

“FED BY FAITH”

The Feeding of the Multitude

Based on Mark 6: 30-44

Background Notes and Concepts

The miracle of the feeding of the multitude tells one of the great stories of Jesus' ministry. The power of faith and the active intervention of Christ Jesus cares for the needs of the people who gathered to hear God's Word.

The story begins with Jesus' disciples reporting on their first preaching and healing mission described in Mark 6: 7-13. Because of the crush of the crowds now coming to Jesus he takes the disciples away for a rest. The people saw where they were going and rushed ahead to meet them.

Despite his hope for solitude, Jesus has compassion for the crowd and begins to teach them. At the end of the day the issue of how to feed so many arises. Mark reports 5,000 were there. Often in the Bible only men were counted, so perhaps as many as 20,000 were there!

After discussing several options, Jesus instructs his disciples to organize the crowd into groups of 50 to 100. Then Jesus takes the food at hand, blesses it, breaks it and gives it to the disciples to share with the people. This part of the story sounds a lot like the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Miraculously, the people are fed, and lots of food was left over.

Key Verses: Mark 6: 39-42

One could focus on verse 41 - "taking the five loaves and two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all." and emphasize the communion comparison.

Verse 39 - "Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass," and demonstrates how bringing calm to the crowd and organizing their care made the miracle of meeting their needs more possible.

This central part of the story (Mark 6: 39-42) is rich with Gospel themes.

Verse 42 - "They all ate and were satisfied," celebrating the providence of God.

Memory work - Hymn 779 (Hymn Book) *What a Friend we Have in Jesus* - sing each week and on the first Sunday discuss the meaning of the hymn (and any difficult words) and how it relates to the concept taught in the "Feeding of the Multitude", that Jesus takes care of our every need, hunger, healing, sins, grief, etc.

Key Concepts:

The story of the feeding of the multitudes offers several key teaching and discipleship concepts.

1. Jesus is compassionate and a friend
 - a) to the disciples (v. 31), urging them to rest and be renewed.
 - b) to the crowd (v. 34), acting as their shepherd and feeding them spiritually and physically (every need).
2. Jesus is a problem-solving leader. The discussions with the disciples about caring for the crowd (v. 35-40) models how we are to offer Christ-like care to others.
3. Jesus is a worker of wonders and miracles. The sharing of the loaves and fish offers a mystery of faith.