Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

A Miraculous Meal
Scripture: John 6:1-14
Code: 1510B

Turn in your Bibles to John 6 as we look at our lesson for this morning. Very, very familiar passage and I do not intend to perhaps lay any profundity upon you this morning that has not already been covered in some study of John's particular account here because the feeding of the 5,000 as it's called, although it was more likely 15,000, is such a familiar account. But I do believe there are some applications to be made from this this morning and I want us to see them, and particularly in perspective as we are considering the gospel of John.

As we come to chapter 6 we find that very tragically the Jewish leaders as well as the Jewish people have rejected Jesus Christ. Christ came from heaven, the Son of God lived 30 years in obscurity. For the last three years of His life He ministered and then He finally died. After all of the plans of God, after all that was accomplished in Christ's coming, after He came to Israel with His message, they had rejected Him. In fact, not only did they reject Him but they had decided that He was the most blatant kind of blasphemer because He claimed to be God. And besides that, He had the gaul to break their legalistic Sabbath ritual and that combination caused them to reject Him. Those were merely the circumstances, the real reason was the hardness of their hearts and the blackness of their sin.

So as we come to chapter 6 Christ has already been rejected and in fact they have plotted His murder in Jerusalem and Judea. In the southern part, Jerusalem/Judea area, Christ has been rejected. But interestingly enough that does not stop Christ from making His claims. The rejection of the people of the southern part of Israel, Jerusalem/Judea area, the fact that they have concluded that He is a blasphemer does in no way deter Him from doing what He's doing or from claiming His...His deity and that He is God in the flesh. And incidently, it doesn't stop John either from recording those claims. And so just because of rejection in chapter 5 doesn't mean everything changes, nothing changes, Christ goes on doing what He did, claiming what He claimed and John goes on recording it.

And as we come to chapter 6 we find almost an identical structure to chapter 5. You remember that in chapter 5 Jesus was in Jerusalem/Judea for a feast, most likely the Feast of Tabernacles, though possibly a Passover. But He was in Jerusalem/Judea, He performed a miracle and that miracle led to a discourse on His deity. We have the very same thing in chapter 6. Christ, first of all, performs a miracle which is followed by a discourse on His deity. There is really only one difference and that is that chapter 5 takes place in the southern part, Jerusalem/Judea; chapter 6 in the northern part known as Galilee.

Now as we come to chapter 6 then Jesus has left Jerusalem and Judea. The reason He left is reported for us in chapter 7 and verse 1 where it says, "After these things Jesus walked in Galilee for He would not walk in Judea because the Jews sought to kill Him." Because of the hatred and because the Jews desired to murder Jesus Christ, He left Jerusalem and Judea and He went north to Galilee. In chapter 6 though coming before the comment of chapter 7 is seen in retrospect in that comment and so as we come to chapter 6 He is ministering in Galilee. And we see again a very close parallel to chapter 5. He does a miracle and that miracle leads to the tremendous discourse on His deity couched in the words "the bread of life." And He claims to be that one which cometh down from heaven, that bread of life. And someone who takes of that bread of life shall never hunger. And this great claim to deity comes as a result of the basic fact of this miracle that takes place in the first part of the chapter. And so we see a very close parallel, only this time it's in Galilee. And we'll also see another parallel, He was rejected in Jerusalem/Judea, He's about to be rejected in Galilee, too. It wasn't much different. They were a little less hostile in Galilee.

Now as we come to this it is somewhat unusual that John even includes this miracle. The reason I say that is because this is the only miracle in all of John's gospel that is also included in the other three gospels. John usually separates out particulars that the others don't record. From time to time he does indicate certain miracles that are recorded in one of the other gospels. This is the only time he uses the miracle that is in all three of the other gospels. And because he does this there must be some tremendous importance laid upon this miracle. We have to consider it as perhaps a paramount miracle in the life of Christ because it is the only one in all four gospels. And may I suggest to you what I think are perhaps the two primary reasons why John uses it, and they lay tremendous weight upon it.

