

Christ Feeding the Multitude

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 6:1-15

Preached on: Sunday, May 4, 2014

We come now to the exposition of the word of God. In John 6:1-15 where we have this amazing miracle of Christ feeding the multitude, the only miracle during Jesus' earthly ministry that is recorded in all four gospels. Let me read the text to you.

“1 After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias). 2 A great multitude was followin Him, because they were seeing the signs which He was performing on those who were sick. 3 Then Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat down with His disciples. 4 Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. 5 Therefore Jesus, lifting up His eyes and seeing that a great multitude was coming to Him, said to Philip, 'Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?' 6 This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do. 7 Philip answered Him, 'Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little.' 8 One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, 9 'There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?' 10 Jesus said, 'Have the people sit down.' Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. 11 Jesus then took the loaves, and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted. 12 When they were filled, He said to His disciples, 'Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost.' 13 So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. 14 Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, 'This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.' So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.”

May God add his blessing to the reading of his word.

This event has such profound implications for all of us who know and love Christ. In fact, this week as I meditated upon it, I found myself often moved to tears and I pray that the Spirit will help you see some of these same truths. Basically this morning, folks, I want to tell you about my Jesus. I want you to hear about your Jesus. Let me give you a little bit of the background here, it's very important: a year has now passed since Jesus explained his union with the Father, since he defended his claims to deity to all of the murderous Jewish authorities in chapter 5, authorities that wanted him dead. Motivated by love, he has shocked them with his scathing expose of their true spiritual condition, a method of evangelism that is foreign to our seeker-sensitive culture. He has told them that they're

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spiritually dead, that they're bound for judgment, that they did not have the word of the Father abiding in them. He told them that because they sought the glory of men rather than the glory of God, that they had no grasp of Scripture, therefore, they weren't able to recognize the Messiah that stood right in front of them. He told them that because of this, Moses will one day accuse you before the Father. And he's going to become even more offensive in the days to come as he unmask their true spiritual condition that they might repent and believe in him.

The other gospels record the amazing events that increased Jesus' fame during this long gap between chapter 5 and chapter 6 which really help us understand the enormous multitude that is now following after Jesus. Now, of course, John's intention here is, once again, to record the largest of Jesus' miracles so that he will have even further evidence to his claim to deity so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing ye may have life in his name. But as we come to this actual event, we cannot help but marvel at the compassion of our glorious Savior, the very compassion that he has for each of us. Frankly, a virtue that we can very easily take for granted in our affluent culture.

I was thinking about this just this last week as I was reading some things about current events and looking at the news. We are watching the systematic demolition of our country along with all of the nations of the world. As we look at it, we see nefarious people who oppose our constitution, our freedom, our way of life. People that absolutely hate genuine biblical Christianity. We see them infiltrating our government; many of them are now ruling over us. People today in our country don't trust the government. Taxes and regulations have a stranglehold on the diminishing number of people who will work to support the exceedingly growing number of people who will not work. The United States is in a moral and economic free-fall. The statistics that have just come out indicate that there is absolutely zero growth in our economy. Many experts say that it's a high probability that our economy will soon collapse under the weight of its own debt, much of which China holds. Our enemies no longer fear us; they mock us. Folks, we don't need experts to tell us that we are living in a very vulnerable situation today.

“Well, I just don't believe any of that will ever happen.” You know, that's what the people of Rome said and every other great civilization that has fallen. You say, “Well, why bring this up?” For good reason, folks, and that is to loosen your grip on this world, to once again look to Christ and rejoice in the one who will never leave us nor forsake us. Praise the Lord Jesus who is the Creator, the Sustainer, the Redeemer, the Protector, the Provider, the Avenger, the Consummator of all things. Proclaim Jesus who rescues men from their sins and find strength in him because we can do all things through him that strengthens us, right? To relax in Jesus who said, “Do not be anxious for your life as to what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor for your body as to what you shall put on

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for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things but seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things shall be added to you.” Dear Christian, I don't want you to be anxious about anything that's going on in the world today because ultimately, we are citizens of another kingdom and we serve the living Christ. But if you do not know Christ, I want you today to be terrified. You have committed treason against the most high God. You stand under his wrath. You stand condemned and you need to hear about my Jesus this morning. Dear saints, let's all, once again, get lost in the wonder of our blessed Redeemer and King.

