

Matthew 14:13-23

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[0 : 00] In Matthew 14, starting in verse 13. So if you are physically able and desire to do so, I'm going to ask you to join with me as we stand together and we read the Word of God found for us in Matthew 14, verses 13 through 23.

As I caution you often, do not let the familiarity of a text keep you from letting the truth of it resonate within your life. Matthew writes for us, now when Jesus heard about John, remember John the Baptist being beheaded in the very first part of Matthew 14 and how it moved him to compassion. Now when Jesus heard about John, he withdrew from there in a boat to a secluded place by himself. And when the people heard of this, they followed him on foot from the cities. When he went ashore, he saw a large crowd and felt compassion for them and healed their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, This place is desolate and the hour is already late, so send the crowd away that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.

But Jesus said to them, They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat. They said to him, We have here only five loaves and two fish. And he said, Bring them here to me.

[1 : 04] Ordering the people to sit down on the grass, he took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, he blessed the food. And breaking the loaves, he gave them to the disciples, and disciples gave them to the crowds.

And they all ate and were satisfied. They picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve full baskets. There were about five thousand men who ate, besides women and children. Immediately, he made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of him to the other side, while he sent the crowds away. And after he had sent the crowds away, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray, and when it was evening, he was there alone.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for your word, and we thank you for the opportunity we have to read your word, and to hear your word. We pray now that by the word of God, you would speak to each heart and each mind.

Lord, help us to come to it with an understanding, not just to gain information or to collect knowledge, but Lord, to see how the truth applies to our life, that your word would have a direct impact upon all that we do, and that you may be glorified and honored through it, and we ask it all in Christ's name.

[2 : 14] Amen. And you may be seated. We come to a very familiar text, something which we have heard a number of times and something which we ought to have heard a number of times, because, see, the feeding of the five thousand, which we have before us in the text, is an event of one of the very few events that is recorded in all four Gospels.

Now, we have many things that are recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Those are the synoptic Gospels. Synoptic simply means same. And they are the synoptic Gospels which share a lot of things and content with one another.

John is at times completely different. John seems to be, apparently through all historical research, to be written at a much later date. John is written for a different purpose and doesn't record a lot of the events that are recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

As a matter of fact, the bulk of the material that we find in the Gospel of John is unique to John, which led biblical criticism in times past to kind of question the authority of the Gospel of John. But we shouldn't go there, because the reality is we do not have contradicting events. We do not have contradicting accounts just because we have four Gospels. When we read four Gospels, we get a four-dimensional view rather than just a three-dimensional view of the individual.

[3 : 35] Much in the same way, if you were to ask a number of people things about me or things about you, and people knew you on different levels and they knew you in different ways, and each person would say something in particular, maybe that they knew, that maybe somebody else didn't

know as well, and my wife would know things about me that nobody else would know, my children would know some things about me that a few would know, friends and acquaintances would know things about me that others may or may not know.

And you would have to speak to a number of people to kind of get a full picture of who I am. This is why we call on a multitude of witnesses to any event historically or any event which happens. If there was an accident right in front of the church and four or five of you happened to be standing outside, the moment that accident took place, they would want an eyewitness account from each of you, because only by taking all eyewitness accounts can we compile a full picture, because just instinctively, each individual focuses on one thing in particular.

Someone may know who was driving the car and what they were, and another person may know what color the car was. And these things that seem to be just very particular because we have a tendency to focus on just kind of a closed group of things.

So we need different viewpoints, and this is why we have the Gospels. God, in His grace and mercy, wants to give us a full picture of who Christ is.

[4 : 58] But if you ask someone about me, and if you speak to multiple people about me, and ask them to describe me, and there is one thing that keeps being repeated, you probably would pay special attention to that thing because this seems to be the thing that everybody knows.

This seems to be the characteristic or the trait which stands out. We do this in all realms when people want to know people. They say, well, most people say this, or this seems to be a recurrent thing about this individual.

The feeding of the 5,000 is one of those things. This is one of the events that we have recorded in the life of Christ that all the eyewitness accounts record for us.

Not only does that add authenticity to the event, it also causes us to stop and pay attention to it. Because if Scripture is the Word of God, written by men of God, moved by the Spirit of God, and God has so determined that it be repeated for us four times, then it is very becoming of us to slow down just a little bit and see that there's just much more here than a story being told for story's sake, but to pay attention to what we see in this account.

We see here the king's provisions. We see the king's provisions to the multitude around him, but we want to look more than that. It is the feeding of the 5,000, and we're not really splitting hairs here.

