

All I Need 2-6-05

Matthew 14:13-21 (NIV)

¹³ When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴ When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick. ¹⁵ As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food." ¹⁶ Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." ¹⁷ "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered. ¹⁸ "Bring them here to me," he said. ¹⁹ And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. ²⁰ They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ²¹ The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

This must be one of the most important passages in Scripture as it is the only miracle mentioned in each of the four Gospels. Matthew tells us that it was the death of John the Baptist that sent Jesus across the lake. Luke adds that the trip coincided with the return of the seventy-two that were sent on the mission trip to preach and heal. (Luke 9:10) Jesus was ready for a break and so were the disciples. Ministry can be very draining. They went by boat to the northeastern shores of Galilee, near a town called Bethsaida. Those who saw them leave ran ahead around the shoreline. Their boat was probably visible most of the time. When they arrived, the crowds were already gathering. So much for a relaxing getaway!

John's gospel tells us that the crowd was made up of sincere followers, but also of those who just wanted to see the miracles or be healed. (John 6:1-2) This was the best form of entertainment that Northern Galilee had seen in years. One would wonder if the ratio of sincere listeners wasn't something similar to the ratio of good soil to bad in the parable of the soils, one in four. We do know that John tells us they intended to try to make Jesus their king after this miracle. (John 6:15) These were not hearts longing for spiritual renewal, but people longing to be free of Roman taxes and to have their daily bread provided. There was more stony and weedy soil than good soil in that crowd. (John 6:26)

Jesus knew this. He sees your heart and mine today. (John 2:25) We may fool others, but God is never fooled. He knows what we are after. However, here is the truly amazing thing, even knowing their motives, He still taught, healed and fed them. ¹⁴ When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

Jesus was displaying, for the world to see, the reality of His power and authority as well as the compassion in His heart. He could command matter, but to show them

Commented [notes1]: ¹⁰ When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida, Luke 9:10 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: ¹ Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), ² and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick. John 6:1-2 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: ¹⁵ Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself. John 6:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: ²⁶ Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. John 6:26 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: ²⁵ He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man. John 2:25 (NIV)

He is God, He did not make rabbits appear or move mountains. He did what was in His gracious heart. (Hebrews 4:15) He confronted the consequences of the fall. Seeing the suffering people, His heart went out, and He expressed His infinite power by healing all their sick. They would one day get sick again and die, but while He was with them, He would intervene in the suffering of this fallen world. (Luke 13:32) He showed what the heart of the Father truly desires.

Commented [notes6]: ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. Hebrews 4:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes7]: ³² He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.'" Luke 13:32 (NIV)

Did they deserve it? Most of them did not. However, that did not matter. He did not tell His disciples to go and heal those who deserve it. He just told them to go and heal. The healing was the invitation banner for the message of the kingdom. The healing was an introduction to the real message of eternal life in Jesus. The message of a heart of healing compassion was to get them to hear the message of a heart that had come to heal their sin sick souls for all eternity. God's undeserved grace and goodness in our life is to help us see submission to Him is the best choice we can make.

John's gospel tells us that it was as the crowds were approaching that Jesus first got the disciples to start thinking about feeding the crowd. ^{5b} "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" (Jesus was teaching His disciples even as He taught the crowd.) ⁶ He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. John 6:5b-6 (NIV) They had all day to ponder how they were going to accomplish such a task. 5000 men means there could have been as many as 25,000 people there. Most men had to work. The women and children were free to spend the day following this rabbi. (see verse 21)

Commented [notes8]: ²¹ The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children. Matthew 14:21 (NIV)

It is interesting that Jesus asked this of Philip, because Philip was from this town. He was the one disciple that might know the local bakers. Their solution was practical, analytical, and it would not cost them a thing. After all, they would come here to rest, right? They would just come off a long stint of ministry. Wasn't it time for a break now? ¹⁵ As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."

What grade do you think they got on this test? Now before you grade them too harshly, hasn't the Spirit of God put a question on your heart at some time? What will you do about this or that? Was your answer much like that of the disciples? "Let them deal with it. It is their problem not mine." But the minute the problem was presented to you by the Holy Spirit, you had an invitation to participate in the work of God. OK, now you can grade them.

Here is the wonderful thing about our Savior. The test was preparation for another test that would open their eyes to heavenly truths. (Psalm 51:6) The same is often true with us. Next test:

Commented [notes9]: ⁶ Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Psalms 51:6 (NIV)

¹⁶ Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." Now, this test emphasized their total failure on the last test. ¹⁷ "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered.

Now they are at least trying. They found a little boy that was willing to share. That is progress. Don't you feel like the disciples at times? God asks you to do something

way beyond what you know is in you and you come up with next to nothing. He asks for piano concerto and you offer Chopsticks. He asks for a million dollars and you offer pocket change. "We only have..." and you fill in the blank. Believe it or not, now we are getting somewhere.

¹⁸ "Bring them here to me," he said.

