

Christ, the Bread from Heaven - radio

I've entitled our message for today, "**Christ, the Bread from Heaven**".

The scripture for this sermon is found in Matt. 14:14-21. Let's read it together:

Matthew 14:14-21 *"And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick. 15 And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. 16 But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat. 17 And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. 18 He said, Bring them hither to me. 19 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. 20 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. 21 And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children."*

This account is found in all four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Let us therefore give it our utmost attention, praying that God would give us the Bread of Life.

There are at least three lessons we must not miss from this scripture:

1. Jesus Christ is God. He created all things out of nothing by His word. Now, He creates food for 5,000 men, plus women and children.
2. Jesus Christ is the Bread from heaven. As God gave manna to Israel in the wilderness, so God gave Christ to His people in the wilderness of this world.
3. As we must eat with our mouth to live and for satisfaction, so we must believe Christ to live in our souls and to find peace in our conscience and joy before God our Savior.

Introduction

In Matt. 14:14 and in Mark 6:34, Jesus was moved with compassion toward the multitude, because they were as sheep, not having a shepherd. And He began to teach them many things. We only live by faith on the Son of God Himself, who He is, what He has done to save His people from their sins. Man, by sinning, earned death. Christ, by dying in obedience to God, earned eternal life for His people, His sheep.

Context

The disciples of John the Baptist had just reported to Jesus that Herod beheaded John in prison. The cruelty of Herod against John is therefore fresh in our minds as we read Matthew's Gospel, just as it would have been in the minds of Jesus' disciples. In Matthew chapters 11, 12 and 13, and now here in chapter 14, we see religious pretenders, together with civil rulers, persecuting Christ and His people. God has chosen the spiritually poor in this world to be rich in faith (James 2:5). But all who are rich in their self-righteousness, persecute the poor in spirit who have nothing but what they have in Christ.

Now, it is against this dark backdrop, that we come in Matthew 14. And what do we see? We see Jesus is in the desert with His disciples (Matt. 14:13). A multitude of people come to Christ, easily more than 10,000. Here, scripture records the heart of our Savior. He has compassion on them because they are as sheep without a Shepherd (Mark 6:34). What does He do? He begins to teach them. He feeds them with the truth of God concerning Himself (Acts 20:28)! What is the truth that poor sinners must have to live before God? What gives and maintains spiritual life in the soul of man? It is the Bread of Life, the Lord Jesus Christ crucified to save His people and glorify God. By standing in the place of His people, by bearing their sins in His own body, but suffering all of the consequences of those sins in Himself -- guilt, fear, shame and punishment -- He saved them. He reconciled them to God. He freed them from sin and its consequences. The Bread of Life is Jesus Christ giving Himself to God, in the place of His people, with their sin, under God's law,

feeling in Himself the effects of all of their sins that were made His, and bearing the full punishment for those sins under the law of God (Gal. 4:4-6; 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:21).

This is the context for this miracle. If we only see Jesus making food for 5,000 men with the women and children, then we will only see a miracle with physical and temporal proportions. But in John 6, Jesus makes it clear that He is the Bread that came down from heaven. His Father has given **Him** as the Bread of Life. And He gives Himself to His people. He is the Bread of Life in at least two ways. First, because He gave Himself for His people in answer to God for their sins and for their righteousness. Second, He gives Himself to His people by His Spirit. He gives them faith to see Him taking away their sins and the wrath of God, and fulfilling all for them. There is no life but in Christ. And there is no satisfaction to a hungry, thirsty sinner but Christ crucified, risen and reigning. He is our Master. In breaking two small fish and five loaves to feed this multitude, He shows Himself to be the life and satisfaction and delight of sinners who have been starved by their sin from knowing and communing God (John 6:33-39).

