

Miracles of Jesus 12-08-05a

This is Sunday, the 5th of August, 2012. We resume our study of the feeding of the 4,000, along with the feeding of the 5,000, and Jesus' teaching points, and the meaning and effectual application of the principles that are reflected in these miracles for ourselves. This is found in Matthew chapter 15, as well as Mark chapter 8. Let's go to the Lord in prayer, and then we'll begin.

Father, we're so grateful for the things that you have given us. We're incapable of equipping ourselves, of defending ourselves, of cleansing ourselves, of enabling or empowering ourselves in any way to attain to the righteousness and the value that you have given to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for Him.

We thank you for His work on the cross. We thank you for His work of redemption and reconciliation and propitiation, the atoning sacrifice on our behalf, and the present ministry that He performs of intercession and of appeal and request on our behalf. His gift of the Holy Spirit to us to fill in where we are lacking, to give us perception where we could not attain to it, to enable us to live a life that is above and beyond the temporal and the mundane.

We thank you most of all for the gift of our salvation and the prospect of being brought into your presence and to remain there for the eternal future with the opportunity to be equipped to serve and to reflect your glory and to appreciate the Lord Jesus Christ who has made these things possible for us. We ask your blessing on us as we address ourselves to this portion of your Word and these truths. May God the Holy Spirit superintend both the teaching and the hearing and may each one of us find in this examination of your truth those things that will be personally meaningful and valuable and compelling as we endeavor to live the life to which we have been called and to reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus.

We ask these things in His name. Amen. How does Psalm 23 begin? Say it with me.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul. He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. That's the portion I want us to begin with.

The Lord is my shepherd. He maketh me to lie down where? In green pastures. In the feeding of the 5,000, why did Jesus feed them? What was the spark that brought out His compassion? What does the account say? If you look at this in Mark 6, in the vicinity of verse 30, it tells us exactly why Jesus, when He came out in verse 34 of Mark 6, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them.

Why? Because they were like sheep, not having a shepherd. They were like sheep, not having a shepherd. So what was His response? What did His compassion produce? He began to teach them many things.

When the day was now far spent, the disciples said, Send them away. He answered and said, You give them something to eat. They found the five loaves and the two fish.

So He, in verse 39, commanded to make them all sit down in groups where? On the green grass. In the green pastures. Sheep without a shepherd sit down on the green grass.

Two unique details in the feeding of the 5,000 among many. Well, we are now looking in Mark 8 and Matthew 15 at the feeding of the 4,000. And it's a long-standing observation.

Dr. Frank Gebelein, a great leading light of evangelical, biblical interpretation from half a century ago, used to make this point. In fact, when he would teach, he had kind of a stock sermon that he would present at various places called The Overlooked Miracle. And it was on the feeding of the 4,000.

The reason he called it The Overlooked Miracle is that so many people then as now said, well, this, you know, the lessons are basically the same as the feeding of the 5,000. Let's move on. There are commentaries where this is actually stated.

Well, for the details, see what I wrote on the feeding of the 5,000. Let's move on. I found an article by a guy who had actually written a commentary, a fellow named E. Shiler English.

And he felt greatly rebuked because he wrote a commentary. He got to the feeding of the 4,000. He said, see what I wrote on the 5,000.

Let's move on. Then he heard Frank Gebelein give his Overlooked Miracle deal, and he felt like, you know, standing up and walking out, bracing up, going back, redoing his commentary. But to his credit, he wrote an article and went back and made up for lost time.

And I was interested to find that he had gleaned in his review of the feeding of the 4,000 many of the things that we have talked about. I just actually ran across this article this morning. But Dr. S. Lewis Johnson, who I also checked to see, he was Patty's pastor for like eight years, and they've got a sermon library of his work.

And I just, on a whim, I went up there to see what he had to say. And he also mentioned that he had heard Frank Gebelein give his sermon called The Almost Forgotten Miracle and had come to the same conclusion that there were certainly points that needed to be addressed. And so we have been noticing not only the similarities but also the differences.

And Shiloh English made a little chart of the similarities and dissimilarities in his article. And a lot of these we have noted. But I'll give you these by way of a quick review.

And he uses Mark chapter 6 and Mark chapter 8 to note these. But number one, in the feeding of the 5,000, the multitude had been with the Lord one day. We saw that last time.

For the 4,000 in Mark chapter 8, the multitude had been with the Lord three days. Secondly, the disciples were instructed to go and see what supplies were available when the 5,000 are at the end of the day of teaching. Jesus says, Go see what you have.

At the feeding of the 4,000, the disciples already know. Jesus asks them. They already know what's on hand.

