

Lessons from the Gospel of John (6): The Need of the Hungry—Life's Feeding

Bible reading

You may find it helpful to also read the entire case found in John 6:1-15.

John 6:8-11

8 One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him,

9 There is a little boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what are these for so many?

10 Jesus said, Have the people recline. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men reclined, in number about five thousand.

11 Jesus then took the loaves, and when He had given thanks, He distributed to those who were reclining; likewise also of the fish, as much as they wanted.

Introduction

Mankind is hungry and needs to be fed for nourishment and satisfaction. In the fifth case in the Gospel of John, we see a crowd of 5,000 who had a most basic and fundamental need—to be fed. Jesus was able to meet this need and thereby satisfy the hunger of the crowd. This case represents the hunger that all men have, which can only be satisfied by Jesus Himself as our real food.

Bible study reading

Please prayerfully read through the following portions of ministry related to this lesson.

The case in chapter six portrays a scene which reveals where we are in our condition. There is a contrast between the scene of chapter five with the one in chapter six. The scene in chapter five is in the holy city, but the scene in chapter six is in the wilderness. A pool is in the scene of the previous case, and a sea is in this case. The people in the former case are associated with the pool, and the people in the latter case are involved with the sea. The pool is related to religion's healing, while the sea is related to the people's living. The person in the fourth case was very weak, needing healing and enlivening, but the people in the fifth case are hungry, needing food and satisfaction. The pool is sacred, being of the Jewish religion; the sea is secular, being of the human society. The person by the pool was impotent, needed life's enlivening, and was waiting for healing. The people in this case are hungry, need life's feeding, and are seeking for nourishment. (*Life-study of John*, msg. 15, section 1)

It is interesting to note that the five barley loaves and two fishes came from a small boy, not a big man. This is very meaningful, because the Lord wants to indicate to us that He is our life, not as someone big, but as someone small. Both barley loaves and fishes are small items, signifying the smallness of Christ as the life supply to us. The miracle-seeking people considered Him as the promised prophet (6:14; Deut. 18:15, 18) and would have forced Him to be their king (6:15), but He would not assume the position of a giant in religion. Rather, He preferred to be small loaves

and little fishes that He might be small enough for people to eat. All of this reveals the smallness of Christ. He is small enough for us to eat.

This chapter not only brings out the smallness of the Lord, but also the richness of the Lord. Just five loaves are rich enough to feed five thousand people. The twelve baskets left over signify the overflow of the riches of Christ's life supply, which fed people over one thousand times. That five loaves fed five thousand people means that it fed them one thousand times. According to the Scriptures, the number one thousand signifies a complete unit. For example, one day in the court of the Lord is better than a thousand (Psa. 84:10). One thousand is a full unit. Hence, five loaves can fill five thousand people. This reveals how rich and how unlimited the Lord is. The multitude could eat as much as they wanted, for the supply was unlimited. Even two little fishes were sufficient for all. (*Life-study of John*, msg. 15, section 4)

Going deeper

Please read or listen to these materials for an in-depth study of this lesson.

Further reading:

[*Life-study of John*, msg. 15](#)

Radio broadcast link:

Broadcast 21, [*The Need of the Hungry—Life's Feeding \(1\)*](#)

Footnotes from Recovery Version of the New Testament:

John 6:9, footnotes 1-2

John 6:13, footnote 1

Questions for personal or corporate study:

References in brackets indicate readings or broadcasts that may be helpful in answering the questions.

- What is the spiritual significance of the numbers two and five and the types of food found in this case? (John 6:9, footnotes 1-2; John 6:13, footnote 1)
- How does this case demonstrate the approachability and availability of the Lord Jesus?
- How does Jesus feed us in a small yet rich way? (*Life-study of John*, msg. 15, section 4)

Next week

The Need of the Thirsty—Life's Quenching

In this case we see that Jesus fed a hungry crowd, not in a great way but in a small, approachable way. When Jesus fed these people, not only did He supply and nourish them, but there was an overflow of His riches signified by the abundant leftovers. Today we can experience the same feeding from the Lord Jesus. Next week we will see a further need of man. Not only is man hungry, but he is thirsty, and nothing of this world can quench his thirst. Only Jesus as the living water is able to meet this need.

Works Cited

Lee, Witness. *Life-study of John*. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1985. www.ministrybooks.org

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