I've divided this text into four categories that I hope will help you understand it and we're going to see: first of all, the selfish seekers; secondly, the doubting disciples; thirdly, the compassionate Creator; and finally, the single-minded Savior. So, let's look first at the crowd, the selfish seekers in verse 1. “After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias),” as it's sometimes called. So, what we see here is that in verse 4, for example, the events in chapter 6 are taking place just prior to Passover which would have been one year after the unnamed feast in chapter 5:1 which was probably a reference to Passover. So, many things have been going on here since verse 1 of chapter 6. In fact, Mark 6 reveals how the 12 disciples had just finished an exhausting season of ministry where they preached that men should repent. They shook the dust off their feet, they pronounced judgment against those who rejected the gospel. The text there says that they cast out demons, they healed many sick people so they were fatigued. That's grueling, arduous ministry. In Matthew 11:1, we read how Jesus also had been teaching and preaching in the surrounding cities while the other 12 had gone out in pairs. In Matthew 14:13, there is a description of how they had just heard the sad news of the execution of John the Baptist so they were motivated here to withdraw for some rest.

In fact, in Mark 6:30 we read, “The apostles gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught. And He said to them, 'Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while.' (For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.) They went away in the boat to a secluded place by themselves. The people saw them going, and many recognized them and ran there together on foot from all the cities, and got there ahead of them.” Now, from the port of Tiberias which is on the west side of the Sea of Galilee, to the other side where they went would be about 5-6 miles so for a small sailing vessel, this would have taken probably two, maybe three hours depending upon the winds. And it would be about 8-9 miles to run up around the north side of the Sea of Galilee where you would have the cities of Capernaum, Corazin, Bethsaida and so forth and so probably what happened here is the young outran the old and the others would come along eventually and they were there actually to meet Jesus and the disciples. By the way, where they went is what is commonly called today as the Golan Heights. I was just there last October. This is the area that the Israelis captured in the Six Day War in 1967. Lots of tank movements there;

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heavy fortifications. You can get up on the top and look way off in the distance and see Damascus. You look on the other side and you see the Sea of Galilee way down below and Israel out to the west.

So, these people were motivated to go those 8-9 miles to get around to meet Jesus and Jesus and the disciples are exhausted. Yet, we see that Jesus still takes time to teach them. Verse 2, "A great multitude was following him because they were seeing the signs which he was performing on those who were sick." Folks, imagine what that would have been like. Imagine if Jesus were here in Joelton and you hear about the things that he's doing. You're going to get your family, especially your sick loved ones, and you're going to do everything you can to go to Jesus. Plus, you want to see the miracles. There are going to be thousands of people pushing and shoving and you're going to try to somehow get close enough to hear him and see him and touch him and experience him. But like the naïve and ignorant crowds that fill the vast auditoriums of prosperity preachers, the masses here perceive Jesus as a physical blesser, not a spiritual Savior. They are selfish seekers. They are not hungering and thirsting for righteousness. They are not mourning over their sin. They are thrill-seekers, by and large. They are craving food, they want fortune, they want freedom. They are blind to his glory and grace. They want to be happy not holy. That's how it is today in many places.

We will later see that once they understand the true gospel, once they understand their need for repentance, faith in Christ, once they understand God's sovereignty that Jesus preaches, they will abandon him. In fact, later on in verse 65, we read what Jesus says, "No one can come to me unless it has been granted him from the Father. As a result of this, many of his disciples withdrew and were not walking with him anymore." Friends, both then and now, this is the reaction of false disciples. Promises of miraculous blessings to somehow meet some personal felt need will draw many people to pant after Christ but it will draw very few to Christ. Yet it's interesting, in Mark's gospel, chapter 6:34, he reveals how Jesus' unflinching compassion continues to reach out to this crowd as they continue to come to where he's at. There we read, "And when he went ashore he saw a great multitude." By the way, as you will understand later, this multitude would have been between 15-20,000 people ultimately. It goes on to say, "And he felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd and he began to teach them many things." In fact, in Luke 9:11, Luke says, "He began speaking to them about the kingdom of God." Bear in mind, this is not what they wanted but this is what they needed.

So, we've seen the selfish seekers, what about the doubting disciples? Jesus knows the weakness of their faith. He's fully aware of the doubt and discouragement and some of the confusion that is beginning to grip their heart as they see the reaction of some of the people and they hear of John the Baptist's death, his execution. So, Jesus is now going to test them to teach them to grow them. Verse 3, "And Jesus went up on the mountain and

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there he sat with his disciples.” By the way, he's apparently he's moving away from the initial group of the crowd. If you have ever been there, you can see how the terraces just keep going up and up and up until it goes way up to the top of the Golan Heights. Then he says something interesting, John records something very fascinating. Notice in verse 4, “Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand.” You know, this is the type of statement that we typically read and just kind of gloss over. “Okay, feast of the Passover for the Jews here is at hand.” Well, what's the significance? It certainly tells us on the one hand that it would be going in March and in April. It will also tell us that many Jews would be traveling that same route on their pilgrimage to Jerusalem. You see, this is kind of like their Fourth of July so their intense nationalistic zeal and their hatred for Rome would really motivate them to look for a king.

