

In the second week of our Jesus series, we find ourselves in Matthew 14:13-21 where we read of Jesus feeding the five thousand. This is an astounding and very important miracle. Of the 35 individual recorded miracles of Jesus, this is the only one recorded in all four Gospels (Mark 6:31-44; Luke 9:12-17; John 6:1-13). Clearly, it was an important miracle! An expression of Jesus' divinity and His absolute power over matter. He used five loaves and two fish to feed over 10,000 people (The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children. Matthew 14:21).

This was not the only time that Jesus miraculously multiplied food to feed the masses. In Matthew 15:29-39 (also recorded in Mark 8:1-9), we read of Jesus feeding 4,000 with seven loaves and a few fish.

### Three things that stand out from the feeding of the 5,000 plus women & children:

#### 1. Christ's compassion

When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed those who were ill. Matthew 14:14. When the disciples suggested Jesus send the people to the nearby villages to get food, He replied: *'They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.'* Matthew 14:16.

Whenever we see Christ's compassion, a miracle was about to happen! For example, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, *'I have compassion for these people.'* Matthew 15:32 (feeding of the 4,000). And in Matthew 20:34, Jesus has compassion on two blind men and heals them: *Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.* There are many more examples of Jesus compassion and miracles in the New Testament.

**Jesus also has compassion for us:** When we are hungry, tired, unprepared, have made a bad decision, etc., Jesus has compassion!

**And Jesus has compassion through us:** When Christ indwells us by faith His compassion is in us. And Christ in us wants to express His compassion through us. If our leaning towards people in need is cynical or harsh, we need to allow His compassion to grow in us and flow through us. More can be accomplished with compassion than criticism.

#### 2. Christ's provision

Jesus created a problem to provide the solution! It was Jesus who kept the crowds there all day, healing and teaching them. Jesus instructed the disciples not to send them away. And Jesus gave the disciples the impossible task of feeding the crowd.

Jesus was more interested in the character of the disciples than in their comfort. He created the problem of the hungry crowd and then when the disciples came to Him, He didn't give them a solution, but gave them another problem... "You feed them." This presented a further problem: "We don't have enough!"

It was then that Jesus told them to give Him what they had (an act of trust) and then to take it and pass it on (an action). The miracle of the multiplication of the food happened in the hands of the disciples! Finally, to drive it home, Jesus makes them pick up all the leftovers - 12 baskets (one per disciple).

It is interesting to note that later on in Matthew, we read of the feeding of 4,000 (chapter 15) and the exact same thing happens... A different place with a different crowd, but the same disciples. And guess what! They come with the same problem: Where could we get enough food to feed all these people? They get the same result as the story in Matthew chapter 14 - Jesus performs another miracle and multiplies the food again!

In Matthew chapter 16 the disciples and Jesus go on a boat trip on the sea of Galilee and they forget the bread. Jesus warns them to be on their guard against the "yeast" of the Pharisees and Sadducees (religion with no relationship, i.e. hypocrisy). The disciples' response to this is: "it's because we didn't bring bread with us."

Jesus reminds them that when they fed the 5,000, they picked up 12 baskets of leftovers; and that when they fed the 4,000, they picked up seven baskets of leftovers. And then He says: You still don't understand!

This challenges us. Miraculous provision in our past should stir our faith in God providing for the problems in our future. But often we forget the lessons of the past and get anxious about our present situation.

Jesus is the Provider. We don't have what it takes to be the perfect husband/wife/parent/son/daughter/entrepreneur/employer/employee... for every need. We need to take what we have (our five loaves), thank Him for His help and then allow Him to work through us. The key is in Matthew 14:19: *Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves.* The vertical (looking to Him) always precedes the horizontal. The vertical empowers the horizontal.

#### 3. Jesus Christ satisfies all hunger

*They all ate and were satisfied.* Matthew 14:20

John recounts this story (John 6), but he gives a little more information... the next day (after this miracle)

the crowds looked for Jesus again, and He tells them that the only reason they sought Him out was because they had eaten the loaves and had their fill. He goes on to say: *Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.* John 6:27. And after engaging in a bit of conversation with the crowd, He declares: *I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.* John 6:35.

This miracle pointed to a bigger truth – every human

being has a spiritual hunger. Blaise Pascal put it like this: “There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every person, and it can never be filled by any created thing. It can only be filled by God, made known through Jesus Christ.”

Jesus is the BREAD of life. Christ is enough to satisfy the hunger of the world. My role as a Christ-follower is to receive the Bread of Life and take the Bread to a hungry world.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Icebreaker (Choose 1)

- Do you have a memorable picnic experience to share?
- What would your ideal picnic look like (if money was no object)?

### Questions For Groups (Choose 2 or 3 questions)

1. What stood out to you from Sunday’s message?
2. Can you think of a time when you felt overwhelmed by the sheer size or scale of a challenge or task you were facing? What did it feel like? What did you do?
3. Read Philippians 4:4-7. What do these verses teach us about how we should respond when we feel overwhelmed?
4. What circumstances in your life tend to push you to rely more on, and believe in, God’s provision for you than you may in your normal course of life?
5. When did God ask you to do something you had no resources for? How did you know He was asking that? How did you respond? What was the result?
6. How would you describe the response of the disciples to the presence of a huge, hungry crowd? How would you describe Jesus’ feelings for, and attitudes towards the crowd? How does this differ from that of the disciples?
7. Consider the miracles of the feeding of the 5,000 (Matthew 14) and the feeding of the 4,000 (Matthew 15). Why is it so easy for fear to jump into our lives like it did for the disciples when we’ve often just watched God do something amazing?

## PRAYER POINT

Spend some time praying for our upcoming Alpha course. For the group leaders and for those coming to the course; as well as those that have not yet been reached.

## ACTION POINT

Consider how God is asking you to use the resources He’s given you. Has He laid it on your heart to lead an Alpha group? If yes, ask your LifeGroup leader to pass your details on to Nikki Thomson at the CityHill office.