

Jesus Displays His Deity by Feeding the Five Thousand

John 6:1-15

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Matt. 14:13–21; Mark 6:31–44; Luke 9:11–17

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⁴ Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near.

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¹⁰ Then Jesus said, “**Make the people sit down.**” Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down,

in number about five thousand. ¹¹ And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed *them* to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹² So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, “Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost.” ¹³ Therefore they gathered *them* up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. ¹⁴ Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.”

¹⁵ Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.

Introduction

The New Testament offers numerous lines of evidence for the deity of Jesus Christ, not the least of which is His many miracles (cf. Acts 2:22). In a unique and powerful way, His miraculous works demonstrate His divine glory (John 2:11). The Lord Himself used them to support His remarkable claims: “The works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me” (5:36). In response to the

exasperated demand of His critics, “How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly” (10:24), Jesus answered, “I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father’s name, these testify of Me” (v. 25). The Lord also rebuked Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum because, in spite of the numerous miracles He had performed in those cities, they stubbornly refused to repent (Matt. 11:20–24).

When John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask Jesus, “Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?” (Luke 7:20), Jesus replied by pointing them to His miraculous works:

At that very time He cured many people of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He gave sight to many who were blind. And He answered and said to them, “Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the gospel preached to them.” (vv. 21–22)

And when Jesus’ own disciples failed to grasp the truth of His union with the Father He told them, “Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves” (John 14:11).

Throughout His ministry, Jesus could have thrilled the watching crowds with spectacular displays of His divine power, such as lifting up the temple and suspending it in

midair, or flying through the sky at supersonic speeds. But instead, He chose to display divine compassion by doing miracles that delivered people in need. He healed the sick (Matt. 4:23–24; 8:2–3, 5–13, 14–16; 9:2–7, 20–22, 27–30, 35; 12:9–13, 15; 14:14; 15:30; 19:2; 20:30–34; 21:14; Mark 6:5; 7:31–35; Luke 5:15; 6:17–19; 9:11; 14:1–4; 17:11–14; 22:51; John 4:46–53; 5:1–9; 6:2; 9:1–7), raised the dead (Matt. 9:23–25; Luke 7:11–15; John 11:43), and cast out demons (Matt. 4:24; 8:16, 28–33; 9:32–33; 12:22; 15:21–28; 17:14–18; Mark 1:39; Luke 11:14; 13:32). Even the Lord’s creative miracles were not sensational magic tricks. As noted in chapter 6 of this volume, by creating wine at the wedding at Cana (John 2:1–11) Jesus met a necessity for the guests and saved the bride and groom from a socially embarrassing situation. The miraculous feeding of the five thousand was a large act of compassion on behalf of people who would have gone hungry.

Although they could not deny His miracles, the religious authorities in Judea vehemently rejected Jesus’ claims (5:16–47). But that rejection did not deter Him, or cause Him to soften His message. Nonetheless, the Lord left Judea because the Jewish leaders sought to kill Him before His appointed time (5:18; cf. 7:1, 30; 8:20). Chapter 6, then, finds Him in Galilee, the northern part of Israel. This chapter is similar in structure to chapter 5; both record a miracle by Jesus, leading to a discourse on His deity. And each recounts the response of the people,

which on both occasions was an outright rejection of His message.

The feeding of the five thousand is the fourth sign that John recorded to prove that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God (cf. 2:11; 4:54; 5:1–17). It is the only miracle (apart from Christ's resurrection) recorded by John that also appears in the Synoptic Gospels (Matt. 14:13–20; Mark 6:30–44; Luke 9:10–17)—a fact that emphasizes its importance, since most of what John wrote supplements the other gospels, providing material they did not include. Although all of Jesus' miracles were astonishing, the feeding of the five thousand demonstrated His creative power more clearly and impressively than any other miracle. In fact, in terms of the number of people affected, it was the largest of His miracles (exceeding His later feeding of four thousand, recorded in Matt. 15:32–39; Mark 8:1–9). The feeding of the five thousand also sets the stage for the Lord's discourse on the bread of life that follows (vv. 22ff.).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2006). *John 1–11* (pp. 218–219). Chicago: Moody Press.

