

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 9 March 2025

Sermon Title : Jesus: The Stories - The 5000

Speaker : Rev Eddie Ho

Text : John 6:1-15

INTRODUCTION

All the stories about Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection are found in the 4 Gospels; Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in the New Testament. 3 of them – Matthew, Mark and Luke are called the synoptic gospels as they are quite similar in that they tell the same story, in the same sequence, and sometimes even the same wordings. But the 4th one according to John is quite different in content and style. To better appreciate the life of Jesus, we ought to read all the 4 Gospels. However, only one story is found in all the 4 Gospels – The Feeding of the 5000.

JOHN 6:1-15

This passage on feeding the 5000 took place in a picturesque site, along the shores of the sea of Galilee; surrounded by gentle hills on the west and tall plateau on the east known as the Golan Heights today. Most Jews live in the west, and the ministry of Jesus and many of His miracles were also found in the west. Verse 1 tells us that Jesus went to the other side, but we are not told if it is the east or west. However, we can get a clue of what had happened from Mark 6:31 – Jesus and His disciples were so overwhelmed by their ministry that they even did not have time to eat. Jesus was withdrawing from the crowd, but they were following Him because of the sign He was doing.

Signs and Miracles

John's Gospel is different from the other 3 Gospels in that he showed Jesus in a different angle. John used the word "sign" for this 'feeding of the 5000' whereas the other 3 Gospels used the word "miracle". Does it really matter whether it is a sign or a miracle?

Matthew, Mark and Luke used '*Dunamis*' (Gk.) – miracle: something out of the ordinary, not occurring naturally or work of power that defies the law of nature, such as Jesus healing the sick with one word, or the cripple suddenly stood up and walked at the command of Jesus.

John used '*Semeion*' (Gk.) – a sign or sign post pointing to something. John not only saw it as a display of power but also as another message; there is a message behind every sign.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

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A sign is useless unless we know how to interpret it correctly. The reason John called this miracle a sign is because God has a message behind each miracle. What are the signs that the people saw? Verse 2 tells us they saw the signs that Jesus was doing on the sick.

The signs that Jesus was doing on the sick in John Chapters 4 and 5

Healing in Chapter 4 – an official had a dying son and wanted Jesus to go with him to heal his son. But Jesus told him that His son had been healed. The official believed and went home to find out that his son was healed at about the time when Jesus said he had been healed. This is a miracle and also a sign.

Healing in Chapter 5 – Jesus asked a cripple for 38 years to get up and walk and he stood up and walked! It is a miracle that defies the law of nature but John says it is also a sign.

If these two incidents are sign posts, then what do they mean? People who see Jesus' miraculous healings can take them as a sign of free and guaranteed healthcare but what do the signs really mean?

Feeding the 5000

Even though Jesus wanted to get away from the crowd, he had compassion on the people when he saw them. (Mark 6:34) Jesus tested Philip, asking him where he shall buy bread for these people to eat. Philip answered that 200 denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little. (1 denari = a day's wage) There were 5,000 men implying possibly a total of about 10,000 when we include women and children. There was no way for the disciples to find so much food to feed so many people in such a short time. Then one of the disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, brought a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but questioned, "what are they for so many?"

Jesus then had the people sit down, took the bread and fish, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were seated to have as much as they wanted. When they had eaten their fill, the leftover fragments filled 12 baskets. The numbers do not add up. The law of nature was broken. This was told in all the 4 gospels because it has a special message for us.

Miracle of Subtraction, Addition and Multiplication

- The miracle of healing the sick boy in Chapter 4 was a miracle of subtraction – illness was taken out of the sick boy – something was already in there and was taken out.
- The miracle of healing the man who was a cripple for 38 years in Chapter 5 was a miracle of addition – muscle and other parts were straightened out for the cripple to walk; something was already there and Jesus strengthened it.

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- But the miracle of feeding the 5000 was from something that was not there. Although there were 2 fish and 5 loaves, they did not grow bigger by addition of parts. Instead, they multiplied till there were even 12 baskets of leftover food.

The law of nature states that matter cannot be created nor destroyed – this is the law of conservation of mass and means that things cannot be created out of nothing. In the two healing miracles, the law may be bent but this law of conservation of mass was not broken. However, in the feeding of 5,000 something was created from nothing – only God can make this happen. This ‘Feeding of the 5000’ is a significant event that points us to God.

