

# The Gospel of John

## The Feeding of the Five Thousand

**John 6:1-15**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

I would like for all of you to think for a moment about all of the miracles of Jesus that are recorded in the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John).

- The water being changed to wine at a wedding feast.
- The healing of two blind men.
- The healing of ten lepers.
- Walking on water and calming the angry sea.
- Casting a net on the opposite side of the boat and catching 153 fish.
- The raising of Lazarus from the dead.
- His resurrection from the dead.
- His ascension into heaven.

In all there are approximately 40 detailed miracles of Jesus listed in the Gospels. But these are just a small sampling of the miracles that Jesus performed.

John tells us at the end of his Gospel that there **were many other miracles that Jesus performed in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book as well as many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, even the world itself would not contain the books that would could be written.**

**John Tells us that he included the seven selected miracles found in his Gospel so that you may **believe** that Jesus is the Messiah, the son of God, and through believing you may have life in His name.** (Paraphrase)

With all of these miracles in mind, did you know that there is **ONLY ONE miracle**, apart from the resurrection, that occurs in all four Gospels? And that miracle is **the feeding of the five thousand** that is here in our passage this morning.

When you consider all of the miracles that Jesus performed this one stands out. What it tells us by mere implication is that it is so important that the Holy Spirit inspired all four of the Gospel writers to include it in their Gospel accounts.

### **All Stand and Read Scripture.**

#### **John 6:1-14 (NASB)**

**6** After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias).  
**2** A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the signs which He was performing on

those who were sick. <sup>3</sup> Then Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat down with His disciples. <sup>4</sup> Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near. <sup>5</sup> Therefore Jesus, lifting up His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him, \*said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?” <sup>6</sup> This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do. <sup>7</sup> Philip answered Him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little.” <sup>8</sup> One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, \*said to Him, <sup>9</sup> “There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?” <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> When they were filled, He \*said to His disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost.” <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> 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.” <sup>15</sup> 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.

## Prayer

Of all the miracles that Jesus ever did, this is the most massive miracle in sheer number. Verse 10 tells us that there were about five thousand men there.

**Matthew 14:21** adds, “Not including women and children.” Do we need to say it? Where there are men, there are women. Where there are men and women, there are children. I don’t know what the total number is, but the crowd was no doubt well over ten thousand.

These people are not just spectators of the miracle, they are participants in the miracle because they eat the meal. So this is a very intimate experience. There’s no other recorded miracle that Jesus did that involves so many people.

This miracle is a staggering testimony to the identity of Jesus Christ as God in human flesh, and that’s why it is in all four gospels. This miracle cannot be discredited or debated due to the sheer mass of eyewitness participants.

Many of the eyewitnesses would still have been alive when all four were written. Were it not true, the people would have called their bluff and no one would believe their Gospels.

The people who lived during the life of Jesus, they didn’t just get the sampling that we get in the Gospels, they saw this going on every day, miracle after miracle, after miracle, after miracle. Never is there any testimony that they rejected the miracles as real. There’s no doubt expressed by the leaders or the people as to the integrity of these miracles. Nobody claims they were fake, fraud, fictitious, that they were trickery, that they were some kind of sleight of hand, or some kind of magic. No. Because it would be impossible to do that. There were just too many of them, too open, too public, and too obvious of divine intervention.

Even Nicodemus, a powerful leader of the Jews said, “Nobody can do what You do unless God is with Him.” They did not know how to process this. Remember, they believe in one God. They were not yet fully able to grasp the Trinity that God is one, and yet three. They are not able to process how Jesus can be God and God be God, so they reject Christ.

## **BODY:**

### **I. THE FICKLE CROWD.**

#### **John 6:1-4 (NASB)**

6 After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias).  
2 A large crowd followed Him, because they saw 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 near.

The first thing I want you to notice is **the fickleness of the crowd**. John tells us that a large crowd followed Jesus. They saw the miracles that He was performing and many of them were sick. They desired His healing.

