

The Miracle of Miracles– Feeding the 5,000

Seven Signs as recorded in St. John's gospel:

The First Sign: Turning Water into Wine at Cana– Lord of Nature

The Second Sign: The Healing of the Nobleman's Son– Lord of life

The Third Sign: The Healing of the Palsied Man– Restorer of Lost powers

The Fourth Sign: The Feeding of the Five Thousand– Jesus is the food by which we live

The Fifth Sign: The Storm on the Lake and Jesus Walking on the Sea– Jesus is our Guide-Helper

The Sixth Sign: The healing of the Blind Man– Jesus is our light

The Seventh Sign: The Raising of Lazarus from Death– Jesus is Lord of eternal life

The fourth sign of St. John (A number signifying the world)

“Jesus therefore lifting up His eyes, and seeing that a great multitude was coming to Him, said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread that these may eat? And this He was saying to test him; for He Himself knew what He was intending to do. Philip answered Him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little. One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people? Jesus said, “Have the people sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. Jesus therefore took the loaves; and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted. And when they were filled, He said to His disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments that nothing may be lost. And so they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves, which were left over by those who had eaten” (John 6:5-13).

The Feeding of the 5000 is the only miracle recorded in each of the gospels: (Mat. 14:15-21; Mark 6:35-44; Luke 9:12-17; John 6:5-13). This must be a mark of importance.

John, the Baptist, had just been beheaded by King Herod, and the twelve had returned from their mission trip, so Jesus said, “Come away by you to a secluded place and rest a while” (Mark 6:31). Because of being so busy, they were not even able to eat and Jesus was concerned about their physical needs. Remember, life can be demanding and with each demand it presses out your strength. Giving your strength and replenishing your strength must be in balance or you are headed for trouble. So called “burn-out” is not the will of God. Jesus in your hustle and bustle of life will call you aside and refresh you by the “still waters” of His presence. Jesus will say, “Get in the boat” and take you for a ride.

When the people saw them coming to shore, a large crowd gathered together and Jesus had compassion on them and taught them.

The Compassion Connection: The compassion of Jesus connected Him to the need and it the sense of shared suffering and a desire to alleviate that suffering. It is empathy, not sympathy –identification with and understanding of another's situation, feelings, and motives. Compassion is a feeling; however mercy (eleos) is an act.

The Greek term for feeling compassion (splanchnizomai) includes a physical aspect in the tone of its feeling. Its related noun (splanchna) means “bowels, viscera.” Both the Greek verb and noun match our English expression “gut feeling.”

In the story of the Prodigal Son (Mark 15:20), the father had compassion for his returned son. Jesus looked with compassion on the widow at Nain who had lost her only son (Mark 7:13). This verb includes a physical aspect in the tone of its feeling because the related noun (splanchna) means “bowels, viscera.”

Jesus lifted up his eyes and saw the people and their need.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus revealed the heart of God. Even though God was the Creator of the universe, all powerful and the King of kings, He loved and felt compassion for people. Jesus responding to the compassion of God healed every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. When He looked upon the people and saw their distress and need He healed them, fed them, taught them about God and touched their infirmities.

Jesus, who has passed into the heavens and sat down at the right hand of God, is our high priest and is moved with compassion toward us. When no one else cares, He does!

The Philip test

“Jesus therefore lifting up His eyes, and seeing that a great multitude was coming to Him, said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread that these may eat? And this He was saying to test him; for He Himself knew what He was intending to do. Philip answered Him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little.”

In Matthew’s account the disciples brought to the attention of Jesus the circumstances of the occasion. It was a remote place, and for the sake of the people, they should be encouraged to search for food in nearby villages.

“But Jesus said to them, they do not need to go away; you give them something to eat” (Mat. 14:16). John recorded the challenge that Jesus made to Philip, and He asked Philip where they should buy bread to feed the people (John 6:5). Jesus is testing Philip. He already knew what He was going to do. He was asking Philip to see if he knew, to stretch him. Is this deceitful or misleading? No. It is like asking your son, “Okay, how are we going to fix the bike?” You know how you are going to fix the bike, but you want your son to use his head, come to some conclusion and act on it. This was a test designed to teach. Jesus wants them to deal with their own thoughts and their own solutions before He shows them what He is going to do. His goal was for them to come to Him and ask Him to do it.

He also questions Philip as to the amount of money it would take to feed the people. “Two hundred (days wages) would not be enough,” explains Philip. Andrew interrupts, having investigated the food problem, “There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?” Jesus caused the disciples to be aware of the fact they could not solve the problem on their own. Jesus wants us to admit that our strength, effort and wisdom are not enough to meet the needs of the people. It will require a miracle!