Number one, it shows the creative character of Christ's miracles more clearly than any other miracle. Now all of Christ's miracles, in a sense, are creative in that even in healing a blind man He recreates the ability to see but He transforms more than creates in His other miracles. He'll take a lame man and take what he has and make it function. He'll take even a dead body and make it come to life, but there's something there to work with in the other miracles. In this miracle and only one other, the marriage at Cana where He made wine, it is a purely creative act where He simply from nothing creates food for 15,000 people. And incidently, in terms of volume, this is the greatest miracle Christ ever did. It's included then because it is a vast miracle involving this multiplicity of people and showing Christ's absolute creative power, such power as only God would have, see.

Then I think, too, that John includes it because it is always John's purpose to present Christ's deity. And nothing will show His deity any better than a creative miracle, right? Because that's God in action. Also, this miracle is the occasion for the tremendous discourse later in the chapter where Christ claims deity. So John wants the miracle because it sets the stage for the claims of Christ to deity which is John's constant, relentless, never ending message. Christ is God. And so this miracle

John includes. And in the discourse to come Christ takes from the miracle the fact of the feeding of these people and says, "I am the bread of life," presents Himself as the sole answer to the hunger of the hearts of men. I've heard a lot about soul food, but the only satisfying soul food is Jesus Christ. So as we come to chapter 6, particularly the first 15 verses, we see the miracle that sets the stage.

Now I had a beautiful thought along this line and just thought I'd share it with you. As I said, all of Christ's miracles were creative, but isn't it interesting, in a sense, but isn't it interesting that these particular creative miracles there were only two...one was the wine and one was the bread. And the fish were rather incidental to the bread, as you know. Later on in this...in verse 13, for example, when it talks about fragments it doesn't even mention the fish, cause they were very small and they were used merely as a spread to put on the bread so it would go down. It was primarily a miracle of multiplying bread, although the fish were there.

And I began to think to myself, how beautiful that the two primary creative acts of Jesus Christ speak to us symbolically of His shed blood and His body given for us. And see, even in these two miracles Jesus Christ is presenting Himself as the crucified Christ, isn't He? And as we look back on it we can see it. And every time we celebrate around the Lord's table to communion, we take that wine that speaks of His blood, we take that bread that speaks of His body. And Christ in these two creative miracles, the wine at Cana and the bread here, spoke of His own body. And in case you think that's just conjecture on my part, notice verse 53 of chapter 6, "Jesus said unto them, `Verily, verily I say unto you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood you have no life in you, he who eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life and I'll raise him up at the last day.'" And that really became kind of the picture of communion, didn't it? And so we're about to meet the soul satisfier. He can not only satisfy the hunger of a man's stomach but He can satisfy the hunger of a man's soul...and He does both in this chapter.

I want to show you five elements in this chapter, five elements, we'll break these 15 verses into five elements. They are these...the multitude following, the missing faith, the miraculous feeding, the many fragments and the Messiah foretold.

First of all, I want you to see the multitude following, verses 1 and 2 and 3 and 4, the first four verses...the multitude following. And let's set the setting for this miracle. Verse 1, "After these things," and there we meet that meta toutau(??) again, that very important phrase, "After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee which is the Sea of Tiberias," a little note so you know what sea he's talking about, Tiberias being a city on the western southern coast. "And a great multitude followed Him."

Now Jesus decided that He wanted to get away for a time of rest, for a time with His disciples to teach them, to share with them, to instruct them, to be alone with them. And so He crosses over the Sea of Galilee, the Lake of Chinneroth, that little place in northern part of Israel. The journey was not

very long. One of the other gospel writers, I believe it's Mark, tells us that He took a boat and they went secretly, trying to get away. And it says in verse 1 that it was after these things that He went away. Now what things? What is this meta toutau? What things have been going on here?

Well remember now, John never worries about chronological order. He never worries about what came after what. He just slaps in there at any ole point his message about Christ is God with no care about getting everything in the right order and the right perspective and the right chronology. He leaves that to the other writers. But in order to discover what meta toutau, what these things are after these things, is he referring to what happened in chapter 5? No, because there's a gigantic gap between 5 and 6, let me show you why. Look at chapter 5 verse 1, everything that happens in chapter 5 took place in the setting of verse 1, "After this there was a feast of the Jews." All right, so chapter 5 took place at a feast. Some believe it was Passover, I personally think the Feast of Tabernacles is more likely, but whatever your choice.