Review

Lesson

I. The Multitude

II. The Mission

III. The Miracle

IV. The Misunderstanding

I. The Multitude

6 After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is *the Sea of Tiberias*.² Then a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His signs which He

performed on those who were diseased. ³ And Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat with His disciples.

⁴ Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near.

According to Luke's Gospel, when Jesus heard that John the Baptist had been killed, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place near Bethsaida.

Mark 6:33 (NKJV)

³³ But the multitudes saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them and came together to Him.

The Number

¹⁰ Then Jesus said, “**Make the people sit down.**” Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

Matthew 14:21 (NKJV)

²¹ Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Matthew 14:13–14 (NKJV)

¹³ When Jesus heard *it*, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes

heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities. ¹⁴ And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; **and He was moved with compassion for them**, and healed their sick.

Mark 6:34 (NKJV)

³⁴ 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. So He began to teach them many things.**

What are sheep like, without a shepherd? They are:

- leaderless,
- defenseless,

- hungry,
- wandering about and lost.

He was moved with compassion. That means His heart went out to them.

It wasn't so much a cognitive thing, or analysis, or that He just reasoned what was the right thing to do in the divine mind and did it; it is the term with a root splagchnon, which speaks of the visceral area, the bowels. He felt the pain. Jesus Christ, though God, was not coldly calculating and analytical in terms of the needs of men; He was passionate, and felt the pain in His own heart, and the Hebrew always identifies emotion in the bowels, or the visceral area, because anxiety and trauma and compassion and emotion have an effect on our stomachs. It hits us in the gut. So Jesus felt pain, genuine emotion, as when He stood over the city of Jerusalem and tears ran down His cheeks. He said, "How

often I would have gathered you as a hen gathers her brood, but you would not." Or as He stood over the grave of Lazarus and again, the tears coursed His cheeks, as He wept over the identification of pain and emotion in the death of one whom He loved and whom His friends loved. He represented God, just as Jeremiah did in chapter 13 when he called to Israel to repent, and said, "If you don't, My eye will run down with tears and I will weep for your destruction." He wept, as it were, in heart, like Paul in II Corinthians 11, who was in mourning, weariness, anxiety so often in his ministry as he saw the needs of men.

I really believe that this is a mark of God. As we read in the beginning of our worship this morning from Psalm 146, God's heart goes out to those in need. It is not an issue of whether they will respond or reciprocate by believing; it is that God's heart goes out to those in need anyway.

II. The Mission

John 6:5–9 (NKJV)

⁵ Then Jesus lifted up *His* eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, "**Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?**" ⁶ But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.

⁷ Philip answered Him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little.”

Matthew 14:15–16 (NKJV)

¹⁵ When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, “This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.”

¹⁶ But Jesus said to them, “**They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.**”

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 small fish, but what are they among so many?”

Jesus steps out of that position with the disciples on the hill and begins to heal people. At that very juncture, John fills in the narrative in verse 5. "Then Jesus lifted up His

eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him," He's just stepping out to go down and heal them, and He initiates something with Philip. He comes and says to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" He plants a problem in Philip's mind; this is a real problem. "Philip, I'm going to go down and spend the day with these people." Mark and Luke add that He not only healed them, but He taught them concerning the Kingdom of God. So He spent the day healing and teaching; all day, giving Himself to the multitude out of compassion. But before He even started that, He plants a question in Philip's mind: where are we going to buy bread to feed this group? There are several reasons why He asked that of Philip. The number one reason is because Philip was from that area, and would most likely know the resources, the places where such food might be gained. Secondly, He asked Philip, verse 6 says, to test him. Philip was like a lot of us - thick. It took him a long time to get the picture. John 14 says that Philip asked, "Show us the Father," and Jesus responds, "Have I been so long with you, Philip, and you still don't know? If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father." So this is a test for Philip. Jesus is saying, "Philip, I'm going to heal and take care of the teaching of the Kingdom; you just work on this problem: how are we going to feed the people?" Philip must have gone and reported this to the other eleven and said, "Hey, guys, we have to figure out a way to feed these people while the Lord is doing all this." They wracked their brains all day and never came up with answer. In fact,

Philip said, "We have 200 denarii," which was 200 days' wages, and probably what was in their treasury to buy their resources. He says, "That's all we've got, and even if we could find a place to buy enough, this wouldn't do it; if we used all of this, we wouldn't get enough for people to take small bites."