Seven loaves and several fish. Thirdly, Shiloh English says that at the feeding of the 5,000, there were five loaves and two fish on hand. Feeding of the 4,000, seven loaves and a few fish.

Some unknown number. Fourthly, in the first case, the multitude is told to sit upon the green grass. In the second, the multitude is told to sit on the ground.

And if you look at this in Greek, it doesn't mention any grass. It says upon the gaze, upon the earth. If you ever have any exposure to the New Age feminist, Lilith, Eastern mystical influenced crowd, they deify Mother Nature as Gaia.

There's New Age music dedicated to Gaia. Whole albums of it. And it's sort of mantra chanting, navel gazing music of kind of a hypnotically distasteful sort.

But Gaia. Well, this comes from the Greek, gaze, and it means earth. And they sit upon the ground.

And apparently, I wouldn't push this too terribly far, but there doesn't seem to be any grass. We know that time has passed and that the first case happened around Passover, which was in the spring. This seems to be some many weeks, if not a few months later.

And if you've been in the Middle East, you know that toward the end of summer, it's kind of like the end of summer in Texas. And not a lot of green grass, kind of dry and parched. We're not too worried about going up to Arkansas to mow because the last person to be up there, there is no lawn.

There's cellulose laying on the ground of a parched and combustible nature and then nothing green to be seen. So that appears to be the case here. Location is different.

I need to stick with his chart, though. I don't know if that's his next point or not. In point five, he says, the Lord blessed the loaves in the first case.

In the feeding of the 4,000, the Lord gave thanks for the loaves and later blessed the fish. And if you read Eidersheim on this, Eidersheim's coverage of the feeding of the 5,000, he makes a point of Jewish custom, which was that when there's bread and something to go with the bread, in this case fish, they would call that the savory. And whichever that was the most of, that's what tradition said you give thanks to God for.

You just pick Thanksgiving, Lord, thank you for this turkey and dressing, and you don't say thank you for the cranberry sauce, thank you for the green beans, thank you for the biscuits, thank you for the rolls. You just pick the main item. You give thanks for that.

You hold it up and say, thank you for this bread, if that's what you've got the most of. If you've got a big basket of meat or fish or lamb or whatever, you hold it up, Lord, thank you for this, and you don't name every single thing. So it stands to reason that with the largely Jewish crowd that comprised the 5,000 men and their families, Jesus would ask God's blessing on the bread.

That's what he had the most of. In the second case, two things are different. A, there seems to be more fish, and B, this is a largely Gentile crowd.

Remember, he's in the midst of Decapolis. I actually saw, and I'm going to name them because shame on them, the Jerome Bible Commentary. This is a Catholic commentary, you know, St. Jerome.

Jerome Bible Commentary, when they get to the feeding of the 4,000 and they get to Mark, Chapter 8. Is it 8 or is it 7? It's Chapter 7. Yeah, 731, which is just before our Chapter 8 account. You remember, Jesus went up and he talks to the woman up in the region of Tyre and Sidon, the little dogs and that. And then it says in verse 31, departing from the region of Tyre and Sidon, he came through the midst of the region of Decapolis to the Sea of Galilee.

And Jerome Bible Commentary says, well, unlike Matthew, who knows the geography of Palestine, Mark has a shameful lack of familiarity. Mark just makes a big mistake here because he says, leaving Tyre and Sidon, you pass through the midst of Decapolis to get to the Sea of Galilee. And obviously, if you know the geography on my air map here, you've got, here's the coastline and the Mediterranean Sea here.

Tyre and Sidon are coastal up in Lebanon now. And the Sea of Galilee is over here, Jordan River, Dead Sea. And you come southeast to get to the Sea of Galilee.

Well, Decapolis is way over here in the Transjordan. And so he says, oh, Mark is shamefully ignorant of the geography of the land because he says Jesus passed through the midst of Decapolis to get to the Sea of Galilee. Come on, Catholic people.

You come from Tyre and Sidon, come around well north of the Sea of Galilee, pass through the region of Decapolis and get to the middle of it, and then cut over to the Sea

of Galilee. That's all Mark is saying. He's saying he didn't take a straight line shortest distance.

He wasn't, let me get to the sea. Jesus wanted to go to Decapolis. He wanted to go to that Transjordan, largely Gentile, Jewish influenced, but largely Gentile area.

He wanted to go there. He went to Decapolis, found himself in the midst of Decapolis, and after a period of time of teaching and doing things, cut over to the sea. I want to take that Jerome Bible commentary and just close it, never open it again.

Shame on them. They say shame on Mark. I say shame on Jerome.