[6 : 32] We're just looking at the text accurately. This is not just Jesus' feeding of the 5,000 men, probably numbered somewhere, some estimates say between 10,000 to 12,000, maybe upwards of 15,000, depending on how many women and children were there.

Because Jesus does the healing in the text. It says he healed them, but if you read all four Gospels, there's this one phrase. He looks at his disciples and says, you feed them.

You feed them. You feed them. Because, see, the ministering to the multitudes was to flow through the disciples.

He broke the bread. He blessed the bread, broke the bread, and gave it to the disciples, and the disciples gave it to the multitudes. See, there's this account that we have of Christ teaching his disciples very near his death in John chapter 13, 14, 15, and even the 16, this great discourse. And Jesus tells his disciples, the works that I do, you will do too, and greater works than I do, you will do. Now, not greater in magnitude, but greater in scope and in reach.

[7 : 54] The life of Christ is confined to a very small geographical region in all of the world. His disciples have taken that work and now have really eclipsed the globe in reach with the same work.

It has exceeded his physical life. I won't say physical because he is still physically alive. His life lived in a short period of time of three and a half years ministry in scope, and that it has reached further than he ever did in his public ministry.

His goal is to minister to the multitudes through his people. So more than just his provisions to the multitudes, here we see the king's provisions to his disciples to minister to the multitudes.

Because Christ has called us, his people, his church, to be his hands and feet. Literally, he looks at his people and says, you feed them.

Which seems to be a task of really unattainable magnitude. Really just unbelievable. The disciples are sitting here saying, it's already late. Where can we get this much food?

[9 : 07] We don't have enough money to buy this much food. And Jesus looks at them and says, you feed them. And we want to focus on, not so much, even though we don't want to overlook this, how Christ ministers to the multitudes, but also how he empowers his people to minister to the

multitudes.

Because this is the task before us. The Great Commission commands us. It is not a suggestion. It's a commandment. Commands us to go out into the world and to baptize and to teach and to proclaim the gospel in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

He commands us to love our enemies. He commands us to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to minister to the needy. He commands us to minister to the multitudes in his name.

And we as his people look with expectation, say, but how? How is this possible? Even in our numbers, the need always exceeds what appears to be on hand.

And Jesus looks at us and says, you feed them. And his disciples say, but how? And in here we have the answer.

[10:29] We see, first of all, the source of the provisions. Because we're looking at the king's provisions. There is the source of the provisions. Now, John tells us in his account, and we're thankful for John's account, because Matthew, Mark, and Luke all have it recorded exactly the same.

And John tells us in his account that Jesus questions the disciples and says, look at all these people. How are we going to feed them? And it says that he did this to test them because Jesus himself knew what he was about to do.

And Peter's like, I don't know how we're going to do it. We don't even have enough money. 200 denarii. That's 200 days wages. It's not enough money to buy enough bread for these people. We have no way of doing it.

And then there's Andrew. You remember what I told you about Andrew? The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association has what they call the Andrew Ministry. And the reason the BGEA has that ministry is because Andrew in Scripture is always bringing people to Jesus.

Right? Andrew doesn't always know what he's doing with it. Andrew just knows every time we meet Andrew in Scripture, he's bringing somebody to Christ. That's all he's doing. Maybe it's somebody with a question. Andrew's like, I don't know the answer to that question, but I do know who can answer that question.

[11:32] And he brings them to Christ. We find Andrew in this because Andrew says, I don't know how we're going to do it, but I found a boy with a sack lunch. It is Andrew who brings the boy that has the loaves and the fish.

Now, my wife likes to point out the reality that that boy's mama had to pack that lunch. So don't overlook the mama packing the lunch. Right? Andrew found a boy with a good mama and said, now, we're going to bring you to Jesus.

And that's all Andrew does. And what we see is, even in the account from Matthew and Mark and Luke, the disciples say, Lord, I don't know how we're going to do it.

We don't have the means to do it. All we have are five loaves and two fish. And Jesus makes this one astounding statement. Bring them to me.

That's it. Bring them to me. Now, the application is clear, but the living out of the application is exceedingly hard. The application is, if you just bring whatever you have to Jesus, then he can take your provisions that you give to him and multiply it so that you can give it to others.

[12:45] That's the application. The application is, is whatever you have, bring it to Christ. Right? Jesus says, bring it to me. He doesn't say, take you a little bit from it.

Be sure that that boy has something for his lunch. Keep a little bit out. He says, bring it, everything to me. That's why the application is easy to understand, but the living out of that application is very difficult.