Jesus told the disciples to feed the people. Basically they said, “We can’t help them, send them away. They recognized their inability and inadequacy and rather than turn to Jesus, they give up. Their inability so consumed them and their minds became so muddled with the immensity of the problem, they forgot Jesus. When our eyes become glued on the problem, and our minds are in a swirling, violent and grinding maelstrom, our faith is blown away in fear and disbelief. We must learn to “turn our eyes” toward Jesus and believe in His acts of mercy.

Abraham put to the test:

“Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am. And He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you” (Gen 22:1-2).

Israel was put to the test:

“Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction” (Exod. 16:4).

“And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin” (Exod. 20:20).

The supply of the disciples

It is very possible the disciples checked with Judas, who carried the money, and asked him, “How much money do we have.” It was obvious they did not have 200 denarii. Their supply was not enough to meet the need. There is not any way, naturally, they can meet the emergency.

It is so natural to compare what you have with what is needed. Truly, God has designed the Christian walk to be one of faith. I have never been given a project to do that my natural supply was sufficient. At the Place of Discontent (Num. 11:22-24), Israel complained about the food, remembering what they had eaten in Egypt and wanted something else besides manna. Moses in turn complained to God about the immensity of the problem, and God told Moses “Is My power limited?” We must turn our eyes toward the unlimited resources of God!

The Boy with five loaves and two fish

What do they have? Just a little boy’s lunch. Children were of little value in that culture. They weren’t even counted with the 5000. I think the significance of this is that God uses someone of no account to perform the miracle. Jesus could have created a feast in the desert with just a word, such as, “Let there be...” and it would be. Instead, He used what was available and multiplied it. The Lord asked Moses, “What is that in your hand” (Ex. 4:2)? God can take our insufficiency and multiply it into more than enough. God majors in using “less, the inferior, the least, the youngest and the weak (Joel 3:10)

Jesus organized the people

Jesus organized the crowd into groups of 50 and 100 for the purpose of easier distribution and also an accurate count to verify a major miracle. Jesus is the author of organization and the devil the author of confusion. “For God is not {a God} of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the Saints” (1 Cor 14:33).

Jesus blessed the food; Jesus broke the loaves and divided the fish

Jesus gives thanks to God for providing the food and demonstrated His dependence on the Father. He is modeling for the disciples a creative miracle. The universe was made out of nothing and the creative power of God is resident in Jesus Christ. To make something out of nothing is a fingerprint of God’s unlimited resources. He can repair the organs of the body or He can create them.

Jesus “broke the loaves and He kept giving them to the disciples” (Mark 6:41). The loaves and fish grew in the hands of Jesus. This miracle of multiplying a substance was nothing new to God

A widow had one jar of oil, and obeying the instructions of Elisha, she borrowed a number of large vessels from her neighbors, and from the one jar she filled them all full. This was a creative miracle

During a famine, Elisha received tithes from a man of twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain. He instructed that the first fruits be given to the people. His attendant said, “What, will I set this before a hundred men?” Elisha replied, “Give them to the people” because I heard a word of the Lord, “They shall eat and have some left over” (2 Kings 4:43). “So he set it before them, and they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the Lord.” This is a creative miracle!

Twelve baskets full of broken loaves, not fragments or crumbs

He breaks the bread and distributes to the disciples to give it to the multitudes. The impact of this routine on the disciples should have been overwhelming as they went back to Jesus time and time again to get what they needed to feed the multitude. How many trips would you have to make before it came to you: “Everything I need for them, I get from Him.”

The number of 12 signifies the government of God.

“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of {His} government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and for- evermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this” (Isa 9:6-7).

In Mark 5 Jesus possessed power over demons, disease and death. There were 6000 (12 x500) demons in one man, the woman had the disease for twelve years and the little girl was twelve years old when she died. Twelve is number that symbolizes government and God’s government that is on the shoulder of Jesus is over the devil’s kingdom.

The word “baskets” refer to the bags that travelers carried. In them was the necessary supplies for the journey and from the left overs, the disciples filled each one of their traveling bags. Jesus demonstrated that his government can supply whatever need it may be and whenever He wants to.

- 1. Jesus lifted up his eyes and saw the people and their need.**
- 2. The Philip test**
- 3. The Boy with five loaves and two fish**
- 4. Jesus organized the people**
- 5. Jesus blessed the food; Jesus broke the loaves and divided the fish**
- 6. Twelve baskets full of broken loaves, not fragments or crumbs**

This miracle of divine creation was recorded in each gospel surely for a testimony for all people for all time. He is “THE I AM THAT I AM”, supplying to you whatever you need when you need it. He is El-Shadday, the all sufficient One!

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