



Aug. 6, 2023 Mt. 14: 13-21

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#### ENTERING THE SCENE:

When was the last time you looked up and said "Is it that time already?" This must have been the atmosphere out in the country the day this feeding event took place. When we are totally focused on someone or something, time seems to stand still and bodily needs ignored. One has to feel empathy for the disciples when they were challenged to take care of all those hungry people. This is how we might feel when we confront the unlimited needs of our own times. Now we need to trust as the disciples did, that God will provide.

#### Mt. 14:13-21

13 When Jesus heard **what had happened**, he **withdrew** by boat privately to a **solitary place**. Hearing of this, the crowds **followed him on foot** from the towns. 14 When Jesus landed and saw a **large crowd**, he had **compassion** on them and healed their sick. 15 As **evening** approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a **remote place**, and it's already getting **late**. Send the **crowds** away, so they can **go** to the villages and **buy themselves some food**." 16 Jesus replied, "They do not need to **go away**. You **give them something to eat**." 17 We have here only **five loaves** of bread and **two fish**," they answered. 18 **Bring** them," he said. 19 And he directed the **people** to **sit down** on the grass. Taking the **five loaves** and the **two fish** and **looking up to heaven**, he **gave thanks** and **broke the loaves**. Then he **gave** them to the disciples, and the disciples **gave** them to the people. 20 They **all ate** and were **satisfied**, and the disciples picked up **twelve basketfuls of broken pieces** that were **left over**. 21 The number of those who **ate** was about **five thousand men**, besides **women and children**.

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Each of us has a loaf or fish to contribute to the healing and restoration of those in need. What is my personal contribution to the needs around me right now?

**PRAYER:** Lord, my individual contribution seems so inadequate to the needs of today. But you promise that if I, like the disciples, go out with what little I have you will make it enough, and even more than enough. Help me to trust that the prompting of my heart that comes from you is indeed your will for me as I respond in my little ways. Amen.

#### WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

**WHAT HAD HAPPENED:** His own people had rejected Jesus, and now he hears that Herod has killed John the Baptist. It was getting dangerous. Jesus knew he might be next to die, so he goes to safer territory ruled by Philip to have time to think and mourn John's death.

*Where do you go when you have to get time alone to think/mourn? What makes that place a 'safe place' for you?*

**WITHDREW BY BOAT:** Jesus wanted to get away quickly and by himself so he used a boat. This is the fifth time in this gospel that Jesus withdraws from aggression, thereby refusing to play by the tyrant's rule.

*When you want to do the same, what do you do?*

**FOLLOWED HIM ON FOOT:** With John gone Jesus was their last hope. The people were now desperate and followed him on foot. This must have taken quite a long time.

*How does desperation open you to risking the difficult or impossible? Can you remember a time when you might have felt like someone in the crowd in this text?*

**PRIVATELY / SOLITARY PLACE / REMOTE PLACE:** A solitary place, off away somewhere, is often the only safe place a person can center down and find some time to think and feel.

*Do you have a solitary place for this purpose? If so, where is it?*

**LARGE CROWD / 5000:** This many people would have certainly caused the religious authorities to become alarmed.

*What do you think Jesus thought as he saw the crowd approaching? What will the authorities do to Jesus now that he seems to be carrying the mantle of John the Baptist?*

**COMPASSION:** The word for compassion in the original language would be more like “gut reaction” in today’s language. It is the kind of response that causes a person to deeply identify with something or someone.

*When was the last time you reacted with your ‘gut’ rather than your head? How can this memory help you connect with this gospel text?*

**EVENING / LATE:** The people have been gone all day by now and were probably very hungry.

*What does the time of day tell you about the quality of the day?*

**GO / SEND / AWAY:** Being in a remote place, there would not be any way to obtain food. The disciples suggest that the people leave in order to get something to eat.

*If you have been one of the disciples, would you have responded the same way?*

**BUY THEMSELVES / GIVE / GAVE:** The common sense response to a hungry crowd was to send them away to fetch for themselves. Jesus uses uncommon sense and with God’s help gives the people what they need.

*Have you ever chosen to use ‘uncommon sense’ to respond to a challenge? If so, what happened?*

**FOOD / SOMETHING TO EAT / ALL ATE / ATE:** Jesus follows in the tradition of Moses Ex. 16: 9f; Elisha 2 Kgs. 4:42f; and Isaiah Is. 55:2f;

*How does this help to explain to the people what is really going on?*

**FIVE LOAVES / TWO FISH:** This tiny amount of fish suggests that people tucked something in their bags/sleeves before they left home that day.

*If you would have also had something ‘tucked away’ that day, what do you think this example might prompt you to do?*

**BRING:** The disciples wanted to send the people away, and Jesus responds by asking them to bring what food they had to him.