Because we look around and we see 5,000 men and 5,000 hungry men is a problem. I don't care where you're at. Five hungry men is a problem, but 5,000 hungry men is a problem.

And these people have walked to see Jesus. Now, I want you to pay attention to this first and foremost. Christ was withdrawing by his, with his disciples to be by himself.

But when he saw the multitudes, he felt compassion for them and he healed their sick. First truth, Jesus always has time.

[13:46] Always. And he will always take time. So the first thought of the disciples' life is, I thought we were going to go take some alone time.

And Jesus says, but we're going to take time. Second truth is, when we give him whatever we got, that is enough.

We may only have a sack lunch. We may only have what appears to be far too less to meet the pressing need. But the command of Christ is bring it to me. And leave it alone. See, the source of the provisions that the king was going to utilize was whatever they had on hands. And the way the king is going to empower his people to minister to the multitudes is whatever he has given us on hands. But whatever he has given us must be given back to him. Now, I do believe that is a scriptural concept. And I don't believe it because I think it. I believe it because I've read it.

[15:00] Because I do believe it says in Luke chapter 12, by the standard of measure which you will be given, it will be given back to you, pressed down and shaken together and poured out in your lap. So what I think Christ is saying there is the same thing we're seeing here.

When you give me what you got, I'm going to grow it and pour it out in your lap. Because see, the source of the king's provisions for your life will always be determined on how much you give to him. Real easy application. Exceedingly hard. Living outs. Because this boy is just as hungry as those 5,000 men. And the disciples are just as hungry as well. But the source is always whatever you have. Friend, listen to me. And I'm going to say this. We don't need him to bless us more so that we could do more. We just need to give him what he's already blessed us with so that he can do more. He's already provided the source.

[16:04] It's just a matter of will his people surrender back to him the source. You know me, one of my pet peeves is when we sing the song I Surrender All with a sad look on our face. It bothers me. Now, you say, well, the tone is kind of melancholy. Well, that doesn't mean we have to be depressed when we sing it. I mean, why should we be depressed when we give him our wickedness and our unworthiness and he gives us his riches? Why should we be depressed when we give up what we have which is nothing and he gives us what he has which is everything? Why should we try to hold anything back? The reason we're so sad when we sing I Surrender All is because, let's just be honest, we don't really want to. We want to surrender some but we don't want to surrender all. We want to say, well, here's four loaves and one fish. I'm going to keep one back for me. That's not what he says. See, the source he's going to use to provide is whatever he has given you already. He says, bring it to me.

[17:12] You know, the great application in that is when we live open-handedly and we live with the reality. Listen, the Lord doesn't own 10%. He owns 100%. And when we live open-handedly and say, Lord, everything you have given me is yours. What I have found is that he leaves a lot in your hand for you to enjoy and to use and to live on but the moment you start closing those fingers things start slipping through your grip. That's been my own practice. That's been my own life. Every time I thought, well, I need to hold on to this, God's got another way of taking it. But every time I can say, God, you can have it, he has a way of leaving it because surrender is a beautiful place to be. We see the source of his provisions. Now, we see the supplier of the provisions. Now, the supplier is not that boy, it's not his mama, it's not Andrew, it's not the disciples because the source that they provided was insufficient for the need before them. The source of what they had was not going to meet the need of 5,000 hungry men and the women and children. So it needed a supplier, it needed someone who could do it. This is where we see the scriptural text that says, when you give it to me, we press down, shaken together and poured out in your lap.

[18:26] So when they brought it to Jesus, Jesus took it. Now, don't be mistaken, whenever you offer something to Christ, he's going to take it and that's okay because he has a right to take it because it belongs to him. He gave it to you to begin with. The Bible says in the book of Job, God has a right to call the spirit back to himself. Now, that word spirit is breath. He has a right to call every breath back to himself and if he was to do so, all of mankind would die and the reason God could call the breath that's in your lungs back to himself is because in the beginning, God created man from the dust of the earth and he what?

Breathed into him, which means that God would not have created life had God not given breath to that being that he created so the very breath that's in your lungs belongs to him. So at any moment, he can take it back and he has the right to take it back because the creator is the owner and the owner is the determiner and the determiner gets to determine what he allows you to keep and what he allows to call back to yourself.

It's just one of the things that we see in scripture and it's one of the things that we understand with the omniscience of God and the superiority of God and the fact that he is over all and he owns all and therefore he has the right to all and Jesus took it but when he took it, he didn't take it to keep it to himself because Jesus doesn't need it.