Earlier, the people following Jesus in verse 2 did so because they saw Him only as a miracle worker. Now, the people saw Jesus as the provider of guaranteed free healing and free food. Jesus knew that they intended to come and make Him king by force and so He withdrew again – this time by himself. (v.15) After experiencing these signs, instead of surrendering to Jesus as God, they wanted to take things in their own hands and make Him king. As a result, Jesus withdrew again to the mountains to get away from them.

What do the signs point to?

To read signs correctly we need to put on the mind of Christ to understand the signs and not lean on our own understanding, submit to Him and do not be wise in our own eyes and shun evil. (Proverbs 3:5-7) **The sign tells us that Jesus is God and that He created something out of nothing. Only God can do that.**

Practical Applications

1. Be aware of your lacking especially your sin.
Philip had self-awareness; he knew what they had and what they had not. Being self-aware is important so that we know our weaknesses; know what we lack and that we are sinners in need of repentance and a Saviour.
2. Do not dismiss the little.
We do not know how Andrew found the little boy. The boy probably went forward and volunteered to give, and Andrew could have easily dismissed the little boy with only 2 fish and 5 loaves which were clearly not enough, but he did not dismiss the little. God is able to do immeasurably more than all that we ask or imagine, according to the power at work within us. (Ephesians 3:20)
3. Offer all that you have.
The little boy offered all that he had. If God can create something out of nothing, our only appropriate response is to surrender to God and not take things into our own hands. He is enough; all that is required of us is to have faith in Him. Trust and follow Him with whatever little we have; it is not worthless.

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CONCLUSION

Let us put on the mind of Christ to understand the signs of Jesus' miracles. He is God the only One who can create something out of nothing. Be aware of our lacking especially our sin before Him; do not dismiss the little and surrender all that we have to Him for He is able to do immeasurably more than all that we ask or imagine, according to the power at work within us. Do not think that you have no skill or no time to serve God. God can surely multiply whatever little you have - your 2 fish and 5 loaves. Honour God with your little and God will honour you. When we have Christ, we have enough; everything we need.

A. Review Sermon Application

Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk!?
- 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?

2. Appoint someone to read John 6:1-15 slowly.
 - a. Jesus tested Philip in John 6:6. How do you think Philip felt when he experienced Jesus' miracle of feeding the 5000, after how he had answered Jesus?
 - b. What are some areas in your life where God had or may be testing your faith and trust in Him?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

3. The people followed Jesus because of His miracles but misunderstood the sign leading to who He is.
 - a. Have there been times when you sought God's blessings and misunderstood who He is?
 - b. How can you shift your focus to seeking Him more deeply?

4. Philip focused on the 'impossibility', while Andrew did not dismiss the little.
 - a. How do you usually respond to challenges in your life — like Philip or Andrew?
 - b. Why do you respond the way you do?
 - c. How can your group members encourage or help you to respond like Andrew if you are focussing on the 'impossibility'?

- 5a. The little boy offered his 5 loaves and 2 fish, which seemed insignificant, yet God multiplied it. What is something small in your life that you can offer to God for His use?
- 5b. How might He multiply it?

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C. Testimonies, Prayers and Action

Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.

6. Share a time when you have experienced God providing beyond what you expected and how that experience impacted your faith.

OR

Jesus gave thanks to God before the miracle happened. Give thanks to God that Jesus is able to create something out of nothing and so when you have Jesus, you have everything.

7. As a group, pray for God to reveal to you how you can commit to a "5 Loaves 2 Fish Challenge" - Identify something small your group can surrender to God (time, resources, talents) for God's kingdom work for the next week(s) until you meet again, and share the results at your next meeting. Pray also for our church to never miss the sign of God's work in our lives but put on the mind of Christ to understand them.

Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. Holy Forever - Chris Tomlin
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lkHgxKemCRk&ab_channel=ChrisTomlinVEVO
2. Yet Not I But Through Christ in Me – CityAlight
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zundjUFazfg&ab_channel=musicmeetsheaven
3. Worthy - Elevation Worship
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xdeFFKRX8as&ab_channel=NatashaBarsh

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