

The Feeding of the Four Thousand

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[0:00] Jesus fed 4,000 that day. What is He feeding you today? Let's look. The Gospel for today is from Mark chapter 8.

! And it involves Jesus miraculously feeding 4,000 people. Mark 6, Jesus did another miraculous feeding, which has caused some scholars to say it's the same feeding just listed twice, which cannot possibly be true.

For one thing, Mark wrote concisely. If he could have done it, he would have lumped them together. But they are just too different for him to have done that.

So let's look at both feedings, sort it out, and see what it has to do with us. Alright, so, we need to look, first of all, at the author.

Of course, the author is the Holy Spirit, working through Mark. Mark wrote these words down about 30 years after Jesus walked the dusty roads of Palestine, what's called Palestine.

[1:21] And he was getting a picture of what Jesus was doing to share with us. And the quick summary is, Jesus feeds everybody.

Okay, that's kind of the bottom line. But let's look at these two feedings to compare and see what it has to do with us. That first feeding of 5,000 was in today what's called Northern Galilee, which was Jewish country.

There would not have been Gentiles in that crowd. This was a crowd of people who came to hear this itinerant rabbi. To be touched by him.

To be healed. So he met with them in Jewish country. And when it came time for him to do his miraculous stuff, he said, we've got to feed these people.

And the disciples said, cannot do it. And Jesus said, well, what have you got? What can you share? And they came up with five loaves.

[2:36] Okay, so here we go with Mark being sensitive to what the Holy Spirit is saying. Five, in this context, represents the Pentateuch.

The first five books of the Bible. Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, Deuteronomy. It's a Jewish event. All right, get it?

And then he takes the bread. He blesses it. Breaks it. Gives it to them. They all eat and are satisfied. And then he tells the disciples, pick up the fragments.

And they pick up twelve baskets of fragments. And it's interesting. And it's interesting. The Jewish word, the Hebrew word for basket in this context is a ritual basket.

It's used in Jewish ceremonies. And how many baskets do they pick up? Twelve. How many tribes of Israel were there? It's a Jewish event.

[3:42] I hit that with a stick until it was dead. Okay, so we get that. Now we shift. We shift locations and times.

A little while later, he's wandered down into southeast Galilee on the east side of the Sea of Galilee. Guess what? That's Gentile country. Jews did not usually go there. So you have to imagine that's a crowd of Gentiles.

Non-Jews. Why did they come to listen to a rabbi? Something about his teaching, the way he touched them, drew them to him.

Not only did they hang around, they hung around for three days. And finally Jesus said, you know, he didn't say this, but their bread's gone moldy.

[4:45] They're run out of food. There's not a circle K close by. We've got to feed these people, guys. And the disciples said, all we've got are seven loaves of bread.

Seven happens to be a Gentile at that time, number of perfection, of completion. Mark, sensitive to the Holy Spirit, is letting us know this is a non-Jewish event.

And Jesus does the same thing with loaves. Everybody is fed. They're all satisfied. And Jesus says, okay, pick up the extra fragments that's left over.

And how many did they pick up? Seven. Same number. However, Jesus feeds perfectly the Gentile person as well as the Jewish person.

All right. So, two events. Two events teaching us one lesson. Mark's intention, therefore, is to say that Jesus was not just forming a Jewish sect that would follow him.

[6:10] He was forming a universal movement that includes Jews and non-Jews and you and me. Which should be the end of the sermon, but I have to go on because I have to get a certain time in.

See, so. So, let's look at this passage. All right. If you would turn in your bulletins. Come on.

Let's see. What page? Oh. It's not in your. If you look in your Bible in the pew. You'll find it. What page is it on? 10-0-3.

10-0-3. Thank you. 10-0-3. I happen to have it. Someone printed me a sheet this week.

Thoughtful people. Okay. All right. So, we start with the first verse. In those days, when again a great crowd had gathered and they had nothing to eat, he called his disciples to him and said, I have compassion on the crowd because they've been with me now three days and have nothing to eat.

[7:22] If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way. And some of them have come from far away. Compassion. Come, which means with.

Passion. Compassion. Deep. Felt. Care. He cares for the people. Compassion. Mark is careful to record what the Holy Spirit has told him.

Jesus has a great attribute and it's called compassion. And it's for you as well as it is for these people probably on a hillside in Galilee.

All right. Verse 4. And his disciples answered him, how can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place? All right.

