

Take, Bless, Break & Give

by Michael Flowers

The sermon explores the significance of the feeding of the five thousand and Jesus walking on the sea, and how these events illustrate the Eucharistic model of taking, blessing, breaking, and giving, and how we can apply this model to our lives to experience God's abundance and provision.

Duration: 21:15

Scripture: Exodus 3:14, Psalm 107:4-9, Psalm 107:23-30, Matthew 14:22-33, Mark 4:13, John 6:1-15

Topics: "Giving"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the significance of the feeding of the 5,000, a story found in all four gospels. He emphasizes that this event is a sign, pointing to something greater. The preacher also highlights the importance of the words of institution, where Jesus took, blessed, broke, and gave the bread, foreshadowing the Eucharist. He emphasizes that Jesus takes our little and adds it with God's abundance, showing that even our small offerings can lead to great things. The preacher also references Psalm 107, which speaks of God satisfying the hungry and thirsty, further illustrating the theme of God's abundance and provision.

Transcript

John, chapter six, is one of the most amazing sections of John's gospel. It encapsulates so much, and as I was just sort of pondering the day's passage, which really is just the feeding of the five thousand, I found myself being pulled into the whole chapter. And so we're going to kind of look at an overview of the whole chapter and what the feeding of the five thousand perhaps prefigures.

The feeding of the five thousand is one of those passages that you'll find in all four gospels. And so that tells us the importance of it. The parable of the sower is an important one.

In fact, the parable of the sower, Jesus said, if you don't get this, you won't get the rest of the parables. And that's only in three. And so there's something very, very important about this passage.

And it is a sign. It says that in the passage that this was a sign that Jesus was doing. Signs point somewhere.

Right. Signs are not in and of themselves, pointing to themselves, speaking about themselves, but they're pointing away. They're giving a direction somewhere else.

Now, when John is talking about this story, he presumes the other three gospels, because this is the last gospel written around 98 somewhere in that time. But there's something that's beautiful, especially in the the synoptic accounts of this passage. In all three accounts, you're going to see Jesus do something.

That's unbroken, and it says he took the bread and he looked up into heaven and he blessed it or he gave thanks and that he broke it and then he gave it those four words took, blessed, broke and gave. There's something about that as we enact that every Sunday in the Eucharist is that he took the bread. These are the words of institution, actually, and this is prefiguring those words that Jesus would do in that upper room.

And he's illustrating it in the feeding of the five thousand, this super abundant sign. He takes the bread and he blesses the bread and he breaks the bread and he gives the bread. And that's very, very much like what he does with us, right? He takes us and then he begins to work with us and he begins to speak to us and then a breaking in our lives occurs, that outer soulish man, that that thing that must die and go to the cross, it must be broken, that resistance.

We're always pushing out of that brokenness and that having blessed us, he breaks us and then he gives us to the life of the world. The sending prayer that we do after the Eucharist, you have fed us with spiritual food. Now, send us out into the world.

Give us to the world. It's all Eucharistic theology, even the sending. It's beautiful.

When they see what's going on, Andrew, Simon's brother, spoke up and he said, here's a little boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish. But how far will they go among so many? And so another element in this story is that Jesus takes the very little bit that we have. And he adds that with God, my little and God will equal the abundance that's about to happen.

And so as we contemplate our little, as we offer that to him, we offer it up like the bread that we're about to offer this morning. We offer him that bread and then we bless that bread, that little bit of bread. It may not seem like much.

It may seem like it's not going to be sufficient for the task. And then he breaks that open, that thing that we offer him, that most precious thing that we were singing about this morning. He breaks it open and he allows that to be multiplied in abundance for the life of the world.

In our weakness, he's becoming strong in our weakness, he's multiplying the life of God through us. You find yourselves in those places sometimes where you feel like you're not up for the task and in that weak place, God is using you and in your weakness, his strength is coming through for the life of those that you're speaking to. This is a sign of the real bread, Jesus himself.

How can you do this? They would ask. The people saw that the sign Jesus performed in this manner when he continued to bless and it fed the whole multitude. And they said, surely this is the prophet who is to come into the world.

Who's he speaking of? He's speaking of the prophet that Moses spoke about in Deuteronomy 18. I will send a prophet after me and you will listen to him and do everything that he said. They wanted to make him king by force, and so he withdrew again into a mountain by himself.

They were kind of getting who he was, but they weren't understanding that he was not just a king limited to their national vision. They wanted to make him king by force. When you think about who Jesus is, can he really be made anything by force? Right.