Now if it was the Feast of Passover, notice chapter 6 verse 4, in chapter 6 it says verse 4, "The Passover the feast of the Jews was near," we've got another Passover. So it's been a year if it was one Passover to the next. If it was the Feast of Tabernacles, as I would think would be best in evidence, then it would be from October to April cause Passover always came in April so it would be six months away. So this meta toutau, these things of verse 1 is talking about some kind of a ministry in there that was either six months long or a year long. Now what ministry was this? Well if you want the details of that ministry, which John's not concerned with in this point, you can read them, they're located for you in Matthew chapter 4 through chapter 15. If you prefer to read Mark you'll find them in chapters 1 to 7 or Luke in chapters 4 to 9. That is the record of His Galilean ministry which took place between verses...pardon me, chapter 5 verse 47 and chapter 6 verse 1. So all of this time in there, either six months or a year, Christ has been ministering in Galilee. And the record of that ministry most extensively is Matthew 4:12 through chapter 12 verse...or pardon me, through chapter 15 verse 20. So Matthew and Mark and Luke record the details in between.

So this miracle really of chapter 6 is much toward the end of Christ's Galilean ministry. And that's one reason why He has so many people following Him. He's already become famous and He's already got a massive crowd moving with Him.

So the miracle comes in at the end of Jesus' ministry and He's been diligently ministering for six months or a year, laboring among people with no rest, as it were. The crowds constantly pressuring and demanding things. And He needs to get away. And this is something that every minister, every servant of God needs, the time of refreshing, a time when he can take respite from the demands and the pressures of ministry. And it's not that he's lazy, and it's not that he wants to be dilatory, it's that he needs time for his mind to be refreshed and his mind to be perhaps shut aside from all of the trials and worries and things and set upon the things of the Lord. And so Christ and His disciples needed this time.

Besides that, there had been some really tragic news because just prior to the opening of chapter 6 the other gospels tell us that they had gotten word, Jesus had and His disciples, that John the Baptist had been beheaded. John, that beloved prophet of God whom they loved and whom Jesus loved, of course, as only Christ could love had been beheaded. And undoubtedly Jesus' heart was grieved and so was the hearts of those disciples for you remember the initial disciples had initially been disciples of John the Baptist. So their hearts were broken. So because of this and the pressures of ministry and the loss of this dear one of God, they wanted to get away and spend some time together and Jesus wanted to be with them. And so they started and they left and they crossed the sea of Galilee and as I said, Mark says they took a little boat and went secretly.

Well it wasn't very secret. Verse 2, "And a great multitude followed Him because they saw His miracles which He did on those who were diseased." You know why they followed Him? Because they loved him? Is that what it says? They followed Him because they repented of their sins? They followed Him because they believed He was the Son of God? They followed Him, they were pure unadulterated thrill seekers, that's all they were. All they followed Jesus Christ for was to see the things that He did, they could care less about repentance or anything else. And we'll see this. The power that Jesus had to do miracles had placed Him on the crest of a popularity wave and He was really riding on that wave. But it was very high and it was very temporary and it wasn't very long until that wave flattened out. And all of the popularity that Jesus had from those people...and incidently, that's not what He wanted but that's what He got...all that popularity turned to scorn and hatred and ultimately He lost His life.

They loved His miracles...now watch this...but they killed Him for His words. Look at verse 15, "After they had seen the miracle of the feeding of all these people they wanted to make Him a king," didn't they? Oh, this is something, anybody that can feed us for nothing, we want to make him a king. We've got this guy ruling over us, we've got our problems solved. But then He starts in verse 22 and He tells them who He is and over in verse 66 look what happened to all the would-be disciples who were going to make Him a king. Verse 66 days, "After He got done with His speech about who He was and what He wanted out of them...it says...from that time many of His disciples went...where?...went back and walked...what?...no more with Him."

They loved Him for His miracles...they loved His miracles really but they didn't want to hear His words. And here they were, thrill seekers following His miracles. And so here...Mark actually tells us, believe this, that some of them beat Him to the place where He was going, they ran around the edge of the lake to get there. And here was Jesus, secretly...secretly moving and He got there and already when He arrived there's a group standing there waiting for Him. This is the multitude following.

