

31. Jesus Feeds the Crowds

John 6:1-14; Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44;

ACCOUNTABILITY:

INTRODUCTION:

- Intro Croatia story, but don't share end result...
- 15 people in a country w/ only 5,000 believers
- Over the course of months, some 660,000 refugees

What does the passage say? John 6:1-14

[1] After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. [2] And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. [3] Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples.

- After Jesus healed on the Sabbath...
- People are following Jesus in droves. Picture unwieldy crowds, a flood of people
 - We can picture something of this sort b/c of what we just experienced a few weeks ago in Budapest at the Refugee Highway Partnership
- This flood of people following Jesus are looking, in many ways, for similar things: hope, healing, an encounter that will bring them new life
- Jesus has been teaching, healing for weeks. His disciples were tired - which is why they left in the boat; to get away (timeline = trip, death of John Baptist, and then feeding)
 - C.f. Mark 6:31, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.' For many were coming and going and they had no leisure even to eat."
 - In Budapest, we realized the insurmountable need → never enough, always more
 - I have felt like this during seasons of ministry. There is always work to be done, always more that you can do, ever aware of your inadequacy
- Jesus knows that their tanks are almost empty, so they got in their boat and went to have a spiritual retreat on the top of a mountain

[4] Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. [5] Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" [6] He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do.

- But now we encounter a problem. All these people had followed Jesus - some for miles and miles - and now they are far from home, far from lodging, far from Wawa
- We learn from Mark 6:34 that the crowds followed them there from across the Sea
 - As Jesus' boat was headed north toward where the Jordan River empties into the Sea of Galilee, they ran ahead the two miles up the road to welcome him there.

- Here he is - here they are, wanting more more more
- Jesus lifts up his eyes and sees this crowd coming towards him
- In Mark 6:34 it says that Jesus didn't just see them, he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd
 - The word compassion means that he felt the needs of every person in the crowd
 - Have you experienced that? Maybe during a prayercast → Their physical pain, their spiritual pain
- Jesus is feeling compassion, and his disciples are trying to send the crowd away...
 - He turns to Philip and says, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?"
 - In Mark 6:37, "You give them something to eat."
 - Look at this crowd, I ache for them - feed them!
 - This is, ultimately, a test, but Philip doesn't know that
 - Do they understand yet who Jesus is? They had seen him turn water into wine, heal men and women alike, but do they get it? Do they understand his power and his sufficiency? The fulfillment of the Story of God?
 - Do we?
 - Do you think God is panicking about the state of the world right now?
 - Is God big enough for your problems, for mine, for the USA, the world?
 - Does he have t-rex arms or is his arm mighty to save?

[7] Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little."

- 200 denarii is about 8 months wages.
- Philip responds with practicality and logic and Philip's response typifies my own.
 - When Gina tells me she wants to do something at the house, I point out all the reasons it won't work.
 - I'm a bubble burster, a cynic, a grinch → not very fun at times
- But his response is probably exactly what all of us would do
 - Even having seen the power of God, this is still his response
- Philip was always this way:
 - He told Nathanael to "come and see" Jesus in John 1:46 w/ his own eyes
 - He asked Jesus in John 14:8 to simply show him the Father and he would believe
 - He wanted evidence, proof
- We all need to have the pragmatic voice in our lives, but we walk by faith not by sight
 - David didn't count the beans when he went face to face w/ Goliath
 - Noah didn't crunch the numbers when God told him to build an ark
 - Moses didn't bust out his abacus when God told him to split the Red Sea
- But we are practical, pragmatic doubters. Aren't we? I am.

[8] One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, [9] "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?"

- Andrew, who had seen Jesus bring in enough fish to almost sink two of the family's boats responds a little better, but not much
- He found a kid w/ a bag lunch. It had a few barley loaves and two fish
 - Did he say, "Hey Jesus, I found this. Think you could do the boat trick again?"
 - No, he looks at the resources in his hand, looks at the crowd, and shrugs.
- Surely we can relate to Andrew as well, no?
 - What can I do against a deluge of need? I have nothing. I have so little. Will it really make a difference? Can I really make an impact?
 - "God, that path doesn't make logical sense. I guess it must be wrong."
- It's not in our John passage, but I want to mention it. In Mark 6:46, the disciples respond the way we would (the way we are responding every day): *"Send them away to go into surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat."*
 - Jesus, let them fix themselves... Let someone else fix them...
 - Isn't this how we respond to the problems in our world? The immigrant, the refugee, the homeless, the drug addict, our neighbor, our church?
 - We ignore, we push aside → out of sight, out of mind. Not my responsibility... please Lord send someone else.