We're hearing about the multiplication of the loaves and the fish and the abundance that God is giving in this sign. And then it shifts to another scene, it shifts to a scene where Jesus is walking on the sea. Now, it was dark and Jesus had not yet joined them.

A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough, and when they had rode about three or four miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water, and they were frightened. But he said to them, I am is the real translation. I am.

Don't be afraid. It is I, the literal word is I am. Don't be afraid.

And then they were willing to take him into the boat and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were going. And so what is this seeming to prefigure? We've got this story about the multiplication of bread and Jesus is taking and he's blessing and he's breaking and he's giving. And then all of a sudden the disciples are crossing over the sea.

It's a prefigure of the Passover in verse four, where it says the Jewish Passover festival was near. And so John begins to paint these these images of abundance again. He's retelling the Passover story in a sense with a different kind of imagery.

And then they're crossing over to the sea, which is like coming through the Red Sea. The parting of the Red Sea is a baptismal type for Paul. They were baptized into the sea and into the cloud and baptism is deliverance from the powers of sin and death.

And the exodus is that image, the crossing over from death to life. They've eaten the Passover and then they take the journey to follow the Lord with the Egyptians on their tails. The miraculous has been built into creation from the very beginning.

Day two of creation, the waters were divided. So this is nothing new. The dividing of the waters because the waters had already been divided by God.

The waters awaits the command of God. This is the sign of the Holy Spirit, the living waters that we enter in through the baptism. And so they're getting ready and they're going across.

And Jesus now is showing up, not splitting the waters, but Jesus is showing up on top of the waters, showing what kind of king he really is. He's not the king of just the nation. They wanted to try to make him king.

And then all of a sudden, the disciples are waiting on Jesus and he's in prayer probably for who knows how long. And they said, we've got to get over there. And so they get in a boat.

They were rowing, it says, like three to five miles. Can you imagine you ever tried to do that? And then all of a sudden they look out and they see Jesus not splitting the waters, but Jesus is walking on top of the waters. Right.

And then he says how he reveals himself first at the burning bush. I am. And so he's pointing them back now and he's trying to teach them how to read the scriptures.

He's trying to teach them how to read the scriptures afresh. And so Jesus says, I am. Don't be afraid.

Think about that. All the areas of our lives that we may be finding ourselves in, even this morning where we feel perplexed, where we feel challenged, we need to hear and see Jesus on top, the most unstable substance around. He's walking on instability.

He's on top of it. And he's raining and he's multiplying your little in your life, just the very little that you have that you're giving to him. It's enough because you're little with God is enough.

Right. He'll multiply that. And then he's walking on top of all that instability in our lives and everything where we feel fearful, like I'm not going to make it through this.

This is going to be hard. We need that contemplation of Jesus walking on top of those substances so that we can see that he's carrying us through those hard places, those instable places in our lives. Right.

I love Psalm 107. It kind of encapsulates both of these stories. Verse five, they were hungry and thirsty and their lives ebbed away and then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble.

And he delivered them from their distress. He led them by a straightway to a city where they could settle. Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.

There it is. That's the feeding of the five thousand and imagery there of God satisfying us and giving us his abundance. And then in verse 23 of the same song, some went out on the sea and ships.

They were merchants on the mighty waters. They saw the works of the Lord, his wonderful deeds in the deep. For he spoke and stirred up a tempest and lifted high the waves, this is the doing of the war, stirring up the waters around us.

He's causing us to call on him and cling to him. Verse 26, he mounted up the heavens and went down to the depths in their peril, their courage melted away. They reeled and staggered like drunkards, it says.

And they were all at their wits end, never felt this way. And then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble. In that boat, in that place out before Jesus comes walking on the water, they cried out to the Lord in their trouble and he brought them out of their distress.

He stilled the storm to a whisper. And the waves of the sea were hushed. This is Jesus walking on that water, the Lord of creation, being able to speak to the storms.

They were glad when it grew calm and he guided them to their desired haven. Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind. Let him exalt him in the assembly of the people and praise him in the council of the elders.

Psalm 89, 9 also says, You rule over the surging sea when its waves mount up, you still will. All these times that Jesus is speaking to the storms and all of those gospel passages, it's drawing from this heritage of God being over creation and ruling creation and connected to creation. He's not separated like the deists have separated God and creation.

God is very much there in the midst of it. Psalm 65, 7 says, Who stilled the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves and the turmoil of the nations. You read that again.

