) Very little is said about Andrew in the Bible, and yet in every case when he is mentioned, it is a tremendously important saying. Andrew was not a spectacular preacher, as was his brother, Peter, but he certainly was a maker of spectacular preachers. Andrew was the one who led Peter to Christ. See John 1:41, 42. Maybe an adult is beyond the age of training for the ministry, but he could certainly be a blessing to little children and lead to Christ others who could become preachers. It is interesting to note the tremendous work that Andrew did here with the little lad. It is no easy task to part a little lad from

his lunch, and yet Andrew had a way with the boy. Peter had a way with crowds; Andrew had a way with people. Ah, this is so important—the human touch! (Teachers, let us teach ourselves something here. There are things you can do that the Pastor cannot do. There are things you can do to reproduce yourselves in the lives of others and to be a tremendous blessing. This is an important lesson on children’s work!)

6. Notice the lad in John 6:9. It is very interesting that a little lad with his lunch gave all he had, and the miracle was performed. It is interesting that God uses little things and the weak things of this world to confound the wise. Read to the class I Corinthians 1:26-29. What a tremendous encouragement these verses are!
7. The greatest blessing comes to those who serve. (John 6:12, 13) This is very interesting! There were 12 baskets left over—one basket for each disciple. Everyone there had enough to eat, but for the disciples who served, there was some left over. Isn’t that always the case? The teacher gets the greatest blessing from the lesson. The preacher gets the greatest blessing from the sermon. The teacher learns more than the pupil. If we would learn, then we should teach, for in preparing to teach, we learn more than we would if we were the learners. The servers are always served the most in God’s family. Let us not be those sitting in the mountain but rather, let us be among those who are serving. God saves the best for that group.

II. JESUS’ PART IN THE MIRACLE.

1. Jesus went alone for meditation. (Matthew 14:13) He had been busy saving and healing. Now He comes apart for a while. Meditation is almost a lost art. These are days when people want to get together, and nobody wants to be alone. Let us teach our pupils here the importance of meditating, thinking, going alone for a while. This is so needed in our day.
2. Jesus is constantly testing us to see what kind of Christians we are. In John 6:5, 6, notice the words, “And this he said to prove him....” This means “to test him” or “to try him” or “to find out how strong his faith was.” Would God we would be as interested in passing this test as we are other tests in school! Let us always be conscious that Jesus is looking at us, and observing what we do, and testing our loyalty and faithfulness.
3. Christ was teaching them the lesson here found in Matthew 6:33, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” He was talking in this verse about food, clothing, etc. These people had followed Jesus to receive spiritual food. They had forgotten the physical needs and had come taking no thought, for the time at least, of what they should eat or what they should drink. They were desirous only to hear the Word of Life and were seeking only the kingdom of Heaven. Because of this, the lower things of life were added unto them; in other words, they were fed. We are promised this by Jesus. (Teacher, you might use a picture of a lily or other flower here. In Matthew 6:28b, 29, Jesus said, “...Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” You might also use a picture of a bird here, as in Matthew 6:26, Jesus said, “Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?” This is so beautifully pictured in this miracle of feeding the five thousand.)
4. Jesus gave thanks before He fed the people. Notice Matthew 14:19; John 6:11. Someone has said, “He that enjoys aught without thanksgiving is as though he robbed God.” Jesus thanked God for the food. (Let us teach here the importance of always thanking God for the food, whether at home, at work, at school, or regardless of where. We should always bow our heads and thank God for the food.)
5. How did Jesus perform the miracle? Some have suggested that He merely hastened the usual process. For example, a single grain of corn multiplies itself in a year and in the end unfolds in numerous ears. This is done year after year. It is advanced that perhaps Jesus did just expedite the matter and did the usual process faster. Maybe this is so, but I doubt it. I think this was a definite act of creation, just like in the Garden of Eden. He made something from nothing and did it by His Word. All that God ever does is by His Word. If we would have miraculous things happen in our lives, we must live in His Word, know His Word, read His Word, and meditate upon His Word. The secret is the Bible.

6. Notice the orderliness of Jesus. Look at Mark 6:39. This is an interesting teaching. Jesus had them sit down by companies. One writer adds that they sat in companies by hundreds and fifties. God's work should be done properly. It should be well planned. It should be orderly. God is not the author of confusion.
7. Jesus is interested in numbers. Notice Matthew 14:21, they said there "...were about five thousand men, beside women and children." It is interesting how many times in the Bible the crowds were counted—or at least, numbers were given. Sometimes people say, "Numbers are not important with God." Numbers are important because they represent people, and people are important! We should be interested in numbers as long as we are interested in people; a statistic represents a person.

CONCLUSION: Let us emphasize the importance of believing exactly what the Bible says about this and all miracles. The liberals say that Jesus took up a sample lunch basket and prayed; then each person opened his lunch and ate. Let us mock to our boys and girls that kind of teaching! Let us laugh at it, make fun of it, and insult it, for it is contrary to the Word of God!