

The Source of all Satisfaction

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Preacher: Dave Bott

[0 : 00] Please open your Bible to Matthew chapter 14. We're going to read from verse 13 to verse 21.

This passage follows on from Jesus finding out about the death of John the Baptist at the hands of Herod. Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself.

But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, This is a desolate place, and the day is now over. Send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves.

But Jesus said, They need not go away. You give them something to eat. They said to him, We have only five loaves here and two fish.

[1 : 12] And he said, Bring them here to me. Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, And taking the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven and said a blessing.

Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples. And the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over.

And those who ate were about five thousand men, Besides women and children. I want to share a bit of an ABC article I read this week that I found interesting.

You may not, but I did. It's talking about the experience of being a follower of a sports team. So let me just quote a little bit here. It is a sense of community and identity, Not often seen outside the most ardent of religious sects.

A heaving mass of chanting and singing and passion. Yet the end goal of eternal life is replaced by a shiny cup or an aging shield.

[2 : 29] Held for an agonizingly short time by your sporting gods. Before the holy grail is handed back to be won all over again. It is simultaneously pointless and life-affirming.

This is your flock. And the bounce of a ball or the flick of a wrist is your shepherd. Anyway, you may not be into sports, But I think it just captured, if you are into sports, Just how much it can be almost a religion.

Certainly, I follow the EPL in England, And people get passionate. You may not be into sports, But I imagine we could write something similar About the way people devote themselves to their beauty, To their hobbies, To their careers, To renovating houses.

Certainly, many worship songs have been written about romance. I don't know if you know this song, But I think you pronounce it Hosea?

Hosea? I don't know. Someone can correct me after this. But it's called Take Me to Church. It's a guy speaking to his lover. I should have worshipped her sooner.

- [3 : 43] If the heavens ever did speak, She's the last true mouthpiece. My church offers no absolutes. She tells me, Worship in the bedroom. The only heaven I'll be sent to is when I'm alone with you.
- I was born sick, But I love it. Command me to be well. That's pretty forthright. I think they're just two examples of the honesty, That our hearts are idol factories.
- I think Calvin is famous for saying. Maybe it was John Owen. I'm not sure. We're always prone to committing two sins, Like the prophet Jeremiah said.
- Forsaking God, The source of living water. And then digging wells, Broken wells, That can hold no water. That can't satisfy us.
- But we keep trying. I think today's passage is showing us Where true satisfaction can be found. So you know where we're headed.
- [4 : 52] Today in the sermon, I'm going to first go back to a section in Matthew Because he's already told us the key To seeing Jesus properly. So we're going to quickly go there And then we're going to dive into the story And then I've got four things.
- I'm sure there's more than four things, But four things I think we can learn from this story today. I think we can learn who Jesus is, The kind of satisfaction we're actually wanting and needing, What it means to have faith in him, And why we can come to him.
- Today will be the last sermon in Matthew for the term. And just looking back, Yes, there was deep hope in those parables, The kingdom parables. There was lots of hope in there.
- But the context of those parables, And the context before, If you remember the narrative, Where we started this term, The Pharisees have decided he's got to die. They're convinced.
- It's by the prince of demons. He drives out demons. It's been a rather negative section. It's just been full of conflict and opposition. Jesus' rejection.
- [6 : 02] And then we had the shocking passages last week Of how deep that rejection has gone. And that rejection of Jesus is still the same today.
- And then we have this story. It's a lovely, warm story, isn't it? I think it's here to tell us, Make no mistake.
- Jesus' worth is not in any way diminished By the rejection of the world. The world might reject him. But what we see here and what happened that day, That does not diminish who he is And his worth.
- So Matthew has already given us, God, the Father's perspective of Jesus. People might reject him, But here is the Father's perspective.
- Do you remember chapter 12, verse 18? Feel free to flick back and take a look. Chapter 12, verse 18. He's quoting Isaiah 42.
- [7 : 10] Behold my servant. This is the Father talking about his son. His suffering servant. Behold my servant whom I have chosen, My beloved with whom my soul is well pleased.
- I will put my spirit upon him, And he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel or cry aloud, Nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets.
- A bruised reed he will not break, And a smouldering wick he will not quench, Until he brings justice to victory. And in his name the Gentiles will hope.
- That's the key to seeing Jesus properly. Remember that justice here is much bigger than how we might use the word justice. Justice here is talking about he's going to restore everything.
- He's going to put everything right. And who is it that receives this restoration? And we see it in this passage, I think. It's the smouldering wick. It's the person struggling.