*What lesson could the disciples get in this interaction?*

**PEOPLE / MEN / WOMEN/ CHILDREN:** All people were included in this story.

*Do you find yourself included as well?*

**SIT DOWN:** The people were told to sit down, which probably set the scene for the unexpected.

*What do you think the people thought when they were told to sit down?*

**LOOKING UP TO HEAVEN / GAVE THANKS:** All Jewish fathers blessed and gave thanks before the family ate their meals.

*When Jesus looks to heaven and gives thanks, what does he teach the crowds about where their meal comes from?*

**BROKE THE LOAVES / BROKEN PIECES:** We get a foretaste of the Last Supper and his death with this description.

*How does this connect you with the Eucharist?*

**SATISFIED / LEFT OVER:** The people not only had enough, there were leftovers.

*When you ‘eat’ of the Word of God, do you come away satisfied?*

**TWELVE BASKETFULS:** Matthew tells us of 12 baskets, reminiscent of the 12 tribes that have now been reduced to only two.

*What hope does this number 12 suggest to the people?*

**PARALLEL TEXTS:** Mt. 14: 31-21 // Mt. 15:32-38; Mk. 6: 32-44; Lk. 9: 10-17; Jn. 6:1-13; **Mt. 14:16** // 2 Kings 4:42-3; 1 Kings 17: 11-13; Nu. 11: 4-5, 22; Ex. 16; Ps. 107: 9; 132: 15; Mt. 5:6; **Mt. 14:20** // 1 Kgs. 17:16; 2 Kgs. 4: 6-7, 44;

**OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK:** Is. 55: 1-3; Ps. 145: 8-9, 15-18; Rom. 8: 35, 37-39; Mt. 14: 13-21; Revised Common Lectionary: Gen. 32: 22-31; Ps. 17: 1-7, 15; Rom. 9: 1-5; Mt. 14:13-21;

#### **SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:**

<http://www.newmelleray.org/sharing.asp?display=main> Aug 3, 2104 Sermon by Fr. Alberic Farbolin

Sympathy implies cool distance. Empathy requires identification with the one suffering. With sympathy, you acknowledge the pain of others. With empathy, you take that pain upon yourself as much as possible. [Bill Tammeus](#)

Authentic abundance does not lie in secured stockpiles of food or cash or influence or affection, but in belonging to a community where we can give those goods to others who need them – and receive them from others when we are in need. Parker Palmer

Frequently depicted in early Christian art. The miracle of the loaves and fishes sometimes called the feeding of the multitude is the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels, reflecting its importance to early Christians. This carved panel, part of an olive-wood door from the 5<sup>th</sup> century basilica of Santa Sabina, one of the oldest churches in Rome, depicts Jesus healing the blind man (top), multiplying the loaves and fishes (middle) and turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana (bottom). As is common in images of Jesus' wonder working in the early Christian art. Jesus carries a wand much as magicians did in pagan Roman art.



Jensen, Robin A. [Dining in Heaven](#). Bible Review: 10/ 1998. Pg. 36.

Always remember those who serve

In the days when an ice cream sundae cost much less, a 10 year old boy entered a hotel coffee shop and sat at a table. A waitress put a glass of water in front of him. "How much is an ice cream sundae?" "Fifty cents," replied the waitress. The little boy pulled his hand out of his pocket and studied a number of coins in it. "How much is a dish of plain ice cream?" he inquired. Some people were now waiting for a table and the waitress was a bit impatient. "Thirty-five cents," she said brusquely. The little boy again counted the coins. "I'll have the plain ice cream," he said. The waitress brought the ice cream, put the bill on the table and walked away. The boy finished the ice cream, paid the cashier and departed. When the waitress came back, she began wiping down the table and then swallowed hard at what she saw. There, placed neatly beside the empty dish, were two nickels and five pennies - her tip.

Jesus reveals a God who is different from the ancient gods. They needed beings to feed them so that they might be strong, and provide aid. To feed the gods is one of the oldest reasons for sacrifice. But this is not the God whom Jesus reveals. His God is one who comes to the people and feeds them, feeds them so abundantly that baskets full remain.

Williams, Patricia. [Christianity and Evolutionary Ethics](#). Zygon. 6/1996. Pg.. 265.