At any rate, this is in the region of Decapolis, not the earlier area, which is in Bethsaida, outside Bethsaida, which is an interesting detail to keep in mind for later observation. After the feeding is over, he sends the disciples back through. I saw somebody try to claim that Jesus was an environmentalist because he didn't want anything left on the ground.

If he was really an environmentalist, he would have told him to leave it all there because it's organic, and it would have fed the grass or helped that dead ground produce. He didn't say, I mean, this isn't McDonald's. There's not a bunch of Styrofoam and cardboard containers left.

I don't know what they were thinking, but this point, another strange point that's actually been made. Jesus didn't ask them to pick up the fragments because he was an environmentalist. In the first case, how many baskets? Twelve.

Jewish crowd, one basket for each disciple, twelve. In the second, a largely Gentile crowd takes up seven baskets of fragments. More on that later.

Finally, 5,000 men plus women and children in the first case, 4,000 men plus women and children in the second case. Despite the points of similarity in terms of multiplication and so on, there are these differences. Here's the thing.

Later on in chapter 8, verse 13, He left them and getting into the boat again, departed to the other side. This is after the Pharisees who wanted a sign, and we spent some time on that last week. What is this whole thing about a sign? Well, we covered that.

So now verse 13 of Mark chapter 8, Jesus left them, the Pharisees, disputing with Him. This is paralleled over in Matthew chapter 16. And what is interesting about Matthew 16 is Mark says it was the Pharisees.

Matthew says it was the Pharisees and Sadducees. And Dr. Johnson had an interesting point. That also I just read this morning.

But he said, you know, isn't it odd that the Pharisees and Sadducees are like the

Democrats and Republicans. They fight over everything. But here's one thing they can agree on.

This Jesus is not to be taken seriously. So the Pharisees and the Sadducees unite. This is the thing that brings them together is opposition to Jesus.

And you think, well. But after the discussion about signs, the disciples had forgotten, 8.14 of Mark, to take bread. And they did not have more than one loaf with them in the boat.

This is right after the feeding of the 4,000. They had seven baskets. And if you look at the Greek, I won't give you the words, but in the feeding of the 5,000, the Greek word used for basket is the one that means lunch box.

This is like the little things we have now, little travel mate things that you open it up. You can put a little cool pack in it and it'll hold a couple of sandwiches and maybe a Coke or two. It's a small picnic basket.

That's what it is. It's a little picnic. One person would carry this.

The disciples take up 12 picnic baskets of fragments. It's something that one person can comfortably carry for his own use. It's about that size.

In the feeding of the 4,000, the word for basket is different. By the way, that's also a very Jewish traditional thing. They would typically take these things along.

This second word is more typical of a Gentile region and it's exactly what you would expect in the region of Decapolis. It doesn't mean picnic basket. It means hamper.

It means laundry basket size. In fact, it's big enough. It's the same word that's used when Paul was escaping and they let him down in a basket.

That's the size of the basket. It's big enough for the Apostle Paul to fit in and be let down. It's strong enough.

It'll hold enough weight. You figure the Apostle Paul, grown man, somewhere, I would guess 150 to 200 pounds. He didn't have a lot of obesity in those days, so I don't think he probably broke 200 pounds.

They were also a little bit shorter. The tradition says the Apostle Paul was kind of a short man. But I would guess he's upwards of 150, probably less than that.

Let's just guess that he's 170 pounds. This basket, they had no doubt that it would sustain his weight as they let him down. Well, that's the size of these seven baskets of fragments that are taken up in the Decapolis crowd.

Hampers, big, substantial baskets. So, having had all of that, by the time they get in the boat and go to the other side, no hampers are in view. They brought one tortilla.

They've got one pizza crust. That's what they've got. Somebody probably forgot.

They rolled it up and stuck it in their pocket or in their girdle, you know, inside their... They used to use their clothing with that belt. This is what I do with my... with anything I'm supposed to bring home from work. I don't carry a purse and I don't have a briefcase.

So anything I do not want to forget, I just stick it in my shirt of paper, not bulky items, but, you know, paper. I fold it like you were going to mail it, just stick it in here. That way I'm sure I get it.

Well, they used to do the same thing. I'm like an ancient man. It's traditional.

This is a worthy way to transport your stuff. So somebody stuck a tortilla inside their... No bread, no bread. He goes, wait, found one.

They did not have more than one loaf with them in the boat. So Jesus charged them saying, take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod. And they reasoned with themselves saying, it is because we have no bread.

And we've talked about this some last time. Jesus says, makes this point about how many baskets did you take up? How many were fed? How many baskets did you take up? How is it that you do not understand? Well, in Mark, it really leaves you hanging because you think, well, the next verse, Jesus will say, here's what you should have understood. But if you go to the Matthew account, we get a little bit better view.

