

“JESUS FEEDS THE 5000 PLUS”

(Matthew 14:13-21)

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dear friends in Jesus,

Our dear Lord, while walking on the dusty tracks of Palestine, telling people about the kingdom of God, and healing the sick among them, saw the crowds coming and we are told, ***'had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.'***

A long day of teaching and healing had passed when the question of food arose. The disciples wanted him to send the people away, so that they might go into one of the surrounding villages to buy 'bread' for themselves. But Jesus, being kind and merciful, would not send the crowd away hungry. Instead he turned to Philip and posed the question, ***'How are we to buy bread so that these people may eat?'*** Philip, being a down to earth man, replied that it would take a huge amount of money to buy enough bread for everyone to eat a little. Andrew, who probably overheard the conversation, offered the information that a boy was present who was carrying his lunch consisting of 5 barley loaves and 2 small fish. But then he said, ***'What are they among so many?'*** Or in other words, 'This boy's lunch amounts to nothing among all these people!'

But Jesus directed that the people should sit down on the grass in manageable groups of 50 or 100. Then he took the loaves and the fish, blessed them, and gave them to the disciples to hand out to everyone. That was enough;

they all ate and were satisfied. About 5000 men not including women and children, (upwards of 15,000), had been fed. To prevent waste the disciples gathered 12 baskets full of leftovers, enough to feed them and Jesus for some days. The people were amazed and exclaimed, 'This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world!'

Jesus, discovering that they were planning to crown him King by force, retired to the near-by hills. He would not consent to become anyone's 'bread and butter' king. Yes, he desired to be their king, but in an entirely different manner and sense. His throne was to be a Cross; and the bread which he came to give was his own Life.

Sometime later, after listening to Jesus' teaching, the people began to wonder. Could Jesus be a prophet like Moses through whom their forefathers had received manna in the desert? What could he do to prove and support his claim that he would give them 'bread from heaven' to eat?

Somehow the people had seen bread in Jesus, but had failed to see God in the bread that he had given them. They ate the bread but did not see that it was Jesus, God himself, who was giving it to them. They wanted more bread, and it seemed reasonable to make Jesus king, one who could guarantee a constant supply of bread. Eventually, Jesus gave these confused people a straight out answer when he said, ***'I am the Bread of Life!'***

What is bread? Bread may be defined as the means of life. It helps to keep alive. Jesus knew this, and so he fed the thousands of people. Humans live from life that has first been given to them whether plant or animal. Humans, who use two kingdoms, live on their natural side from the vegetable and animal kingdoms, and on their spiritual side they live from God. Therefore, humans cannot live from bread, earthly perishable bread alone. To be a 'whole' person they must also eat the 'bread from heaven', which gives them life from God. Jesus said that he was the 'Living Bread' from heaven.

It is God who graciously provides earthly bread for his creatures. Jesus showed this by giving thanks to his Father for the loaves and the fish. The very fact that millions of people on earth go to bed hungry is not an indication that God is unwilling or unable to deal with this sad situation. It may seem strange that there is starvation in the midst of surplus food. Humans, because of greed, have created this problem. Our problem is one of distribution for which we, as God's stewards, are also responsible. Actually, while we boast about our many technical advances, most of them deliver no bread, although they might and should.

In spite of everything God continues to bless in abundance. Wouldn't it be wonderful, especially in our present health crisis, if more people would seek God's help and healing, and thank him for the many blessings we still experience.

In spiritual things we see that our heavenly Father is the one who provides the 'Living Bread' from heaven, Jesus himself! Jesus says, 'If you eat of this bread, you will live forever.' But again we note that in the midst of plenty there is spiritual starvation. Many receive little or none of the 'Living Bread' from heaven. Spiritual hunger and starvation are prevalent in our society. We, who have so generously received the 'Living Bread', are invited, yes, challenged to share Jesus with others. Let's start within our own families, our friends and others in our community. Tell them simply what Jesus means to you, my Saviour and my Friend, and what he can mean to them also.

When we eat the 'Bread' from heaven we grow in our lives with Jesus. We live in him, and he lives in us. Jesus is present with us to renew and encourage us. Our lives take on a new lease and become increasingly significant with and for Jesus. Jesus is the real 'Bread' we eat, the 'Living Bread' from heaven. **Amen.**

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Sermon by Pastor Graham Zweck 2 August 2020