You know, some writers say, "Isn't this exciting how the multitude followed Jesus?" I think it's absolutely pathetic. I think it's absolutely discouraging because they were following Him for such self-centered, meaningless reasons. They had seen those that He had healed who were diseased. And He had healed a lot of them. Why Matthew records for us and the other gospels, the Centurion's servant, remember the son of the widow of Nain who had died, the maniac, Jairus' daughter, two blind men, the woman who touched His garment, a demonic who couldn't speak, all of these had been in His Galilean ministry. And He had a fantastic reputation and they were probably thinking, "Wow, this might be Messiah, let's get Him to be our King, it's unbelievable." Isn't it amazing how everybody wants to serve somebody who does nothing but do things for them? But when Jesus started saying, "Now here's the price you have to pay," all of His disciples just drifted away.

Verse 3, "And Jesus went up into a mountain, or a slope, or a hillside and there He sat with His disciples." Even though there was a little group there, He went ahead up there to spend some time with His disciples. Sooner or later the crowd would all arrive and I'm sure Jesus knew that. But He took the little time that He had to be with His disciples.

You know, I've often thought if I could live at any other time in the world, I would like to live at this time...not that I would, I'm glad I live today cause I wouldn't be here and I wouldn't the wife I have and the children I have, you know, and all that's ridiculous because, of course, I live now. But I'm not unhappy with my circumstances, but if I could live at any other time I think I'd...I don't want to live a whole life time, I just would like to live like four or five little intervals and they would always be when Jesus went away with His disciples because I just can imagine what joy...I'm kind of like John, I would just like to get right next to Jesus and just sit there and just hear every word He said. I can imagine those moments were so precious.

You say, "How can you imagine that?" Well I know what kind of precious moments I have with Him, you know. And I mean, when I just sit and talk to the Lord and listen to the Lord as I look at His Word and just sense His presence, there's nothing more precious in the world than that. And what must it have been for those men to just sit there. Precious moments with them.

John adds a time note for us, Jesus and His disciples are there, verse 4 is a time note, "And the Passover, a feast of the Jews was near," now we put it in perspective. You say, "Why does he tell us this?" Well so we'll know the time and also I think so we'll know why there was such a crowd there. You see, Passover time meant everybody was getting ready for a trip anyway. They would be moving toward Jerusalem and the crowds would be gathering in town, usually towns went together to the Passover, and so they'd all be gathered and there would be plenty of them and they would naturally follow Jesus. Be more natural to have a crowd at that point, they wouldn't have to come from their homes, they'd already likely be gathered to move toward the Passover.

And so, they're going to Jerusalem. Incidently, over in verse 15 they want to take Him along and crown Him King there, too. They're going to Jerusalem for the Passover.

And so we see the multitude following. No rest for Jesus. Kind of a beautiful thing though that even though Jesus Christ wanted that time with His disciples, He knew that crowd would be there and He stopped what He was doing with His disciples and went and ministered to them.

We've seen the multitude following, looking at the missing faith. We're going to introduce you to the missing faith in verses 5 to 9. Before we do though, let's set the scene because John skips the chronology a little bit. Verse 5 at the beginning says, "When Jesus then lifted up His eyes He saw a great company come unto Him." Now evidently Jesus had been up in the mountain for a while with His disciples instructing them. We gather this from the other gospels. And then He looked down and saw this crowd coming. They were gathering.

Matthew records it this way, "And Jesus came forth and saw the multitude and He had compassion on them because they were as sheep not having a shepherd." He saw them in their lost milling condition. He saw past the physical milling around to the spiritual. And, of course, the Bible then says in Matthew that He began to teach them many things. And Mark and Luke add for us that He healed all that had need of healing and He cared for the sick. So what He did was come down off that mountain and spent a whole day healing, raising the sick and teaching. Always Jesus gave Himself to everyone who ever came to Him. Note at verse 37 of chapter 6. Whenever anybody came to Christ He had time for them. He had time for them.

Oh that's a great principle, great principle. This is something I believe in my own heart and I've always believed that any minister of God who doesn't have time for people is missing it...is missing it. And Jesus always had time. Listen, if I think I've got things to do...imagine what Christ had to do, always had time.

