

Matthew 14:13-21 | Frank LeMunyon

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Date: 01 September 2024

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[0 : 00] Okay, how's that? All right, I hope my voice carries anyway. All right, well today we are in the book of Matthew continuing. Actually, we're about halfway through the book of Matthew because we're in chapter 14 and there are 28 chapters in the book of Matthew.

So Lord willing, if he tarries, then we'll have a chance to enjoy many more great sermons in this book. So we are going verse by verse. So if you have your Bible handy, we'll be covering Matthew 14 verses 13 through 21.

Our talk today is going to center around the miracle of the feeding of 5,000 people. Perhaps you know this story well, but I thought you might be interested in some modern day concerns if the feeding was to take place today. So I wonder if we could have the first slide.

So, Kurt, is that excellent? Hello? A little technical difficulty.

Okay. All right. Okay, here we have some concerns. We got the vegetarian who says, hey, is there maybe a substitute for this fish? How about some cucumbers or something else?

[1 : 59] Or maybe the environmentalist is saying, has this fish been checked for mercury? I don't know if you remember this about 30 years ago or so that there was a great scare that when we eat fish, we're consuming mercury.

But you know, mercury is just one of our standard elements in the elements table. And so there's a measure of mercury in the universe anyway. And so that kind of became quiet. I mean, it's in the parts for billions or so. So it's apparently not much to worry about.

And then, of course, there's a lot of people. And then, of course, there's a lot of people. And then, of course, there's the third one. And that is the group saying, is this bread gluten-free? So I don't know if that word was even around back then in the Lord's time. But today, we're worried about whether our bread is gluten-free or not.

Well, anyway, that picture you see there came off of a birthday card that my daughter said was sent to her back in June. But inside that, the caption was in that card. It said, avoid the complainers and have a good birthday.

So back then, they didn't have to worry about things such as that. Okay. And the next cartoon, next one, Kurt. All right. Here is the Lord, two disciples standing near the Lord.

[3 : 32] And maybe the disciples are in our story today, Philip and Andrew. And maybe one says to the other, says, would you ask the Lord to stop multiplying the loaves and the fish?

Because we're running out of plates. So I don't know if there was plates back in those days. When I looked at the sequence on the chosen ministry, it's the third series.

And I think the last presentation on that, they saw the disciples just going about and reaching in their baskets and handing a piece of fish and a piece of bread and just moving on.

And so, okay. But anyway, we're in our scriptures today. Turn to me with Matthew chapter 24, Matthew 14.

We're going to read the first three verses. But before we do, let's begin by a word of prayer. Father in heaven, we ask that your Holy Spirit enlightens us through your word this morning to the truth of your miraculous power to do supernatural things.

[4 : 50] We pray that our time spent in your word will increase our faith in your saving grace and mercy toward us through application to our daily lives.

We pray this in Jesus name. Amen. All right. Looking at verse 13 in your Bibles from chapter 14.

Now, when Jesus heard about John, that is John the Baptist, he withdrew from there in a boat to a secluded place by himself.

When the people heard this, they followed him on foot from the cities. Last week, our brother David, from our brother David, we learned about the death of John the Baptist at the hands of Herod.

There's a likelihood that Jesus had walked from Capernaum with his disciples on the north side of Galilee to the eastern shore near Bethesda.

[5 : 55] And so in Luke, and this is the only time we're going to refer to the chapter, the book of Luke as representing the story, because the other verses I'll reference will be from the book of John and the book of Mark, as well as our passage today from the book of Matthew.

So the disciple Luke tells us in Luke 9, verses 11 and 10 and 11. He says, So here we have a, now the map will show that you see Capernaum there toward the upper northern left side.

And they'll travel about five miles, five to seven miles over to Bethesda. And then shortly after that, they'll drop a little bit south by so many miles to the shore, the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. When I was in Israel five years ago, I was on the left side, down toward the city of Tiberias. And so, but you could look across because the width was only about six or seven miles.

[8 : 10] And you could see the opposite shores there. In fact, I conferred with my brother just recently who went with me. When we were coming down from Mount Hermon, we drove on a bus to the, along the eastern shore.

And we probably passed the area where this story today takes place. Because we were on our way after that to the Golan Heights and then down to the Dead Sea.

And so, it gives us a little, so that's what Luke did. Luke supplied the idea of exactly, because over the years there was three locations that people said this took place.

But I think scripture is clearly showing us that from the story in Luke that this took place just south of the city of Bethesda.

Luke said, okay, so returning to our talk in Matthew here, verse 14.

[9 : 11] When he went ashore, he saw a large crowd, and he felt compassion for them, and he healed their sick. So, this location may be, as I said, a little bit south on that eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Okay, Mark's gospel adds further thought with the same subject. When Jesus went ashore, he saw a large crowd, and he felt compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them. So, the added thought from Mark is this phrase, like sheep without a shepherd. And so, when we think of what Isaiah says, that we are like sheep who have gone astray. We've turned everyone to his own way. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. And so, we have this crowd that may be no different from our crowd today.

