

Episodes in Life of T/lord 03 Feeding the 5000

by Robert Constable

The sermon explores the significance of the feeding of the 5000, emphasizing God's providence and the power of small offerings in His hands.

Duration: 45:20

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 6:5-13

Topics: "Miracle"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of the episode in the life of Jesus where he feeds a large crowd. This event is recorded in all four gospels, indicating its significance. The preacher highlights the different perspectives of the gospel writers and the importance of paying attention to this story. The sermon encourages listeners to consider the lessons and teachings that can be derived from this event.

Transcript

Because he sings the whole song. One time we were having a skit at the school and somebody was making a takeoff on Dr. Culbertson, and the most characteristic thing they could think of saying about him was, we will sing the entire hymn. So, it's great.

And you know, another thing, I know why I like to sing all the verses, because it sounds so great up here. You people really can sing. And when you get into this and you're singing the whole message, you know, there's continuity to it.

The singing then isn't just an exercise before the message, it is something to enjoy yourself and enter into the truth of. And it's obvious that you people do this. This is one of the great things, isn't it, of knowing the Lord a while? You get so that more and more these songs fit into your experience, and pretty soon you're just expressing what is in your own heart.

It comes real easy, but it sounds great. Tonight we want to consider an episode from the life of the Lord Jesus that is recorded for us in every one of the four Gospels, but we're going to read it from the sixth chapter. Okay, it's a great temptation.

John chapter 6, and we'll read the first 14 verses of this chapter. And if you have a Bible, turn to it. It's much nicer if you can read it as I read it.

And I've told people before, I don't like to be sitting in the congregation when the speaker calls for a reference and then starts reading right away, you know. And just about the time with my sticky fingers, I get the reference found, he's finished reading. Then what am I supposed to do, read it or listen to him? I never can figure it out.

So when I'm speaking, I try to wait for people. Chapter 6 of John, after these things, Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him because they saw his miracles, which he did on them that were diseased.

And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. And the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. When Jesus then lifted up his eyes and saw a great company coming to him, he said unto Philip, when shall we buy bread? That these may eat.

And this he said to prove him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, two hundred penny worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said unto him, there's a lad here which has five barley loaves and two small fishes.

But what are they among so many? And Jesus said, make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place, so the men sat down in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were sat down, likewise of the fishes as much as they would.

When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, this is of a truth, that prophet that should come into the world.

Well, my text here really is Jesus took the loaves, but that doesn't matter, we want to consider the situation. Now as I said, this is one of the things, the episodes in the Lord's life that is recorded in every one of the four gospels. Now there are many very wonderful things that the Lord did that are not recorded in all the gospels.

There are many things that are recorded only in one. There are very important things that were only recorded in two. A few things in three, but this in four.

Now this says something, I think, it says something to me, and that is that God is very concerned that we take note of this. This is an episode in the life of the Lord Jesus that God doesn't want us to miss. It's an important one.

So, this is one of the reasons I've selected it in this series, because I think the Lord wants us to consider it. But of course, each of the writers of the gospels tells the story a little differently. This is always true, each tells it from his own particular point of view.

So, because I don't want to refer you to four different stories of the same thing, let's just review the circumstances the Lord Jesus had been teaching these people. There'd been a very great crowd gathered together, and as he was talking to them it was getting late, and it was time for everybody to be going home. And the disciples knew this, and the disciples were getting restive about it, getting pretty late, and so some one of them said to Jesus, it's getting very late, let these people go home now, you must stop, let

them go.

And Jesus said, well, they're hungry, you can't let them go the way they are, they've been here for a long, long time, you must give them something to eat. Well, this is rather a startling thing to say, and Jesus said, according to one of the records, go into the towns and buy something for them. And one of the disciples said, 200 penny worth? Now, we know that a penny in those days was a man's wages for a day, and what he was saying is to take enough food to feed this crowd, to use up a man's salary for about nine months.

