

### Feeding of the 5000 – Bible

To get the full story of this, we have to go to all four of the Gospels. So the Bible reading is from Mark 6.30-44, Matthew 14.13-21, Luke 9.10-17 and John 6.1-12 !

#### The Bible

The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat (and 'when Jesus had heard what had happened – John the Baptist's death), he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place (Bethsaida). But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. People followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing those who were ill. The Jewish Passover festival was near. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus welcomed them and began teaching them many things, spoke to them about the Kingdom of God and healed their sick.

By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat."

But he answered, "You give them something to eat."

Jesus said to Philip, 'Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?' He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

They (Philip) said to him, "That would take more than half a year's wages. Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat? And only enough bread each to have a bite."

"How many loaves do you have?" he asked. "Go and see."

Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, 'Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?'

Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied. When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, 'gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted' and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, 'Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.'

## Kingdom Purpose – setting the scene

The last verse of the Bible reading sums up what our lives should really be all about – ‘After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, ‘Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.’

God’s business is often called the “Kingdom of God” in the Bible. This just means praying for God’s purposes and plans to happen on earth. God calls us to be part of this and to make this the main thing in life.

The purpose of the kingdom living is to live the kingdom with purpose.

So remember that this ‘Kingdom of God’ business is our kingdom purpose: for others to know the prophet (Jesus) who was and is and who will once again come into the world.

## Steps and Stops

A life with Jesus is often about motion, about being sent, going and doing. But one speaker says that God not only plans our steps; he also plans our stops. As another person has said, we’re not just human doings, we’re human beings. Psalm 46.10 tells us (and the nations) to be still and know (recognise, understand, perceive) that he is God. In this Bible story, the leading of Jesus was to a place of rest. Maybe you need a rest today?

The Bible teacher Derek Prince said he never took vacations. But he did take holidays. Vacation is from the root word ‘vacant’ whereas the word ‘holiday’ is from the root ‘holy day’. He didn’t want to do something without purpose but something that was from God.

There was always purpose behind what Jesus did and what he does. When Jesus leads you, there is always a purpose. And he may have a surprise or two up his sleeve. Like feeding five thousand men...

So maybe God is saying to you today: “Go and see.”

## Good things for you to do that God’s already planned

The people recognised Jesus and the disciples and recognised where they were going. They even got to the place that Jesus was going before Jesus did. When God sends you to places, he sends people to you. You go somewhere and there are people there waiting for you! When I was in Kansas City, it was amazing how many times I bumped into people in amazing ways like I’d be sent to talk to the people by God.

In one of the movies made by Darren Wilson, there is the true story of a Christian in India who has a dream and goes to a certain temple to look for a certain man. He eventually sees this man and speaks to him about Jesus. This man is a Hindu priest but has had a vision from Jesus the night before and saw the Christian in his dream. Jesus told him to go to the same place and meet the Christian. As a result the man became a Christian and now runs churches and disciples others.

If you’re walking in the will of God and being obedient, the people will already be in the place where you are going.

So... who is waiting for you? Will you go? Are you ready to give an answer for the hope that you have? Have you prepared your God story for others to hear – a simple summary of how you met God and what God has done in your life?

## Compassion and meeting our needs

Jesus had compassion on the people and saw they were like sheep without a shepherd. I heard one speaker talk about his time living in a place where sheep and goats would come past. The sheep trotted behind the shepherd but the goats were all over the place doing their own thing. There's a message here. Are you a sheep or a goat?! Be a sheep!

Jesus showed that he didn't just care about super-spiritual things! He cared and he cares about the stuff of life – like food, drink, being hungry. And he showed that he's super-able to provide what we need. Of course we also see Jesus' message of provision that there were 12 baskets of food left for his 12 disciples!

2 Corinthians 9.8 tells us that "God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work." Jesus never really carried money but was always rich – as Derek Prince says, anyone who can turn 2 fish and 5 loaves into feeding probably 20000 is not someone who is poor!

If you're a follower of Jesus, you're a son and daughter and you have a Father in heaven who's always ready to provide for you – just remember he may ask you to do something but even then he'll help you!

## Partnership

Do you think the disciples were listening to the teaching of Jesus? If they were do you think they took it in? Jesus healed the sick and taught about the Kingdom of God and the disciples saw all of this happen. But then when Jesus gave them the opportunity to partner with him in doing Kingdom of God miracles, they were a bit clueless. Maybe they were hungry!

As Joyce Meyer says, we do what we can do and God does what we cannot do. The disciples and the boy did what they could do – asking around and then bringing the 5 loaves and 2 fishes. But then Jesus did what only he could do and multiplied the fish and the bread. And it was effortless for him. He just asked the disciples to help out and he did the amazing stuff. The Bible tells us that it's Christ in us that is the place where the power comes from. It's not us so we don't take the credit but we also don't need to worry!

God uses small and weak things to mess with the heads of people who think they are wise – the tiny amount of bread and fish ended up feeding the many. The loaves and fish were symbolic (a picture in the natural that reflected a spiritual principle), both of God doing much with little and of the little doing much. All because of the power of Jesus.

Jesus knows what's going on but he invites us to partner with him. Jesus asked the disciples 'what shall we do with the bread' but knowing already what he had in mind to do. Jesus could have simply done a miracle. But like the story of Jesus turning water into wine, Jesus asked others to get involved and be part of the miracle. He's saying the same thing to you today.

# The Broken Bread

The disciples picked up 12 baskets of 'broken' pieces of bread and fish. There is a process in being a disciple. Some people need God to break into them, others need God to break them and others are broken already. But this was gathered in by the disciples, brought back to life to be used. We need to make sure as Christians that we don't leave people out there on the battlefield. They are to be brought back, nurtured and released.

The movie 'Hacksaw Ridge' tells the incredible true story of a soldier in WW2 called Desmond Doss who rescued 75 wounded men from the Battle of Okinawa. One by one, he went back at great personal cost and brought the men back to camp. He was awarded the Medal of Honor by President Truman and died age 87 in 2006.

Jesus' body was broken like the bread and fishes. Could it be that Jesus was demonstrating a prophetic act (something that Jesus did to show a model of what would happen) about his life, death and resurrection when he offered himself as a living sacrifice?

Interesting that the bread here in the story was barley bread. We see Barley in some interesting places in the Bible – from Ruth gathering up the barley in the field of Boaz (Book of Ruth) to the enemies of Gideon (a man of God fighting bad people) having a dream about barley smashing into their tent, causing them to fear the sword of Gideon. Barley is often associated with 'truth' in the Bible. 'Bread' is often associated with provision and supply. Fish of course also has significance with being fishers of men. And the 'sword' represents the Word of God. So maybe this story has some deeper meanings too!

## "Waste Not Want Not"

Nothing be wasted – Jesus was a good steward and environmentalist! I once spoke with a Christian who said they weren't worried about the environment. "God is going to destroy it all and re-create it anyway." Right theology but only in part. God put Adam in the garden and told him to look after it, tend it, care for it and nurture it. This is part of our responsibility as Christians. Cut out waste: recycle everything: be a good steward. God will hold us accountable with what we've done with our time and resources and I believe that will include care with people, animals and environmental care. But we don't worship any of these things!

But more than that, this is a model for us after the sacrifice of Jesus – we don't want to waste what God has given us. The challenge for each one of us is to be a good and faithful steward. Let your light shine before men. Don't hide your light. God has prepared good works in advance for us to walk in. Just as God said to Moses, 'what is that in your hand?' God says to us – what skills, talents, gifts, ideas and abilities has God given you? Use them and watch God do incredible things in and through you!