So, what are the disciples focusing on? The problem. When they ought to be focusing on God's solution.

[8:27] There it is. Impossible. You're not going to feed 4,000 people with seven loaves of bread. End of story. Well, not quite the end.

But it's the end for a lot of us. How often do you focus on the problem and not look at what God might have for you as a solution? I know I do. We live in an impossible situation.

In case you haven't noticed. We have to deal with things like family dynamics, work dynamics, health issues, our own image.

It's enough to drive you absolutely buggy. And it seems to come to us in stages. For some, it's trying to get ankle biters to do the right thing.

You know, we spend 18 months trying to teach them how to talk and then 18 years telling them to shut up. We have issues with our family dynamics.

[9:39] I don't happen to have those issues right now in this stage of my life. I'm privileged to spoil grandchildren. This Friday, I'll get to watch a grandchild get married.

I mean, I'm in a different issue right now. It's not family. It's not work. You know, I get up and say prayers with my wife and figure out, all right, what's on my agenda?

Oh, nothing. So I don't have that kind of a situation. What I have at my age is health issues. As you get older, in case you haven't noticed, things start to break.

They don't work as well as they used to. And it's enough to put you in bed. If you just focus on the problem. Okay, so I have to deal with cancer.

All right. God's got a solution for that. So there we go. I'm following the Lord Jesus. And my computer, for a second week in a row, has said, you have talked enough.

[10:47] Shut up. I'm shutting myself down. Okay. But I'm not going to pay attention to my computer. And so with these issues, it's enough to shut us down.

It's enough to starve us out. We need to remember a wonderful scripture, 2 Peter 5.7. Some of you have memorized that scripture. I hope you all will.

2 Peter 5.7. I can't remember it. Cast all your cares upon him, for he cares for you.

Grind that into your mind. Cast all your cares on him, because he cares for you. All right. Then we move to 5 through 7.

And he asked them, how many loaves do you have? They said, seven. And he directed the crowd to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves.

[11:44] And having given thanks, he broke them, gave them to his disciples to set before the people. And they set them before the crowd. And they had a few small fish.

Having blessed them, he gave that these also should be set before the people. Jesus now does his miracle thing. But he takes the bread.

He blesses the bread in true Jewish form. He breaks the bread as the host. And he gives it to the crowd.

Do you see a similarity with what's happening today? In a few minutes, I'm going to take the bread. Say the blessing.

Break the bread. And give it to all of us. Every time we have Holy Communion, we recreate the feeding of the 4,000.

[12:48] It's a miracle. Every time. Every time we receive communion elements, Jesus feeds our souls. Our starving souls.

Our worried souls. Often we hear that liturgical services are hollow ritual. Actually, our communion is a compassionate act of God to feed us, his children.

Jesus said in the 6th chapter of John, My flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed, says the Lord.

And so we get to verse 8. And they ate and were satisfied. And they took up the broken pieces left over seven baskets full. And there were about 4,000 people.

And he sent them away. They ate and were satisfied. Can we be satisfied in how Jesus feeds us?

[13:57] Can we be satisfied enough to facilitate the spiritual feeding of others? Can Church of the Holy Trinity be a spiritual feeding center?

It is. Some of us have been affiliated with this parish for a long time. People change. People come. People go. Mission stays the same. Feed the people. It's actually what's called a little church that can.

Isn't it? Some of us could be in a church in another part of the city right now where there are a couple thousand people. Today it's just us.

It can cause you to sort of give up on things. Why aren't there more of us? Why aren't these pews filled? Well, we don't know. We pray about that.

[14:56] We probably couldn't fit 2,000 people in here. But we could fit more in here. So part of our prayer is that people will come here, learn Jesus, and be fed.

So, we're getting to the conclusion. In a few minutes, I'm going to do that which I'm called to do. I'm going to take bread and bless it and break it and distribute it.

It's not a formal, hollow act. It's a wholesome family meal. So, my question to you, will you invite Jesus into your body and soul and spirit this morning?

Will you let your starving soul be filled? And this week, will you take some time, some quiet time each day to read his word?

Lord, that's another way he's going to feed your soul. And may he blessedly feed you this week. Let us pray.

[16:03] Lord God, you feed us in incredible ways, in ways we cannot even imagine. In our darkest moments, Lord, in our times of feeling abandoned, we covet your presence.

And we give thanks that it's not that you're invisible. It's that we simply don't see you. Share your love with us.

We pray this in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen. Amen.