Where are we going to get that kind of money, was what he was saying. 200 penny worth? And Jesus said, well, what have we got here? Find out what we have. And so Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said that um, there's a boy here, he's got five barley loaves and two fishes, what's that among so many? He just missed that, you know, that's nothing.

And Jesus said, well, bring him to me. And so they went out to find this boy who had been wandering around in the crowd with his basket with five little buns in it, and two small fishes. And so when they found him and brought him to Jesus, and the boy gave Jesus the buns and the fish, and Jesus gave it to the multitude.

There is a lad here. This is one of the very important lessons that I think the Lord wants us to get out of this, this statement of Andrew's, there is a lad here. How come there was a lad there? How come there was a boy there with five barley buns and two small fishes? How come do you think he was there? You think he just happened to be there? You think this was just a coincidence or an accident that this boy came walking around with his basket with five buns in it and two small fishes? You know very well it was no accident.

That boy was there by appointment. Of course, he didn't know a thing about this, but God brought that boy there. God's eye had been on that boy since the beginning of the day.

He had been seeing where he went and what he did, and he managed to get him into that crowd and into that place with five barley buns and two small fishes just when they began looking around to see what they might feed this crowd. And he came by, and Andrew said, there is a lad here. Now what I want to talk about tonight is God's providence, God's presence, and God's ordering of the details of our lives.

This boy, he's just an ordinary kid. The country was full of him. That he had five loaves and some fish would indicate that he sold these kind of things.

He went about with these buns. Perhaps his mother made him some fishes he may have caught, but he was around in the crowd trying to sell them. And he wasn't a very important boy, as some people count importance.

But how many boys of that generation are being mentioned 2,000 years later in connection with their activity for God? Not very many. This boy is still being talked about. It looked like it was a coincidence, but it was God's providence that brought him.

Well, the first thing, of course, that you take notice of about this boy is how utterly insufficient and inadequate anything he could do was to the situation. Right? Don't you think that you would have shared Andrew's point of view about this if you had been there? What if you were one of the disciples standing with the Lord Jesus and listening to this conversation? And Andrew had said, well, there's a boy here with five barley loaves and two small fishes, but what are they among so many? Would you have said, oh, you

mustn't downgrade the Lord. He could do great things.

Would you have said that or would you have agreed with Andrew? Well, I know what I would have done. I would have agreed with Andrew, of course. How far can five barley loaves and two small fishes go in a crowd of 5,000 men? This is a lot of men.

And then one of the Gospels, it says, besides women and children. Well, we don't know how many were actually there, but we do know at least 5,000 were. So the boy was there, and the boy was judged to be insufficient in himself and in what he had to offer.

What is that? Ever hear people say that? What is that? It's nothing. Do you ever think that about something you might have? What is that? I've heard people that when they were asked to sing, for instance, they say, oh, well, you know, I haven't got any good voice. You don't want me to sing.

Same idea, you see. What I've got isn't sufficient for the situation at all. There's a great opportunity to do something for God, and an appeal is made, a financial appeal.

And you say, oh, well, what's my two bits in a big project like that? It doesn't amount to anything. What's the use of my contributing to that? I'll put it into something where it's more significant. This is the way we're asked to feel.

We say this all the time. What I've got to offer doesn't amount to anything. And that's the situation we have here.

This boy was judged insufficient. But there was another interesting thing about this boy. He was willing to part with what he had.

Maybe that's what he was there for, but in any case, he was willing to get rid of the five loaves and the two fishes. He didn't hang on to them and say, who do you think you are taking my buns? I think he was paid for them myself. But anyway, he gave them up.

He gave them over into the service of the Lord when they were asked for. The Lord never takes anything for free, you know. If the Lord takes something, he gives for it.

He pays a good price. Although I suspect that when this boy went home that night, and he told the story at home, you know, about the fact that he sold his last five buns and two fishes to a man who took them. And as he passed them out, they grew and grew and grew.

And thousands of people ate those buns and fishes that his father said to him, you should have charged more. That would have been typical, wouldn't it? But it's too late then. He was willing to give up what he had, and he gave them up.