- [8 : 09] It's the hopeless person. It's the person who is desperate. And like in chapter 12, where we find that quote, The Pharisees are starting to attack Jesus, And he withdraws.
- He doesn't attack in return. He doesn't use the political weapons to get the victory. So here in our passage, Herod has just said his conclusion about Jesus, That he's John the Baptist, risen from the dead.
- That's become popular. People know his opinion now. What does Jesus do? He doesn't defend that. It's really surprising. He doesn't overthrow Herod.
- He doesn't start his own campaign. He goes and turns his attention to the desperate. He just gets on with serving those who want his help.
- Other people might reject Jesus, But that does not change the fact he is God's chosen one, In whom God delights. And so should we. So that's the key.
- [9 : 22] To seeing Jesus properly. Let's get into the story. Let's get into the story. And I know this is one of those stories where it is so familiar to us That we might be tempted to switch off.
- So if that's you, Let's slap yourself a bit. Wake up. There is so much gold in here. Let's not just discard it because of familiarity.
- So he went to Nazareth. He went to Nazareth to give eternal life. And they didn't want it. They reject him. Herod rejects because he wants to keep living in sin.
- So who is it in our story who flock to Jesus? Who run on foot? While he's in a boat, they're running on foot. They wouldn't have known where he's going to stop.
- They're so desperate that they're just going to keep going until they get to him. It's the sick. It's people who have loved ones who are sick. It's those who are empty and they know they need filling.
- [10 : 31] And in Jewish thinking, remember, to be seriously sick would have been understood as being under God's curse. So there was a spiritual emptiness here as well.
- So in comparison to the Pharisees who consider themselves strong and pure religiously, these guys are the smouldering wick. And Jesus has compassion on them.
- Do they have faith to know that he's the Messiah? Unlikely. Probably not. But notice what Jesus does do with the little faith they have. He has compassion.
- He receives them. At his powerful hand, they find wholeness, physical wholeness. And let's not overlook, I don't know, how many miracles are contained in those four little words, and healed their sick.
- Even that's amazing. Could you imagine the joy in that room? Imagine if all the sickness among us right now, I can see a few families here where there's only one person representing today.
- [11 : 44] All the sickness was just healed. Imagine the joy we would have. It must have been an amazing moment. They've run to him for this purpose, and they're satisfied.
- They got what they came for. But they weren't as satisfied as they were aware of, as they thought.
- If you asked them, they would have been like, yes, I'm satisfied. But Jesus doesn't send them away. They're actually not satisfied. There's more they need, and he gives it to them.
- And I'm not just talking about bread, just as a hint. Could we pause before we get into the miracle itself, the big miracle that's recorded?
- What do you think a miracle is? How do you kind of conceptualise it? Do you see a miracle as God intervening from heaven and doing something, changing things, reaching into this cause and effect world and just doing something special?

[12 : 58] If you understand a miracle as God intervening, I'd suggest that that's not the best way to think of a miracle. Let me tell you about another miracle to try and illustrate.

Those who know a bit of church history, George Mueller, he was a missionary in England in the 1800s, and he, as well as preaching, he had a real heart for orphans, and he set up heaps of orphanages, himself running them, appointing other people.

Apparently, in his lifetime, 120,000 orphans received care because of his ministry. He was a huge effort. And it ran off the giving of other Christians.

And he records in his journal this one morning when the funds have run dry. There's nothing for breakfast. And he goes into the dining room.

I'll read a bit of it. There was nothing on the table but empty dishes. There was no food in the pantry and no money to supply the need. The children were standing waiting for breakfast.

[14 : 08] A knock was then heard at the door. The baker stood there. Mr. Mueller, I couldn't sleep last night. Somehow I felt you didn't have bread for breakfast, and the Lord wanted me to send you some.