In this light, let us examine each verse in this scripture

v14) **Jesus saw the multitude**. When Isaac asked His father, “My father, where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” Abraham told Him, “*My son, God will provide Himself a Lamb*” (Gen. 22:8). God will provide. Or, Jehovah Jireh, God will see to it (Gen. 22:14). Here, Jesus provides for the multitude. This is ever the way it is. He created all things by His word. He upholds all things by His word. He is the One who saw the multitude and their need. He anticipated their need. And He met their need. He is Jehovah Jireh, “*The LORD will provide Himself a Lamb.*” Christ gave Himself for their life.

v14) **He had compassion on them**. We don’t know what God is like until He makes Himself known. Christ makes God known here. **He has compassion on the multitude**. Against the backdrop of the hatred and pride of the scribes and Pharisees as they treated people as pawns in their game of man-made religious

rules, we have here the heart of God revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus told Philip and Thomas, *“If you have seen me, you have seen the Father.”* Jesus Christ is the brightness of God’s glory. What is the brightness of God’s glory? It is Jesus Christ taking the sins of His people, suffering under those sins as His own, and bearing the full curse of God’s law, even the sense of God forsaking Him in His soul to bring us to God (Ps. 22:1; Matt. 27:46; 1 Pet. 3:18). How can you know compassion and kindness and love? Look at Christ. See how He sees the misery of ruined sinners. See how He gives Himself in their place, bearing their obligations before God in His body and soul. We know God by what Christ did to save His people from their sins (Jn. 17:3; 2 Cor. 4:6; Heb. 1:3; Philippians 2:6-8). He pleased the Father. His Father’s will was in His heart. He fulfilled it. He magnified His Father’s glory by saving His people -- guilty, condemned and helpless sinners! What is God like? Look at Christ. You can only know God in Him. And you can only know Him by how He saves His people from their sins. Isn’t that His name? Doesn’t His name tell us all that He is? JESUS: He shall save His people from their sins! Jehovah is salvation. That is who He is.

v15) **The disciples think to send the people away.** The disciples exhibit the wisdom of men here. They see thousands of hungry people in the desert. They have nothing of significance to feed them. So they reason within themselves. “Send them away to buy food and to find lodging. This is the desert. They are many. We have nothing in comparison to their need.” Sadly, unbelief can see no further than man’s wisdom and strength and goodness. Only faith sees every need in light of Christ’s all-sufficiency (2 Cor. 12:9-10). Let this ever be our banner: the grace of God in Christ is all-sufficient for our every need. His throne is a throne of grace (Heb. 4:15-16). His riches are the riches of glory. His mercy to His people is everlasting. Go to Jesus. Tell Him. Stand still. And see the salvation of the Lord (2 Chr. 20:14,17; Ex. 14:13).

v16) The disciples told Jesus to send the multitude away. But Jesus said, “**They need not depart.**” Christ is the Bread of Life. Never send a hungry sinner away from Him. The fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily. What need can a sinner have that is not fully met in Christ? **There is no barrier in His people that**

God has not removed in the person and work of His Son! Therefore, Jesus told His disciples, *“They need not depart!”* What an encouragement this is to one who has nothing to bring to God in himself! What a supply is here given by the Master Himself. Did He not say, *“Come unto me, all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest?”* And did He not say that *“He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness”* (Ps. 107:9)? To go beyond Christ is to transgress. To look for anything more than Christ and Him crucified as everything in my salvation is to frustrate the grace of God (Gal. 2:21). It is to make Christ’s death unnecessary and of no value. It is antichrist religion! *“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son”* (2 Jn. 1:9-11). Therefore, there is only one place for sinners to go for salvation: it is the Lord Jesus Christ. *“Him that cometh to **ME**,”* said our blessed Lord, *“I will in no wise cast out!”* To confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is to confess that He is God (He came) and man (flesh), and that He accomplished all of the will of God to save His people from their sins (the purpose for His coming) (Matt. 1:21; John 19:30; Rom. 4:25; Heb. 1:3). The eternal Word of God came from heaven. He was born of a woman. He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. Yet He is *“God with us”* (Matt. 1:23). Jesus Christ said, *“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty”* (Rev. 1:8,11,18). There can be no denying that scripture declares Christ to be God almighty, God with us, *“God over all blessed forever”* (Rom. 9:5)! Therefore, they need not depart!

Sinners cannot look upon God. At mount Sinai, God said that *“If so much as a beast touch the mount, it shall be stoned or thrust through with a dart”* (Heb. 12:20). But here, the Son of God Himself tells His disciples that sinners need not depart! Do you know why these people came to Jesus in great multitudes? **Because Christ made Himself their salvation.** He met their every spiritual and physical need. He is *“full of compassion.”* And He is *“mighty to save”* (Isa. 63:1)!

