

Miracles of Christ - Part 3

by Charles Leiter

In this sermon, Charles Leiter explores the miracle of feeding the 5,000, emphasizing God's power to multiply our small offerings and the necessity of Christ's blessing for true satisfaction in life.

Duration: 43:37

Scripture: Matthew 14:13

Topics: "Divine Providence", "Spiritual Satisfaction"

Description

This sermon focuses on the miraculous feeding of the 5,000 by Jesus, emphasizing the themes of God's ability to transform and multiply small things into great works, the importance of seeking Jesus' blessing and power above all else, and the ultimate satisfaction that only Christ can provide to the deepest longings of the human soul.

Transcript

Well, I mean, if we could have half of the spiritual feast that we've had physical feast, we'd be doing well. Let's read this evening from Matthew chapter 14, verses 13 to 21. Matthew 14.

And when it was evening, the disciples came to him saying, the place is desolate and the time has already passed. So send the multitudes away that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves. But Jesus said to them, they do not need to go away.

You give them something to eat. And they said to him, we have here only five loaves and two fish. And he said, bring them here to me.

And ordering the multitudes to recline on the grass, he took the five loaves and the two fish. And looking up toward heaven, he blessed the food and breaking the loaves, he gave them to the disciples and the disciples gave to the multitudes. And they all ate and were satisfied.

And they picked up what was left over the broken pieces. 12 full baskets. And there were about 5,000 men who ate, aside from women and children.

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And then let's turn to John chapter 6. And we'll read a parallel passage here this time to give us a little more information about this miracle. Vayamos a Juan 6, un pasaje paralelo, para tener más información sobre el milagro. John chapter 6. After these things, Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, or Tiberias.

And a great multitude was following him, because they were seeing the signs which he was performing on those who were sick. And Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand.

Jesus, therefore, lifting up his eyes and seeing that a great multitude was coming to him, said to Philip, Where are we to buy bread that these may eat? This he was saying to test him, for he himself knew what he was intending to do. Philip answered him, Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little. Two hundred days' wages.

Now, two-thirds of a year's work. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people? Jesus said, Have the people sit down. Now there was much grass in the place, so the men sat down in number about five thousand.

Jesus, therefore, took the loaves, and having given thanks, he distributed those who were seated, likewise also the fish, as much as they wanted. And when they were filled, he said to his disciples, Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost. And so they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten.

When, therefore, the people saw the sign which he had performed, they said, This is of a truth, the prophet who is to come into the world. Jesus, therefore, perceiving that they were intending to come and take him by force to make him king, withdrew again to the mountain by himself alone. And a great crowd followed him where they saw the signs which he had performed to the sick.

And so Jesus went up to a mountain, and sat there with his disciples. And the Passover was near, the feast of the Jews. When Jesus raised his eyes, and saw that a great crowd had come to him, he said to Philip, Where shall we buy bread so that they may eat this? But this he said to test him, for he knew what he had to do.

Philip answered him, Two hundred denarii of bread will not be enough for each of them to take a little. Those two hundred denarii are practically two hundred days of payment, that is quite a lot. One of his disciples, Andrew, brother of Simon Peter, said to him, Here is a boy who has five loaves of bread and two little fish.

What is this for so many? Then Jesus said, Make the people lie down. And there was a lot of grass in that place, and they laid down as in numbers of five thousand men. And Jesus took those loaves, and having given thanks, he divided them among the disciples, and the disciples among those who were lying down, as well as the fish, as much as they wanted.

And when they had been satisfied, he said to his disciples, Pick up the pieces that are left, so that nothing is lost. They picked up and filled twelve baskets of pieces, that of the five loaves of bread were left over to those who had eaten. Those men then, seeing the sign that Jesus had made, said, This is truly the prophet who had to come to the world.

But understanding Jesus that they were going to come to take possession of him and make him king, he went back to the mountain alone. There was a time in church history when all Scripture was interpreted allegorically. For example, the woman at the well, Jesus said, You have had five husbands.