Who stilled the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves and the turmoil of the nations. That's something to take into prayer when you get concerned about America, when you get concerned about the rest of the nations and what's being shaken in the earth right now, he will shake everything that can be shaken until that which cannot be shaken will remain. And so if we put our hope in political structures and economic structures, we will shake with them and we will be shaken to death.

But if we put our hope in the kingdom of God, the righteousness, the peace and the joy in the Holy Spirit affecting those structures, affecting the economy, but that must come first. We must give our little to him first and let God add the rest. And that's the way of the kingdom, isn't it? It's the way of the kingdom.

In the midst of the storm, he's walking on top of everything that creates chaos in our lives. That's Yom, remember the old Canaanite god of the sea, Yom, he's walked on top of Yom. And so what does God need to multiply in our lives this morning? Where might you be challenged in that place where he must come through? I can think of my whole life being that.

In fact, if not every aspect of our lives comes under that definition, oh, God. You must do this. Then we're still trying to do it ourselves, right? So I think he's calling us this morning, like the song, like Garrett wrote the song a couple of weeks ago.

To offer everything that's most precious to him. To offer it to him. And it feels like you might be in that place where, you know, there's only like two fish and five barley loaves and you look around and you go, that's not going to cut it.

That's all I have. But then as you offer that to the Lord, this is where he's drawing us to him. You take that, you offer that to him.

In my weakness, you are strong. Lord, be glorified in my weakness, in my little, in my lack. Take this.

I give you thanks for this. I bless this, this little thing. You say, don't despise the day of small beginnings.

You see, a lot of times the small beginnings, the very things that we can't bless because we resent them. We might be a little angry about those small beginnings or that little in that lack. Be quick to listen and slow to speak and slow to become angry.

That's one of the words. Don't despise the day of small beginnings that we were giving right in the in the beginning of this little church plant. Kevin Miller from Church of the Resurrection in Wheaton, I said, hey, you know, if you're praying for us and you hear anything.

Send us something. We need we need a prophetic word. We need a word of encouragement.

Right. Because, you know, we're 12 old people up here in this upper room praying and doing the Eucharist. And we have this vision inside of us that's just like, ah, it's so big, it's busting.

It wants to get out. Right. You have to like be in that place where you're nurturing, you're pondering in your heart.

Right. You're pondering that vision that God has given you that purpose, but it's not there yet. And the trick is not to be angry and not to lose heart.

Right. And not to go into unbelief in those times where God has promised you something. So don't despise the day of small beginnings.

Don't despise the little that you may be feeling right now. And it may be you may have great abundance, but there may be one small little area in your life. You feel like this is not happening and that's what you fixate on.

We reign in life through the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness. As we just have to learn, always the Eucharistic model of taking and blessing and breaking it and giving it. Right.

Yeah, that's right. Right. Kind of zero out the breaking part.

That's the hard one. I'm going to break this and give it. Yeah, that's kind of what we are.

Right. We we offer him that breaking in our lives, which has been broken because that's when the oil comes out of the alabaster jar. Right.

Breaks that open and the fragrance can fill the room. And we have to always remember in the valley where that's happening in the multiplication is happening and you don't know how it's happening, but you're still alive. That this Lord of ours not only is serving us that bread and that fish, but he's walking on top of all those circumstances in our lives that we so desperately need for him to rule and reign over.

Yeah. Let him be that kind of king this morning. Let him rule through you.

We reign in life, that's Jesus reigning through us, that we've learned the secret of his spirit. See, the kingdom of God is in the Holy Spirit. It's righteousness, peace and joy in the spirit.

And as he reigns through us by the very presence of the Holy Spirit, the real presence, the Holy Spirit's the real presence, the Holy Spirit's the real presence in the Eucharist, the Holy Spirit's the real presence in baptism, the Holy Spirit's the real presence in our confession, in our faith. Yeah. Thank you, Lord.

Lord, we thank you that you are so good to us and that you satisfy the hungry with good things. And you want to take us and bless us and break us and give us for the life of the world. And this morning, Lord, we ask that you would do that once again as a people and as individuals.

We give you glory and honor that you are the one who is walking up on top of all the instability in our lives. And you're saying, I am. Don't be afraid.

We invite you into our boat this morning. You got into that boat and you took them to the other side. We pray that, Lord, this boat, this ark, the people of God.

The salvation of the world, Jesus Christ, that you would take us to the other side with all of our needs and all of our desires and all of our hopes and dreams, that you would teach us how to be in union with you and yoked with you. Your yoke is easy, your burden is light. Thank you for this journey of faith that you've called us to.

Thank you that you're holding us and bringing us through in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

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