The disciples were ready to send them away. Their resources were exhausted. But where human strength ends, The grace of Christ begins. *“When we were yet*

without strength, Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom. 5:6)! God’s love is seen in giving His Son up to death to reconcile His enemies and make them His sons (Rom. 5:10; 1 John 3:1; Eph. 1:4-6)!

v17) The disciples said, “We have here but five loaves and two fishes.” Jesus said, “**Bring them to me!**”

<skip -- Mark 6:38-41 gives an expanded account. Jesus told His disciples to make the people to sit down...

“39 he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. 40 And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties. 41 And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all. 42 And they did all eat, and were filled” (Mark 6:39-42). end skip>

- They were **sheep** in His eyes. He **sat** them down in the **green grass**, as in a **pasture**. Christ is the Good Shepherd. He feeds His sheep. How does He feed them? He laid down His life for them. **Seeing Christ and trusting Him, they live and are satisfied**. Just as our bodies live and find satisfaction by eating food, our souls live and are satisfied -- even delighted -- in believing Christ.
- **Bring them to me**. He had asked His disciples what they had. They told Him five loaves and two small fish. They brought it to Him. They gave it to Him. He blessed it and break it. He gave it to the disciples to give to the people. What do we learn from all of this?
 - That we must **Bring Christ all that He has given us**. He has given you the Gospel of His saving grace. He has given you faith to believe Him. Bring that to Him. It is all you have. Please His obedience, His sufferings, His faithfulness, His righteousness, His mercy and His promises. Plead His grace as all you have!

- **Acknowledge your insufficiency and the insufficiency of all that you have.** I am a great sinner, and nothing at all. All my knowledge and faith are insufficient. “*Who is sufficient for these things*” (2 Cor. 2:16)? All I have is Christ! It is Christ that is all! All I am and all I have is insufficient to do one thing for the good of men’s souls and the glory of God. He must do as He will with me and with all that He has given to me. My life is in His hands! His grace alone is sufficient to save and bless sinners!
- **Give back to Christ what He has given us.** It is your reasonable service. Only if He multiplies the Gospel that He has made yours by God-given faith, will that Gospel bear fruit in the lives of others! The Gospel, faith, prayer, the forgiveness of sins by the blood of Christ, justification by His righteousness, these are the things He has given you if you are a believer. His work in Himself to save sinners is your testimony to men of your salvation (Rev. 12:11)!
- Then, **Distribute what He gives back to you.** If you live on Christ by faith, then give what He gives you to sinners, praying that He bless the work of His hand (Ps. 90:17). “*It is more blessed to give than to receive*” (Acts 20:35)! Solomon said to the Lord: “*Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee*” (2 Chr. 29:14)!

Next, we see in v19 that “***He looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all***” (Mark 6:41)

- Take careful note what Jesus does here. He is about to feed this great multitude. He has five loaves and two small fish -- only enough for a boy’s lunch. But He is the Lord from heaven. He is about to create food for the people. See what He does. First, **He looked up to heaven.** Why did He do this? Because He is giving **thanks to His Father** (John 6:11). What is He thanking Him for? He is thanking Him **that He has provided** this food. He is thanking Him that He hears Him. But understand the significance of this

action. **Jesus** will soon give Himself as **the Bread of Life** to His people. **His body will be broken. His soul will be made an offering for sin.** He will bear the sins of His people in His own body on the tree. He will feel the weight of those sins in Himself. He will own them as His sins before God (“*mine iniquities*” Psa. 40:12). And He will answer God’s justice and honor God’s law for them in the place and on the behalf of His people. This is what the Bread of Life is. Jesus said, “*The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world*” (John 6:51). Jesus Himself explains here the significance of the bread He broke. The bread represents Him broken to make propitiation for His people’s sins. He gives His life. “*I will give my flesh.*” **All** for whom He gives Himself **live**. He said, “*I will give my flesh for the life of the world.*” If He gave His flesh for their life, they **will** be given life by **that offering!** Now He lifts up His eyes to heaven. He thanks His Father for providing Him that He could give His life for the life of all the Father gave to Him. All who live are all those given to Him by His Father. Those are the ones for whom He gave Himself. Isn’t this what John 6:51 says?! “*I will give my flesh for the life of the world!*” He cannot fail. He is the Son of God! Jesus did not give His life for nothing! He did not bear one sin for one sinner who is not eternally saved and brought to glory! **All** for whom He died **live** to God. Is this not the argument of Rom. 8:34? “*Who is He that condemneth? It is Christ that died!*” If Christ died for you, you cannot be condemned! Thus, when Jesus looked up to heaven, He thanked His Father that He could offer Himself in the place of His people, and give Himself on their behalf, for their life. He is that Bread of Life.

