



JOURNEY with JESUS

Plentiful

Carol Fox

Dear Heavenly Father, Hallowed is your name. As we look at your word today, help us to see the true meaning of the message. Through Christ we pray. Amen.

One of my many memories of my mother was how she could put a meal together for any number of people on short or no notice. When I was young it was not unusual for family or friends to go for a drive on Sunday afternoon. I think gasoline was less than \$1 a gallon at that time. They would stop by our house to what we would refer to today as “hang out” together. Mother always invited them to have a meal with us. Obviously, there was nothing miraculous about those meals. Yet, it amazed me how she could take what was on hand and feed many. Only in later years have I realized how many of mother’s God given talents were wrapped up in those meals. None of mother’s family had an economic need for the food. However, many spiritual and emotional needs were met around our family table.

The memory of my mother’s meals was the impetus for choosing the 6th chapter of John to share my thoughts about Jesus’s miracle of feeding the 5,000 men.

John 6:1-14 relates that Jesus had crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee and a great crowd had followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he performed to heal the sick. Jesus retreated to a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. He looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him and said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?” Philip replied, “Eight months of wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!” Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up: “Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fishes, but how far will they go among so many?” Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” Jesus took the loaves, blessed them and distributed to them as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. When they all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples “gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.” So they gathered them, and there were 12 baskets filled with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

Scholars believe the number of people fed was probably closer to 10-15,000 including women and children. Several things are noted about this particular miracle.

- This is the only miracle that is recorded in all four gospels. More people were involved than in any of the other miracles.
- It is the only miracle where he asked his disciples questions. He asked where shall we buy bread to feed the crowd and how many loaves do you have?
- It is the only miracle where he used someone else to contribute anything. The young boy provided the loaves and the fishes.

- It is the only miracle where he asked his disciples to serve him. He asked them to have the people sit down and Matthew recorded that he asked them to bring him the five loaves and two fishes.
- Lastly, it marks the only attempt by an Israelite crowd to crown Jesus as King (John 6:14-15). This miracle fulfilled the prophecy of Ezekiel 34 beginning in verse 12 concerning the ministry of the Good Shepherd.

Christ drew large crowds because they knew of the miracles he was performing. The crowds were amazed with the part of the miracles that met their physical needs. When Christ claimed he was the son of God and started talking about being the Bread of Life the crowd didn't understand what that meant. I wonder how many times we misunderstand the true message of scripture. The people wanted to keep Jesus around to serve as their magical baker and keep meeting physical needs. Jesus rebuked their spiritual shortsightedness. They ate the bread, but they were unable to see what this sign signified. In John 6:26, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw the miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill." Their motive was wrong.

This miracle serves as a reminder of many things.

It shows that Christ was powerful enough to perform the miracles any way he chose, yet he used the young boy to provide the initial bread. This reminds us that God uses ordinary people and modest resources to accomplish great things. It is also a reminder of the importance of sharing, the importance of small things, to make the most of what is available to us, and to put our trust in God. The disciples knew you couldn't create more food out of five loaves and two fishes to feed thousands. They had to put their trust in God.

God uses us and the talents we think of as small to do great works.

This miracle happened at just the right time to confirm Jesus's divine powers, and the fact that a crowd of thousands witnessed it first-hand lends credence to the idea that Jesus is the Messiah. This miracle serves as a fulfillment of the prophecies and a vision into our future eternal life with God. The fact that there were twelve baskets of leftover food after everyone had eaten all they wanted is a reminder to us that grace is plentiful and that it is free.