

MATTHEW: THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

LESSON 37 – JESUS PROVIDES MATTHEW 14:14-21

The King Feeds 5,000 Hungry Subjects

Read Matthew 14:13-21

1. What were the circumstances when this great crowd of people sought help from Jesus (vv. 13-14)?
2. What was the concern of the disciples that evening (v. 15)?
3. What do the disciples suggest should happen to the fellowship at meal time?
4. What resources did they have to solve the problem (vv. 16-17)?
5. The sequence of verbs (“give thanks, break, give”) occurs again in Matthew 26:26. There are a number of overtones that connect this miracle with the institution of the Lord’s Supper. How do you think each of these verbs may direct the church today?
 - a. Give thanks
 - b. Break
 - c. Give
6. The prototype Old Testament event for the feeding miracles is the miracle of Elijah in 1 Kings 17:9-16, Elisha in 2 Kings 4:42-44 and the providing of the Manna in Exodus (16:11-16). The memory of these meals would help shape how the people received the gift of the fishes and loaves. What connections do you think they might make based on these two Old Testament meals?
7. Jesus gave instructions for an orderly meal (v. 19). Then he took their meager resources, a boy-sized lunch, and spoke the table prayer. After he had broken the lunch into pieces, the disciples began to pass around the food. How much did each person eat? What was the amount of leftovers? How many people were served (v. 20-21)?

8. The history of interpretation of this passage has included over time different emphases that reveal different longings and experiences, which of these sounds closest to your expectations?
- a. Salvation – Fives loaves/five books of Moses, two fish/prophets and writings, twelve baskets/twelve apostles. Jesus changes the Torah and prophets into a new spiritual food for the people in the wilderness. He is the new spiritual food that provides and is distributed through the twelve apostles instead of the twelve tribes.
 - b. Moral – Jesus wants to overcome the disciples’ greed and to get them to share. Inspiring the people to share the meager resources they have to help the greater group
 - c. Social – God takes care of the body, not just the spiritual well-being. Piety of the people includes not only spiritual but also physical cares.
 - d. Spiritual – One does not live by bread alone. The bread and fish are the tangible and tasteable word of the merciful one. The word of God is tasted but remains the Word.
 - e. Ecclesiological – Looking to the role of the disciples and the church, we start with little faith but there is more left over to keep working for Jesus.

Matthew also records the feeding of the 4,000 (15:32-38) in a section which culminates in Jesus’ discourse on fellowship. The meal was more significant for the ancient world than it is for most today. The meal established fellowship. The fellowship of this feeding of the 5,000 comes to an end, but Jesus’ fellowship with His own does not end. He comes to them across stormy waters.

The King Walks on Water

Read Matthew 14:22-36.

This crowd that had been miraculously fed had a misplaced confidence or faith. See John 6:14-15. They wanted Jesus to be their earthly king, their bread king. Jesus then ordered His disciples to go by boat to Capernaum on the other side of the Sea of Galilee while he sent the crowd of people back to their homes.

1. Jesus stayed on the east side of the Sea of Galilee and found a place in the hills for prayer. Matthew recounts Jesus praying here and in the garden of Gethsemane. This was possibly his original plan in Matthew 14:13. He prays apparently for several hours. Why do you think Jesus prayed?
2. What happened to these seasoned seamen as they rowed across the lake (14:24)?

The Sea of Galilee, located between high ridges, is noted for the fury of the sudden storms that sweep over it. Between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m., the fourth watch of the night, the disciples were still in the middle of the lake. Jesus came to them, walking on the water.

3. How did the disciples react to the sight of Jesus (v. 26)?
4. How did Peter demonstrate his faith (vv. 28-29)?
5. What caused Peter to sink (vv. 30-31)?

They landed at Gennesaret, which is three miles southwest of Capernaum on the west shore of the Sea of Galilee. Crowds of needy people arrived, and once again many are healed. Jesus and the disciples did not arrive at their announced destination, but people still found them. Jesus still healed them.