But I think there's a far more theological significance to this little verse. Let me explain it to you. The first Passover recorded in John's gospel in chapter 2 describes Jesus portraying himself to the people as the temple that must be destroyed, “And in three days I will raise it up,” he says. So, the first Passover points to the death of Christ and then the third Passover in John 11 is in the context of Jesus' actual death. But here we have this Passover in John 6 that's sandwiched in between the two and in this particular situation, we see Jesus revealing himself in unmistakable glory as the Creator, the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel whose flesh is the true bread of life pictured in the Old Testament manna during the Exodus. And you will recall that the Exodus was a picture of redemption; it was a picture of salvation based upon a sacrifice that pictured the deliverance from sin and destruction. All of that pointed to the cross of Christ and now here we have thousands of Jewish people making their way to Jerusalem to celebrate the original Passover and they encounter the bread of life, the Messiah. According to verse 33, the bread of God which comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world. It's interesting that later on at the Last Supper, Jesus will transform that Passover feast from the old covenants of works and the law to the new covenant of grace. He will do away with the old. He will bring in the new. He will move them from law to grace, from Moses to Christ, from bread to flesh that must be eaten figuratively. So this verse is very informative. Now, the Passover, the feast of the Jews was at hand.

Let's look more closely at this issue of the doubting disciples. In order to better understand the scene, we can read in Mark and Luke that it's getting late in the day. Alright, put yourself there. In Matthew 14:15 it says, “When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, This place is desolate and the hour is already late so send the crowds away that they may go unto the villages and buy food for themselves.” Now, let's go back to John and verse 5. Notice what happens: “Jesus therefore lifting up his eyes and seeing that a great multitude was coming to him said to Philip, Where are we to buy bread that these may eat? This he was saying to test him.” The term “test” means also “to prove” him. “For he himself knew what he was intending to do.” Now, Jesus knew that

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there was no place around there to buy bread. There are no grocery stores, no restaurants, anything like that and they didn't have enough money to do so even if they could. Isn't it interesting how the Lord loves to put us in situations that are seemingly hopeless to get our attention to test us? That's what he's doing here. He wants to see where we will turn for help. Will we turn to our own resources? Or will we turn to him? You know, we're all quick to recite Philippians 4:19, "My God shall supply all my needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus," and then when we're confronted with some situation, somehow all of that goes out the window and we don't rest upon that great promise. We get all panicky and nervous.

So, Jesus knew what Philip and the others would do in this dilemma, they're going to try to find a solution apart from Christ. Notice verse 7, "Philip answered him, Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little." By the way, 200 denarii, that would be eight months of wages. "That's not even enough," he's saying, "even if you give them a little bit." In other words, this is just an impossible situation. Philip's faith was weak. Even though he had witnessed Jesus perform many miracles and he knew that God in the past had provided manna from heaven for his ancestors in the wilderness. It's interesting that Mark's gospel indicates that Jesus commanded the disciples to "go look." Go look around in the crowd to see if anyone had any food. Now, why did he do that? Well, I think to reinforce the magnitude of the problem #1, but then secondly, to give them time to pause and say, "You know what? This is hopeless but, Lord, it's not with you so, Lord, we beg you to do something." But that didn't happen.

So, Andrew comes back and gives the report here in John 6:8, "One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother said to him, There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish but what are these for so many people?" Now, folks, can't we all see ourselves here? The disciples are in the presence of the Creator of the universe and somehow they're not tapping into his resources. I mean, we can all say, "Five barley loaves and two fish, what are these for so many people?" In other words, "Lord, we're toast here. It's hopeless." They fail the test. Oh, we of little faith. Don't we do the same? How often when confronted with some great dilemma, we panic, we pout, we cry, we anesthetize. In subtle ways, we shake our fists and say, "God, this isn't fair." We moan and groan rather than going to the throne to find grace, to find help in time of need, and then patiently wait for God to prove himself powerful on our behalf. Usually he does that in some way that is absolutely unimaginable and that's what he's going to do here. Ah, but our Savior knows our weaknesses. By the way, that's why he tells us in James 1:2, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith is going to produce," what? "Endurance and let endurance have it's perfect result so that you may be perfect and complete lacking in nothing."

