

Message for October 11, 2020

Five loaves and two fish. That's all there was to feed five thousand men, along with the women and children who were present when Jesus taught. Yet all were fed, with food left over! What can we learn from this miracle? What role did the disciples play in it? How can we apply this to our lives today?

First of all, this miracle is recorded in all four of the Gospels, so it must be significant. And each account is essentially the same. So let's go through it bit by bit.

After hearing of the death of John the Baptist, Jesus departed with His disciples to a deserted place to be alone and rest awhile. But the people knew where He was going, and a multitude soon followed Him. When He saw them, He had compassion on them, and began to teach them, as well as heal their sick. So the scene is set. A great number of people are out in the wilderness with Jesus, but without provisions for themselves. A recipe for disaster?

By the time Jesus finishes ministering to them it is late in the day. So the disciples suggest that Jesus send them away to the surrounding villages in order for them to get something to eat. But this is where Jesus gets the disciples involved. He tells *them* to give the multitude something to eat. Can you imagine their reaction? "Are You kidding? We don't have enough food to feed all these! We only have five loaves and two fish. That's not enough! Do you want us to go and buy food for them, and spend a small fortune in the process?" I guess they weren't thinking very spiritually, and certainly not expecting a miracle to happen. But then again, how often do we when we're faced with a perplexing situation?

So Jesus calmly tells the multitude to sit down to eat. Then He looks up to Heaven and blesses the food. This is where it now gets really interesting. He divides the loaves and fish among the disciples and tells them to go feed the people. Notice that Jesus did not multiply the food and *then* give it to His disciples. There was

no heap of bread and fish fragments for the disciples to come back to time and again to pick up and then carry to those waiting to be fed. The miracle occurred only as the disciples were obedient to Jesus and went with what they had to feed the people. Their initial supply of only a few pieces of bread and fish never ran out! In fact, there were twelve baskets of fragments left over. That's some miracle!

So what can we learn from this? Just as the disciples did, we must learn to walk by faith, not by sight. How easy it would have been for them to look at what little they had, and then not even make any effort to do what was expected of them. They also trusted Jesus to somehow work it out. He didn't tell them that the food would be multiplied, He simply told them to go. The miracle occurred along the way as they obediently went, not knowing what to expect. The disciples didn't cause the miracle, but they were the instruments that enabled it to occur.

Have you ever felt led by God to do something, and then looked at your talents, skills, abilities, knowledge, etc. and thought "No way could I do this"? Of course you couldn't, any more than the disciples could, if all you saw was what little you had. But *He could do it*, working through you as His chosen instrument. All it takes is a trusting first step in faith. Then as you walk in obedience, He supplies whatever is needed and a "miracle" occurs. Just like with the disciples. How much better and more abundant our lives would be if we would learn to walk by faith rather than by sight!

May we all have eyes to see what is possible with God, rather than what is lacking in ourselves.

Blessings,
Pastor Joe

PERSEVERING FAITH

In the movie *Monumental*, Kirk Cameron describes what led the Pilgrims to leave England and Holland for America — as well as the conditions they faced along the way. While on the cramped, storm-tossed *Mayflower*, they signed the *Mayflower Compact*, attesting that they came “for the glory of God and advancements of the Christian faith.”

Within months in the new land, 47 of the original 121 Pilgrims had died. Only six or seven could walk and care for the others, and only four adult women were still alive for the first Thanksgiving. But the Pilgrims persevered, thanks to their faith in God and help from Native Americans.

William Bradford, governor of Plymouth Colony for 30 years, experienced hardship firsthand; his wife was one of the first to die during the journey. Yet Bradford’s tomb bears the bold message that “Jehovah is our help.”

KEEP ON BELIEVING

Through major life challenges, Christian singer-songwriter Jeremy Camp has learned to walk by faith and cling to his hope in Christ. While he was growing up, Camp’s family (which includes a brother with Down syndrome) struggled with poverty. When Camp was just 23, his wife of several months died of cancer.

The first song Camp wrote after her death was the chart-topper “I Still Believe.” In the chorus, he sings:

I still believe in Your faithfulness
I still believe in Your truth
I still believe in Your holy word
even when I don't see, I still believe.

Camp says trusting in God during life’s valleys takes lots of courage. “You can say, ‘All right, Lord, I don’t get it, but I’m going to trust you,’ and go to the only One [who] offers life and hope and peace and joy.”

Faith is a reasoning trust, a trust which reckons thoughtfully and confidently upon the trustworthiness of God.

—John R. Stott

WALK BY
Faith,
NOT BY
sight.

“The Little Church That Could”
“Believing is Seeing”