

*A short holiday with Jesus...*

Jesus feels that He needs a rest. John has just been executed. It is time for fresh thought and prayer. Jesus decided to take His disciples away for a short holiday<sup>□1</sup>. But Jesus never gets His rest! When He gets to the other side a great crowd is waiting for Him<sup>□2</sup>. He feels compassion for them and begins to teach them<sup>□3</sup>. Then He feels sorry for them because it is late and the people are hungry. The disciples want to send the people away<sup>□4</sup>, but Jesus says 'You yourselves give them something to eat'<sup>□5</sup>. He gives the disciples the first opportunity of performing the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand!

□1 6:30-32  
 □2 6:33  
 □3 6:34  
 □4 6:35-36  
 □5 6:37

**1. An Invitation to rise in faith**

**1. The occasion was an invitation to the disciples to rise in faith and do what Jesus wanted done.**

This miracle was obviously a very crucial event in the story of Jesus. It occurs in all four gospels. Matthew and Mark also report a second story of miraculous feeding<sup>□1</sup>. Because the disciples did not see its significance they failed to understand Jesus' walking to them on the water<sup>□2</sup>. And the point would be made even more emphatically later on<sup>□3</sup>. Obviously they would be growing or not growing in the kingdom according to the way in which they understood this miracle.

□1 see 8:1-10  
 □2 see 6:52  
 □3 see 8:17-21

When the disciples saw the need of the people the thought of a miracle did not cross their minds. They were thinking only of money and the difficulties of feeding such a crowd<sup>□1</sup>. So Jesus performs the miracle instead of them. But He makes use of them. It is the bread that they go out and find that Jesus uses<sup>□2</sup>. The miracle is performed in an orderly manner. The people sit down in groups<sup>□3</sup>, and the miracle is performed<sup>□4</sup>.

□1 6:37b  
 □2 6:38  
 □3 6:39-40  
 □4 6:41-44

*• What would Jesus do?*

Yet Jesus had hoped that they would perform the miracle. The need of the people was itself an invitation to the disciples to sense what Jesus would do. They had at least sufficient practical concern to see that the people were in need<sup>□1</sup>. Could not they go one stage further and have sufficient spiritual discernment to do what Jesus would do? 'You yourselves give them something to eat', said Jesus. They had been with Jesus for some time now. They had seen the way in which He responded when He saw people in need. Could they not see what Jesus would want to do? Jesus would like the idea to occur to the disciples, of wonderfully and miraculously feeding the people, rather than have Jesus to do it for them.

□1 6:35-36

*• Having his mind*

Of course disciples today cannot 'switch on' at will the faith to perform such miracles. Yet in our own way and perhaps less dramatically, Jesus wants us so to have His mind that we know what He wants almost before He tells us what He wants.

**2. Jesus can do much despite feeble resources**

**2. Jesus wanted them to learn how much could be done through Him despite feeble resources.** Jesus chose to use the disciples. He chose to use a small and insignificant amount of loaves and fishes. Why did Jesus do this? He brought into being such a massive amount of food and there were twelve baskets of food

surplus. So He did not need to use the loaves and the fishes at all! Yet He did. He chose to use what the disciples would find to put at Jesus' disposal.

### 3. The King of Israel

3. **Jesus wanted them to see that He is the King of Israel.** They were in a wilderness. Mark mentions it three times<sup>□1</sup>. It was like the time when the Israelites were in the wilderness and the people were like sheep without a shepherd. At that time Moses prayed for a leader for the people *'so that the Lore's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd'*<sup>□2</sup>. In that same wilderness time Moses had appointed men who would be in charge of groups, including groups of one hundred and of fifty<sup>□3</sup>. At that same time manna fell from heaven to feed the people.

• *A king yet greater than both Herod and Moses*

Jesus wanted the disciples to see who He is: God's King greater than Herod and greater than Moses. We know from John's Gospel that some people did know Jesus was a king – but the kind of king they wanted was more of soldier and politician than a Saviour.

### 4. A test

4. **Their grasp of Jesus is soon to be tested.** The next story is linked with the feeding of the five thousand. The disciples are sent ahead of Jesus to Bethsaida<sup>□1</sup>. Jesus Himself will walk around the lake and spend time praying as He does so.<sup>□2</sup> He is in the hills and is able to pray for them as they cross the small sea.

• *The disciples – slow to grasp who Jesus was and slow to believe*

But as the disciples cross the lake again the weather becomes difficult<sup>□1</sup>. Jesus trusts the Father to enable Him to get to them, and He walks on the water to them<sup>□2</sup>. He acts as if He is about to walk by them. He is not so much walking to them to help them, as showing them what He can do by His Father's power<sup>□3</sup>. But they shout out in terror<sup>□4</sup>. So Jesus encourages them<sup>□5</sup> and gets into the boat<sup>□6</sup>. They are amazed<sup>□7</sup> but Jesus makes the point that they ought not to have been amazed<sup>□8</sup>. If the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand had been rightly understood they would have recognized Jesus as God's king able to do wonders. It was because they were still slow to grasp who Jesus was, that they were slow to believe such things as His walking on the water. Soon they arrived at their destination and again a multitude of the sick were healed<sup>□9</sup>. Even one touch from Jesus' clothes was sufficient to be a blessing to them.

□1 6:31, 32,35

□2 see Numbers 27:17

□3 see Exodus 18:21

□1 6:45

□2 6:46

□1 6:47–48

□2 6:48a

□3 6:48b

□4 4:49–50a

□5 6:50b

□6 6:51

□7 6:51b

□8 6:52

□9 6:53–56



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