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So, Jesus takes charge. Notice what happens in verse 10, “Jesus said, Have the people sit down.” Now, I can assure you even though the Scripture doesn't say it, that was the last thing that the disciples were thinking he was going to say and that's typically the way the Lord works in our lives too, what he tells us to do. It's like, “Say what?” “I want you to have the people sit down. Okay?” So, we go on and we read, “Now there was much grass in the place so the men sat down, in number about five thousand.” Now, I want you to notice for a moment what Jesus didn't do: he didn't rebuke his disciples or berate them because of their little faith. He just puts them to work. He just puts them to work and they respond in obedience. Now folks, as we're going to see, this is a huge crowd, 15-20,000 people. To get them all to sit down, can you imagine what that would be like? Beloved, there is a great lesson here: when, not if, your faith grows weak, what should you do? Be obedient to those areas in your life where God tells you to do something. Take inventory: what do I know he wants me to do? And then do it. If you stay obedient, he's going to strengthen you, he's going to teach you. If you launch out on your own and you show off and you act the fool, he's going to chasten you.

And also as I look at this, we need to always rejoice in God's gracious provision even in the midst of confusion and helplessness. I want you to notice that little sentence, “Now there was much grass in the place.” Think about it: it's not the hot season here where everything is dry and dusty and nasty. You see how the Lord provides for their comfort? He knows what he's doing. My friend, I don't care how bad it gets, if you look around, you're going to see God's hand of provision, you're going to hear his voice of compassion, you're going to hear his authority. “Sit down. I've provided much grass for you here. I want you to relax. I'm in control.” That's the idea.

Now, think about it: why sit? Well, partially because God is a God of order not of chaos, 1 Corinthians 14:40, “Let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner.” And Mark says that the disciples had them sit in groups, 6:40, by hundreds and by fifties. Now, we don't know for sure but probably what you have here is 200 semicircles of 100 people each ranked symmetrically because this was the customary arrangement for the distribution of food amongst the Jewish people and their festivals and their feasts. But I think there's another reason why he wanted to have them sit down. Not just so it would be easier to distribute but I think he wants everybody to be able to see the miracle that's going to take place. If everybody is standing around, you can't see. You know, you're wanting to get up on top of people, especially those that are short. And as I think about it, what does our Shepherd do? Psalm 23:2, “He makes us lie down in green pastures.” The Lord is about to do this, the Shepherd knows where and when and how to feed our souls.

On another note, Matthew 14:21, we read again, “There were about 5,000 men who ate aside from women and children.” So, if you add the women and children, you would probably get in the neighborhood of 15-20,000 people. By the way, why did he mention

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the men? We don't know for sure but I think it's a tenable hypothesis to believe that these were the guerrilla warriors that knew about Jesus and they were ready for their command from the king. That's probably what's going on.

So, we've seen the selfish seekers, the doubting disciples, let's look at the compassionate Creator in verse 11. "Jesus therefore took the loaves and having given thanks, he distributed to those who were seated. Likewise, also the fish as much as they wanted." Here we see the love of Jesus for the unbelieving hungry sheep without a Shepherd. It's interesting, I think, to note that all through his ministry he performed miracles that met the needs of the people in terms of their healing and their deliverance from demons and so forth. He even gave life to people. You know, he could have made trees fly; he could have made camels sing. He could have done anything. He could have turned chickens into elephants; he could have turned kittens into mountains. He could have done all of these things but instead, he chose to minister to the needs of the people because he is the compassionate Creator.

Now, on another note of observation here, I find it interesting that he didn't just create a massive pile of loaves and fishes; he didn't have the tables like we have them out here when we eat and have all the people come and serve themselves. It's interesting, Mark and Luke indicate that there was a miraculous multiplication that occurred from Jesus' hand. The texts say that he continued to give the disciples the bread. It just kept appearing from his hands. Wouldn't that have been amazing to see that? Folks, you realize this is the same Savior we serve today. In Mark 6:41, we read that "he broke the loaves and," it goes on to say, "kept giving them to the disciples to set before them." And he adds that he divided up the two fish among them all and so forth. By the way as a footnote, notice the sequence here: he took the bread, he blessed it, he broke it, he gave it to the disciples. Do you see any parallel there? The parallel of the Lord's Supper of which this pictures at some level.

