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The Gospel According to Matthew

Jesus Feeds the 5,000 – He is Greater than Moses

March 31, 2019

Sermon Text: Matt 14:13-21 (with a few thoughts on vss 1-12)

Scripture Reading: Exodus 16:1-31

We return now to the 14th chapter of Matthew, always keeping in mind the main theme of this Gospel – *the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven, and the King*. What is Matthew telling us about these things? That is the question to always keep before you while trying to understand the parts.

Listen again as we read:

Mat 14:1-21 At that time Herod the tetrarch heard about the fame of Jesus,

(2) and he said to his servants, “This is John the Baptist. He has been raised from the dead; that is why these miraculous powers are at work in him.” (3) For Herod had seized John and bound him and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, (4) because John had been saying to him, “It is not lawful for you to have her.” (5) And though he wanted to put him to death, he feared the people, because they held him to be a prophet. (6) But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company and pleased Herod, (7) so that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. (8) Prompted by her mother, she said, “Give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter.” (9) And the king was sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he commanded it to be given. (10) He sent and had John beheaded in the prison, (11) and his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. (12) And his disciples came and took the body and buried it, and they went and

told Jesus.

First, regarding the death of John the Baptist. This shows us the ongoing battle between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world. It is this:

Psa 2:1-3 Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? (2) The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, (3) “Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.”

And again:

Joh 17:14-16 I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. (15) I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. (16) They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

What had John done? He had spoken for the Lord, announcing the kingdom of heaven in the person of Jesus, and he had confronted the sin of Herod. He was light and the darkness hated him. This is why he was murdered.

And this is the state of affairs we are in now, as long as we are in this world. Do not expect or try to be popular and loved by the world. There is a large element of this very thing in the political scene today in our nation. No God! And all who hate Christ are rebelling against anyone who confronts their evil. No one can follow Christ unless they are willing to be hated by the world, and the “world” includes all who are not in Christ – father, mother, sister, brother, childhood companions, everyone.

Get hold of it firmly – if you are not willing to give up a quest for popularity with people, then Christ will not have you. On the other hand, if you are finding yourself hated by people who were once your family or friends, take heart and be encouraged.

The Feeding of the 5k +

(13) Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a **desolate** place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. (14) When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

(15) Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a **desolate place**, and the day is now

over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves.” (16) But Jesus said, “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.” (17) They said to him, “We have only five loaves here and two fish.” (18) And he said, “Bring them here to me.”

(19) Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. (20) And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. (21) And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

What does this mean – that Jesus fed these people miraculously? Well, note the word “desolate.”

The Israelites had been in a desolate place – the wilderness – once before. We read about it in Exodus 16 earlier. And of course you recall that the Lord had fed them there – with manna. Bread from heaven. This is what lies behind Jesus’ feeding of the people here. We are meant to realize something very important about Him. Here in a sense is *another Moses* leading the people in *Exodus*. Only this

Moses and this Exodus are far superior to the first. The Lord who fed their ancestors in the wilderness under Moses has come again! That is who Jesus is. But this “Moses” does far more. He heals their diseases. And more yet – He gives them food that never perishes and gives eternal life to all who eat it.

John and the Old kingdom have passed away. Christ comes now and shows them the things that the Old Testament spoke of. He shows them Himself and His kingdom.

Here is the best commentary on this event, given by Jesus Himself in the Gospel of John. This is after He had fed the 5,000 -

Joh 6:22-59 On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone.

(23) Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks.

(24) So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.

(25) When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?”

(26) **Jesus answered them, “Truly,**

truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. (27) Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.”

(28) Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” (29) Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”

(30) So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? (31) **Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” (32) Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.**

(33) For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” (34) They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”

(35) Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

(36) But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. (37)

All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. (38) For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.

(39) And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. (40) For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

(41) So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” (42) They said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?” (43)

Jesus answered them, “Do not grumble among yourselves. (44) No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. (45) It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me— (46) not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father.

(47) Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.

(48) I am the bread of life. (49) Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. (50) This is the bread that comes down from

heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. (51) **I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.**”

(52) The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” (53) **So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. (54) Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.**

(55) For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. (56) Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. (57) As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. (58) **This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.**” (59) Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.

Now *there* is a divinely inspired summation of the gospel. Let’s just draw several very important doctrines out of it.