And so He came down and ministered to the people. You know, it's kind of sad to think about this, too. You know, He knew what kind of people they were. He knew they were thrill seekers. But His love was so great that in spite of their motives He met their needs. What a beautiful thought that is. That's just the way God is, you know that? Just the way He is.

Well, then Matthew, Mark and Luke tell us it was evening and evening came, "And the disciples said, `Look, it's evening, we better get rid of this crowd because they're going to get hungry.'" Let's get rid of them. So the disciples suggested they get rid of the crowd. But that wasn't Jesus' way, He never got rid of anybody. And as we see this point with the disciples wanting to get rid of the crowd, we pick up the detail now in the middle of verse 5. After the disciples evidently had said this, "Jesus saith unto Philip, `Where shall we buy bread that they may eat?'" In other words, Christ has no idea about turning this crowd loose, He's going to meet the need of this crowd. Now He knows that but Philip

doesn't. And He asks Philip this question, and all along Christ had been planning to take care of the crowd.

You say, "Well why did He ask Philip?" Well there are probably a lot of reasons. He may have asked Philip, this is conjecture, He may have asked Philip because Philip might have been one of the guys who said let's get rid of the crowd. Secondly, He may have asked Philip because Philip lived in Bethsaida, chapter 1 verse 44 tells us that. And Mark says this happened in Bethsaida. So Philip knew the area and He may have been saying to Philip, "Philip, you know what's happening around here, you know where available food is, where do we go to get some bread?" But those were just possibilities.

The real reason He asked Philip this is told to us, verse 6, "And this He said to test him." You know why He asked Philip? Philip needed a test. Did you know that? He did. Do you know that God brings things into the lives of His own just for the sake of tests, no other reason? And a test is set out to prove something and He wants to prove something to Philip. He doesn't need it proven to Himself, He knows, but to Philip. And so He's going to test him. Verse 6, "He said to him these things to test him for He Himself knew what He would do." He knew He was going to feed that multitude, of course. He knew what He was going to do, He knew He wasn't going to go buy bread, but He said this to test Philip. In other words, He was trying to decide whether Philip really believed in His power, whether Philip had gotten anything from seeing the majesty and the glory and the power of Christ and all the miracles that had been done in the time intervening. And did Philip remember that Moses had provided food, God had really through Moses provided food in the wilderness? God had provided food through Elijah and could not God provide food through this one greater than Moses, greater than Elijah? He was testing Philip to see where his faith was.

You know, there are often tests like this. And here's what I call...I call them tests of trust...tests of trust. And they come into everybody's life. God brings them to us. Some times things happen in our lives for no other reason than to test our trust. Remember back in Genesis 22 when God tested the trust of Abraham by telling him to give his son Isaac? Remember back in Deuteronomy where God tested the trust of the children of Israel for 40 years in the wilderness? God tests our trust. And it's always interesting to me that God gives us a test just past our trust. You know that? If God only tested me as far as I already trust Him, I'd never get anywhere, would I? If I'm here, let's say, in terms of trust, I can trust You this far, God, about out there. And God keeps testing me out there. What good does that do? Pretty soon I'm going to say, "Oh, man am I super spiritual. I trust God constantly."

So you know what He does? He always tests you just past your trust. Why? Because then He can take your trust and move it out to that test. The next time you get tested you get tested just a little past that trust and you can move out a little further. So He knows that the character of Philip's trust and He tests him just past his trust because He wants to move him out.

That's a beautiful thing. He never tests you so far that you're going to blow your mind and explode. No, never. Just past your trust. Why? Because then He's going to bring something into your life to pull your trust up to that test and pretty soon, you know, you trust Him more and more and you're way out there. Tests of trust.

You say, "Yeah, but you could certainly get upset at God if He just kept on testing you. I mean, that's kind of unfair." No, does testing upset the believer? No, James says the trial of your faith brings patience. It doesn't upset you. You just know what God's doing because you just learn to trust Him more and more. I like to have to reach for my faith, don't you? Cause then I know it's growing.

