

## Five Loaves & Two Small Fishes

**Text:** Mark 6:30-44

### **Introduction:**

1. This is the only miracle (apart from the resurrection) that is recorded in all four Gospels. It must therefore be a miracle of great significance. It is not only significant on account of its magnitude, but it is also significant in relation to its timing as it occurred near the end of Jesus Galilean ministry and would form the basis for Christ to challenge the people to receive Him as the bread of life. At this point many turned back from following Him (Jn. 6:66).
2. There are some important lessons to be learned from this parable concerning the Person of Christ as well as the importance of faith in Christian service and ministry.
3. In this sermon we will study this miracle under four headings:

### **I. The Place of the Miracle (Vs. 30-33)**

#### **A. The Context of the Place (Vs. 30-31)**

1. The return of the Apostles (Vs. 30)
  - a. The Apostles were sent out in twos by Christ for an important Evangelistic mission.
  - b. They now return and give a detailed report to Christ of that tour.
2. The recommendation of Christ (Vs. 31)
  - a. Much wisdom revealed in Christ's council. Intense periods of Christian service should be followed by short periods of rest in a quiet place in order to recuperate for further ministry.
  - b. The busyness of Christ and the Apostles is highlighted. They couldn't even find time to eat a proper meal.

#### **B. The Characteristics of the Place (Vs. 31-32)**

It is described as:

1. A desert place. The word 'desert' often translated wilderness. It was a solitary, uninhabited place. Luke pinpoints it as "*belonging to the city called Bethsaida.*" (Lk. 9:10) "It was a vast open space of field on a hillside on the north-eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee." (Butler)
2. A coastal place. They had to journey there by boat.
3. A mountain place. John 6:3 records, "*And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there sat with his disciples.*"
4. A grassy place. Mark mentions "green grass" (Vs. 39) and John mentions "much grass" (John 6:10). So, this miracle took place on a grassy mountain slope overlooking the Sea of Galilee.

#### **C. The Crowd in the Place (Vs. 33)**

1. They saw Christ (Vs. 33a)

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2. They sought Christ (Vs. 33b)

### II. The People for the Miracle (Vs. 34)

#### A. Christ's Compassion for them (Vs. 34a)

1. The Depth of His Compassion – “moved with compassion”
  - a. Compassion means to feel pity or sympathy. Very strong word in the Greek language. Root word referred to the intestines (heart, lungs, liver etc...). Word translated ‘bowels’ elsewhere. Reference is to the seat of the affections. It means that Christ felt pity and sorrow for the multitudes in His heart, He yearned inside.
  - b. Christ's example of compassion for sinners: Matt. 9:36, 14:14, 15:32, 20:34; Mark 1:41, 5:19, 6:34, 8:2; Luke 7:13 (9 references in Gospels)
2. The Discernment of His Compassion – “as sheep not having a shepherd”
  - a. Sheep are vulnerable creatures. Without a shepherd they scatter and become easy pickings for predators. Without a shepherd to feed them they become sickly and malnourished.
  - b. This was how Christ viewed the multitudes. There were many false shepherds in Israel who would mislead and destroy them but He was the Good Shepherd who came to give his life for the sheep. John 10:11 *“I am the good shepherd: **the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.**”* John 10:15 *“...I lay down my life for the sheep.”*

#### B. Christ's Instruction of them (Vs. 34b)

1. The duration of the instruction – obviously for some hours (Vs. 35a)
2. The theme of the instruction – specifically the “kingdom of God” (Lk. 9:11). Christ was principally concerned for the salvation of their souls.

### III. The Proving before the Miracle (Vs. 35-40)

#### A. The Ignorance of the Disciples (Vs. 35-36)

1. They tried to council the Lord (Vs. 35)
  - a. Here is Jesus, the Lord of glory and they approach Him as if He has forgotten the place, the time and the hunger of the people (Vs. 36b). How often do we wrongly feel that our difficulties have escaped our Lord's attention!
  - b. Perhaps there was a measure of exasperation and frustration on the part of the disciples. After all, they had come all this way to get a rest and now they were surrounded with people again!
2. They tried to command the Lord (Vs. 36)

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- a. “send them away” = the disciples’ solution to the problem was to send the people away! This was not the only time they thought this was the best approach.
- b. Challenge: How often do we waste time **telling** the Lord what we think He should do when we find ourselves in a challenging place in Christian service rather than **asking** Him what He would have us do! The Lord in His Omniscience already had a plan as to what He was going to do! (See John 6:6)

