

More Than Church | Matthew 14:13-21

Not about Food, Miracles, or Praying: For some reason I had always grown up believing that the main point of Jesus feeding the 5000 was about Jesus being able to do perform miracles. It was either that or “if you pray before you eat...then you will never go hungry.” It’s not that those aren’t valid points – but when you start to read deeper into the text and start to analyze it, you find something different. Remember, within a passage, there are sub points and there are main points.

Matthew 14:13: (context) In every translation that we read it says “When Jesus heard *it*...” And without this little word, you could easily go ahead and interpret the passage any way you want. But you can’t forget that Scripture is written out in a specific way. There is a timeline and there is something that the author wants you to understand. What happens just before Jesus feeds the 5000 is that he gets news that his cousin (the forerunner of the Messiah) has just had his head cut off. And don’t rob Jesus of emotions like we usually do...he hears this news and He departs from everyone by himself and gets away. You do realize that he’s grieving here...and it’s probably what you would do if you found out that your best friend, confidant, and family was just brutally murdered. You probably would want to be alone, to reflect, and the last thing you would want is to have people all around you...much less go to work.

The Heart of Jesus: “But when the multitudes heard...” You see, the people know that Jesus is in town and they drop everything to go see him. And surely they all aren’t there to follow him, in fact most of them are seeking him to be healed (probably physically). Think about being famous for a second. People know you (maybe not like you, but know you) and they know that you have something that can benefit them. And so they stalk you almost to the point where you wake up and someone is hiding in your bathroom just to get something from you. And so Jesus, being extremely distraught, probably very tired...he sees this crowd approaching him and what the passage says is that he, “was moved with compassion for them.” In life there have been thousands of opportunities for me to do the “right thing”. And for some reason I just so happen to have the greatest excuses in the world – “i’m tired”, “someone else will do it”, “if they don’t see me it wouldn’t matter”, “I just went through something...let me rest”...and c’mon, you do this too. We’ll find any excuse to NOT do what we’re supposed to do. And i can’t help but to think that Jesus & his disciples thought the same thing. Why do i say disciples? Because the next verse tells us.

Apparently the disciples were with Jesus while he was “moved with compassion” and “healing the sick.” It likes when there’s something to do at church (i.e. setting up chairs, picking up trash, serving dinner...) and I to “hey guys...help me do this.” And a whole day of working goes by and the disciples come up to Jesus and says “Man, we’re tired and there are still people here...get them to leave.” Haha...it’s like when you have guests over and it’s getting late and you’re trying to hint at the fact that they need to leave. Like you try to yawn or go “man...i got a long day tomorrow.” The disciples are probably going “Hey Jesus...send them away, tell them to go get food...” And Jesus just responds:

You give them something: I would be like “Wait what? I just spent all day taking care of these people that were using you. I’m tired and i’ve done my ministry for the day. Why do i have to do this?” Nevertheless Jesus looks at us and goes, “Ummm...are you done complaining yet?” And then i’ll just start giving him excuses “But but but...we don’t have food. Do the math Jesus, 7 items cannot feed 10,000 people.” And then...very gently, Jesus says “Do you trust me? Do you want to even follow me? Then do what i say and watch what i do” He then takes a very small amount of food and feeds everyone. Now, typically i’ve been taught that this was the main idea...that “Jesus is a miracle worker” But if you

look at this verse, the climax and the resolution goes much too quickly. The "lesson" is too short here. You can try to make this the main idea...but it wouldn't fly.

Wrapping Up: So what is it? Another key to the passage is verse 19. Jesus passes the bread and the fish to who? The disciples. In an instant, he teaches them to have the same compassion that He has for the people. The same compassion as in verse 14. And watch this...he gives the food to the disciples so that they can go out and give it to the people. This is Jesus teaching them discipleship. It's easy to "just do what you're suppose to do" and stop after that. It's easy to be a Christian at church...because everyone else is doing it and "acting like one". It's something totally different to follow Jesus every single moment in your life. You see, the disciples thought that checking things off their list was enough...Jesus showed them that actions represent what flows from the heart. Giving someone food is easy...showing compassion constantly comes from following Jesus.

When you being to follow after this Jesus, he'll challenge every aspect of your heart and I promise you sometimes it's not easy. Because he'll take what you hold on to the most (pride, selfishness, comfort, etc) and he'll expose it. Why? Not because he's an evil man wanting to take joy out of your life...but because he wants you to experience the fullness of it. Because when you finally submit to him and begin to really follow him and allow him to be your Lord, then life begins to make sense and his promise in John 14:6 becomes reality and we live life to its fullness.