

MIRACLES OF JESUS

THE BREAD OF LIFE - MARK 6:31-44

A. Context

1. The time was before Passover in the early spring, a year before the crucifixion of Jesus.
2. Jesus was rejected by those in His hometown of Nazareth.
3. Jesus received the news of the death of John the Baptist.
4. Jesus sent out the twelve disciples to minister and they return with a ministry report, Mark 6:30, *The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught.*
 - a. What they did by the authority of Jesus, Luke 9:1-2, *And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.*
 - b. Important point on serving
 - 1) Our ultimate joy is in Whose we are not in what we do since it is Jesus working through us.
 - 2) Luke 10:17-20, *The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."*

B. In search of rest (31-34)

1. They went by boat to a quiet place across the Jordan River (31-32), *And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves.*
 - a. Jesus took the disciples to an uninhabited place near Bethsaida, on the northeast side of the Sea of Galilee.
 - b. It would be a time for the disciples to rest after intense ministry.
 - 1) They had just completed their first ministry assignment without Jesus.
 - 2) Crowds were growing as they saw miracles performed by Jesus and His disciples.
 - 3) Ministry is tiring, physically, emotionally and spiritually.
 - 4) William Barclay, *The rhythm of the Christian life is the alternate meeting with God in the secret place and serving one another in the market place.*
 - c. It was a time of rising rejection of Jesus' ministry.
 - 1) The news of John the Baptist must have weighed heavily on them.
 - 2) The rejection of Jesus in His hometown, included disbelief by His family.
 - 3) In one year, Jesus would be hanging on a cross.
2. Many people followed after Jesus (33), *Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them.*
 - a. People anticipated the destination of Jesus and His disciples and they got there first.
 - b. The people were running to Jesus because they thought He could meet their needs.
 - c. Tom Constable, *Teaching was their greatest need, though healing was what they craved.*
 - d. Jesus came to meet our deepest needs but many just want bandages for their cuts and bruises.
3. Jesus ministered to them (34), *When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things.*
 - a. Jesus felt compassion for the people.
 - 1) Instead of being annoyed that sought-after rest would not happen, Jesus felt compassion for the people.
 - a) Compassion means *pity, sympathy*. In the New Testament, it is tied to physical as well as emotional response.
 - b) Luke 10:33, *But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion.*
 - 2) Charles Ryrie, *It is not sinful to grow weary in the ministry, but it is unchristlike to grow weary of the ministry. Compassion should motivate us to serve.*
 - 3) I am so thankful we have a Savior Who sees people as needy not as an inconvenience.
 - 4) *sheep without a shepherd*
 - a) Ezekiel 34:11-12, *For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered...*
 - b) This scene pictures the nation of Israel which has been in the wilderness without a leader.

- c) William Barclay gives three descriptions of sheep without a shepherd.
 - 1) *A sheep without the shepherd cannot find the way.*
 - 2) *A sheep without the shepherd cannot find its pasture and its food.*
 - 3) *A sheep without the shepherd has no defense against the dangers which threaten it.*
- d) Jesus is more than a miracle worker. He is the Good Shepherd.

b. He took time to teach them spiritual truth.

- 1) Luke 9:11, *When the crowds learned it (where Jesus was going), they followed him, and He welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God and cured those who had need of healing.*
- 2) Charles Ryrie, *He saw their hunger for truth, which their spiritual leaders had not met. They had no shepherd, though they had scribes and rabbis galore.*
- 3) Larry Richards, *God was seeking out and feeding Israel not only with bread but with truth as well.*

C. A need identified (35-37)

1. The disciples identified a physical need (35-36), ***And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat."***

a. The people had been with Jesus all day and had nothing to eat.

- 1) The disciples noted that it was getting late and the crowd had nothing to eat.
- 2) They acknowledged that the place where they were was isolated with no hope of finding food for them.

b. The disciples went to Jesus with a plan.

- 1) They instructed Jesus as to what to do. They had already forgotten that ministry is allowing Jesus to work through them.
- 2) They were thinking from the human perspective - the need is too great for us.
- 3) They looked at the circumstances instead of looking to Jesus.
- 4) William Taylor, *The world says to put away difficult issues but Jesus says we are to address the problems with mercy and grace.*

2. Jesus told them to meet the need (37). ***But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." And they said to him, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?"***

a. Their response was to determine how to buy food for the huge crowd.

- 1) They rightly calculated that it would cost 200 denarii, eight months of a man's wages.
- 2) There was no place available to obtain so much bread.
- 3) They didn't have that much money anyway.

b. Jesus intended for the disciples and the crowd to look to Him for their need.

- 1) Jesus wanted the disciples to realize that they were unable to meet the need themselves. They didn't have a plan big enough to meet the great need.
- 2) Thomas Constable, *The disciples' response shows that they had not yet learned to look to Jesus for all their needs. Instead of asking Him to provide what the people needed, they calculated the cost of the food and concluded that they could not afford to pay for it.*

D. A plan developed (38-44)

1. It was practical - Jesus directed them to utilize resources available (38), ***And he said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." And when they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish."***

- a. In John 6:9, Andrew responded to Jesus' question as to how much food was available, *what are they for so many?*
- b. Andrew had not learned that the resources we have are sufficient for every need that God sends our way.
- c. Thomas Constable, *...disciples need to realize the inadequacy of their resources, but they also need to understand that it is those resources, as inadequate as they are, that Jesus uses.*
- d. R. Kent Hughes, *It is good to understand our limitations and weakness, because then there can be no mistake as to where the power comes from.*

2. It was instructional - a confirming sign of Who Jesus is (39), ***Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass.***

- a. Ezekiel 34:23, *And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd.*
- b. *green grass*, Psalm 23:1-2, *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.*

3. It was orderly - people were placed into groups (40), *So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties.*
 - a. This was a demonstration of faith on the part of the people and that of the disciples, neither knew what Jesus was about to do but He can be trusted.
 - b. It allowed for orderly food distribution.

4. It was supernatural - Jesus sought God's blessing on the task (41), *And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all.*
 - a. Jesus blessed the food acknowledging that all depends on God's provision.
 - b. The miracle took place as Jesus broke the loaves, divided the fish and gave them to the disciples to distribute.
 - 1) *gave*, kept giving, the food multiplied in Jesus' hands.
 - 2) The more the disciples gave, the more they received so they could give more.
 - c. Just as God provided manna to the people of Israel and multiplied oil and meal for Elijah, Jesus provided food for the people who were following after Him.

5. It was successful - the plan was accomplished (42-44), *And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men.*
 - a. Everyone had enough to eat.
 - 1) Five thousand men.
 - 2) Women and children, in Matthew 14:21, *besides women and children*, probably grouped separately from the men according to Jewish custom.
 - 3) Disciples
 - a) 12 baskets remained, enough for each disciple.
 - b) When we serve others, our needs will be met, as well.
 - c) William Taylor, *The fragments were more than the original feast, for benevolence gains more than it gives... We should be frugal that we may be able to be liberal in our benevolence.*
 - b. People personally responded to Jesus.
 - 1) Some concluded that Jesus was the coming Messiah, John 6:14, *When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"*
 - 2) Some thought Jesus should be crowned king, John 6:15, *Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.*
 - 3) The disciples still failed to understand who Jesus is, Mark 8:19-21, *When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" They said to him, "Twelve." "And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" And they said to him, "Seven." And he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?"*

CONCLUSION

- A. Ministry is meeting the needs of others with Godly compassion.
- B. Ministry is trusting God to work through me to meet the needs of others.
- C. Ministry should be concerned about physical needs without overlooking the spiritual.