How much is that? Well, one denari was a day's wage. If you multiply 200 days by the minimum hourly income of contemporary society, you are looking at 7,600 dollars just to buy enough to give everyone a little bite. It is absolutely inconceivable!

So there is no resource.

Andrew comes, and sort of says, tongue in cheek, "Lord, I've been through the whole group and found one kid with five flat barley cakes and a couple of pickled fish." Barley was the cheapest grain, and the poorer the people, the more likely they were to use barley and make little bread cakes like a cracker. They would take the fish, which were commonly pickled, and then put them like a relish on the bread.

So Philip says, "There are two problems, Lord. One, we don't have any food; two, we don't have enough money to buy any food." And they have a whole day to stew over this; this is a day-long test, and the Lord goes about His business of healing and bringing the people the knowledge of the Kingdom. They're fuddling around, trying to figure out how to solve the problem.

Finally, evening comes, and they are no closer to a solution than they were at the first. Verse 15 picks it up. The Jews had two evenings; one was 3-6, the other was 6-9, and this was the first evening, prior to the setting of the sun. "When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.'" That was their solution; good, eh? Just get rid of them, send them away.

I confess to you that if you wanted to believe anything, you would have to believe that the Twelve, who had seen Jesus walk into Galilee and heal everyone in sight; who had seen Him create wine at a wedding; who had seen Him raise the dead, and calm the sea and control the wind; who had seen miracle after miracle; who had seen Him do the same through them in their recent ministry, at least the Twelve would have said, "Lord, You can do it; just say, 'Food!' and it will all appear." I mean, it doesn't seem like too much faith when you'd seen as much as they had seen. But they are thick. It's like a man standing in front of Niagara Falls asking if anyone knows where he can get a drink; the power is all there, they are just too blind to see it.

Before you criticize them too strongly, remember in your own life how many times in the past God has met your needs, and how in the last, or present, crisis, you are struggling to figure out where the resources will come

from. So they come, and have no answer. "Send them away, Lord. Get rid of them."

Verse 16. "But Jesus said to them, 'They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.'" Sure. They're thinking, "We don't have any food." He knew that, so why would He say that? It was very simple. He is making them face the fact that they don't have any food. You say, "They already knew that." But He just wanted to be sure it was really solid in their knowledge, the admission of no resources. "You give them something to eat."

They said, "We have here only five loaves and two fish." That is it. Even infinitesimal bites of that couldn't cover 25,000 people. They are baffled, and that's right where the Lord wants them. It is very important that they say, "We haven't got it, and we can't get it. What we have isn't enough, and what we can get with what we've got isn't enough either. So we haven't got it and we can't get it." That's a great spiritual lesson for all who serve God; you haven't got it and you can't get it any more than they could. It is the dullness of their perspective. It is strange that no one said, "Hey, guys, the Lord could just create it." But there is none of that.

If you combine all four gospel accounts

with five terrific obstacles to Christ's miracle:

Luke, chapter 9, verse 12b – This is not the right place – “. . . for here we are in a desolate place.”

Luke, chapter 9, verse 13b – There is not enough bread – “. . . We have no more than five loaves and two fish . . .”

John, chapter 6, verse 7b – There is not enough money – “. . . two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient . . .”

Matthew, chapter 14, verse 15b – There is not enough manpower – “. . . send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.”

Mark, chapter 6, verse 35b – There is not enough time – “. . . it is already quite late”.

III. The Miracle

John 6:10–13 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Then Jesus said, “**Make the people sit down.**” Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. ¹¹ And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed *them* to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹² So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, “**Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost.**” ¹³ Therefore they gathered *them* up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten.