Now it says that Jesus took the loaves. Jesus took the loaves. All the boy had, the Lord Jesus took.

They weren't much. It says they were barley loaves and I've been told that barley is horse food, you know. They weren't even much as buns, although I've eaten barley soup that tasted pretty good.

So I don't know about this. But anyway, barley loaves were not considered the very finest. They were just ordinary buns.

Very thick, the food of common people, very ordinary. But these buns are brought front and center, and they become the center of this whole story. And what we want to consider is not so much the boy's sacrifice of the buns as the Lord's power with them.

Now what was the first thing about these buns? The first thing about these buns is that they were associated with Jesus. They were brought to the Lord, the buns were, and the two small fish. You know, that makes a big difference.

They weren't very much in the boy's basket, but they became a very great deal in the Lord's hands. And that's why I think of this as the lad's loaves in the Lord's hands, you see. They weren't, they were ordinary buns as long as the boy had them, but as soon as the Lord got hold of them, man, this was something else again.

And they became enough for his purpose. Now what was his purpose? His purpose was to feed 5,000 men and the women and children. That was his purpose.

To strengthen them with food before they went home that evening, because they had followed him for a long time and a long ways, and they would faint in the way, he says, in one of the other gospels. So he wanted to strengthen them and encourage them and bless them with food. And he had these buns in his hands to do this with.

This was his purpose. Now, I've made something already of the fact that the buns didn't amount to much. And this is right, of course, buns didn't amount to much.

And I do not want to suggest that everybody that has a small gift or a small capacity is going to do great and mighty things. That isn't exactly what I want to suggest here tonight, because I don't think that exactly is the lesson here. There are things in the episodes in the Lord's life that certainly teach us that he can do with us and through us great and mighty things which we know not.

But I think here the lesson is not so much that we will do great things as that we will fulfill his purpose, fulfill all his purpose in us. Now, this is what we want, isn't it? We'd be pretty scared, some of us, if we thought that the Lord all of a sudden was going to bring us front and center and start some great big thing going that we were going to be responsible for. We might not feel we have the capacity for that, or we might not feel like we want to get involved in a thing like that.

But one thing we all do want, and that is that the Lord's purpose in us, whatever it may be, shall be accomplished. And this is a very great deal more important to be a soldier in the will of God than it is to be a general outside the will of God. A very great deal more important.

Everybody wants to be president, you know. Everybody wants to be number one. But this is not the important thing.

The important thing is to be in the place of God's appointment for us at the time he wants us there. Now, this was true of the boy. This is true of the loaves.

The boy was in the right place at the right time. The loaves, though very small and apparently insufficient, they were in his hands. And I want to say this before I go any further, that I think what I've said already applies to everybody's life here.

I know it does. We're apt to forget this. There isn't a person in this room tonight just because he wanted to be here or she wanted to be here.

There isn't a person on the park of the palms, on the grounds, just because you wanted to be here. Our lives are ordered by the Lord. He has had his hand in directing us and bringing us together to this place.

We may not understand this any more than the boy. I'm sure it never entered the boy's mind, and it may never have entered your mind either. That all the while the Lord was working circumstances, and our thoughts, and the counsel that we received, and everything else to bring us to this place at this time.

Now, let me add this. One of the most important, apparently, concerns of Christian people is how to know the will of God. Now, the reason I say this is that it is my privilege, and has been for many years, to speak in conferences all over the country.

And very often we have, along with the preaching sessions, opportunities for classes, or for counseling, and this kind of thing with people. And if we let it open and say, now what would you like to take up in these classes? Almost invariably, the main subject will be, how can I know the will of God? Now, this happens all the time. So, I'm not, I know I'm not very far wrong when I say this is a point of great concern to people, how they can really know about the will of God.

And as a result of this, I have had to read the word a very great deal in this connection. Believe me, I've been asked some pretty tough questions in this connection. And I know this, if I know anything about the word of God at all, I know this, that if a man wants the will of God, he has it.