There's no question about the popularity of Jesus. His popularity is staggering. There's no question about His being a miracle worker. You know, fake miracle workers can gain crowds. They can draw massive crowds on the deceptive promise and sleight of hand and the chicanery and the deceit that they purvey. But here is a true miracle worker. He had power to draw thousands. He had power to draw tens of thousands of people. And that's exactly what was happening. Of course their interest was all superficial and self-serving. They wanted to be healed. And that sort of sets up the picture here.

Look, everybody wanted healing!. They were living in a primitive world. It would be two thousand years before a disease was ever diagnosed correctly. They didn't know what was wrong with them. There were no true diagnoses of issues other than those things that were external. So they just had no hope. There was no medicine. It was hopeless.

Jesus worked within the crowd for a long time, probably all day because **Matthew 14:14** says He spent the day healing the sick. **Luke 9:11** says He spent the day speaking to them concerning the Kingdom of God and salvation. And Mark says He did this because He was moved with compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

So His heart goes out to the crowd. He goes out to them because of their suffering in the physical world. It goes out to them because of their desperate spiritual condition. So He heals them and He preaches salvation in the Kingdom. He's doing it all day. But this is kind of a daily routine, moving among these thousands and thousands of people.

In **chapter 6 verse 26** Jesus said, "You seek Me because you ate the loaves and were filled." This is all temporal, physical food, it's personal well-being, personal fulfillment, personal satisfaction, personal ease. You know, the battle for bread was a lifelong battle in those days. Didn't have supermarkets and didn't have preprocessed foods, didn't have refrigerators. I mean, it was a battle for every meal. Somebody had to work to get every meal to acquire, to prepare to cook and then back up from that to plant, to grow, to harvest...they were all in the food chain at a very primitive level and life was not easy for them. If somebody came along who could heal all their diseases and give them free food, you know, this is wonderful for them. So this crowd is following Him, even though they haven't had a feeding miracle yet, they're coming because they're attracted by the healing. They came for temporal miracles, not the eternal words. When He started to speak eternal words by the end of chapter 6, they're running. Even some of those who were His followers, many of His disciples walked no more with Him, **verse 66**. They just bailed out.

They could not get past their fleshly desires.

## II. THE FAITHLESS DISCIPLES.

We have met the **fickle crowd**. Now we will meet the **faithless disciples**.

### **John 6:5-9 (NASB)**

<sup>5</sup> Therefore Jesus, lifting up His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him, \*said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?” <sup>6</sup> This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do. <sup>7</sup> Philip answered Him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little.” <sup>8</sup> One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, \*said to Him, <sup>9</sup> “There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?”

As the day begins to draw to an end, it’s late afternoon and the disciples, according to **Matthew 14:15** come to Him and say, “**This place is desolate**”. We went up in a mountain to get away, but the crowd has followed us.

Then they said, “The hour is late already, You’ve got to send these people away because they need time before dark to get to some town or some village where they can eat some food. Send them away.”

So Jesus says to Philip, “**Where are we to buy bread so that these may eat?**” The disciples are telling Him to send them away and Jesus is wanting to feed them.

Jesus is suggesting what seems to be an impossible situation. There were no resources. This is a desolate place, there’s nowhere to go to buy bread for this many people. He is really not looking for help from Philip. John tells us in **Verse 6**, “**This He was saying to test him, for He already knew what He was going to do.**”

What was the test? The test was to find out how much faith Philip had. It would have been a different story, perhaps if Philip had said, “**Lord, why are You asking me? You made everything. Without You was not anything made that was made. You are the Creator. We’ve seen You create. For all these months, we’ve seen You create. Why are You asking the question?**” Ah, he would have passed the test if he had put his trust in the power which he had seen displayed day after day, after day. He could have said, “Surely, You can do all these other things, You can make lunch or dinner for everybody.”

True to form, the weakness of the disciples shows up again. They see miracles all the time, so many that the books of the world couldn’t contain them. And they do not have faith for a miracle in this situation. So this is all about testing disciples and building their faith. Jesus knew exactly what He was going to do. Philip’s answer showed that He failed the test. There is some sarcasm in Philip’s answer, “**two hundred denarii**”. A denarius was a one-day’s wage for a Roman soldier or a worker. So **two hundred** would represent almost **seven month’s pay**. That’s a lot of money!