- **He blessed and broke the loaves. Jesus, our High Priest and Mediator, blesses His own substitutionary life and death to the salvation to His people. What He accomplished for them, He gives to them.** What He gives to them, He earned for them. “*As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him*” (John 17:2). Do you adoringly wonder at the Lord Jesus for this? First, He thanks His Father that He can give Himself for His people. Next, He blesses His accomplishments to them by giving them eternal life!

- The people are sitting on the grass. Jesus gave His life for the sheep. He feeds the sheep. He keeps the sheep. All whom the Father gave to Him, He saves (John 17:8-12; 6:39). Why did this multitude come to the desert? Because they were drawn by the Father to Christ (John 6:44-45). In the wilderness of this world, Christ feeds His sheep, giving them life and faith in the work He finished in Himself for their salvation to the glory of God.

“And they did all eat and were filled” (Mark 6:42).

- Christ is all. He is all to His people. He is our life (Col. 3:4). The fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily (Col. 2:9-10). And we are complete in Him. *“He satisfieth the longing soul”* (Ps. 107:9). If God has given His Son; if He has delivered Him up for us, then He will give us all things with Him. *“He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things”* (Rom. 8:32)?! Therefore, if Christ died for you, God will give you eternal glory with Christ. You will be filled with Christ. Having Christ, you have all things. But if you gain everything without Christ, you have nothing before God!

“And He gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude”
(Matt. 14:19).

- God has ordained that through the foolishness of preaching, He will save sinners (1 Cor. 1:21). Remember Romans 10:17? How does faith come? *“Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Rom. 10:17). And how does hearing come? *“How shall they hear without a preacher”* (Rom. 10:14). Jesus gave the loaves to His disciples so that they could give it to the people. Christ gives the Gospel to His preachers. They preach His Him. He blesses that word to the hearts of chosen, redeemed sinners. This is how God always saves His people. It is by hearing of Christ crucified in the Gospel. Paul and Barnabas preached the Gospel of Christ in Acts 13. And *“when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed”* (Acts 13:48). By the will and directive of our reigning God and Savior, the Gospel is preached. All who are ordained to eternal life hear it and believe Christ. This

is God's work. He blesses Christ to His people through Gospel preaching. When He does, they are filled.

“And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full” (Matt. 14:20).

- The Gospel is greater than we can ever consume by our limited understanding and faith. There is always much left that we cannot take in. There is an abundance of grace in Christ that exceeds our ability to receive.
- The apostle Paul prayed that all believers would “...know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph. 3:19). The fulness of God is revealed in the love of Christ by His saving work as our Redeemer. In that same prayer, Paul worshipped God and the greatness of His grace by this praise, “*Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us*” (Eph. 3:20)! Truly, God gave all when He gave His Son! What more could He give?! When God gave His Son, He gave all that He had. He emptied heaven in the gift of Christ (Heb. 9:26; Philip. 2:6-8; 2 Cor. 9:15)! The 12 baskets full signify the fulness of Christ to hungry sinners.

This miracle is recorded that we might find Christ to be the Bread of Life. But how do we eat the “Bread of Life?” This is the big question! How do I eat Christ? Jesus Himself answers this question. “*I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst*” (John 6:35). We eat food with our mouth. We eat Christ by faith. Faith is coming to Christ. “*He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification*” (Rom. 4:25). Because Jesus Christ fully answered God's law for His people, God justified Him with His people and raised Him with them from the dead (Rom. 4:25; 5:9). Come to Christ! See that your salvation is in Him and what He did! Depend on Him for all! Find your satisfaction only in Him! There is salvation in no other (Acts 4:12). There is life in none but Him (John 14:6)! “*We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal*

life” (1 John 5:20). “*He that hath the Son, hath life. He that hath not the Son, hath not life*” (1 John 5:12).