The problem is not discovering it intellectually, finding it with our mind, the problem is wanting it in our hearts. There are so many things we want, and many of them are perfectly legitimate things, but they just happen to be the things we want. And we want them many times more than we want the will of God.

I'd be glad to have the will of God in my life provided, provided. That's the way most people go through life. That's the way most Christians approach this subject of the will of God.

It's a matter of whether we really want it or not. If we want it, we have it, because God has guaranteed this in his word. He has promised to lead us according to his will, if we will let him.

The amazing thing is, we really don't trust him very much. We're afraid that if we let the Lord have his will in our lives, it wouldn't be as good as what we think we would like. And let me tell you this, there isn't anything we would like that is worthy to be compared to what the Lord would give us if we let him.

So much for this. It isn't to do great things, it's to fulfill his purpose. And there is nothing in life as important as this, to accomplish the fulfillment of the will of God in our lives.

How is this done? It's done through association with Jesus. These bonds satisfied the multitude, because they were associated with him. Another thing, they were transferred to him.

The boy didn't come and hold the basket and the Lord waved his hands over the basket, and something happened to the bonds. It says Jesus took the loaves. They were actually put in his hands.

They were transferred to him. It was a deliberate act. Now here's another place where a lot of people sort of miss the boat.

Because they think, well the Lord knows all about this, and I don't have to do anything about it. He knows my heart and all. He won't take you on those terms.

He takes you on the terms that you bring yourself to him and say, Lord here I am. You put yourself in his hands by a deliberate and by a definite act of your will, then he can do something. But he's not going to, as I said the other night, he's not going to butt into your life.

You must invite him in. You must do this definitely. Your life must be transferred to him to be used.

And then a wonderful thing happens. It happened to the bonds, and it'll happen to us. They were accepted by Christ.

No, he didn't say, cheap barley buns. Who wants barley buns? He didn't say that. He didn't say, five? What are we going to do with five buns? He didn't say this.

He took the bonds. He accepted what was offered to him. And a lot of people seem to be afraid that the Lord is going to sneer at what they bring.

And so they don't bring anything. Oh, you know, I can't do anything. What I've got doesn't amount to anything.

He doesn't need what I, no, he doesn't need it. But if you bring it to him, he'll use it. He'll accept it.

He will accept anything that is brought to him for his use. And he will do like he did with the buns. What have you got? And all of you are beginning to think right now.

Oh, well, you know, you're not talking to me. What I've got isn't important. Wait a minute.

The buns weren't important either. Five buns aren't important when the assignment has been thousands of people. Don't take Andrew's attitude about what is this among so many.

What have you got? I didn't say what did you have? I said, what have you got? Whatever it is, the Lord will accept it. If you bring it to him, he never turns anything away. He's careful.

This is shown in this story by the fact that when the miracle was all over and everybody was on his way home, the Lord Jesus said, gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Nothing be lost. He's a careful administrator.

He's careful. Not only is nothing lost, is nothing turned away, but no one is turned away. Nobody is ever turned away by the Lord Jesus.

He was the rejected one. He doesn't reject other people. Come unto me is his invitation.

He that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. This is his invitation. Anything or anyone.

And then he did an interesting thing. He blessed the loaves. This means he said grace before mealtime.

He had these five buns in his hand and he stood there and he lifted his eyes to heaven and he thanked God for this food that had been provided. And I think the disciples peaked during that prayer because they were standing around, you know, and they didn't think much of these buns. And Andrew had already said, what are they? And here he is giving thanks for five buns.

And if you were one of the disciples, don't you think you'd look over at one of the other ones, sort of with a quizzical look in your face and said, this is an interesting thing. What's he got to be thankful for? We're really getting in a bind here. There didn't seem to be much cause for thanksgiving.

But you remember one thing I said last night? Maybe some of you were here last night and heard me say that he sees the potential. He doesn't just see what's there on the surface. He doesn't see just what you and I see.

He sees the potential. And who in that crowd looking at five buns saw a full-fledged meal for thousands of people? Nobody. Nobody.