And that was interpreted in various ways. Some said the five husbands stand for the five books of Moses. Augustine said the five husbands stand for the five senses, you know, smell and touch and taste and so on.

So Augustine said that the five husbands represented the senses, the sense of touch, smell and taste. That's what allegorical interpretation is. And we can thank God that at the time of the Reformation, there was a return to trying to understand what the Bible is actually saying.

At the same time, we can go too far. We can become afraid of interpreting any Scripture in a way that would be spiritualized. And that's not Scriptural either.

For example, the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 10. He says that they were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and they all ate the same spiritual food and they all drank the same spiritual drink. So he says that they were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and they all ate the same spiritual drink.

For they were drinking from that spiritual rock which followed them and the rock was Christ. Now that's not allegorical. What that is, is he's saying this is what God was teaching us.

This is what he was foreshadowing before in the Old Testament that referred to Christ. In the same way, when we come to the miracles of the Lord Jesus, the first thing we need to realize is those were actual miracles. And so we need to treat them historically as miracles and learn from that first.

But at the same time, we're specifically told these were signs that pointed to something about the person and character of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we saw that this morning concerning the Lord's first miracle or first sign, the changing of water into wine. It wasn't just any water that he changed into wine.

It was the water that was used for the Jewish custom of purification. And it wasn't just any wine that Jesus made, it was the best wine. And he made 180 gallons of it.

You see, he's telling us about how he's going to change the water of Judaism and the water of tradition and ceremony into the wine of resurrection life. Now, the same is true of this miracle we have just read about. It's the only miracle that is recorded in all four Gospels.

We ought to take that seriously. And we need to think of what the Lord is saying to us in the miracle itself. And then we need to look at the miracle as a sign of something else.

And he tells us in the context what the sign is. I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall not hunger.

He who believes in me shall never thirst. So let's look at this miracle, first of all, just as the miracle that it is. The changing of water into wine, you could say that is a miracle of transformation.

God is able to take one thing and transform it into something else. He's able to take a Saul and transform him into a Paul. He's able to take a Simon and transform him into a Peter.

He's able to take a thief like George Mueller and make him a man of honesty and integrity. So that's a miracle of transformation. But this is different, isn't it? It's a miracle of multiplication.

God is able to take something little and make it into something big. He's able to take something small and stretch it into something incredible. God can take, and this is the first point, God can take very small things and make them into very big things.

Not only is he able to do that, he delights to do that. So he comes to a man named Gideon and he said that he is the least in Manasseh, and his father's house is the least, and he's the least in his father's house. And Gideon starts out with 32,000 men, and he goes up against, anybody know how many? A hundred and thirty-five thousand.

A hundred and thirty-five thousand. God says, oh, you're way too strong. If I let you win in that battle, you'll think that you had something to do with it.

So you remember God thinned them out. And he got them down to 10,000 men. Now the odds are just about 14 to 1. What do you guys think? You're walking down an alley, dark alley, and 14 guys come out and surround you.

You think that's bad? Is that bad enough odds? God says, no, you're way too strong still. It's got to get a lot worse than that. So he brings them down to 300 men.

Now we're talking about 450 to 1. 450 against 1. So now you're going down the dark alley, and 450 men surround you. You've got a small army around you. God says, okay, now you're weak enough.

I can do it and get the glory. See, we just cannot use our weakness and our limitations as an excuse for not giving everything to God. Can't do it.

God is able to take the smallest and weakest of any of us, whoever it is, and use us for his glory in ways that we can't imagine. You know, John the Baptist, it says the voice of one crying in the wilderness. One man can't do anything.

Yeah, but it says all Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him. So this is the way God works. It's the way it was in the early church.

120 people in the upper room. They're going out against the imperial power of Rome. And the religious power of Jerusalem.

And the intellectual power of Greece. Greatest philosophers who ever lived were back there hundreds of years before. All the immorality and wickedness and corruption of a place like Corinth.