Now, imagine being there. You always want to read the word of God and put yourself there as best you can. So use your imagination here. You're out in the middle of nowhere. I mean, even to this day it's pretty remote. It's getting dusk. You're hungry. You already know that you're going to have to sleep outside. You look around, there's Jesus, there are 12 disciples, they are 12 baskets and there are 200 semicircles of 100 people all around you and you don't even know it but you're there for the wrong reasons and you're wondering if there's going to be enough for you, right? I mean, come on. You would have wondered, especially if you're in one of those circles towards the end there. Jesus is walking with the disciples apparently, going to each circle of people and he's filling their baskets with his hands over and over again. The word of God doesn't say this but I would believe that you could of heard a pin drop during this time. Don't you know you would have said, "My goodness, look at this. The food just keeps coming. Jesus, he just keeps

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giving and giving. There is no end to his provision. There is no end to his resources.” The text says that he supplied as much as they wanted. Beloved, is this not a picture of his infinite grace for us?

Now, imagine the lesson the disciples are learning. So much for the whining, “Only 200 denarii worth of bread and that's not sufficient, you know, even if you just receive a little. I mean, we've only got five barley loaves and two fish. What are these for so many people?” Don't you know they're eating those words by now. My, what a lesson for us to learn and here it is: the Lord delights in exposing the weaknesses of our faith so that we might learn to trust him, that we might learn to enjoy him and to glorify him.

Now, I want you to notice what else didn't happen. Jesus didn't just nod his head as he could have and boom, there's food on everybody's lap on some plate. He didn't do that. What did he do? He used 12 ordinary men and one of them was a devil. Even so, dear friends, he uses us to accomplish his purposes. Is that not amazing? I think of what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:9 regarding this privilege. He says that we are laborers together with God. He uses not many mighty, not many noble. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:27, “God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong.” Aren't you glad he uses sinful, hard-headed men and women like you and like me who foolishly tend to rely on their own resources to accomplish his purposes?

We know according to Hebrews 11:1, “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen.” “Oh, but Pastor, my faith is so weak. I don't know if I can trust God to meet my needs if I give to him first. I don't know if I can trust God to sustain me if I lovingly confront my husband. I don't know if God will help protect me if I truly share the gospel with those who are hostile towards it. I don't know if God will help me if I put off my sin and put on Christ.” Ask yourself: where are you afraid today? Where are you frustrated? Where are you weak? Do you trust God? If so, are you being obedient to what you know he's asked you to do? That's the issue. You know, sometimes, folks, we just have to build an ark. Even though we've never seen any rain. Why? Because God said so. Sometimes we just have to hide baby Moses in the bulrushes because God said so. Sometimes, like Abraham, we just have to obey not knowing where God is really taking us because God said so. Sometimes, like Sarah, we just have to trust God to do the impossible because he's promised to do so. And sometimes you just have to have folks sit down and take your pathetic little basket and serve even when there doesn't seem to be enough of you to go around because God said so.

Verse 12, I love the first phrase here, “And when they were filled.” Isn't that great? There wasn't anybody who went away hungry. “And when they were filled, he said to his disciples, Gather up the leftover fragments that nothing may be lost.” Folks, don't miss

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this: when we trust in God's provision, he always gives more than what we began with. He always does that and he always gives us more than what we need. The question is: will you trust him for that? You remember the story of Job? In chapter 42:10, we read that when the Lord restored the fortunes of Job, "The Lord increased all that Job had twofold." Well, that wasn't the way Job thought that that would ever happen. In fact, Jesus says in Luke 6:38 that he will "give in good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over," and that what he gives will "pour out into your lap." Do you trust him for that?

So, Jesus not only fed the thousands of all they could eat but he provided enough extra for the doubting disciples to eat on for several days just kind of to reinforce the message, right? Well, we've seen the selfish seekers, the doubting disciples, the compassionate Creator, finally, the single-minded Savior. Given the awesome nature of this miracle, the Jews rightly believed that they were experiencing the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecy that Moses recorded in Deuteronomy 18:15-19. In verse 14 we read, "Therefore when the people saw the sign which he had performed they said, This is truly the prophet who was to come into the world." Now, they were right, this was the Messiah. He was the perfect anti-type of Moses who provided manna in the wilderness, I should say, who fed them through God's provision. But because they failed to accurately see their need for a Savior, they didn't see Jesus as the Incarnate Son of God, the bread of life. They were too focused on free food and victory over their Roman oppressors. Their thinking would have gone something like this: if Moses could have freed our ancestors from the bondage of Egypt, then surely Jesus can free us from the oppression of Rome. You see, they wanted a provider, a liberator, not a Redeemer, especially given the hard demands of the gospel that we'll read about later on in the chapter.