Once they are in Jesus' hands, it is a completely different scenario. They would have got an A on the first try if they had asked themselves a question or two. "What'd He make the stars from? Where would He get the raw material for this earth? Who designed barley grain? (Job 38:4-11) Oh, wait a second! If I believe He made everything I see from nothing, this is not a problem. (Hebrews 11:3) But He is asking me to participate, so... I just give Him whatever I can get my hands on, let Him bless it, and it'll be fishwich happy meals for everyone!"

If Jesus asks for more than you have, you should get excited. He may say, "Bring me your slingshot little boy. I've got a giant to kill." (1 Samuel 17:45-47) He may ask a starving widow to give her last meal to a prophet (1 Kings 17:12-13), or ask a little servant girl to tell her master who is a general where to go to be healed. (2 Kings 5:2-3) If Jesus took a cross to beat the Prince of Demons, spoke through a donkey to set a prophet straight, (Numbers 22:28) and used a hooker for spy mission impossible (Joshua 2:1), what makes you think you can't be used? Do not get discouraged because you cannot do it. Be encouraged because of who is asking! He asks you to test you. Get your eyes off your inabilities and onto God's all sufficiency.

¹⁹ And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people.

Mark uses a beautiful word for the groups that sat down, *prasia*. (Mark 6:40) "We'd say flower beds." You can imagine the colorful robes in clusters on that grassy hillside. First, Jesus made things orderly. Sometimes we must begin by dealing with the practical. Everyone was standing up to see and hear. It would have been pandemonium if someone rang the dinner bell. After they were seated, He blessed the five loaves and two fish and broke them into the baskets to distribute. Now, even if you have half the estimated number of people, one basket is not going to go very far before it is empty. The miracle must have been going on inside each basket. They just kept passing and passing, passing, and never ran out.

Here is where the disciples passed the easier test. Jesus gave thanks, an incredible act of faith in itself. Could you hold up your lunch and thank God that it was going to be enough to feed a city? The disciples could have then said, "Wait, it still isn't enough. If I go out there and give only some of the people food, the others are going to be upset with me."

When we were in Israel, my big-hearted sister could not keep from giving to the children who were begging. However, not all her coins were the same. So one little boy said, "Hey, you gave that little girl more than you gave me. It's not fair." Well, imagine 25,000 people and only some of them get to eat. It took faith for the

Commented [notes10]: ⁴ "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. ⁵ Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? ⁶ On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone-- ⁷ while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy? ⁸ "Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, ⁹ when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness, ¹⁰ when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place, ¹¹ when I said, 'This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt?' Job 38:4-11 (NIV)

Commented [notes11]: ³ By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. Hebrews 11:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: ⁴⁵ David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. ⁴⁶ This day the LORD will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel.

⁴⁷ All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands." 1 Sam 17:45-47 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: ¹² "As surely as the LORD your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any bread--only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it--and die." ¹³ Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. ... [1]

Commented [notes14]: ² Now bands from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. ³ She said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." 2 Kings 5:2-3 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: ²⁸ And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? Numbers 22:28 (KJV)

Commented [notes16]: ¹ And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there. Joshua 2:1 (KJV)

Commented [notes17]: ⁴⁰ And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties. Mark 6:40 (KJV)

disciples to start distributing what they were given. I can hear the screaming now, "Where is my fish sandwich!" But they obeyed Jesus. When you bring Jesus what you have, and do what He says, your eyes will be wide with wonder at what He does with the little you have.

I am always amazed that God wants to use us. I am becoming more amazed at the fact that we so often do not want to be used. How many people like Jonah, turn and run the other way when God calls? (Jonah 1:2-3) To be used by God is an incomparable blessing. If our lives are yielded to Him, He will invite us to work with Him. (Matthew 11:29a) He will ask for some little bit of cooperation. People will give you accolades and say what a good job you did, when all you really did was bring the little you had to Jesus and obeyed His instruction. Now, as for those who don't want to be used, who would rather serve themselves than the living God, they know not what they do. (Luke 19:27) It is people like this little boy that gave up his lunch and the disciples that we are talking about 2000 years later. What a big heart God has! In using us, He shows His overflowing compassion and patience.

The other day I was playing with my grandson with these new high tech magnetic tinker toys. I would not play with them on my own, but when Ethan wants to play, I want to play. What is fun is doing something together. We made a helicopter bulldozer. Pretty cool huh? God wants to do things with you! He wants to do things of eternal importance. Man may not perceive it. You may not get recognition for it, but if you will just put the little you have in His hands, He will work together with you on the neatest projects. After all, He is your Abba father. (Romans 8:15) Quit calculating how much each piece of bread will cost and whether or not there is enough for sale in all of northern Galilee.

Listen to how silly Philip must have sounded to Jesus. "Lord, even 200 denarius would not be enough to assuage the hunger of such a multitude." (Mark 6:37) How do you think that sounded in the ears of the One who was about to do this incredible miracle? Just put what you have in His hands and obey. The way we try to figure it all out, you would think we were in charge. He is graciously inviting us to participate in something great because He wants to work with us like a father with his child.

