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FIVE LOAVES, TWO FISH FOR A PARTY OF THOUSANDS (John 6:1-15)

The story we will study here is the only miracle of Jesus recounted in all four gospel accounts (except for the resurrection.) In our last study in chapter five, we saw important teaching Jesus gave on his relationship with the Father. When chapter six starts, there has been a gap of six months to a year.

*John 6:11-15 - After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little." One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here who has **five barley loaves and two fish**, but what are they for so many?" Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, **about five thousand** in number. Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost." So they gathered them up and **filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten**. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!" Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.*

As this passage begins, Jesus is healing and performing many signs. He takes his disciples away after a hectic time of ministry, but the crowd follows them. Instead of hiding from the crowds or becoming upset with their persistence, Jesus has compassion on them and since the time was getting late, he began thinking about their

physical needs (which apparently the crowd didn't consider.)

Jesus' heart for people didn't allow him to be indifferent or get bothered with them. Even though the crowd didn't have the best motivation (wanting to see more healing) and didn't have the best timing (following while Jesus and the disciples were headed away), he still loved them and wanted to meet their needs. In a parallel passage, Mark tells us that he saw them as "sheep without a shepherd." (Mark 6:34)

THE DEEPEST OF NEEDS AND GREATEST OF OPPORTUNITIES MAY NOT PRESENT THEMSELVES AT A CONVENIENT TIME OR PLACE.

We can see that Jesus' solution to the hunger of this crowd was meant to benefit his disciples as much as the whole group. The situation looked impossible and Jesus knew it was the perfect time for a teachable moment. When he asked Philip where they could buy food for the crowd, the text tells us this was a test. Philip failed the test by immediately starting to do the math. Eight months' wages couldn't even buy a mouthful for each one there. We often think just like Philip, turning to our resources and ideas instead of trusting God and knowing he has the power and ability to take care of our needs in ways we cannot imagine. So we all need to learn the lessons Jesus taught his disciples that day on that huge, grassy field.

PHYSICAL NEEDS HAVE IMPORTANCE.

The text says that everybody ate and had as much as they wanted. He multiplied the five loaves and two fish, but the result was a huge amount of food. The throng

was made up of five thousand men, so the whole number of the crowd could have been between 15,000 to 20,000 total. And Jesus knew that their bodies would need satisfied as well as their souls. We all benefit from a God who knows and meets our needs.

*Matthew 6:26 – Look at the birds of the air, they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. **Are you not much more valuable than they?***

We should be grateful for, and find ways to help and support community efforts that meet physical needs like food pantries, free clinics, and others that seek to minister to the bodies *and* souls of people. Jesus understood how crucial that is.

GOD OFTEN DOES MUCH WITH LITTLE

We already saw the enormity of the problem and that Jesus asked Philip what his solution would be. And we know Philip immediately thought in human terms – what the cost would be, the man-hours it would take. But Andrew (Simon Peter’s brother) at least found a little food that a boy had, although he probably didn’t think it could amount to much.

Do you feel like you don’t have much to offer the Lord? Surely he could do so much more with other people more talented or smart or charismatic or wealthy. Christians must bring their lives to God in a spirit of obedience and sacrifice, no matter how insignificant they may think their gifts or talents are. When doing so, expect God to do far beyond what can be imagined. Also, Christians should trust that God not only wants to meet the needs of His children, but He wants to lavish His children with spiritual blessings, even to overflowing.

Christians must never believe their resources are too little to serve God. God delights in taking a humble, seemingly insignificant person and using him or her for His glory.

CHRIST ORIGINATED, THE DISCIPLES PARTICIPATED

It is noteworthy that Jesus fed the people *through the agency of His disciples*. He could have simply snapped His fingers and caused everyone present to have a meal, but He didn’t. Instead, He “gave . . . to his disciples to distribute to the people”. In this way, the disciples had to trust the Lord for everything they distributed. They could only give as they received. Philip, Andrew, and the rest were put in a position of total dependence upon the Lord for the supply. God still uses people the same way today

CHRIST DEMONSTRATED HIS DEITY AGAIN

When we read an account like this, it’s hard to imagine the look on the people’s faces who witnessed the miracle. They must have been absolutely astounded, but we have to remember what John said about the purpose of his writing this gospel book:

*John 20:30, 31 - Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; **but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.***

CHRIST PROVIDED MORE THAN ENOUGH

Everybody was stuffed, from one little boy’s lunch. Twelve disciples helped distribute the food and there were twelve baskets full of leftovers. Do you think maybe Jesus wanted the disciples to see first-hand just what kind of authority he had?

*Ephesians 3:20, 21 – Now to him who is able to do **immeasurably more** than we ask or imagine, **according to his power** that is at work within us, to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen.*

BIBLE STUDY

Legislators and Staff (During Session)
Thursdays, 8:00 a.m.
(ZOOM)