Mark tells us that the Lord told them to seat the people in groups of 50 and 100 with aisles in between, so that they could serve them. Of course, the disciples are obeying the Lord, but they can't figure anything out. They still don't know what is going on. Mark says, "He sat them prasiaprasia," or, "Garden bed by garden bed." This is a very vivid description. There is the green grass, with little aisles in between, and clustered in groups of 50 and 100 were these people in brightly-colored oriental garments, so it would have looked like little garden beds of flowers among the green grass, as seen from God's perspective.

They are all seated, wonderfully in order, prepared to be served, and the only thing is, there is nothing to serve them. Then, this is even more interesting, "He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He thanked God." You have to know the disciples are peeking during this prayer to see where the delivery truck is. He is thanking the Lord for this box lunch in His hand as if they were all going to have a wonderful feast.

By the way, it says, "He blessed," and the same indication in John 6:11, it says He said 'thanks,' therefore we conclude that saying 'thanks' to God and blessing God are the same, so we bless the Lord and say thanks to the Lord. "And He broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes."

The miracle is almost hidden, isn't it? There is no fanfare. It doesn't say He got up on top of the mountain and said,

"Food!" or that angels flew all over and trumpets blew and the earth shook. He just started handing out bread and fish and never stopped; He just created them. It must have been good, because it had never been touched by the curse. It was the best bread they'd ever eaten, and the best fish, and it just kept coming. He gave it to the disciples, and they passed it out.

Feeding of the 5000

Aside from the resurrection, the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000 is the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels. Obviously, the Gospel writers considered this a significant miracle. When Christ fed the masses that day, He began with only “five barley loaves and two fish,” borrowed from a boy’s lunch (John 6:9). To feed 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish is indeed miraculous, but the Greek term used in Matthew 14:21 specifies males, and Matthew further emphasizes the point by adding, “Besides women and children.” Many Bible scholars believe the actual number fed that day could have been 15,000—20,000 people.

Andrew asked, “What are [five loaves and two fish] for so many?” (John 6:9). And Philip exclaimed, “It would take more than half a year’s wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!” (verse 7).

Jesus provided “as much as they wanted” (John 6:11), and “they all ate and were satisfied” (Matthew 14:20). Christ did not just meet the need; He lavished them with so much food that there were “twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish” left over (Mark 6:43).

1. food composed of flour mixed with water and baked; the Israelites made it in the form of an oblong or round cake, as thick as one's thumb, and as large as a plate or platter (cf. Winers RWB under the word Backen; (BB. DD.)); hence, it was not cut, but broken

Now understand, this is crackers made from barley that never was planted, and these are fish who never swam. These are fresh, dead fish who never were alive. This is the only uncursed banquet that any of those people would have ever gone to.

Was the food good? Huh, this is like eating in the Garden of Eden. These are uncursed crackers and uncursed fish. This is just an incredible thing to think about. And there was nobody who said, "I'm sorry, I don't eat fish." Oh-oh, I don't think so. Every time I go out with people there is somebody who says that. "I don't like fish." You'd like these fish. I...just plain fish, cursed fish is good, uncursed fish, who could imagine what that would taste like?

JM

Lets take the more conservative amount of people of 15000
 1.5 fish per person ===== 22,500 fish average 1 pound per person
 or
 22,500 lbs of fish
 5 barley cracker or small flat bread =====75000 crackers

If a boy ate five crackers and two fish, did an adult eat ten crackers and four fish? Do the math. Twenty-five thousand times all of that? You've got hundreds of thousands of crackers broken up and scattered and hundreds of thousands of fish just coming out of His hands like that

Question: "What does Creation "ex nihilo" mean?"

Answer: "Ex nihilo" is Latin for "from nothing." The term "creation ex nihilo" refers to God creating everything from nothing. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1). Prior to that moment there was nothing. God didn't make the universe from preexisting building blocks. He started from scratch.

The Bible never expressly states that God made everything from nothing, but it is implied. In Hebrews 11:3 we read, "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible." Scholars take this to mean that the universe came into existence by divine command and was not assembled from preexisting matter or energy.