So flip back over to Matthew chapter 16, verse 5. When His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Jesus said to them, take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. They reasoned among themselves, well, it's because we've taken no bread.

Matthew doesn't mention the one loaf because it's so insignificant. Jesus, being aware of it, said, O ye of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves? Because you have brought no bread. Do you not yet understand or remember the five loaves of the 5,000 and how many baskets you took up? Nor the seven loaves of 4,000 and how many baskets you took up.

How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread, but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees? Then they understood, verse 12, that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Now, the other interesting feature, and we have to go back and forth to get these details. One of the things that we also observe about this is the healing that Jesus did before the feeding of the 4,000.

So if you look in Mark chapter 7, He came to the region of Decapolis, the Sea of Galilee. They brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and they begged Him to put His hand on him. And He took him aside from the multitude, put His fingers in his ears, spat and touched his tongue.

Looking up to heaven, He sighed and said to him, Ephphatha, that is, be opened. Immediately His ears were opened, the impediment of His tongue was loosed, and He spoke plainly. This is a miracle we'll be looking at in the near future.

He commanded them they should tell no one, but the more He commanded them, the more widely they proclaimed it. I mean, this happened right during the episode. They went around and started telling the crowd.

And He said, Wait, come back. Don't noise this abroad. And they're doing it while He is actively trying to stop them.

They were astonished beyond measure, saying, He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak. And this same thing is covered over in Matthew 15, verses 29 through 31 in a more general sense in terms of just general healing.

And if you look at chapter 8 of Mark, afterward there's another healing. Blind man healed at Bethsaida. So there is healing and teaching going on at the same time.

What is the point? Jesus says it's the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. That's what you should have taken away from these two feedings. Well, okay, that's a step forward in do you not yet understand that He's talking about their doctrine.

We've deduced that the bread stands in for the teaching and that the miracles authenticate the teaching that it is from God. There's miracles before, there are miracles after. This man is from God, so His teaching is the real deal.

Just before we take our break, turn quickly to John chapter 6. Jesus speaks of Himself and talks about bread. In verse 26 of chapter 6, Jesus says, I say to you, you seek Me not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.

The miracles affirm that God has put His seal on Him and He says don't get your eyes on this physical bread. You need the bread that has a view toward everlasting life. The food, the bread, which endures forever.

And they said to Him, What shall we do that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said to them, This is the work of God that you believe in Him whom He sent. Your work is to have faith. Boy, that opens up the whole James versus Paul, faith,

works, interrelationship.

But look down at verse 32. They bring up Moses bringing manna. They gave him bread from heaven to eat.

Jesus says, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven. My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. And this affirms what Jesus tells the disciples after the boat incident with the one loaf.

We're talking about truth. We're talking about doctrine. We're talking about bread for the soul.

The bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. Jesus said to them in verse 35, I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger.

He who believes in Me shall never thirst. I said to you, you have seen Me and yet you do not believe. And then in verse 41, I am the bread which came down from heaven.

They argue, wait a minute, this is Jesus, the son of Joseph, His father and mother we know. How can He say He came down from heaven? Then you have this, no one can come to Me except He is drawn and so on. But look down at verse 50.

This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever.

And the bread that I shall give is My flesh which I shall give for the life of the world. And then He says, unless you eat of the flesh and drink of the blood and a lot of people turn back. They can't get past the literal.

They cannot, wait a minute, you were born in our land. You're flesh and blood. We know you're family.

How can you say you came down from heaven? They can't shake the literalness. And if you think about that crowd of 5,000, Jesus says, I have compassion on them. They're like sheep without a shepherd.

They're in the midst of the green grass and they're not able to partake. They're not able to grow. What does the shepherd do? He leads them to green pastures and beside the still waters, paths of righteousness.

Even in Psalm 23, you can clearly see that the shepherd here is speaking in metaphorical terms about spiritual truths. Jesus looks out at the crowd and in His mind He says, look at them. They're scattered all over this green grass.

They're like disorganized sheep. There's no shepherd. They're standing in the grass and

yet they're not benefiting from it.

The shepherd is not showing them. They're not under the guidance. They're not responding to the authority.

They're not availing themselves of the green pastures, much less the still waters. And Jesus feels sorry for them and so He gives them the bread and He says, the bread is Himself. He has come down from heaven.

So when you look at it in this context of Israel, this is the feeding of the 5,000 and it's the background for what we're going to talk about in the feeding of the 4,000. It's really an Israelite identified thing. They are sheep.