Friends, today there are predatory preachers by the thousands that offer a Jesus that people want, not one that they need, one that will satisfy their earthly appetites, one that they can somehow manipulate for their own self-serving ends like a genie in a bottle. But Jesus will have none of that. He had none of that here. He offers them the gospel, that which they needed but not what they wanted. McLean put it well, "The world will deify any leader who will give to the people enough bread and circuses while making no high moral and spiritual demands upon them but they will reject the true God if he asks them to receive what they do not want." Beloved, the only way anybody will ever want the gospel is by the regenerating power of the Spirit of God.

But Jesus is single-minded here in his devotion to do the will of the Father. He came first to seek and to save sinners before he would ascend his earthly throne. Now, you must understand that Jesus was Israel's king and eventually he proceed to Jerusalem to offer himself officially and finally as the King of the Messianic Kingdom in exact fulfillment of prophecy, knowing full well that they would reject him. But as he will continue to

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clarify to his disciples the ultimate establishment of the earthly kingdom promised in the Old Testament, it's going to be in connection with his second coming, not his first, when he returns as King of kings and Lord of lords.

So, in verse 15 we read, "Jesus therefore perceiving that they were intending to come and take him by force to make him king, withdrew again to the mountain by himself alone." I would imagine he miraculously transported himself away from the people up higher on the Golan Heights to find a place of seclusion. And as I was thinking about this, isn't it precious that our Savior will never, ever withdraw himself from us because we are hidden in him? He is the vine, we are the branches. He is the groom, we are the bride. He is the head, we are the body. Beloved, we are in Christ. Oh, what blessed oneness and intimate union we have with Christ.

I want to close this morning with this very brief practical application that I believe emerges from this text and it goes like this: the supply of God's grace stops only with our desire for it. Did you get that? The supply of God's grace stops only with our desire for it. Verse 11 says, "He gave as much as they wanted." Beloved, we need to treasure those words. Those of you who are in need, you need to hear this this morning: there is no limit to God's grace. Ask him for it. Ask him for it. He will give out of his endless supply to meet your need. Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 3:22 that "all things belong to you and you belong to Christ." What an amazing thought. James 4:2 says, "You do not have because you do not ask." Beloved, we have such little faith at times, don't we? Too often we refuse to draw upon the infinite resources that we have in Christ. If you are weak and discouraged, if you are tried and tempted this morning, if you are empty and lonely or guilty and ashamed, if you're bereaved and desolate, if your eyes are red from weeping and your heart is breaking, know this: that you are not without resource in Christ. All things belong to you because you belong to Christ.

So, beloved, may I encourage you to fall on your face before the Lord and hold out your empty little basket and ask him to fill it but just obey him and serve him. Draw upon the resources of our infinite Savior and his infinite grace from Christ Jesus, the one who lives to make intercession for you. As the writer of Hebrews tells us in Hebrews 4:15, "But we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses but one who has been tempted in all things as we are yet without sin. Let us therefore," what? "Draw near with confidence to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need."

My friend, if you have never trusted in Christ, I plead with you to do so today. Later, Jesus is going to say in John 6:35, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall not hunger and he who believes in me shall never thirst." Deep down you know that your sin has made you God's enemy. Can you deny your uncontrollable passions that bring such

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Christ Feeding the Multitude

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 6:1-15

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misery into your life? Can you deny the unhappiness and the misery and emptiness that you feel in the middle of the night when all is quiet? Can you deny the many disorders of your life and the way that you are ruled by your lusts and how sin has dominion over you? You cannot, you know that. Therefore, you live for yourself and not for God and as a result, you are miserable, you are at enmity with God, you are separate from God, you have been led captive by Satan to do his will, therefore, you stand guilty before a holy God. But, oh please hear this: the good news is that Jesus will forgive. He will give you his righteousness, something you are utterly helpless to do on your own so won't you believe in him today. Oh, how I want you to know and love and serve and worship my Jesus. He fed the multitude and he stands ready to feed you as well.

Let's celebrate his grace, amen?

Father, thank you for these truths. Thank you for the hope, the help that we have in Christ. Use what we have learned today to increase our faith and animate our service that we might experience the joys that you want to lavish upon us and that we might give great glory to you for it's in Christ's name that I pray. Amen.

We pray you've been edified by this presentation. You've been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at otcr.org.

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