You say, "How much was there?" Well, verse 20 says, "They all ate, and were chortazo," which is the word used of an animal who is into the feed trough for all he can get, or a horse in the feed bucket. It means foddered up; they ate as much as they wanted. You can know that if it was uncursed barley cakes and uncursed fish, they had a lot. It must have been the best meal they had ever eaten, and they were totally satisfied. They had all they wanted. Isn't that like the Lord? He doesn't say, "Just a bite or two." It's all you want. The supply was exactly equal to the demand. And after everyone was full, which is the same word used in Revelation 19:21, where you see the birds that come to the great day of the Lord and gorge themselves on the flesh; it is a word that is used in

Matthew 5:6 of those that hunger and thirst for righteousness, being filled. This is a very abundant concept.

Now the liberals have a problem with this, so they have come up with a couple of suggestions to explain away the miracle.

- The first explanation is that what Jesus was doing was passing out communion, so everyone just got a crumb of bread and a teensy weensy bit of pickled fish.

Look at verse 11, the last phrase,

[they took] . . . as much as they wanted . . .

Matthew, chapter 14, verse 20a, tells us that they ate until they all, “. . . were satisfied.”

The Greek word “chortazo,” or “satisfied,” could be translated “stuffed”.

Of course, there was some left. How interesting! When they collected all the fragments, there were 12 basket fulls! Isn't that interesting? There were also twelve disciples. Amazing. As great a wonder as the ability to create was the ability to create exactly the amount that satisfied everyone with exactly twelve baskets left over for the disciples. That is the economy of God; He doesn't

waste His miracles. You say, "What about the Lord? There wasn't any for Him." Yes, and that would be another lesson for the disciples. If He was to eat, guess where He'd have to get it? From them.

And everybody eats till they're gorged and they can't eat any more. And then a most interesting thing, they picked up twelve full baskets of the broken pieces and also of the fish. Now Jesus did not have them pick this up because He was an anti-litter, pro-environmental clean-up advocate. He had them pick them up because when they picked it all up, it was twelve baskets full. The basket here is a Greek word that refers to a little traveling food bag or basket. It's *kophinos*, it's just a little travel bag that you would carry your lunch or meal in.

IV.The Misunderstanding

John 6:14–15 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world."¹⁵ Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.

they tried to make Him king; they tried to take Him by force and make Him a king. That was all they needed - free food. Talk about a campaign promise! I mean, He could

not only heal all their diseases, but He gave free food, and the best-tasting food there ever was. Anyone who could heal all the diseases, cast out demons, raise the dead, and give free food could overthrow the Romans, bring a revolution, bring a utopia, the ultimate welfare state. This has to be the king, so their political aspirations reached a fever pitch, and they tried to force the issue.

Verse 22 says that Jesus constrained His disciples, which means they must have fought against it. They now get the message, by the way, that He had the power. He constrained them to get into a boat; they didn't want to leave Him, I think, but He sent them away before Him. He would come later. "And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray.

The Lord was teaching here; all of this was a massive lesson. There are three groups in this crowd. There are the Twelve, and this was for their training. There is the elect remnant, and this was for the confirmation of the faith of the elect. There is also the rejecting, shallow thrill-seeker, and this was the unmasking of the thrill-seeker. All of these were in view. Let's take them one at a time.

What did Jesus teach here in the training of the Twelve? He was always involved in training the Twelve; He was always involved in doing things that they might learn. What did they learn from this? What practical lessons that they could apply to their ministry, and that you and I can apply to our ministries as disciples of Jesus Christ, did they

learn? Think back through the story, and try to see if you can identify where they fit.

The first lesson I see here is that He taught them to withdraw from needless danger. There is no virtue in a martyr complex. Sensibility says that you withdraw from needless danger.

Secondly, He taught them that it was important to seek rest and solitude for refreshment and the restoration of strength for the task. The Lord needed that, and He knew they needed that, and He knows you need that, that place of solitude, quiet, solace, refreshment.

Thirdly, He demonstrated to them how important it is to spend time with those who labor with you. He took the Twelve; they needed time together, and there was a mutual stimulation there, a mutual strength. That was all part of discipling, to share His life with them, and they with each other.