And so Philip needs a little test of trust here. And just like everybody else, the first thing to do is..."Well, let's see, mathematically it can't happen," see. No way, verse 7, "Philip answered 200 denarii," he's doing mental arithmetic, see, "Two hundred denarii of break is not sufficient to give them a little bite." No, let's see, we can't do it that way. First thing you do in a test is...what?...fall on your own resources. Figure out the statistical impossibility of your situation. Then in desperation pray, right? It's always the way, see. First of all, you look at the impossibility, you look at the inadequacy of your own resources. Then you decide it can't work, then you get upset. And then when you're really upset you pray. And then all of a sudden you remember, "Oh yes, isn't there a verse somewhere that says My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches by Christ Jesus?" Well, that's interesting.

You see, what we do is we assign our feebleness to God, don't we? So Philip forsakes his faith and substitutes mathematics. And he goes through mental calculation to decide that everything is hopeless. He's thinking statistically and instead of saying, "Lord, You can provide," he says, "It's an impossible situation, I know the area, Lord, and let's see, figuring it out, 200 pennies, it's not going to work and I know where it can be purchased, etc., etc." And you couldn't even give a bite...well, 200 denarii or 200 penny worth, that would be a working man's wage, depending on his employer for anywhere from 250 days to a full year, that's about $40 in what we know today. But according to that economy a working man could live on it.

Now that's not enough to feed them, he says. And so Philip shows missing faith. He's been tested past his faith, hasn't he? He can't believe...you know, he might have believed that God could heal one blind man, but feed 15,000, oh no. That's pushing it a little, Lord. He's tested past his faith.

Now we come to verse 8 and 9, evidently it ran among the disciples because one of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, dear Andrew, he was always Simon Peter's brother, "Andrew saith unto Him, `There's a lad here...probably a young teenager...who has five barley loaves and two small fishes, but what are they among so many?'" Now he says this crowd came running out of town without a thing, poor planning, right? They saw Christ, they were so attracted to Christ they never

even...might know, some dear mother somewhere made her son wait till she packed him a lunch, right? There's always one of those, right? Mine was always the one. Everyone's going, Mom. Just a minute, I have to pack you a lunch. And some dear mother made some dear boy wait till she packed his lunch. And she put in there five loaves. Now please, that's a poor word because, you know, you conjecture some poor little kid with five great big loaves of Webber's bread under his arm or whatever. These kind of loaves are not loaves like we know, this is really the word that indicates "little cakes." They were like a biscuit, a small flat round thing, kind of like a dollar pancake. And the fish was a very, very world famous at that time pickled fish that came from the Sea of Galilee. They swam there in swarms of these little tiny fish like a sardine. And they would take them and use them as a spread on top of the bread so that it would go down, it would give it a little bit of moisture. And primarily, of course, the bread was the sustenance of food and this was just like a little relish that they put on top of it.

And so this little boy had this. But, you know, he's not thinking about using it, he's simply saying...What is this, only one kid I could find that even brought a lunch. And Barclay in his commentary says, "Isn't this wonderful, this is a lesson in sharing? As soon as they discovered the little boy's lunch, everybody pulled out the lunches they had been hiding and they all shared their lunch." Yes he does, really? (Commenting on Barclay to the church.)

And so we see the loaves and the fishes, a rather frustrating circumstance because there's nothing there. It's interesting too that the loaves are barley because this was a poor little fellow. Barley is the loaf of the poor, or the bread of the poor. A woman who is taken in adultery, according to the Mishna, and the rabbinical teaching, a woman taken in adultery had to give an offering of barley because adultery was the sin of an animal and barley was the food of an animal. And so this was a very poor lunch and it was all there was. So they didn't have any faith. Philip didn't have any, and Andrew didn't have any. So you see secondly the missing faith.

Now Christ can do one of two things. Here's the test of trust out here, and here's the trust in here. Now Christ can bawl them out and reprimand them for not having enough trust, or He can forget about the reprimand and take their trust and move it up...which is what He does. He doesn't say, "Oh, you people don't have trust." He just takes them where they are and moves their trust up. And we see that in the miraculous feeding of verses 10 and 11, a miraculous feeding.

Verse 10, "Jesus said, `Make this men sit down,'" and that does not imply that the women had to stand, "Make the men sit down, now there was much grass in the place." Isn't that beautiful? God actually provided a comfortable green carpet for all those people to sit on, that's just the way Jesus does things. If you've been over into that area from what I understand, there's not a lot of grass around the Sea of Galilee, but there was some there, enough for all these people.