Passover

We know from John 6:4 that it was the Passover when Jesus fed the 5,000. Jesus is giving a new meaning to the Passover elements – or rather we should say He is showing the fulfillment of the things the Passover pointed to – Himself and His body and blood given for us as the Lamb of God.

It is important for us to remember this when we observe the Lord’s Table. The symbols the Lord has given us in the bread and the cup portray to us the spiritual truth that by faith we have partaken of and share in His body and blood for forgiveness of sins.

And then there is this:

(John 6:26) Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. (27) Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.”

Every one of us needs to ask ourselves what we are “working for.” That is to say, what is it that we are giving our lives and energies to gaining? *Most people give themselves “food that perishes.”* Jesus confronts the crowds on this. He had fed them before and

here they came again. What He is telling them is that they must not focus their lives on working for things in this present world that are going to go up in smoke.

Most people who claim to be Christians are not really seeking Christ and His kingdom. No. They are doing “church” and religion for selfish, temporal gain.

It appeared to be a noble thing, right? The crowds flocking out into the desert to see Jesus. Compare it to some big crowd coming to a church service on a Sunday morning or to hear some notable Christian speaker. It looks commendable, right? But Jesus saw their real motive, and that motive was wrong. They just wanted to see signs and miracles and get a free dinner. I am sure that many such people came to hear George Whitefield or C.H. Spurgeon preach.

(26) Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, **not because you saw signs**, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.

See it? They actually weren’t even coming because they had seen Jesus perform incredible miracles and thereby had concluded that “this is the Son of God.” No. They came simply to have their bellies filled.

Take Christ’s warning to heed. Why are you here? Why do we claim to be Christians? Why?

Listen to Jesus once more:

(John 6:29) Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”

(30) So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? (31) **Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”** (32) **Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.**

(33) **For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”** (34) They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”

(35) **Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.**

(36) But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.

The Jews saw Moses as an end in himself. They saw the Old Testament in the same way. They were blind to what and who all these things pointed to. Take the manna for example in

Moses' time. These people are demanding that Jesus feed them with manna from heaven. Make it rain bread as Moses did. They fail to understand that the manna, that old bread from heaven, was a message to them. A symbol that pointed to TRUE bread from heaven – Jesus.

Jesus is the Bread of life. Whenever you see that word “true” as an adjective –

but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.

It means that the “true” thing is the reality, the fulfillment. True drink. True life, and so on. The thing to which all the types and shadows pointed.

Jesus is the true bread. We must eat this bread by faith and when we do, we have eternal life and we will never hunger or thirst again. Which is simply a way of saying “eternal life.”

(John 6:53) So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. (54) Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. (55) For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. (56) Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood

abides in me, and I in him. (57) As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. (58) This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.”

So we understand? *Jesus is the manna. He is the bread and the water.* Just as earthly food gives us earthly life, so Jesus as the Bread of Life gives us eternal life when we eat this true Bread by faith in Him.

Incredibly, after seeing all of His healing miracles and after seeing him take two fish and 5 loaves of bread and from them feeding thousands of people with plenty left over, these people still did not believe in Him. And here is His commentary on that:

(John 6:37) All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

(John 6:43) Jesus answered them, “Do not grumble among yourselves. (44) No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. (45) It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me—

So we see here then the answer as to how it can possibly be that people who actually saw Jesus, who saw Him heal people, who saw Him do many other mighty and miraculous works such as feeding these thousands, *still did not believe in Him.*

The human heart is so fallen in sin, man being totally depraved in all of his being, unable to see the kingdom of God and only able to be hostile to God and His Word, that unless the Lord mercifully takes the initiative to draw us to Christ, we would never believe in Him.

But this drawing of His people to Christ is so powerful that it is irresistible. EVERYONE who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Christ. ALL that the Father gives to Christ come to Him without fail and when they come to Him, Christ ALWAYS receives them, never ever casting out a single one.

And so, someone might say – “Well, there it is then. Either God draws me or He doesn’t. Nothing I can do about it. If I’m not elect then I’m lost and that is that.”

This is a lie. This is not what reformed theology teaches. There is in fact PLENTY that every human being can do:

1. He can acknowledge that God exists –

Heb 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

2. He can plead with God for faith-

Luk 18:13 But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’

And Christ’s promise to anyone and everyone who will confesses these things genuinely *He will never reject.*