### B. The Instruction to the Disciples (Vs. 37-40)

1. The Requirement of the Lord (Vs. 37)
  - a. “Give ye them to eat” = the Lord puts the problem back on the disciples.
    - i. John 6:5-6 *“When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? **And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.**”*
    - ii. The Lord knew what He was going to do the whole time, but He used the occasion to test the faith of the disciples and force them to realize they had no human solution to the problem.
  - b. “Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread?” = a penny (denarius) was the ordinary pay for a day’s work in the vineyard (Matt. 20:2). This would represent about 8 months wages for a common workingman and would be way beyond the reach of the disciples. Especially considering the fact they had just returned from their Evangelistic tour where Christ had commanded them to not take any money with them (Vs. 8)!
  - c. Principle: The Lord requires the impossible from us; not that we may be cast upon our own resources but that we may learn to rely upon His Divine Power. We have to learn to come to the end of ourselves and let Christ be our live.
2. The Resources for the Lord (Vs. 38)
  - a. John’s account reveals that the lunch was donated by a young boy found by Andrew (John 6:8-9). Andrew comments “...but what are they among so many.” “The disciples had mathematics in mind; the Lord had a miracle in mind!” (Phillips) They forgot to include Christ in the equation.
  - b. Maclaren writes, “Calculations which leave out Christ’s power are not quite conclusive...Five loaves and two fishes, plus Jesus Christ, come to a good deal more than two hundred pennyworth of bread.”
  - c. Principle: Christ asks us to place at His disposal **what we have, not what we don’t have**. So often we spend our whole time focusing on what we DON’T have and fail to simply give God

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what we DO have. “Jesus uses our resources for the basis of His wonders.” (Maclaren)

3. The Readiness for the Lord (Vs. 39-40)
  - a. We note the parallel truths of God’s Divine Power and human responsibility in this account. Christ will do the miracle, but the disciples’ job is to prepare for it. This is the obedience of faith.
  - b. An orderly seating arrangement would facilitate distribution of the food as well as keep Christ as the focal point.

### IV. The Performance of the Miracle (Vs. 41-43)

#### A. The Prayer before the Miracle (Vs. 41a)

1. The posture of Christ’s prayer – “looked up to heaven” Conveys the dependence of Christ as perfect man upon the Heavenly Father to work through Him.
2. The content of Christ’s prayer – “and blessed” John says he “gave thanks”. Prayer before a meal is a Scriptural practice.

#### B. The Power of the Miracle (Vs. 41b)

1. “brake the loaves and gave” = the word ‘gave’ is the imperfect tense meaning he gave and kept on giving. “The miracle of multiplying by dividing and of adding by subtracting began.” (Phillips)
2. Illustration: Like the widow’s handful of flour and little oil that didn’t run out for many days (1 Kings 17:8-16), the bread and fish kept coming from the hands of Christ till all were abundantly fed.
3. Christ’s power as the Creator demonstrated through this miracle as He brought into existence literal food that didn’t exist previously. The power of Christ is inexhaustible. He can give and give and give of His power and yet His power is not diminished. “He bestows and is none the poorer. The streams flow from the golden vase, and, after all outpouring, it is brimful.” (Maclaren)

#### C. The Principle of the Miracle (Vs. 41b-42; John 6:35)

1. There was a higher truth this miracle was meant to convey that went beyond the physical needs of the people. This miracle would set the stage for Christ to challenge this same group of people concerning their spiritual need to receive Him (Christ) as the bread of life.
2. John 6:35 “*And Jesus said unto them, **I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.***”
3. John 6:47-48 “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. **I am that bread of life.***”
4. John 6:51 “***I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.***”
5. Illustration: Jesus used a similar analogy with the woman of

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Samaria where He likes Himself to living water (John 4:14)

### **D. The Plenty of the Miracle (Vs. 42-44)**

1. They were filled (Vs. 42) What a picture of the Gospel! Only the Lord Jesus truly satisfies. “O taste and see that the LORD is good...” (Ps. 34:8)
2. There were fragments (Vs. 43) The abundance of the miracle didn't negate the need for the disciples to prudently use what had been provided.
3. There were five thousand (Vs. 44) Matt. 14:21 adds “beside women and children” so this crowd could have been somewhere in the order of 20,000 people!

### **Conclusion:**

1. To the unsaved – have you received Jesus Christ who is the bread of life?
2. To the saved – are you serving in faith and dependence upon Christ?