One of the most evil cities that's ever been, really. And as Leonard Ravenhill said, the early church had as much chance of survival as a baby left at the bottom of a Grand Canyon. It was a group about like this, 120 people in the upper room.

Can you imagine you're going to Rome and you worship this crucified Jew? And you say to the Romans, you say, this crucified Jew is the king of the universe and his kingdom is going to destroy the kingdom of Rome. You can hear the rounds of laughter. Trouble is his kingdom did destroy the kingdom of Rome.

And as old Vance Havner said, people call their boys Paul and their dogs Nero. Think of it in the life of the Lord Jesus himself. God did everything in the world to handicap and weaken him.

Where is he going to be born? Well, how about in a stable? Where is he going to grow up? How about Nazareth? Everybody hates that place. What's he going to be? Well, he'll be a carpenter's son. Well, no doubt the best education.

No, no education. Never wrote a book. Never left a small area of the countryside.

Picked his disciples out of some ignorant fishermen. And totally turned the world's history upside down. This is the way God works.

He takes weak things and he multiplies them. That's the way he is. May God help us in this.

We always say what Andrews said in verse 9. What are these among so many? What is it? I've got this, but what? It's so little. Matthew, we only have a few loaves and fish. And what's Jesus say? Bring them here to me.

And that's what he's saying to us. I don't have, you know, I can't sing. I can't play the guitar.

What am I going to do? I can't do anything. We center on all of the negatives. And God says, I'm sorry, but that's not going to be a good enough excuse.

You give me what you've got. Bring that little thing you've got. You say, I don't have hardly anything.

Great, maybe he can use you. Maybe he won't have to cripple you or knock you down or make you sick or give you cancer or something before he can use you. And if he has already done that, praise God, because he can take the nothing that you've got and turn it into something.

What's the second thing to learn here? The only thing that matters in God's kingdom. The only thing we must have is the blessing and power of the Lord Jesus. What have you got? Give it to me.

They gave it to him. He blessed it. And he broke it.

And he gave it out. That's all we need. That's the one thing that we absolutely must have.

Look at what it says in verse 23. Amazing. And this is John 6. There came other small boats from Tiberias near to the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks.

He didn't say where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had performed a mighty miracle and fed 5,000 people. He just said that's the place where the Lord had given thanks. It says he blessed that bread.

He gave thanks and blessed the bread. That's all it said. And beloved, that's all we need.

We just need Jesus to put his blessing on us. And then to break us and give us out to others. We don't need a good building.

We don't need a good location. We don't need air conditioning. We don't need comfortable peers.

We don't need youth programs. We don't need fun and games. We don't need a better plan.

Not that I'm against any of those things. But you can do all of that and if you don't have the Lord's blessing, you don't have anything. And if you do have the Lord's blessing, you have everything.

Here's John the Baptist out there. Talk about location. He's out in the desert.

The chairs weren't very comfortable out there. Everything going against him. But it said all Jerusalem and all Judea came out to him.

He said, well, at least you could have a good personality. They look at John the Baptist, they say, this guy is a nut. Wearing camel's hair and eating locusts and wild honey.

But you remember what it said? In such and such year, Luke says, the word of the Lord came to John the Baptist. And he came preaching. It's good to have more doctrine.

It's good to study the Bible. It's good to do all those things. But you're never going to know the Bible as well as Satan does.

But you're never going to know the Bible as well as Satan does. There's no thing that's going to work. You remember what they said there in the Old Testament? Let's get the ark that it may work for us.

Well, it didn't work and they got defeated and the ark got taken from them. If we can just keep this in mind. All we need is Jesus.

I've seen times when we were on the campus witnessing. Here's a guy talking to me, resisting me. And I think we both knew when the Holy Spirit came.

All of a sudden, it's different. And he begins to listen. And finally, he says, I've got to leave.

I've got to go to class. But do you have any other tracks I could take with me? What is that? That's when the Lord helps. He does something we can't do.

And that's all we need is the Lord to bless that little five loaves and two fish. That's all we need. What's the last thing? This is the spiritual application that Jesus himself gives.

