

A Feast in the Desert

Mark 6: 35-44

Our text today is one of the most familiar accounts recorded in the gospels. In fact, this is the only miracle Jesus performed that is recorded in all four of the gospels. It is a story that many of us have heard all our lives. I suppose it resonated so well down through the ages because of the compassion and sufficiency of Jesus revealed in this story. It provides hope and assurance that Jesus is more than able to meet our needs, regardless of the situation.

We have discussed on several occasions in recent weeks that many view the Lord as one who is distant and unengaged from our lives. We see Him as the God of creation and Lord of our salvation, and yet we often fail to realize that He is very near to us, taking an active role in our lives. He is a God of power, able to perform things beyond our comprehension, and He is also active in our lives, meeting our day to day needs.

As we discuss this familiar passage, I hope you will be reminded of the Lord's care and ability in regard to your individual life. I want to examine the [details](#) of this encounter as we consider: [A Feast in the Desert](#).

I. The Problem with the Multitude (35-40) – As we discussed in our previous study, a multitude of people had followed Jesus and the disciples to a desert region near the Sea of Galilee. With such a large gathering, a problematic situation arose. Consider:

A. The Dilemma (35-38) – These verses record a multi-faceted dilemma the multitude posed for the disciples. Regarding the dilemma, notice:

1. The Assumption (35-36) – [And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed:](#) ^[36] [Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat.](#) We don't have a lot of detail regarding the events of that particular day, but we do know the multitude had remained with Jesus the entire day. Nightfall was quickly approaching, and the disciples had nothing to feed such a large number of people. They urged Jesus to send them away so they would have time to go into the surrounding villages and purchase bread to eat.

- The disciples had assessed the current situation and determined that nothing could be done to provide for such a great need. The only solution to this problem was to dismiss the crowd so they would have time to secure provisions before dark. They had not taken the time to consider

the power of the Lord, or what He had planned. Are we not often much like the disciples? Many times we assess our current situation and immediately assume that it is hopeless without consulting the Lord or seeking to discern His will.

2. The Argument (37) – He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat? Upon hearing their suggestion, Jesus offered a simple solution – feed them! It is apparent that the disciples had already discussed how much money they had available at the time. Feeding such a multitude of people would have required two hundred denarii, literally six to eight month’s wages for one of the disciples. It is estimated to be about \$10,000.00 in today’s money. Such a request seemed impossible to them and completely out of reason. The disciples argued with Jesus, viewing His command as an utter impossibility.

- The disciples had already considered their resources and come to the conclusion that it would be impossible to feed this multitude. That is probably why they urged Jesus to dismiss the crowd. They are thinking simply in terms of what they had with them at the time. They were depending solely on human ability and resources.
- I am often amazed as I read these accounts in Scripture. Take just a moment to consider what these men have experienced in recent days and weeks. Jesus calmed the raging storm as they sailed upon the sea. He had delivered a man from demon possession; healed a woman of a disease of twelve long years; raised a little girl from the dead; and sent them out two by two, enabling them to perform miracles and proclaim the Gospel. They have witnessed all these miracles and yet they are unsure how this multitude will be fed.
- Before we get to critical, I would suggest that you and I often have the same doubts. We too have experienced the mighty hand of God in our midst and yet we often view our situation as an impossibility. We view our situation from a human standpoint, depending on our abilities and resources, and never see the Lord’s power and ability by faith.

3. The Appraisal (38) – He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes. Jesus sent the disciples out among the multitude to discover how much bread the people had among them. After a lengthy search through thousands of people, the disciples returned with the meager tally – five loaves of bread and two fish. That is definitely a small amount of food for such a large number of people, and yet it isn’t even as much as one might think. These were not loaves of bread like we would purchase at the store. They were actually very small pieces of flat bread, no bigger than a thin biscuit. The two fish were not large fish, but very small fish, likely the size of sardines. Among all the people, all they could find

was one little boy who had packed his lunch for the day. In John's gospel we discover the doubt of Andrew. [John 6:9 – There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?](#)

B. The Directive (39-40) – [And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass.](#) ^[40] [And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties.](#) I am convinced Jesus knew what was available before He sent the disciples to see what the people had brought. He already knew what He was going to do. As soon as the disciples gave their report, Jesus commanded them to seat the people in the grass – in groups of one hundred and others in groups of fifty. Jesus was preparing to feed this large multitude and He wanted the process to be as efficient and easy as possible. What the disciples viewed as a problem, Jesus viewed as an opportunity to display His power and grace among the people.

II. The Power of the Master (41-44) – In our concluding verses we discover the awesome power of our Lord. Consider:

A. The Division (41) – [And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave *them* to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all.](#) Jesus took the meager supply available, thanked the Father, blessed the food, and began to break and divide the bread and fish for the disciples to distribute among the people. What appeared no more than enough for a little boy's lunch, Jesus would multiply and divide among the masses.

- Can you imagine the scene? Jesus sent the twelve to distribute the food among the multitude. As one left with his basket filled, Jesus kept breaking and filling another basket. As the disciples emptied their baskets and returned for more, Jesus kept breaking and providing fish and bread. The well of grace and provision is so deep and vast that we will never exhaust its abundance. Like the disciples, each time we return, needing more, Jesus continues to provide!

B. The Satisfaction (42) – [And they did all eat, and were filled.](#) Jesus didn't provide an appetizer or a light snack; He provided a meal that filled each one, satisfying their hunger. He took a little boy's lunch and met the needs of thousands. He fully met their need. No one was overlooked or neglected.

- There is always satisfaction in the provision of Jesus. I am thankful we can come to Him and be filled. He has the ability to provide for our individual needs. He doesn't offer just enough to

get us by, but grace and mercy full and free. He daily meets our needs and satisfies us with His grace. Such grace is available to all who come to Him by faith. He stands ready to satisfy our need through His power and grace.

C. The Provision (43-44) – *And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes.* ^[44]
And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men. What initially appeared to be dreadfully insufficient, turned out to be more than enough. As Jesus multiplied the loaves and fish, He provided enough for those present and had twelve baskets left over. Thousands ate and were filled that day, and yet there was provision for more.

- There is a great miracle revealed in the text. Jesus took a meager supply and met the needs of thousands. As I pondered this miracle, I was reminded of the miracle of salvation. Jesus offered Himself on the cross for our sin. He came to this earth as the atoning sacrifice. The Bread of Life was offered to meet the needs of humanity. While countless millions have already been satisfied through the great provision of Christ, the abundance has yet to be exhausted. Salvation through His great love and grace continues to be freely offered. He continues to meet the needs of His children daily. What a gracious, loving Savior we serve.

Conclusion: What seemed hopeless became a time of abundance and satisfaction. Jesus took the little that was available and providing great abundance. The multitude lacked the power and ability, but Jesus took what they had and multiplied it. Why not bring your meager efforts to the Lord and allow Him to bless and multiply them in your life? If you are hungry spiritually, come to Jesus for the provision only He can provide!