Nobody but Jesus. And when he looked at these buns that he could hold in his hands, he thanked God on the behalf of 5,000 men besides women and children for this good and generous and adequate provision for their need in that hour. Isn't that tremendous? I'm sure the disciples just kind of couldn't believe it.

I was at a conference one day with a gentleman who was walking down the path with me by the lake. And he said, I'd like to tell you my story. And I said, I'd be very interested in hearing it.

And he said, do you know Lon Hunter? I said, yes, I know him. Lon Hunter was a personal worker. He wasn't very gifted, as the world counts gift, but he was a man who loved the Lord Jesus.

And because he wasn't very gifted, many opportunities didn't come his way, but he made opportunities to talk to people about the Lord. And he said, Lon Hunter came up into our neighborhood once, and he'd been dealing with the boys and girls in the neighborhood, and he rented a little store. And he started a Sunday school class.

And we had a little girl, and she went to this class. And when I found out about it, it really made me mad. I said to my wife, look, if our kid wants to go to church, let her go to church.

Don't ever go down to that place. And my wife said to me, he said, you just leave her alone. She's having a good time down there.

She's enjoying it down there. Now, you're not taking her to church. You leave her alone.

Well, he said, you know, I said my piece, so I thought I better shut up. So he said, I let her go. And then pretty soon my wife started going down to that place.

And now and then they'd ask me to go. Well, I wasn't having any part of it. And he said she'd asked me until finally I got fed up with the whole thing.

And she came to me one afternoon on Sunday, and she said, they're having a special speaker at the little place where we go. Would you come and hear him tonight with us? And he said, I saw my chance. He said, well, you know how I feel about that.

He said, I'll go with you under one condition. And that condition is that you'll never ask me to go again. Well, the wife really had herself a situation, didn't she? But the man who was going to be there that night was a real special speaker, an evangelist with a reputation, a man she knew could preach the gospel.

And so she said to her husband, all right, if you'll go with us tonight, I'll never ask you to go again. All right, then I'll go. And so after supper, they went to this little storefront for the meeting.

And when they got there, they sat down with the few people that were there. And everybody sort of seemed to be hemming and hawing. And time for the meeting came, and nothing seemed to happen.

And the man who was up front didn't seem to know what to do. And so he said, well, let's sing a few songs. Our speaker is probably held up in the traffic or something.

He'll be here. So let's have a few hymns. And they sang a couple.

He hadn't come yet. He sang a couple more. And by this time, the man on the platform was just about devastated.

He didn't know what to do. And so finally he said, well, I don't know what to do. Our speaker hasn't come.

Can you imagine how that woman was feeling about now? Boy, she was really low. She'd shot her bolt on this one time, and the preacher didn't come. And so the man on the platform said, well, our preacher didn't come.

If anybody has anything to say, why don't you go ahead and say it? And three men got up one after the other in the little place, only a few men there. One was a painter. One worked in a store in a factory nearby.

They were ordinary working men. And these three men said what Jesus meant to them. And this man got saved.

He said, I was all set for that preacher, but I wasn't set for these guys. Isn't that a great story? That's this story. The man with the gift, the man that had everything.

He didn't come. The men that didn't have very much, that is according to the way men count things, they just threw in their nickels worth. But the Lord took it and used it to the salvation of this man.

And he's been a real soul winner himself ever since. You see, it isn't just that the Lord did this 2000 years ago. He's doing it now, right now.

So he sees the potential. My, he saw the potential that night. Well, something else.

It was increased by Christ. Now the boy gave everything he had. He gave all his buns and his fish.

But of course that wasn't enough. But Jesus increased it. You know, it isn't how much you've got.

It's how much you've got plus what Jesus can do with it. You know, the coal car in a train isn't a very impressive car. He doesn't see a coal car stuck out on the tracks by itself and nobody's going to get excited about this.

But you back up to that coal car locomotive, you can put a hundred cars of freight on the back of that and it'll move. And what we are and have may only be a coal car, but what's that got to do with it? Associated with the Lord Jesus. That's it.

Connected. Make the right connection. The power is his power.