One of His disciples, Andrew, **verse 8**, Simon Peter’s brother, said to Him, “There’s a lad here who has five barley crackers and two fish. But what are these for so many people?” Now why does he pop up out of nowhere? Well, according to **Mark 6:38**, Jesus told the disciples to go into the crowd and find out what might be available.

That tells you a little bit about the crowd, that they hadn’t planned very well.

### III. THE MIRACLE MEAL.

We have seen the **fickle crowd** and the **faithless disciples**, now let's see the **miracle meal**.

#### **John 6:10-13 (NASB)**

<sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> When they were **filled**, He \*said to His disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost." <sup>13</sup> 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.

The disciples had told Jesus to send them away. It is going to be dark, there's not going to be any food. This is not going to be a happy group. They need to eat!

Jesus says, "No, just have them sit down. Sit them down." **Mark 6:40** says, "Jesus said, 'Sit them in groups of 50 and a hundred, sit them in blocks, fifty here and fifty there, a hundred here, a hundred there. It is thousands of people. All over the grassy hillside, these people are sitting down.

And then we see **verse 11**, this has to be the most understated act of creation ever! "**Jesus then took the crackers and having given thanks**," He's got thousands of people to feed and He's got five little crackers in His hand, and He's thanking the Lord for this wonderful meal that they're about to partake.

And then with no fanfare, no voice from heaven, no lightning, no thunder, He distributed to those who were seated. He just kept passing out crackers and fish. He had the crackers and fish distributed to all that were seated and they were able to take as much as they wanted.

I love that word "filled,". it's a word that suggests that they stuffed themselves on these crackers and fish.

Do you remember a meal that you had some time in the past that you just cannot forget? **Mine was a trip to Jennings, LA. I had shrimp gumbo over rice. It is the most satisfying meal I have ever had.** But even that meal probably didn't come close to this one. How many of them told the story to their children about the greatest meal they ever ate? They were filled. As much as they wanted.

And when everyone had finished eating they gathered up everything that was left, and **verse 13** says, it filled twelve baskets with fragments from the crackers left over by those who had eaten.

### IV. ATTEMPT TO MAKE JESUS AN EARTHLY KING.

While the disciples were trying to get their faith together in the face of all of this, you come to a final point. And that is **the people's attempt to make Jesus their earthly king**. You have the crowd, you have the disciples, you have the miracle meal, and you have the response of the crowd.

### **John 6:14-15 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup> 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.”

<sup>15</sup> 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.

The people see what Jesus has done and they...they say, “Wow, maybe this **is** the one who is promised in **Deuteronomy 18:15 to 19** in that great prophecy of Moses? This **is** the prophet who is to come into the world greater than Moses. This is our deliverer, **this is our Messiah!**

So what do they do? Do they say, “Let’s listen to what He has to say? Let’s hear His message since He’s a prophet from God.” **No!** They try to take Him by force. They desire to make Him their earthly King because He can provide the ULTIMATE welfare state. He can do all the miracles, heal everybody and feed everybody.

You know, if Jesus had been a guy who was just trying to get power, this would have been His shining moment. He would have let them make Him King. Thousands of people were a pretty big force and there would have been others coming from other places who had seen His miracles who might have swelled the crowd made it successful. This If what He wanted was power and authority, as some people claim, this could have been His moment. But at the very height of His popularity, He disappears to make sure that doesn’t happen.

The other writers say Jesus sent His disciples to a boat and told them to go across to the other side of the lake. Then He dismissed the crowd and went into the mountain.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Jesus isn’t willing to be a temporal earthly provider. This was another attempt of Satan to offer Jesus his earthly kingdom. But Jesus was here to do the will of the Father. The will of the Father was that He die on the cross for our salvation and set up a heavenly kingdom.

**People do not come to Christ for what they want. They come to Christ for what He demands!** He calls on sinners to grieve for their sin, to be obedient to Him, live for Him, serve Him, and suffer for Him.

When Jesus gives that message later in the chapter, **Boom**...they were gone! Jesus always drives the superficial crowd away with the demands of the gospel.

Why are these written? Why the record of the miracles?

### **John 20:31 (NASB)**

<sup>31</sup> but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

Why is it so important that we believe? Because “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.”

### **The Family of God.**