To a preacher who kept saying, "We must put God in our lives," the Master said, "He is already there. Our business is to recognize this. - Anthony de Mello, "One Minute Wisdom"

#### **The Churches of Tabgha**

Not far from Capemaum is a place, which was called in Greek "Heptapegon, " i.e., seven springs. In Arabic this word has been corrupted to "Tabgha, " the contemporary name of the site. Egeria visited this place during her travels in Palestine and though she mentioned only one church, archaeology has shown that three existed here in the fourth century (see illust. 22). Egeria's description of her visit to Tabgha reads as follows: "Not far away from there [Capemaum) are some stone steps where the Lord stood. And in the same place by the sea *is* a grassy field with plenty of hay and many palm trees. By them are seven springs,

each flowing strongly. And this is the field where the Lord fed the people with the five loaves and the two fishes. In fact the stone on which the Lord placed the bread has now been made into an altar. People who go there take away small pieces of the stone to bring them prosperity, and they are very effective. Past the walls of this church goes the public highway on which the Apostle Matthew had his place of custom.” Hoppe, Leslie J. [The Synagogues and Churches of Ancient Palestine](#). Collegeville, MN. The Liturgical Press. 1994. Pg. 92.

Real believers in the Word of God by their faith become the real living loving presence of God, doing the wondrous works of God by their immediate sacramental presence, not as a remote link in a chain of causality.  
Parr, Raymond. [Process Person Presence](#). Chicago. Thomas More Press. 1990. Page 116.

And after he feed the 5,000 he was no doubt a popular guest everywhere (after the word got around) with the way he could do wonders with just a smidgeon of food!

Wells, Abbie Jane. [The Gospel According to Abbie Jane Wells](#). Thomas More Press, Chicago. 1985. Pg. 47.

God overcomes impossible circumstances to demonstrate compassion and sovereign power, miraculously feeding more than 5,000 people with fish. The audience links fish with God’s compassionate and powerful actions in overcoming limiting circumstances, in supply human need, and in displaying God’s sovereignty.

Carter, Warren. [Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations Harrisburg, PA](#). Trinity Press. International. 2001. Pg. 141

The disciples assume (or hope) that the village markets will be able to cope with crowds of five thousand plus. Contrary to Jesus’ teaching, they look first to the imperial economy to supply the need, rather than to God (6:25-34). Note the frequent claim that the emperor, and through him various gods, is responsible for blessing the empire with adequate food. Statius (Silv 5.1, 79-107) praises Domitian for doing so, while the coins of Titus and Domitian claim that the gods Annona and Ceres manifest their approval for these emperors in adequate grain supplies. To the contrary, the scene asserts that the earth and its produce belong to and are supplied not by the empire and its elite but by God the creator (Lev. 25:23; Ps. 24:1; Mt. 6:25-34; 12: 1-8; 15: 31-39).

Carter, Warren. [Matthew and the Margins](#). NY. Orbis Books. 2000. Pages 306-7.

The happiest of people don’t necessarily have the best of everything; they just make the most of everything that comes along their way.

I cannot live in mediocrity, content with merely knowing that there is more of God to experience and explore -- and then do nothing about it. Truths that are not experienced are, in effect, more like theories than truths. Whenever God reveals truth to us He is inviting us into a divine encounter. - Bill Johnson, "Face to Face with God"

There is a story of Gandhi that reveals how profound and daring his sense of compassion was. It occurred during one of his famous hunger strikes. A man whose daughter was killed came in anguish, saying to Gandhi that he would stop fighting if the great soul would eat. But Gandhi knew the healing was deeper than just stopping the violence, and so he told the man he would eat only when the tormented father embraced the man who killed his daughter.

Nepo, Mark. [The Book of Awakening](#). Berkeley, CA. Conari Press. 2000. Pg.179.

My most spectacular answers to prayers have come when I was so helpless, so out of control as to be able to do nothing at all for myself. Catherine Marshall

Seeking God is not just an operation of the intellect, or even a contemplative illumination of the mind. We seek God by striving to surrender ourselves to Him whom we do not see, but Who is in all things and through all things and above all things. Merton, Thomas. [Seasons of Celebration](#). New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1950. Pgs. 223-34.

How many times do we miss God's blessings because they are not packaged as we expected? – Anonymous

"Three quarters of Americans believe the Bible teaches that 'God helps those who help themselves.' That is, three out of four Americans believe that this uber-American idea, a notion at the core of our current individualist politics and culture, which was in fact uttered by Ben Franklin, actually appears in Holy Scripture. The thing is, not only is Franklin's wisdom not biblical; it's counter-biblical. Few ideas could be further from the gospel message, with its radical summons to love of neighbor." - Author **Bill McKibben**, in his *Harper's* magazine essay, "The Christian Paradox"

## SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: [www.theark1.com](http://www.theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2001. Pgs. 120-123. To order contact [Carol Oberfoel](mailto:Carol.Oberfoel@theark1.com)

William R. White. [Stories for the Journey](#) Augsburg Pub. House, Minneapolis, MN. 1988. **STONE SOUP**: Pages 70-73.

Sumwalt, John E.. [Forty Tellable Tales for Cycle A](#). C.S.S. Pub. Co. Inc. Lima, OH. **MOM, MOM**: