

Feeding of the 5000
(An Easter Story)
Mark 6:30-44

Isaiah 53
Matthew 28 1-10
Congregation Romans 8:31-39

Today is Easter Sunday, and I had thought about putting together some sort of special Easter message today but as I was thinking about it, the thought occurred to me, should not every message be a Easter message of sort? One that points to Christ's sacrifice for his people, one that points to our sins and Christ's righteousness, and our inability to please God and our need for a perfect mediator. Every time that we open the bible these things jump out at us, even in today's passage of the account of Jesus feeding the multitude of 5000 who were following him. Points to his gracious provision for even their basic needs, let alone his message and purpose for his ministry to die as a propitiatory sacrifice in our place, paying the price for our sins, reconciling us to be adopted children of God.

So I figured, that since we are going through the gospel of Mark, we will eventually be getting to the account of Jesus death and resurrection so we might as well just stay on track today and continue on here in chapter 6. So, as per usual let us start out this morning by reading our passage of scripture, starting in verse 30-44.

The first thing that jumps out is the positioning of this account right after the martyr of John the Baptist. There is a sort of mirrored reflection here between these 2 accounts, but as we see they could not be more opposite. In both of these accounts there was a great feast, one was a birthday party for Herod, thrown by Herod himself to impress and gain favor with the powerful elites, serving his own purpose to bolster his standing. But here we see Jesus' feast is not done for him to gain favor, or to impress those who have gathered but rather it was a feast of provision, providing what is needed to all those who have gathered.

In these first few opening verses we see Mark continuing in a theme that we have seen run throughout his writing. Verse 31, he gathers his disciples to himself, away from the others showing that one of the prerequisites for a true disciple is to be with Jesus. We are not called only to go and minister to all those around us, but we are also called into fellowship with Jesus himself, and to each other through him. Being a disciple of Christ is not like a high school or college education, where you learn what you need to then move on to bigger and better things. We are not just on a mission for Jesus, but rather we are on a mission with him.

It is unknown where Jesus and his Disciples headed, or where this feeding of the 5000 happened other than somewhere along the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. Verse 31 here says that he calls them to go with him to a deserted place because there was such a commotion of busyness with people coming and going. Up until this point Mark has always pointed out to the crowds of people who had gathered to listen to Jesus, or who were seeking to be healed, or just wanted to see what all the rumors and commotion was about this Jesus person. But that is not the type of commotion that he is mentioning here, so it would seem it wasn't necessarily a gathering of people like usual, but rather just a busy place with lots of stuff going on so he sought some quiet and a peaceful place to rest and fellowship with his Disciples who had just come back from their mission that he had sent them on.

So in the following verse we see that they departed by boat, and in verse 33 it says. "But the multitudes saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them and came together to him." There is a little bit of controversy over this verse, for there are conflicting greek manuscripts that say that the multitude gathered after they had come to shore, and there are some which say that the multitude got to the destination before them anticipating where they were heading.

From what I read, it is largely favored that the crowd were actually waiting for them at their destination. So either there were those who knew Jesus and his routines enough to know where he was going, or it could have been that Jesus saw the crowds following along the shoreline that he directed them to go there. There is no real way of knowing whether they just knew where Jesus was going, or if Jesus had detoured because of the crowd of people on the shore. But personally it seems to make sense to me that he brought the ship to shore because as we see in verse in verse 34 when he comes out of the ship and seeing the great multitude he has compassion on them for they are like sheep without a shepherd.

It would seem that whenever Jesus sought to get away, or to find rest, he rarely found it. And here it is no different. How often does this happen to us? Do we feel overwhelmed and just want to give up on our responsibilities. Sometimes we feel like we are being pulled in a million different directions with no way out. I am sure that is how Jesus and his disciples felt, constantly hounded and surrounded by people, barely moment of peace and as we have seen Mark say a few times barely enough time, or space to even enjoy a meal. But what does Jesus do here, he could just continue on, leave the crowd at the shore and find a small secluded place but he doesn't. He has compassion on the people, and instead of turning away, turns toward them.

Jesus approaches this sea of people who he says are like sheep without a shepherd, and takes it upon himself to teach and to shepherd them. And as we see a good part of the day was spent ministering and teaching them to the point where his disciples being concerned for them that Jesus should dismiss them and tell them to go find food in the near by towns. To the disciples this seems like a reasonable suggestion but Jesus response puts them in an interesting situation. He tells them that instead of sending them on their way, that they should feed them.

It seems to me that the disciples response we see from the disciples is a bit snarky and sarcastic. It is unlikely that they had the money needed to feed this multitude of people, and were probably a bit surprised at Jesus response to what they thought was a pretty good idea. Jesus had just asked them to do the impossible, who are they going to feed all these people?

Jesus takes command of this situation and tells his doubting, and now probably confused disciples to go and gather what they could find and to bring it back to him. Once again bringing dependence upon himself, having his disciples following his commands which seem futile and impossible, but they do so obediently and he teaches them again of God's provision and grace in their time of need. There are a few parallels that can be made from this account. First is the feeding of the Israelite in the wilderness when God provided Mana from heaven. Jesus tells his disciples to have he crowd separate into groups of 100s and 50s, just like Moses did with the Israelites. 2nd is the similarites we see with the Last supper. Jesus taking the bread, breaking it, blessing it, then handing it to his disciples.

This physical act of feeding this multitude of people could easily be understood with the spiritual act of ministry. Jesus himself is the bread of life, broken for us, and we his disciples have been given the mission to share it with the multitudes. It may seem like an impossible task at times, or one that we may have grown weary of but it is what we are called to do none the less. Just as Jesus seeing the multitude even though he was trying to get away for a time, he had compassion on them.

Continueing on verse 41. “And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples o set before them and the two fish he divided among them all. So they all ate and were filled. And they took up 12 baskets full of fragments and of the fish. Now those who had eaten the loaves were about 5000 men.

In this miraculous feeding of the multitude we see a picture of God's provision, His compassion and love. But not only that, we see that his provision is sufficient, and in fact more then sufficient to supply their need of food. As we have mentioned in previous weeks, it would seem that mark use the term multitudes to refer to those who are not true believers, not true followers of Christ but rather on lookers, and we know that there were some who were waiting to catch him in his actions and teachings so that they may have grounds to get rid of him. And I am sure there were many who very well may ended up being followers of Christ as well, but Mark, nor the other gospels mention about these people coming forward for the focus of their writing is not on the crowds, and the people but rather on Christ himself and his ministry.

All of the miracles that Jesus has performed has always had a redemption message, and this one I think really is no different. But we need to be careful here when we try to apply this miracle in such a way that we do not go against the rest of scripture and paint this as some picture of a universal atonement, that Jesus is providing the bread of life to every single person who was there. We know that this could not be a picture of a universal salvation type situation because we have so many other verses in scripture that point to what a true disciple must be. Skipping a head a bit turn with me to Mark 12, verse 28-31. “Then one of the scribes came and having heard them reasoning togethe, perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him. Which is the first commandment of all? Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear O Israel, the lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with al your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment, and the second like it, is this. You shall love your neighbor as yourself, there is no other commandment greater than these.”

There were those in this crowd who hated Jesus, who sought to have him killed. They can not love God, and hate the Son. Jesus said “I and my father are one” and he also said, if you hate Me you also hate my Father.” So we must be very careful that we are not taking this account and turning it into a salvation message for as we know the mark of a true follower of christ is their love for God and his son. So then, if this is true, if Jesus miracles have some sort of redemption purpose and message, then what could this one be about?

Well I think that it has a couple of things that we can take from it. First off, and most obviously is what we have already talked about. God's provision and grace for all. There is an element of God's grace even toward the unbeliever. The very breath that they breath, and the beating of their heart that keeps them alive is granted to them by the all mighty God of this world. Someone who speaks blasphemies, and hatred toward God and he still allows him to live, to breath, and have a full life is quite gracious. It is the idea of common grace, God's grace toward mankind, providing rain, and sun, life, pleasures and joy, to all mankind. His provision is sufficient, it is more than enough.

Second since this also draws comparison to the Last supper there must be more to it than just God's common grace toward mankind. I believe that this feeding of this multitude shows not only God's common grace is sufficient, but also that his grace is sufficient toward all who would believe.

In this case here God has provided to these in the faceless crowd the food that they needed to be sustained and when they were all full, still gathered up 12 baskets of extra. If God will feed and provide for even those who hated and sought to kill him, how much more so for those who are his children? David understood this when we wrote Psalm 23. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside the still waters, he restores my soul. He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for you are with me. Your rod and your staff they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies, you anoint my head with oil, my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

God's grace and provision for David was more than sufficient, he said his cup runs over, there are 12 extra baskets full! Praise God for his abundance of grace and love toward us. That while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us covering our defenseless head with the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. See, this is an Easter Sunday message after all. Christ's sacrifice is sufficient to cover the sins of all those who believe. There is no person who is so sinful that God's provision of atonement can not cover. Christ is all sufficient, and his sacrifice on the cross is all sufficient for our salvation. It is not Christ plus anything, it is not Christ plus the law, or Christ plus good works, but it is Christ and Christ only. Today, if you are listening to this and you are not resting solely on Christ as the author and finisher of your faith, but instead are trusting in your own works, in your own idea of morality and gaining favor before God then lay that aside and repent, believe in Jesus Christ, and rest in his sufficient provision in salvation.

Today is the day when churches all across the world celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, even the Catholic church will have special Easter Sunday services but they do not believe in the sufficiency of Jesus' sacrifice, they seek to add to it works to the equation. Making it Christ+works, Christ+the Church. But if this account of the feeding the multitudes teach us anything, it is that Christ's provision is all sufficient. He alone provided what was needed on that day, and he alone provided that which was needed on this day with his Death and Resurrection.

I want to close today reading a passage from Romans chapter 10. Turn with me there, starting in verse 1. "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For God is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (Christ is all sufficient, Christ is all that we need) For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, the man who does those things shall live by them. But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way. Do not say in your heart who will ascend into heaven, that is to bring Christ down from above or who will descend into the abyss, that is to bring Christ up from the dead. But what does it say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart. That is the word of faith which we preach.

That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in you rheart that God has raised him from the dead you will be saved For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture says, who ever believes on him will not be put to shame. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same lord of all is rich to all who call upon him. (who's cup overflows, who's provision provides 12 extra baskets.) For whoever calls on the name of the lord shall be saved.