They're in the green pasture but they need a shepherd and He says, I have come. He doesn't sit them down on the ground and say, grab some grass and it suddenly turned into food. He could have done that.

Right? Don't need five loaves and two fish. Sit down in the green grass. Do you not see the grass? You're in the pasture.

I'm the shepherd. I feed you in the green pastures. Why didn't He turn the grass into food? It's abundant.

Disciples wouldn't have had to wander around. They could have each grabbed some for themselves. They are sheep.

They're grazing. He's the shepherd. Beautiful picture, Psalm 23.

What a wonderful passage it would be. Why didn't He do it? Take the inedible and make it edible. Take the abundant and make it useful.

They're right there in its midst and wouldn't it fulfill the Old Testament picture? I ask myself, why didn't He do that? Gives them something new. They're sheep without a shepherd and He comes as a greater shepherd with a better food. Instead of being sheep that graze on the grass, they are going to be God's people and they are going to partake of the bread.

I am the way, the truth, Jesus said, and the life. Partake of Me and you partake of eternity. Partake of Me and you will never die.

This truth that you take in is eternal and unchanging and as you take it in, you begin to partake of its qualities of eternality and imperishable life. And it is through Jesus Christ. Now, when they have the five loaves and the two fish, Jesus didn't say, take it and give it to the people.

Jesus has to touch it first, right? And the interesting observation you can make about

that is what the disciples have among themselves is insufficient and if they had tried to feed the crowd with just what they had, it would have been insufficient. But when they take it and give it to the Lord Jesus and He gives it back, now it supernaturally multiplies. Now it's got a power it didn't have before.

And it's a great reminder, especially for those of us who are tasked with learning and taking our rather limited, inevitably limited grasp of Scripture. I was telling Patty this morning, you know, you can look at all these different people that have looked at a given miracle, for example, and say, well, you know, he had a good observation here, this guy had a good observation here. My grasp is certainly not complete.

We're like those blindfolded guys with the elephant. I can see the part that that guy's got a hold of. He's got a hold of the tail and this guy's got a... But I can't tell that I don't have the whole elephant just like they couldn't tell.

We're partial. We've got five loaves and a couple of fish. But dedicating it to Jesus and having the Lord give it back, then when we distribute it, hopefully it becomes more than what it was when we possessed it on our own.

And it is a reminder that we rely on God and on His provision and on His blessing. We dedicate anything we do, any gift we have, any effort, any resources that we have, we don't just take our resources and try to address a problem. We take those resources, what we have on hand, dedicate it to God, hand it to God, give it to Him, and when He gives it back, now it's got His divine power.

And it's a reminder that we are not our own and we're not left to our own devices. We don't have to meet problems in our own strength. But we have to take whatever it is we have, however small it may be, and dedicate it to God.

Give it to Christ. Let Him have it in His hands. Let Him dedicate it to His Father and thank His Father for it and hand it back to us.

Now it is something more than what it was. Now it has power to not only meet the need but to superabound. Well, there's much more we could say and will say after the break.

But that is a truth that can be the basis of very fruitful meditation. What is it that we have, and maybe we haven't been dedicating it to God first. We may have a talent, we may have a resource, we may have finances, we may have opportunities, we may have time, we may have relationships.

And we think, well, as a parent, I've got this figured out. I'm going to raise this child. I'm an employee.

I've got these experiences and gifts and ideas and I'm going to get this job done. I'm a husband or I'm a wife and this is what I'm going to get done in the home. This is what I'm

going to get done in the marriage.

I'm a child, this is what I'm going to get done on behalf of my parents or in spite of my parents or in my education or out in the world. Whatever it may be, all of us have bread and fish and we like to think, well, this is true. This is the real deal.

I'm a believer and I know where I am and what I'm doing and I'm going to do things in faith. But we maybe aren't careful about that step of first dedicating what we have and what we do to Christ. Let Him take it in His hands and through Him dedicate it to the Father.

This isn't going to mean anything, it isn't going to do anything, it isn't going to have any power unless it is in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ who holds it up before God the Father and says, Father, bless this. Then He hands it back to us. Now it is tremendously divinely enabled and empowered.

It has living force. It partakes of Jesus Christ Himself. It reflects His body, His work, His divine nature, His eternal life.

And Jesus says you have got to partake of that bread if you want to partake of the eternal future. And the more meaningful and more powerful it is to us, the more meaningful and powerful our entrance into that future kingdom will be. We're going to pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we have not covered the half. When we start looking at this feeding of the 4,000, you can see why it is covered separately by both Matthew and Mark. It is so entirely different.

That's what we'll look at when we come back.