So I got up at 2 o'clock and baked some fresh bread and have brought it. Mueller thanked the baker, praised God for his care. I said, children, he said, we not only have bread but the rare treat of fresh bread.

And almost immediately, there came a second knock at the door. This time it was the milkman who announced that his milk cart had broken down outside the orphanage and that he would like to give the children his cans of fresh milk so that he could empty his wagon and repair it.

I reckon that's a miracle. We might call it answered prayer. It's just the usual way of feeding the orphans was through giving and paying for food.

But this one time, it was very unusual. A miracle is God acting in an unusual way. Hebrews 1 says about the Son that he upholds the world by the word of his power.

[15 : 13] He's upholding everything. Every moment he is. He's involved in everything. He has his hand in everything. A miracle is just, he's doing something a bit unusual this time.

Colossians 1 says, in him all things hold together. And that's why this story of feeding the 5,000 should make us realise who Jesus is.

The prophet Elisha did something really similar. 2 Kings 4 records it. Elisha's disciples of 100 men were hungry and someone brought 20 loaves of barley.

So I should be able to do the maths. What's that? Oh my goodness. I'm having a brain fog. Someone help me here. Five. Thank you.

One loaf between five men. Now, when I turn up at Smoke and Joe's barbecue next month, I don't want to put pressure on the organisers and Joe.

[16 : 18] But I'm hoping for at least one bread roll to myself. At least. Not share it among four other guys.

And yet, the word of Elisha, the man of God, all 100 men ate and had their fill and there was leftovers. Only God's prophet could do something like that.

But what happened in Jesus' day on that grassy hill shows that he bursts out of this category called prophet. Five loaves, two fish, 5,000 men plus women and children, maybe 10,000, 15,000.

Now, that number means it's really hard to picture numbers, isn't it? My stab at who's in the room, I don't know, this has no authority, but 140, 150, probably in this room.

Damo, Lauren can correct me on this, but McDonald's, I looked up online how many customers they get in a day, the average McDonald's. One person guessed, one employee guessed 2,000 to 3,000 customers per day.

[17 : 40] So just think of that constant drive-thru. You better not be in that drive-thru. Just kidding. Anyway, funny joke. 3,000 to 5,000 was another person's guess.

So that's all those hungry customers. One McDonald's, a whole day's worth of business is the kind of numbers we're talking about. Constant stream.

And Jesus turns to his worried disciples because they're nowhere near cities that could cater for this amount of people. So don't picture desert when it says desolate.

Just they're not near a major city. They've got tiny villages nearby. And he says to the disciples, they need not go away. You give them something to eat.

It's funny. There's humour in the Bible, I think. I reckon seeing the disciples' faces at that moment would have been priceless. John's Gospel records them trying to solve this impossible command.

[18 : 41] One of them goes, it would take more than 200 days' wages to even buy a little bit for everyone. And I wonder what the look on people's faces were when Andrew brings the little boy with the lunchbox.

We've got five loaves and two fish. I'm picturing Sarah Morris at youth group when I was unorganised and I'd turn up unorganised. She'd just look at me.

I'm picturing that kind of look. Five loaves and two fish. Yeah, thank you. Okay, they come to the end of themselves and then Jesus steps in.

Bring them to me. And like the head of a Jewish family at the dinner table, he looks up to heaven and perhaps said the traditional, the regular blessing, blessed are thou, this is English, obviously translation, blessed are thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

And I know the administrative minded in this room are just amazed, as amazed as the food coming, as the administrative task of 12 disciples feeding about 10,000 people.

[19 : 58] Like how that worked, it's hard to picture. They all ate and all were satisfied. 12 baskets picked up.

So there's the story. I'd like to draw our attention to four things I think we can learn from it. Firstly, we see more clearly who Jesus is.

He is no mere prophet. He is the source of all things. Someone much bigger than Elijah and Elisha is here.

Anyone who claims to be religious and yet sees Jesus as a prophet or gives him a title of some other servant is suppressing the truth.

It's hard not to see in this story a mental link to Moses on the mountainside, providing an unusual source of bread to God's people.