He has bread to eat that is not of this life, remember? He didn't need it but he took it and it says and he looked up to heaven and he gave thanks and then he broke it.

[19 : 59] So he will take what you give him and he will break it apart and he gave it back to them. Now I want you to stay with this. Here is the supplier. We know the supplier is Christ but this is how it works.

They gave what they had to Christ. Christ gave it back to them to give to others. The increase wasn't for the benefit of the disciples. The increase was for the benefit of the multitude which means great application.

When we give him what we got and he multiplies it, he's not multiplying it for our own benefit. When we give him what we have and we put it in his lap and he looks up to heaven and he blesses it and by blessing it it begins to increase and to overflow.

When he pours it in our lap, shaken together, pressed down and it's spilling into our lap, he doesn't do it just so we have a fuller lap, he does it so we can reach more people. He does it so that we, it says that he gave it to his disciples and his disciples gave it to the people.

Sometimes there's a break in the command. Historically, we have seen it happening where God takes what his people give him and he multiplies it and he gives it back to his people and he gives it back to his people for the purpose of his people giving it to the multitudes.

[21 : 27] Sometimes we've seen his people stop the line and hold on to it. We've seen it in the ministry, in pulpits and we look down upon those ministers who decide that oh, they were there to be enriched with God's provisions and God's blessings and usually, you know, that's called, they end up bringing in a little bit of extra money, a little bit extra fame, a little bit extra fortune and they end up being in jail because they thought the provisions were for themselves rather than for the multitudes of friends.

Listen to me, it happens in the pews as well because what I have found is whatever happens in the pulpit also happens in the pews. It's just a little bit more public up here and it ought to be because scripture says you're held to a higher standard, to a greater account.

But the reality is is that when God takes what we have given him and he multiplies it and gives it back, he gives it back for the benefit of others. Think of the very first miraculous event which Christ ever did, a wedding feast at Canaan.

Remember that? A great wedding feast. Now, this is a wedding week around our house. Our second son getting married this week. It's an exciting time. His mama's going to be crying all week, right? But one thing I'm excited about is we're cooking all week to get up to that day.

We've got some here that are going to help us with the food preparation and the food distribution and again, I'm thankful for that because it would be hard for me to serve barbecue and officiate a wedding ceremony at the same time and it is great.

[22 : 56] But one thing I'm really thankful about is that when we have that reception, it's over because in the Bible that wedding feast will last about seven days. I can't even begin to imagine how much cooking you've got to do for a seven day wedding celebration because everybody just stayed there.

And at that wedding feast in Canaan when Christ was there, they ran out of wine. Now that's a no-no. It'd be like if we run out of potato salad or something and you're at the reception and we don't have it.

It's a no-no, right? They ran out of something important. They ran out of wine and Jesus' mother said, well just do whatever he tells you. And Jesus says, woman, what does this have to do with me?

Now he wasn't being disrespectful. He was actually calling her ma'am. I don't have, this doesn't concern me but do you remember the servants came to him and the servants came and said, what

do you want us to do? Your mama said, talk to you.

And he says, get those six stone water pots and fill them up with water. Now about 25 to 30 gallons a piece in those pots. Those are big pots of water, right? Get them and fill them full of water. And those servants went and filled each pot up with water and then take it to the master.

[23 : 58] And when they took it to the master and the master of the ceremony dipped his cup in there and he said, oh you saved the best wine for last. All I want you to know is Jesus didn't tell the servants to do that so the servants could have six jars of wine.

He did it so everybody else could have wine. Jesus didn't multiply the bread and fish so the disciples could have food. He did it so everybody else could have food. Jesus isn't multiplying what you're bringing to him in your life for your benefit.

He's doing it for the benefit of the multitude. Told you it's hard to live out even though it's easy to understand.

Because the one man that we can find in scripture that saw the blessing of God and he thought that that blessing was for his benefit so he built more barns.

Jesus says that God looks at him and says, you fool. Today your very life will be required of you.

[25 : 02] See, the supplier of the resources and the provisions gets to determine what we do with what he has supplied. You say, well, I've worked hard.

Well, I want to ask somebody. I asked a gentleman this one time. I said, well, I've worked hard. You don't understand. I said, well, did you create your body? No, your body was knit together in your mother's womb before you knew you, before anybody knew you.

God made you. Did you put that breath in your lungs? No, you didn't because God put that breath in your lungs. He said, well, I worked hard. Was it your strength? Well, yeah, it was my strength. No, it wasn't. If you didn't have strength, in your strength.