People who are without Christ, people without a leader, people without hope, people guilt in their sin, and so forth.

[10 : 24] And so, our Lord, by his compassion, had compassion for both his disciples, as well as compassion for this great multitude that has followed him.

And so, a summary of what we have just said so far is, number one, our Lord leading his disciples to Bethesda. Our Lord comforting his disciples after their ministry.

Now, our ministry, those ministries are that before we, this part of our story, the Lord sent out the disciples in groups of two each.

So, six groups that were traveling around the area of Galilee and the Decapolis, an area. And they were to preach the kingdom of God, and they were to have the power to heal.

And so, they're, at this point, are meeting up with the Lord again, because the Lord was probably away, while they were doing that, to visit the city of Nazareth, where he grew up.

[11 : 29] And therefore, we learned from the past that the rejection that our Lord received from even his own family and his own relatives.

And so, then, the next part is, our Lord, spending time alone. So, he went, after they arrived, they went up on a mountain, and he spoke with his disciples, teaching them.

But then he came down, and he took a boat, and he went out in seclusion to spend time. And I just picture that, the Lord going out on that boat, getting away from the crowd for a while, so that he could spend time with his Lord.

And maybe, perhaps, to discuss the recent passing of John the Baptist and his ministry that he had. And then the Lord arriving, finally, on shore to minister to the crowd.

But on the subject of compassion, compassion is that tenderheartedness to care for, to suffer with, to listen carefully, to accept people for who they are and where they're coming from.

[12 : 45] And so, I often wonder, as we think of compassion, is that a gift that we have today and are using it? Because it seems like, as the church becomes cold, and perhaps through the time period of this COVID thing, that has believers lost compassion?

Or are we still pretty good at that? So, in our daily lives, are we compassionate? Do we show compassion for the plight of fellow believers?

How about for the lost, relative, or the unsafe friend or neighbor? Our Lord is the perfect example of compassion. Along with the Lord's healing ministry, we see he taught the crowd many things. The Lord knew that the miracles would one day cease. But his words would be for everlasting. So, the Lord focuses heavily on what he has to say.

Over, exceeding even the power of having miracles. As we read earlier, he began speaking to them about the kingdom of God.

[13 : 58] Returning to Matthew 14, verse 15, it reads like this. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, This place is desolate, and the hour is already late.

So, send them away, so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves. But Jesus said to them, They don't need to go away.

And he follows by this. He says, You, you feed them. You give them something to eat. So, I can imagine the thoughts of the disciples then and the apostles about, Okay, what are we to do from here?

Here we are seeing the sovereign grace of our Lord at work. Not missing an opportunity to witness to this crowd than has to send them away.

The power of our Lord's ministry is to save souls for eternity. At this point in our story, Jesus in John's gospel, chapter 6.

[15 : 11] So, when we refer to two other locations of our story, it would be that in John's gospel, chapter 6, and in Mark's gospel, chapter 6 as well, is where we add to the story to make it even more complete.

So, in this passage, Jesus sees the crowd coming to him, and he says to Philip, one of the apostles, Where are we to buy bread so that these may eat?

This, as scripture says, he was saying to test Philip, for he himself knew what he intended to do. Philip answered him, 200 denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little.

Well, perhaps Philip is doing some calculations that a single denarii, which is about a wage is for a day's labor, in any case, how many loaves could be purchased with the money apparently in their treasury?

So, Judas is in charge of the treasury, and perhaps Philip is aware that there's 200 denarii available. And they, and the disciples all speak up, saying to him in Mark 6, 37, Shall we go and spend 200 denarii on bread and give them something to eat?

[16 : 44] It is though the disciples are saying, Is this what we really want to do? So, here we have the perplexity of the folks after the Lord asked them, You feed them, trying to come up with some rationale of what they should do.

At this point, Jesus says to them, Well, how many loaves do you have? And then he follows by saying, with a command, Go and look.

And so, in John 6, verse 8, one of the disciples, Andrew, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to the Lord, There's a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what is that amongst, but what are those amongst so many?

And Jesus follows by saying, Well, bring them to me. Now, verse 19 of our Matthew text reads as follows, Ordering the people to sit down on the grass, He took the five loaves and two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed the food, and breaking the loaves, He gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds.

And verse 20 says, And they all ate and were satisfied. And so here our Lord is showing what can be done by His wisdom and His mighty power, giving at first those disciples the opportunity to seek a solution.

[18 : 26] There was an orderly process to what took place, because as the Lord says in Mark 6:39, He commanded them to sit down in groups of 50 and 100.

Our Lord, who placed the universe in order, likewise desires that our lives also be orderly. So, you know, I was looking at the Chosen Ministry, Series 3, they were showing, I think in the last segment

of it, the feeding of the 5,000.