[21 : 00] Men are in the wilderness, desolate wilderness. Back then, they had their fill, but no leftovers. They had the perfect amount.

Here, it is overflowing. Back then, they collected the flakes off the ground, knowing the bread came from heaven somehow. Here, the source is clearly coming from Jesus through the apostles to the crowd.

He is the focal point of the source. Maybe the 12 baskets, I'm not sure, but maybe the 12 baskets is trying to make us think of Moses with the 12 tribes of Israel.

Jesus is bursting out of the mold of prophet. He's even bursting out of the mold of Moses, the connection between God and his people. For some reason, I had this thought, and it crystallised the significance of what happened that day in my mind.

It may not do it for you, but this is what helped me grasp it. Jesus feeding so many people in such an unusual way, in ridiculous abundance, it reveals that he is also the source of those original five loaves and two fish.

[22 : 20] He's not just the one who multiplied. He's the one of those original five loaves and two fish. He's the source of everything. Now, I know when we say grace before a meal, that can be pretty religious.

It can be pretty mindless. We can sometimes pray, oh, Lord, turn this McDonald's into a nutritious meal and bless my body.

That's not the point of the prayer. God doesn't need us to say grace, but I don't mind it. I think it's a good habit to go, you are the source of everything.

I don't deserve even a morsel, and yet you give in abundance. Not just food. You are the source of everything. It's probably not a bad habit, is it?

To remember that Jesus is the one that we can enjoy food and fellowship, everything. Knowing that we have peace with the Father, we can delight in his gifts.

[23 : 29] So I think that's the first thing we learn. He's no mere prophet. He is the source of all things. I think the second thing we learn is what kind of satisfaction we're all actually hungering for.

So the crowds originally come to him for healing, but Jesus doesn't send them away at that point. He doesn't let them scatter, but he gathers. He gathers them.

They need not go away. I think this is something we Westerners struggle to see. It is because we're not quite a hospitality culture, but this is a story of hospitality.

This is a story of fellowship. Who you eat with is who you belong to, and that's your community. We call it fellowship.

Jesus gave the people what they were hungering for, and they didn't even realise they were hungering for it. Belonging to God, accepted by him, joyful community with Jesus at the head of the family.

[24 : 39] I think it's similar to Moses feeding in the wilderness. Yes, God provided the manna, but we're told in Deuteronomy why he did it.

Not just to teach his people that he's the source of food, but to teach that man does not live off bread alone, but from every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. I think the same here.

We're learning that we live off Jesus, every word, every promise, what he says about us, being gathered to God through him.

I remember a time I experienced, I think we constantly experienced this satisfaction. I think that's why we come to church. That's what Pete prayed for at the start, that we're constantly needing this satisfaction, this deeper satisfaction of knowing God more, Christ more, and belonging to him.

But I remember this time I experienced it, I don't know, a bit more clearly in a desperate time in my life. I was experiencing relational conflict, and it wasn't with Emma.

[25 : 49] I just want to put that out of there. And I'm sure you can sympathise, we've all had relational conflict, and it's agony, isn't it? Agony. And I was losing hope that things would change.

I thought my greatest need was the conflict to resolve, to be healed. I went to Lake Macquarie, got a coffee. Coffee, you don't have to do the coffee bit.

But I didn't know what to do. And so I just started reading John's Gospel. And I can't tell you what it was that helped me. I can't. There wasn't like a single idea in John's Gospel that went, Aha, that's the key to resolving this conflict.

That wasn't the solution. It was just focusing on Jesus. It just calmed my soul. It just soothed me, knowing that I belong to him, and he accepts me.

Anyway, I'm just trying to share an example of this satisfaction. That we might think we need God to solve our circumstances, but the deepest thing is being gathered to him, and knowing we belong to the shepherd of our souls.

[27 : 00] So I'm not sure what's making you discontent at the moment, dissatisfied. But I think we see on this hill where your deepest need for satisfaction is, and that Christ is ready to give it to us right now in abundance.

To see him more and know that you belong to him. Know that you belong to his flock. I think the third thing we learn is what it means to have faith.

And I think that's why Jesus tells his disciples, you give them something to eat. Otherwise, that's just a cruel command. It's not cruel. He's testing his disciples.