Fourthly, He taught them the lesson about compassion for those in need, and showed them the heart of God, which was a heart broken over the needs of men. Not just spiritual needs, but even physical needs reached the heart of God.

Fifthly, He then taught them that sacrificing rest and leisure to meet the needs of others demonstrates the caring heart of God. It was a great lesson, because it is easy to get to the place where you feel your priority right is the right to leisure. Our Lord demonstrates that the priority is to meet needs, and you sacrifice leisure for that.

Sixthly, I believe He taught them very clearly in this incident that while you're meeting physical needs, you're also teaching the truth of the Kingdom. You can't just have a 'social gospel.' It is not enough just to do that which men need physically, but while He was healing, He was teaching them the things of the Kingdom of God. He would take them at face value in terms of their physical need, but not without trying to turn them to an understanding of their spiritual need. When you reach out to meet someone's physical need, it is with a view to turning them to the spiritual dimension.

A seventh lesson is that He taught the disciples to learn to obey even if they didn't understand why. Can you imagine this group of guys organizing all these people into units of 50 and 100 to serve them food they know they don't have and can't buy? But they did it, and I imagine that when it was all done, they said, "Boy, we want to be sure that when the Lord tells us to do things that we don't understand to go ahead and do them anyway, because something wonderful might happen."

Number eight, I think there is a great lesson here about doing things in an orderly fashion. God is a God of order; Paul tells that to the Corinthians when he encourages them to do things decently and in order. God is a God of great order, and He doesn't want any stampede for food. It is marvelous how the Lord Jesus sets everyone in garden bed by garden bed and has all the disciples moving among them. He is the God of order, with a place for order.

Number nine, God also demonstrated His economy of stewardship. There was nothing left over except enough to fill twelve baskets full, which would have fed the disciples, leaving nothing. There was not a waste; God is a steward of His miraculous power, a steward of infinite treasure. How much more are we to be stewards of finite treasure? Don't waste.

He also taught them that God was generous; everyone got all they wanted, and were stuffed. They ate as much as they cared to eat. God is not a God who doles it out piece by piece, but a God of abundant supply. So in ministry, we should come to men's hearts with the heart of God, which is a heart of abundance.

An eleventh lesson is that He taught them that ministry is looking to provide for others, not yourself. He says, "Give Me what you've got, and we're going to give it to them." They didn't get anything to eat until they had fed everybody everything they wanted, and you can imagine them saying, "How long is this going to keep coming? What if they run out before we get ours?" But there was enough. They had to go around and collect it, but it was there in exactness. It is the lesson that we are called to provide for others, and God will be sure there is provision for us.

That's what He told them in chapter 10, when He said not to take two coats or staffs, or money in a bag. He said, "Just go and give yourself away, and charge no man anything and I will make sure your supply is met."

A twelfth lesson is to learn to share with those who have not. I think the Lord didn't take a basket because He wanted them to learn to share with Him, and that's a great lesson. From all He gives us, we must give back to Him. Isn't that how it is? He has given us time; He wants a return. He has given us talent, spiritual gifts, money, possessions, and all of it has come from His creative hand. He asks that we share it with Him; that's what stewardship is. This is a great lesson.

The thirteenth lesson is that we should learn to trust the power of God to provide what seems impossible. I mean, they were saying, "We don't have it, and we can't get it," and He says, "That's right where I want you. Now you can learn that when you come to the point where you don't have it and you can't get it, trust Me to supply it."

I think about that in terms of ministry. It's the responsibility to feed you spiritually, to represent Christ week in and week out, to stand between Him and the world, as it were, and Him and the church, and to feed the church. I know two things: I don't have it and I can't get it, and that is why I depend on Him to provide it. People ask me all the time what the key to preaching is. The key to preaching is studying the Word of God with diligence and waiting on the Lord to put the meal together. You give Him all you've got. "Lord, I've exegeted the passage, read all the theology on it, figured out a few good illustrations; now will You do something with all this?" And you give Him your five little bread cakes and two fish and say, "Will you take this and feed the multitude?"

