"FEEDING THE FIVE THOUSAND"

Read Matthew 14:13-21

Of all Christ's miracles, only one is recorded in all four Gospels; namely, the *Feeding of the Five Thousand*. But why is this miracle recorded four times, when the *Feeding of the Four Thousand* is recorded only twice; and when an astonishing miracle like the resurrection of Lazarus is recorded only once? The answer may be as simple as this: In the *Feeding of the Five Thousand* we learn so much about our Savior—His compassion, involvement, power, and generosity; and not in a desperate setting like a cemetery in Bethany or a storm on Lake Galilee; rather, in a setting as basic as our need to eat.

The Savior's Compassion

At times, even we are tempted to doubt God's compassion. "God, why did you let this happen to me—this illness, this accident, this job loss?" Yet, the Bible assures us that God is full of compassion and mercy. The psalmist wrote, **"The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love,"** Psalm 103:8.

According to Matthew 14:14, **"When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, He had compassion on them and healed their sick."** Notice. Jesus had compassion on the multitudes before one person said "Jesus, I'm sick" or "Jesus, I'm hungry." Don't think of the Savior's miracles merely as acts of power, but also as acts of compassion.

The great magnitude of God's compassion is seen in this: He has given us what we do not deserve—forgiveness and salvation in Jesus Christ. Indeed, our God cares about every aspect of our lives, from eternal life to daily bread.

The Savior's Involvement

Jesus miraculously fed five thousand men. But including women and children, the number may have been 30,000; comparable in size to such Florida cities as Winter Park or Key West. One look at the multitudes and Jesus could have easily said "forget this" and walked away. But He did not. Instead, His great compassion moved Him to great action. He fed each man, woman, and child.

God is involved in our lives too—and to the point of caring about our growling stomachs. What better demonstrates God's involvement than the Incarnation, when Jesus came to be with us and one of us? What better demonstrates His involvement than the sacrifice of Christ to atone for our sins? And if Jesus willingly laid down His life for us, will He begrudge us a change of clothing or loaf of bread? Of course not.

The Savior's Power

Jesus is God. Jesus has all power. Jesus can do anything. This is a lesson you and I desperately need to learn. The original disciples needed to learn it too. They were the ones who said to Jesus, **"This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food,"** Matthew 14:15. What was the Savior's response? **"You feed them."** Why did Jesus give His disciples this impossible task? To show them their weakness and His strength.

Amazingly, none of the disciples learned this lesson. A month or two later, when faced with a similar impossibility at the *Feeding of the Four Thousand*, the disciples asked Jesus: **"Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?"** <SIGH> But perhaps we can forgive the disciples, knowing that we have done the same. How many times has God delivered each of us in the past; yet, we still doubt His power to deliver us from future problems? <SIGH AGAIN> As in the *Feeding of the Five* Thousand, Jesus has the power. Jesus miraculously provides the meal. Our role is simply to distribute the food and collect the leftovers.

The Savior's Generosity

The Lord blesses us so richly, we always have leftovers. **"They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over,"** Matthew 14:20. Or as the apostle John said of Jesus, **"From the fullness of His grace we have all received one blessing after another,"** John 1:16.

When facing hardship and heartache, remember the *Feeding of the Five Thousand*. Remember the Savior's compassion, involvement, power, and the generosity with which He laid down His life and provides for all our needs.

Written by Pastor Mark Weis
GraceLutheran.Net

All Scripture quotations are taken from: The HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved. The New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.