He can do great things and he will increase what we give like he increased what this boy gave. There was another story in the Bible that I'm not going to touch on this week. I'm going to study it real hard and talk

about it sometime, I'm sure.

And that is when the Lord Jesus watched the widow in the temple when she came and she only gave a mite. All she had, the Lord said. I'm convinced of this, that when that woman got to heaven, the Lord was waiting for her there and told her about this experience of seeing her go through the temple.

And how many times do you suppose in the years since then, men have repeated this? Men have used this as a text. Men have used the widow's mite as the basis for an appeal to people to give to the Lord's work. How much do you suppose that widow's mite has been multiplied down the centuries? Why unthinkably, unthinkably, we couldn't begin to imagine how much has been brought into the coffers in the Lord's house because one woman gave a mite.

Same thing. So we're talking about, he increases it. But he not only increased it, he didn't have piles of loaves of bread all around him.

And incidentally, I don't know how this happened. This is one of the things I'd like to find out. None of the gospels reveal this.

What happened? Did the loaves, did he break a loaf in two and hand a loaf to one disciple here, and then as he handed this loaf to this one, he had another half in his hand. And then as he handed this one, he had another half in there. I don't know.

I don't know how it happened. It must have been tremendous though, however it happened, because he just kept on giving out loaves of bread. He never ran out.

And fish. He distributed it. Do you know who he gave it to? He didn't give it to the crowd.

He gave it to the disciples. And why did he give it to the disciples? They might not have been hungry. And with the five fish, the two fish and the five loaves, maybe the disciples would have had enough to eat anyway.

Why give it to them? Well, you know why he gave it to them, so they could give it to the other people. And since I've arrived here at Park of the Pounds this time, several people have said to me, oh we've had such rich ministry. What are you doing with it? What are you doing with it? You know, it's great.

You haven't been getting barley loaves, you've been getting the finest of the wheat. What have you been doing with it? If you give it away, it will increase. If you're sharing it with other people and with one another, it will increase.

But if you're just thinking about it, it'll breed worms and stink, just like the manna would if it was kept. No, it was given to the disciples to give to other people. When you come to a conference like this, you are fed from the word of God.

It isn't given to you for you only. It is given to you for others, to share among yourselves, to pass on to others that you may be in contact with. You're all in contact with lots of people.

You write letters, you send postcards, you use the telephone, you make contact in many ways with people. I'm sure we don't make nearly the contacts we ought to make with people that are in the world. Sometimes you get very monastic, and we don't see a non-Christian from one week to the next.

And there's something good about this, but there's a danger in this, too, that we dry up the channels by which the word of God may feed the multitude. We should be making contact with the unsaved. That's why he distributed it.

Now, what happened as a result of this story? A great deal of hunger and discomfort was averted. These people didn't go away hungry, with pains in their tummies, and thinking how late it was, and how hungry they were, and how long it had been since they ate before, and how long it would be before they got home, and why were they caught out without enough money to buy something to eat, and why are the stores all closed, and all of these things. They didn't care about these things.

They were satisfied. And this is what happens when we bring our little bit to the Lord Jesus, and he takes it, and he blesses it, and he multiplies it, and he distributes it through us to other people. Other people are satisfied.

What else? Did you notice the last verse that we read, verse 14? Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth, that prophet, that should come into the world. Jesus was glorified. Is there anything you'd like to see more than that? How can you accomplish that? By sharing what he gives to you.

Men were brought to a realization of the truth. There were fragments to be gathered, and there was a record made, and kept in four Gospels, because God thinks it's important that we apply this to our lives, that we apply the teaching that God orders our lives in all details, that he gives us the privilege of giving to him, so that he may use what we give him for the blessing of others. God help us to learn this lesson, shall we pray.

Gracious God, we thank thee for the Lord Jesus, and we thank thee for the wonderfully gracious and tender way that he had of telling men about thee, and of revealing thy will to bless, and of revealing thy great power. And as we think about this this evening, we pray thee that it might enter into our hearts, and that we might think about what God

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