So the men sat down in number about 5,000. And Mark tells us that they had them in groups of 50 and 100 sections. He told the disciples to get them...imagine what a job that is to get 15,000 people set up in hundreds and fifties...sections. They did it. Why? Because they wanted little aisles in there. The disciples knew what was going on, somebody was getting ready to serve dinner. They were organizing those people into...so they could be served. And you know, you can imagine, twelve people serving 15,000 people dinner. Some of you complain about the lines at the pot lucks.

Verse 10, it's also a very beautiful thought, you know, how thankful we should be that the grace of God is not dependent upon the poverty of our faith, is it? Cause this crowd, they didn't even know what was going on. Those disciples, they didn't know what was going on either but that didn't restrict the grace of God, did it? It's also interesting that the grace of God was not even restricted by the poor excuse for the hearts of the people who were there. So Christ sets them all out and He gets ready to feed them.

And then He commands the disciples to do this, He says get them all seated and everything. And they never even questioned Him...they never questioned Him. Now watch this one, their faith may have failed, watch it...their obedience did not. And that's a very fortunate thing, brother, because if you've lost your faith and fail to obey, you have had it because the only way God can ever take you up to the point of new trust is for you to obey what He tells you to do. And so their faith had failed, their obedience had not...and watch this...obedience is always the channel through which faith comes. Your faith will never grow unless you're obeying the Lord. You see the supply was already in the mind and the sovereign will of the Savior but it was going to flow through the obedience of those twelve. And that miracle wouldn't have happened if they hadn't obeyed Him. See, faith grows, trust grows through obedience...obedience is the channel of blessing. Jesus said, "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, He it is that loveth Me and My Father loves Him and I love Him and I will manifest Myself...what?...to him." You see, faith and trust grows through obedience. And so their faith was weak but, boy, their obedience was on schedule.

And so they moved them all out. Verse 11, "And Jesus took the loaves, the little biscuits, and when He had given thanks He distributed to the disciples and the disciples to them that were sitting down and likewise of the fishes as much as they would." Now isn't this something? It doesn't even say it was a miracle. It doesn't say, "And Jesus multiplied the loaves," just kept passing it out. Where did...who grew that barley? Nobody, it never grew. Who caught those fish? They never swam. He was making them there in His hands...creating fish, creating little biscuits.

As I said a few weeks ago, then some idiot comes along and says, "It all happened in a puddle by a one-cell protozoa." And here you see the creative power of God, don't you? Standing on the side of that hillside, Jesus Christ was creating...creating...creating...creating. The Creator God at work. And He just kept handing it out. I don't know what those disciples were thinking, but I'm telling you, it must have been unbelievable.

But you notice...isn't it beautiful that He used them. Do you think He needed to use them? If He could create it, if He could create those fish He could make them swim through the grass right to the right person. He didn't need those disciples. But this miracle was not for the crowd. Watch it. It was for them. It was a test of trust for them. And He took their trust where it was and by this miracle...do you think from then on they believed He could do this? He moved them up. Listen, but He didn't...He used them, He always does that. Oh, it's so like God. Listen, He used the tear of a baby to move the heart of Pharaoh's daughter. He used the shepherd's stick to mighty miracles in Egypt. He used a sling and stone to conquer a nation. He used a little girl to bring a great leader, Naaman, to his knees before a man of God. He used a widow with a little meal to sustain His prophet. He used a little child to teach His disciple the lesson of humility. And I want you to know that there's hope for Him using me because He even used the jawbone of an ass to slay a thousand men. And He even used Balaam's ass to preach. That's great encouragement.

God can use anything in His hands. And if it happens to be you and it happens to me, He can use us. This is glorious. Listen, Jesus uses the weak things of the world to do...what?...confound the mighty. And His strength is made perfect in our weakness. So we see the miraculous feeding. Ah, it's a beautiful thing. He always uses the instruments that make themselves available. And I just get so blessed when I look at that verse and the end of verse 11 it says, "They ate as much as they would." Isn't that unbelievable? I mean, they had all you can eat. They stuffed themselves. Well how do you know? Verse 12, "When they were filled," who? Everybody was filled. Listen, I want you to know when Jesus provides a meal by His grace, it is a feast...a feast.