[10] Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. [11] Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted.

- Although the disciples wanted to send the multitudes away, Jesus takes another approach → he sits them down and feeds them
- The disciples grossly underestimated their resources and their God.
- Jesus takes the least thing that they have and does the miraculous.
- Barley loaves → the poorest of food. Five little dinner rolls.
 - Why would Christ use this food?
 - Perhaps to underscore the reality that no matter what you have - even the tiniest thing - if you give it to God, he can accomplish great things.

[12] And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost." [13] So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. [14] When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"

- And there was leftover - isn't that the way God works? From his kindness there is overflow

Discovery Questions:

1. What does this teach about God?
 - a. **God is able to do abundantly more than you could ask or imagine.**

- i. God operates in the world of faith, not the world of logic
 - 1. As IC says, "God is out of the box"
 - ii. God wants more than our minds, he wants faith
 - 1. We can read the Apostles' Creed and subscribe to the vast, unfathomable doctrines of the greatness of our God, but once we get into the fray do we act on it?
 - 2. Do we actually believe or do our minds condemn us?
 - 3. Faith manifests in action, namely love
 - iii. Listen: God can do, is doing, has done more than you could imagine...
 - b. Jesus is God, the rescuer for whom they've been waiting.** The OT points to this...
 - i. The One w/ power over Creation... The Prophet like Moses... The Bread from Heaven... The hope they are actually looking for...
2. What does this teach about mankind?
- a. We are practical, pragmatic doubters, and in this we grossly underestimate our resources and our God.**
 - i. Like Philip, Andrew we doubt. We crunch the numbers and determine nothing can be done; things are doomed to fail; it's impossible
 - ii. We look at our resources and then at the problem and we abandon the effort → Lord, send them away. Let them get help somewhere else
 - iii. The epidemic of drugs in CMC? Homelessness? A declining society? A messed up world? Your family, marriage, kids. Lord, what can be done?
 - iv. We are fine giving God our strengths → Lord, use my eloquence, my business savvy, my talent... But what if God prefers our weaknesses?
 - 1. After all, when God uses our weaknesses he gets more glory
 - 2. No one would praise this boy or the disciples for their ability to solve the problem.
 - b. We need faith in the Rescuer**
 - i. This is not a pep talk about thinking big → the object of your faith is more important than the quantity of your faith
 - ii. Faith of a mustard seed... a barley loaf
 - iii. Where is your faith placed? In the bread or the bread of life? In the seen or the unseen?
 - iv. Even the smallest measure of faith, placed in the Rescuer, blossoms forth into a spring that will yield water into eternity
3. If this is true, what will I do? **In faith, give God what you have and watch him work.**
- a. Sometimes we feel like saying, "God, you don't know how big my problem is. I have calculated it out, I have read books, I have consulted the experts and nothing can be done..."
 - i. Your marriage, your faith, your health, your family member, these refugees, the drug crisis, the need of the gospel in our world
 - ii. Is your situation truly too big for God or is our faith misplaced?

1. Now I am NOT saying that if you have faith you won't have problems. What I am saying is that God is able to do abundantly more than you could ask or imagine.
 - iii. What do you have to give towards any of these things? Give it and watch God work
 - iv. Do you have nothing to give? Give that
 - v. We need to believe that God is big enough and that he wants to move
 - b. Testimony from Croatia w/ refugees
 - i. Feeding 80,000 over the course of 6 months
 - ii. How? They gave God their meager offering and let him make miracles
 - iii. I want to point out the last line of the passage, *"This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"*
 1. OT promised that another prophet, like Moses, would come - Moses through whom God miraculously provided for his people
 2. Here they realize that here is the New Moses
 3. The muslim people think that God promised to send a Prophet too, but they think that Prophet is Muhammed
 4. Well, not all of them. Because of the miraculous feeding of the thousands, many many Muslims came to believe that the Prophet was indeed Jesus, Isa al Masih.
 5. That is what obedience can do as we give God our meager rations
 - c. Don't think for a moment that you have nothing to offer. You do... in faith.
 - d. In life we often feel completely overwhelmed with our inadequacy. In the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000, however, we see that God is in the business of doing more than we could possibly ask or imagine as we place our faith in him and not in our own resources.
4. If this is true, who will I tell?