That takes us to a fourteenth lesson, which is to begin with your own, available resources. Even though it is little, trust God to make it much. As the song says, little becomes much when it is placed in the Master's hand. It's amazing when you think you have nothing and you wind up feeding thousands. God can use small things; He used the tear of a baby to move the heart of Pharaoh's daughter. He used a shepherd's stick to work mighty miracles in Egypt. He used a sling and a stone to conquer a nation. He used the little girl to lead Naaman to Elisha. He used a widow with a little meal to sustain a prophet. He used a little child to teach His disciples the meaning of humility and salvation. He used Balaam's donkey to preach His truth, and the jawbone of another donkey to slay 1,000 men. He can use a small thing for a great end. Jesus likes to have the weak; that way, when things happen, we know it's His power. A final lesson is that God wants to provide for people through you. When He took the little that He had and broke it, He gave it to the disciples. They stood between Him and the multitude. We stand between Him and the multitude, and God wants to feed the multitude through us. It is our availability, our heart of service. We stand between Christ and a needy world. This is a spiritual lesson for every generation; the hungry multitude is always present, and there is always a little band of disciples who haven't got it and can't get it. But there is always the compassionate Savior who wants to multiply it through us if we're available. This was a time to train the Twelve.

Let's look at group two. This would be the faithful remnant. In that crowd, there were true believers who said, "This is the Messiah." There were those who really believed, who really saw that this was the Messiah. There were some who even asked the question in John 6, "What must we do to work the works of God?" Jesus says, "No man comes unto Me unless the Father draws him," but He also said, "He that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." He says, "All that the Father gives to Me will come to Me, and I will lose none of them, but will raise them up at the last day." In other words, He knew that in that crowd were the gifts of the Father, the elect remnant, the true believers. And this was for them; this whole day was for them.

What did they see in it? They saw *divine power* in this man Jesus Christ; they saw before their eyes creation, for this was a creative miracle. They saw divine compassion, and the heart of God in that individual. Those were representations of deity, and they saw His great integrity - no waste. False charlatans, those prophets who feigned to represent God, would be wasteful, flaunting their supposed power. There is an economy here that speaks of the integrity of God.

They also heard Kingdom teaching; they heard words that were inexplicable in coming from a human mind, that spoke of the mind of God. They also saw a symbol of the Lord's ability to meet spiritual needs as they who hungered and thirsted after righteousness would be as filled as they who hungered and thirsted after food. So the elect remnant were taught and were given enough to confirm

their faith, so there was an establishing of the Twelve and a confirming of the believing remnant.

That brings us to group three. These are the rejectors, the shallow soil, the weedy, thorny soil, the thrill-seekers. They were revealed, made manifest. John 6 tells us that the next day, the crowd showed up. Jesus went across the Sea; the disciples took a boat, and He walked across the Sea, met them in the middle, and they all went to shore. The next day, the crowd is back and Jesus says, "You seek Me not for My sake, but for the sake of food. That is all you want." Self-indulgence.

He said, "Unless you eat My flesh and drink My blood." In other words, "Unless you will take in all that I am, all that I say, all that I do. Unless you totally and fully receive Me, you have no part with Me." At that point, it says that many of them walked no more with Him. They were gone. The whole thing just revealed the thrill-seekers. Many of them walked no more, but it doesn't say all of them. Some of them continued to walk; that was the remnant that stayed according to John 6.

Then there were the disciples, and the Lord said, "Will you go away too?" And Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Only You have the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure that You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Isn't that great? You know what this did for the disciples? It made them sure, and for the elect remnant, it brought them to believe and continue to follow. For the thrill-seekers, they turned around and left. So there was some good soil; many left, but a few stayed. The

disciples were sure. This was a monumental, climactic point in the life of the Lord. The multitudes have gone; from now on, the Lord concentrates on the few, and the Twelve, as He moves toward the Cross.

I suppose the question that is obvious to be asked of you today is which group are you in? Are you an already-committed disciple? If so, doesn't this add surety to your faith? Are you one who has sought with an open heart to know the Lord Jesus Christ? Does this not convince you that He is God, and elicit from you true saving faith? Or are you a thrill-seeker, and have you been following Jesus for what you can get, and when the pressure is on and the demands are made, you're gone? jm