So we see the multitude following, the missing faith, the miraculous feeding...very quickly, look at the many fragments, verses 12 and 13. This is really good. "When they were filled He said unto His disciples, `Gather up the fragments that remain.'" Isn't that a tremendous truth? Listen to this. Did you know that you never run out of supply, that when you've exhausted all of God's grace there's more left? Some people think they're at the limit of God's grace already. Listen, there's baskets full left and you haven't even gotten to the end. When they were filled He said gather the fragments. Verse 13, "Therefore they gathered them together and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which remained over and above that which they had eaten."

You say, "Well why did He gather all this up? Was this a `Keep Galilee Beautiful' campaign?" No. That wasn't the point. What was the point? The point was, first of all, economy, right? No sense in wasting food. The second point was a memorial. I think that these fragments acted as a memorial to those disciples. You say, "What do you mean?" Well that's the third point. How many baskets were there? Twelve. How many disciples were there? You know what He did, He just provided the next day's food for those twelve...which would be just another little memorial reminder to make sure that their trust had moved out to meet the test.

You say, "But there wasn't a basket for Him." No, why? I don't know why but I imagine why. I imagine He wanted one of those disciples or two of them or all of them to say, "Lord, can we share ours with You?"

So we see the many fragments. But that's the way God's grace always operates. You exhaust it all and you know what? There's more left.

Then we see the Messiah foretold, verses 14 and 15. Verse 14, "Then those men when they had seen the miracle," and "those men" refers to the people, "When they had seen the miracle that Jesus did said, `This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.'" You know what that does? That gives you a perfect indication of what kind of a Messiah the Jews want. They wanted a Messiah who healed and fed them and was a physical earthly political Messiah. They had no concept of repentance at all. They wanted a Messiah who came and did everything for them and they didn't have any demands at all. And they said "that prophet," "This is of a truth that prophet," and they were referring to Deuteronomy 18 where Moses talked about that prophet, Deuteronomy 18:15. This was the kind of Messiah they wanted. They didn't think of spiritual revival, of repentance. They were too self-righteous. They wanted a king to come in and throw off the Roman oppression and feed them, that's what they wanted. That was their idea of Messiah and Christ never fit it.

Verse 15 then, "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by force to make Him a king," you say, "Isn't that wonderful? That's what He wanted." No, no, no, He didn't. He wanted them to take Him as King but He said this, "The Kingdom of heaven is at hand," but before He ever said that what's the one word He said? "Repent." He didn't want to be crowned King until there had been a spiritual or revival in Israel. And that didn't happen. It didn't happen. So He postponed that Kingdom. He would not be made King by force on their terms, they would only make Him King on His terms. He was not going to be forced to be King. And He knew the character of their hearts. As we said, in verse 66, "Many of the disciples when He told them how He wanted it, when He told them what He expected, when He made the demands, they turned around and walked away."

You want to know something? There are a lot of people in our world who want the same kind of Christ as that. They want one who will just do everything for them and make no demands. If that's the Christ you want, then you don't want this Christ. He said, "If you're not willing to leave father and mother and everything in this world, if you're not willing to take up the cross, you're not worthy to be His disciple." It will cost you your life...everything. But you want to know something? It's a cheap price for what He gives...cheap...for all the riches of Christ. Oh....

He demanded repentance. He still does. He demanded a recognition of sin and a hunger for forgiveness. He still does. He didn't get it in Israel. And in the world today He doesn't get it either. But if you'll receive Jesus Christ on His terms by faith and repentance for sin, you'll know the soul

satisfier and you'll have every need of your life met because that's the way He is.

Father, we thank You this morning for Your word to us. We just have scratched the surface of many things, but, Lord, we pray that You'll teach us by Your Spirit. Seal these things in our hearts. Lord, so many of us are Christians, God, maybe instead of being vessels that You can use and being obedient we're just really in the way. God, teach us to obey. Even though our faith be feeble, may our obedience never fail, may we be usable instruments, Lord. And, God, send us tests of trust, send us tests that are beyond our trust and then show us Your power that our trust may move just that much further ahead, Lord. And, Father, for those here who do not know Jesus Christ, may they eat of the bread of life this morning, they feast upon the soul satisfier, Jesus Christ. These things we pray in His name, Amen.

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