Only the Lord Jesus Christ can satisfy the deepest hunger and longing of the human soul. I am the bread of life, he said. I'm that bread.

He that believes on me shall not hunger. He that comes to me shall not hunger. He that believes on me shall never thirst.

And you remember, they came to him after this miracle, and he said, you seek me not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. I've always wondered about that. I think why it looked like they did seek him because they saw signs.

He's saying, you didn't really understand what I was saying to you. You just wanted your belly filled. He's telling us that he alone can satisfy the deepest hungers of the human heart.

We talked about wine this morning, joy, celebration. Bread is more basic than that. It has to do with sustaining life itself.

It's the staff of life. It's the food of both rich and poor. He said, I'm the bread.

You are never going to have satisfaction. You're never going to be full inside unless you have the Lord Jesus Christ. You're going to be starving inside.

Nothing else will satisfy. You remember about Solomon? Do you remember Solomon? Well, let's look at maybe just a little bit in Ecclesiastes chapter 2. In verse 4, I enlarged my works. I built houses for myself.

I planted vineyards for myself. I made gardens and parks. I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees.

I made ponds of water. I bought male and female slaves, flocks and herds larger than all, collected silver and gold of female singers, the pleasures of men, many concubines. I became great and increased more than all who preceded me.

And then verse 11, he says, behold, all was vanity and striving after win, and there was no profit under the sun. He says, behold, all was vanity and striving after win, And then verse 13, behold, all was vanity and striving after win, And then verse 14, behold, all was vanity and striving after win, and there was no profit under the sun. And then verse 15, behold, all was vanity and striving after win, Now here's a man that tried sensual pleasure.

He tried all kinds of riches. He tried wisdom and education. And he tried work.

He did all kinds of work. There are men that are doing that right now. They sink themselves in their work all the time because they're afraid to slow down long enough to think how empty they are.

You know, if somebody's been to a restaurant before you, you ask them, you say, what was it like? How good was it? They say, man, don't go to that place. Food's terrible. The service is terrible.

You know, you listen to them. Well, here's somebody that's been to the restaurant. He had more money than all of us put together will ever have.

He said, it's just vanity. It's striving after win. It won't answer anything.

He had more pleasures. He had more money. He had more education.

Whatever it is that you think is going to fill up that hole inside of you, it won't work. And the Lord Jesus in this miracle says, I want to tell you something. I'm the bread of life.

I can satisfy that hunger. And I'm the only one who can. Are you empty? I can tell you this.

If you're not a Christian, only Christ can satisfy. If you are a Christian, I can tell you this. Only Christ will satisfy.

Sometimes we get off track a little bit, don't we? And start looking for something somewhere else. It's not going to happen. Now, what else is he saying to us? He says, I'm the true bread.

I'm that true bread that came down. He's the one that can satisfy. But he's saying that he can satisfy us completely.

It says, when they were all filled, they all ate as much as they wanted. Now, you guys ought to understand that after this feed. I mean, when that food is that good, and you say, no, thanks.

I don't care for it anymore. They ate and were satisfied. And what happened? Jesus said, pick up the fragments.

12 full baskets. Once again, why? He could have gauged that miracle so it came out just right, not a tiny bit left over. What's he saying? He's saying, I've got enough to satisfy you and much, much, much more.

Same thing he did with the wine. He does it lavishly. He's wanting us to know what kind of a Savior he is.

Where sin abounded, grace did just barely make it equal. Grace did much more abound. That's the kind of Savior we're dealing with.

Now, you see, he's talking to us, and they're active parables. There's reasons. I've looked through the Gospels many times.

I've never seen one thing that Jesus said that he didn't really need. You know, he's just talking. All of it full of rich meaning.

Here's another example. Lord willing, tomorrow morning we'll look at another one. Now, there's a lot of them.

We don't have time to look at a lot of them, but they're there, and he's talking to us through those. He's talking to us through all of them. Amen.

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