Take the little you have, let Jesus bless it, and do what He tells you with it. I think I like this message so much because it is what I do every week. I take the next little portion of Scripture and ask myself, what am I going to do with this? I could not preach 5 minutes on this. Not that the text is not rich, it is that I am so clueless. Then I give it to Jesus. I pray over it. He blesses it and puts it in my basket – word processor – and out comes enough food for everyone at Wayside Chapel and those on the internet around the world. I feel like I am the grandson playing with my Grandpa. I do not know what I am doing. However, I know that if Jesus gets a hold of the little I have and blesses it, it will be something really cool. (2 Corinthians 12:9)

²⁰ They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

Everyone had enough. The word here for "satisfied" is the word that is used in

Commented [notes18]: ² "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me." ³ But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD. Jonah 1:2-3 (NIV)

Commented [notes19]: ^{29a} Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, Matthew 11:29a (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: ²⁷ But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me. Luke 19:27 (KJV)

Commented [notes21]: ¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." Romans 8:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes22]: ³⁷ But he answered, "You give them something to eat." They said to him, "That would take eight months of a man's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?" Mark 6:37 (NIV)

Commented [notes23]: ⁹ And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 2 Corinthians 12:9 (KJV)

Greek for a feed animal that is allowed to stay at the feed trough until it has had enough, *chortazo*. In that day and age, if people were giving food away, they would eat like at a Sizzler salad bar. The world sings Jagger's theme song, *I Can't Get No Satisfaction* because they realize Solomon was right. Everything in creation leaves you wanting more. (Ecclesiastes 1:8)

Commented [notes24]: ⁸ All things are wearisome, more than one can say. The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing. Ecclesiastes 1:8 (NIV)

The world looks to everything in creation to satisfy their emptiness, but Jesus is the Bread of Life. (John 6:48) He alone is enough to satisfy the hunger in the heart of man. Any other distraction can bring thrills and adrenaline and highs of one kind or another, but they will all require you to have more to get the same high next time. (Ephesians 4:19) Eventually it will kill you. Excessive use of anything in creation will destroy you, because things were never made to be your satisfaction. They are a very poor substitute for the One who *alone* can meet the hunger in the heart of man. (Psalms 86:8)

Commented [notes25]: ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. John 6:48 (NIV)

Commented [notes26]: ¹⁹ Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. Ephesians 4:19 (NIV)

Not only does He satisfy, but also He is sufficient. (2 Corinthians 3:5) Everyone got to eat. He does not run out or run short. The Children of Israel learned this in the desert. The manna would fall every morning but only last one day. The day before the Sabbath, though, it would last two days. God told them this, but they still tried to gather too much on the regular days and it rotted at night. They did not gather enough the day before the Sabbath and went hungry. (Exodus 16:18) Jesus is the Bread from Heaven. He is enough for every condition in life. Augustine said, "You have made us for Yourself; and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee."

Commented [notes27]: ⁸ Among the gods there is none like you, O Lord; no deeds can compare with yours. Psalms 86:8 (NIV)

Commented [notes28]: ⁵ Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; 2 Corinthians 3:5 (KJV)

Commented [notes29]: ¹⁸ And when they measured it by the omer, he who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little. Each one gathered as much as he needed. Exodus 16:18 (NIV)

There were 12 baskets of bread left over. Some say this represents Jesus being sufficient for the need of Israel (12 tribes) and at the feeding of the 4000, the 7 baskets represent sufficiency for the world. (Matthew 15:38) I do not know if that was what God was saying, but I do know He is enough. He is enough for every need you or I will ever have. He was showing them that He was the same God that brought them manna. He was showing them that He is Jehovah Jireh, the God who provides. He can nourish His creation, physically and spiritually. He is enough for all.

Commented [notes30]: ³⁸ The number of those who ate was four thousand, besides women and children. Matthew 15:38 (NIV)

You may have searched down a hundred roads. You may be on one right now. You may have come like some of those thrill seekers at Bethsaida, just looking for something to do, not really acknowledging Jesus as God. Maybe a relative or friend dragged you here this morning. It does not matter. He will feed you with the bread from heaven, the bread that satisfies. It is His very own body that was broken for you. Every punishment you deserve, He took on His own body so that He could offer you the Bread of Life. He just wants you to come and be satisfied, to find the reason you are alive. It is not to chase creation, but to know the Creator. Until you taste of Him, everything else will leave you empty and wanting for more. (Psalm 34:8) He alone is sufficient for the hunger in your heart. Take that little that you are, put yourself in His hands, and do what He tells you.

Commented [notes31]: ⁸ Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. Psalms 34:8 (NIV)

¹² "As surely as the LORD your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any bread--only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it--and die." ¹³ Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son.

1 Kings 17:12-13 (NIV)