And it's not a test to see if they pass or fail. It's a test, as in test to learn. John's Gospel says that explicitly. Jesus said this to test, I think, Philip.

I don't think he was suggesting you can do the miracle yourself if you have faith. That's not the conclusion of the story. I don't think we should draw that conclusion.

[28 : 13] They try and solve it themselves, how much money they can have, how much food they can scrounge up. I think we see what faith is, that faith is turning away from the pretty rubbish efforts that we can conjure up and turning to Christ as the source of all things.

Later in chapter 16, Jesus said to them, to his disciples in Matthew, watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. And they take it as a criticism because they didn't bring bread on the journey.

And Jesus is frustrated. He's like, what are you talking about? How much leftover was there when I fed the 5,000? How much leftover when I fed the 4,000? Why are you focusing on what you did or didn't do?

Haven't you got it yet? That kind of thinking is exactly what I'm warning you about. That's religious thinking. That kind of thinking makes you not come to me and trust me as the source and just focus on what you can do or what you didn't do.

Faith is to look to the source of all things. Faith is to say, I'm not wise enough. I'm not strong enough.

[29 : 41] I'm not good enough to be in control of any aspect of my life to please God. But I know who is and I belong to him.

Faith is to look to him as the source of all things. And the last thing I want to draw our attention to is why we can have confidence to come to him.

I think we can think of God as holding back the best from us. We can think of God as trying to test us to see if we pass or fail and only blessing us if we pass. That's just wrong thinking about God.

And we see what God's character is like truly through his son here in this story. John King asked to hear what we're learning about in church.

And after hearing this story, John, bedbound, he wrote four words on his notepad. That overflow of God's grace. Part of the reason this story of the 5,000 can lose its impact on us is we forget how undeserving these people are to receive the healing, to receive the bread, to receive being gathered into God's flock.

[31 : 06] They are not deserving. We are not deserving. It's the overflow of God's grace. And there's a hint in this text. There's four verbs used.

Jesus takes, he blesses, he breaks, he gives. They occur in every single recording of this miracle in all four Gospels. Every one of the feeding of the 4,000 as well.

And we hear it again. You probably can guess when we hear it again. When he's alone with his disciples on the night of the Passover, chapter 26. Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread.

After blessing it, he broke it and gave it to the disciples and said, Take, eat. This is my body. The compassion we see here.

They could only receive that because he's so compassionate that he himself would be broken. So that we would be healed.

[32 : 11] Body and soul. Soul now, body later. As Isaiah said, Isaiah 53.

He was despised and rejected by men. A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised and we esteemed him not.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we esteem him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions.

He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was chastisement that brought us peace. And with his wounds we are healed. And all we like sheep have gone astray.

We have turned, every one, to his own way. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was broken to gather us in. Your soul can find satisfaction because his compassion is so great, he broke his body for you.

[33 : 17] And that's why the Father delights in him. That's why we need a delight in him. So as I finish, let's make no mistake.

The mass rejection of Jesus by those we know around Newcastle, around the world, as they fill their lives with broken systems that can never satisfy.

It is in no way whatsoever does it change the fact that Jesus is God's chosen one in whom the Father delights in.

He is the source of all things. He is the source of all satisfaction, gathering us into God's flock. And he will receive all who come to him in faith, who look away from what they can do for him and trust in what he can do for you.

And we can be confident that he will receive us because he is overflowing with compassion. He is the source of all satisfaction.

[34 : 29] Our soul now, everything else when he comes back. So let's keep coming to him to have our fill. Father, I know my words are like the five loaves and two fish.

It might sound good for a moment, but it won't really get into our hearts unless you multiply, unless your word itself gets deep in our hearts so that we can see just how great Jesus is, how he bursts out of any category we give him because he is your son, just how great your compassion is that you were willing to be broken so that we might be healed.

Lord, please help us to delight in you and to turn away from the things that the world tries to seek life in and just keep failing again and again to find satisfaction.

Please help us to come to you and to receive eternal life in knowing you. Lord, help us to do this so that we can live a life that honours you and puts you first.

in all things and so that we can show people where living water can be found. Lord, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.