And it was just a great crowd of about maybe 5,000 people in Texas where they filmed it. And the disciples were just among the people giving out a piece of fish or a piece of bread as they passed a person.

But there was no setting them up in an orderly fashion of 50 or 100, which would have resulted in having aisles, perhaps, and at least segments whereby you can make sure you didn't miss anybody and that everybody who had a chance to be fed were done so.

And so they picked up all that was left over of the broken pieces, 12 full baskets, and also of the fish. There were about 5,000 men who ate beside women and children.

[19 : 53] So it is estimated by various scholars that this could have been a crowd of about between 15,000 and 20,000 people. So imagine how many acres of there are sitting on the, apparently the Lord provided some very nice grass because that's kind of barren in that area.

And yet, when you think of that, that whatever amount somebody wanted, they received. And the crowd of that large, so truly a miracle had to take place in order for that to happen.

In John 6, verse 14, it concludes with this statement of John's description of what happened that day. Therefore, when the people saw the sign which he performed, they said, this is truly a prophet who has come into the world.

This statement by the crowd is a confirmation that the people were recognizing Christ as a prophet because of the miracle. And that would be a prophet, maybe like Elijah, like Elisha, like John the Baptist and so forth.

But this statement, but not as their Savior and not as the Son of God. And so the crowd is missing the point here that they're coming for other reasons.

[21 : 24] In summary, we see the Lord testing the faith of the disciples. They were seeking earthly answers to a difficult problem when they had in their midst one who created the universe, who is the resource of all things.

And so that's where the Lord was testing them to see were they going to turn to him, were they going to rely on him. Regarding this story, scoffers tried to explain this miracle.

They said this, the crowd, they say, they saw the young boy give his five loaves and two fish. This made them see how selfish they were.

So they decided to take out their lunches and share them with each other. Mankind will always try to discredit the supernatural works of God.

And so we see that when it comes to all the miracles, man is going to say, no, that didn't really happen. It didn't, there's no history of it and, or it didn't happen that way.

[22 : 40] But I know the Lord knows best. The Lord had planned this miracle long before he even got to Bethesda. And so it was an opportunity to demonstrate continually his power.

where most miracles were where, where, where an individual eyes were made to see, legs made to walk. And so the crowds appreciated the ministry of that one person.

But this is a miracle where everybody was involved in the miracle because they had no food when they were there. And, and by the time it was over, they were well fed.

in closing, I'd like to ask the musicians to come up. But I do want to say something about, our focus has been on the miracle.

But I'd like to talk about the subject of bread for a minute. Our Lord chose bread to be emblematic of many things.

[23 : 44] Bread as a spiritual example, when the Lord says, I am the bread of life, He is our source of eternal life. Bread is associated with fellowship.

Bread is used for remembrance of his body, such as we practiced this morning in the breaking of that loaves to remind us of that body that was broken for us.

Bread can satisfy hunger. Bread comes in many shapes, flavors, textures, sizes. Bread is universal. Bread has a daily nature to it.

Its frequent use reminds us of spending frequent time in his word. And so, you know, I think sometimes I have bread three times a day. Piece of toast with bacon and eggs in the morning. Lunchtime, a sandwich with two pieces of bread. And at night, maybe sourdough bread with a steak. And so, bread is pretty common in our lives.

[24 : 52] But we ask ourselves, how about the word of God? Is it pretty common in your life? Is it something every day or is it on Sunday? Or is it maybe not even Sunday? And so, the importance

of the word of the Lord in this lesson and in our lives is to be focused on the word of God. It changes lives. It brings salvation. It sanctifies us. And so, we have the wonderful presence of bread in all things.

So, I'd like to say the next slide there, Kurt, a quotation that you might be familiar with. John 6, 26. Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me not because you saw a sign, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.

Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.

For on him the Father, God, has set his seal. So, the Lord's not saying that we can do without bread. It's the idea that there's priorities in life.

[26 : 13] And the things that are much more important is the bread of life, and that is the salvation of souls and the living for our blessed Lord.

And then, in another slide, we have another statement, also from John 6, verses 35 and 36. Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life.

He who comes to me will not hunger, and he who believes in me will never thirst. But I say to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.

And so, what a sad commentary that you have thousands of people there enjoying the miracle, been drawn to it because they've heard that he presented miracles in other places, and they're drawn to see this.

And the Lord says, yet you do not believe. I trust that anyone here or anyone listening by other medias to this sermon may be like the Philippian jailer who asks, what must I do to be saved?

[27 : 27] The response is, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. And so, may the Lord speak to our hearts this morning about a simple message that we might have learned since we were children in Sunday school.

And I trust that in this comprehensive way of seeing all that was spoken speaks to us of the Lord's compassion, to speak of his wisdom, in testing the disciples about what they would do, to show us his eternal power to be able to do this miracle which cannot be done by any other means, and that out of it we learn to trust him and his word further in our lives.