See, in the end, when we bring it down, anything we have, he is the supplier of. And when he supplies it, he wants us to distribute.

I'm not talking about equal distribution among God's people. I'm talking about benefiting the multitudes outside of God's people. And we see this here.

[26 : 04] He is providing for the multitudes. The third thing we see here is the significance of the provisions.

We've seen the source, whatever they have. We've seen the supplier, that is, Christ giving it back to them. Now we see the significance, and this is why we included these last few verses. Because, see, the Jewish people were anticipating a Messiah who would come and would feed them in the wilderness, much like Moses fed them in the wilderness.

Jesus here is demonstrating in a very public fashion, I am that Messiah. They were anticipating a king who would come and would be able to multiply the harvest.

Jesus says, I've taken a few loaves of bread and a couple of fish and I've multiplied the harvest. Every miraculous event which Christ did was really just a increase in the production of that.

He used very ordinary things and made them extraordinary. He took water which usually nourishes the grape vine which produces the grapes which eventually turned into a grape press and we finally have this fermentation of wine.

[27 : 16] Jesus just bypassed all that, took water, made it straight to wine. He took bread which is the grain could be grown and all those things and the fish which more fish could have been caught. He just bypassed all that and made it more.

He just multiplied it and increased it. And this is the anticipation of the Jewish people according to the prophetic word in the Old Testament scripture. Deuteronomy 18, a prophet like unto me Moses says.

Now we know this is a reality of what he is doing because when we read the account in the Gospel of John it is followed by the people following him after he walks on the water. We'll get to that next week if the Lord allows us to.

But after he goes across the other side they follow him and Jesus said you didn't follow me because you wanted to hear my teachings. You followed me because I fed you. Because you were hungry and I fed you. And they were like yeah.

And he says I tell you that Moses didn't give you the bread out of heaven I am the bread out of heaven. So we see him pointing to the significance in connection to what Moses had provided. He said rather than Moses providing you bread I am the true bread.

[28 : 18] And this is where we get that really disturbing series of events where Christ says whoever does not eat of my flesh and drink of my blood cannot be my disciple. And everybody leaves him but his disciples.

And we see the significance in this and this is why Christ says scripture tells us immediately he made the disciples get into a boat and go ahead of him. We will see next week if he allows us to Jesus will send us right into the middle of a storm.

But he made his disciples get into the boat. That word made means he compelled with a significant force get into the boat. Now if he can tell the sea to be silent he can tell you to get into a boat.

And he put them in a boat and told them to go ahead of him. Now that seems kind of confusing to us but stay with me. And after he put his disciples into the boat and told them to go ahead then he sent the multitudes away and sent them home.

Why did he do that? Well again we need the other gospel accounts to show us that. According to the other accounts found in the gospels when the people saw the increase in the food they wanted to make Jesus king.

[29 : 29] Because this is what we've been looking for. I've been looking for someone who could take a sack lunch and feed a multitude. Who hasn't been looking for that? Right? I've been looking for someone who could do the wondrous in a moment.

And they wanted to make him king and Jesus was afraid that his disciples would be influenced by the multitude so he sent his disciples away. Sometimes he sends us away from the crowd so the crowd doesn't influence us.

Because the significance of the event is his kingdom's not of this world. This is not his realm.

Friend, he's not just the king of Israel.

He's the king of kings. And he's the lord of lords. In a moment a rebellion could have started and he could have had a throne.

But as the king of kings he'd rather have a cross. Because see on the cross I'm closing he took what we could give him our filthy rags our sin our misery our pain our separation.

[30 : 37] He took what we gave him on the cross and rather than looking up to the father and blessing it he looked up to the father and said why have you forsaken me and it is finished.

And the blessings that flow from the cross are so much better than the blessings that could have flowed from a throne. Because the cross establishes the kingdom in heaven which makes the world his footstool.

The provisions of the multitude would have given him an opportunity to sit on a throne on earth but he knew his throne was in heaven. Friend, he has called us as his people to minister to the multitudes and the only way we minister to the multitudes is through what he can provide and what he has provided is salvation through the blood of the lamb.

And he has asked us to give him our all and to see what he does with it as he pours it back in our lap for the sake of others. And may he be glorified and honored through all that we do in his name. Let's pray. Lord, I thank you for this day. I thank you for the opportunity we have together to see your word. Pray that you would speak to us in truth through your word.

[31 : 53] Lord, may the truth of it capture our hearts and captivate our minds and may we live for your glory and honor each and every day and we ask it in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[36 : 43] Amen. Amen.