Miracles Reveal: Feeding

Mark 6:34-44 Kimby Young

Mark 8:1-8 February 4, 2018

This winter, we have been looking at the miracles of Jesus. The question I have been asking is - what do these miracles tell us about God. Today’s two miracle stories are very similar – feeding multitudes of people. You have all heard this story before. I have even preached about it before here – though from another gospel. That’s one interesting thing about this miracle. It is the only miracle, other than the resurrection of Jesus - It is the only miracle included in all four gospels. And in Matthew and Mark this miracle of feeding is recorded on two different occasions. So what new insight can we glean from this so familiar story? I decided that I would make a top ten list of insights that the miracles of feeding tell us about who God is. I’ve included an insert in the bulletin if you are the kind of person who likes to make notes – so you can keep track of the list. What do these miracle stories of feeding a multitude of people with limited resources tell us about the nature of God and our relationship with God?

Number 1 – God has compassion. In both cases the motivation for the miracle is compassion. In the first story it says “because they were like sheep without a shepherd.” Jesus loved them and provided for their basic needs. This tells us God has compassion for us. God loves us and wants what is best for us.

Number 2 – God is full of surprises. God never seems to do the expected thing. The disciples say – send people home, send people off to the villages so they can get what they need. That’s what any practical person would have done. They can take care of themselves. But instead Jesus says they are here. We will take care of them. God is full of surprises.

Number 3 – God is powerful enough to do the unbelievable. God is powerful enough to do what needs to be done. God is powerful enough to take care of us even when we can’t take care of ourselves. Miracles are all about the power and presence of God turning the ordinary into the extraordinary. God can do what we can not explain or expect. And God WILL do whatever is needed to care for us, to feed us, to make us strong and able.

Number 4 – these miracle stories tell us – God uses what we offer. God takes whatever we have and multiplies it to accomplish what is needed. God takes our gifts – however limited they might seem – and makes them more than enough. So the lesson for us, is to give what we have – to offer whatever we have to be used by God. Then to be amazed by what God can accomplish through anything we offer.

Number 5 – God always feeds, fills, nourishes, and satisfies our needs. God will always provide for us. God always, always, gives us the energy to accomplish our mission; gives us the time to do what needs to be done; gives us whatever we need to do whatever we are called to do. God provides.

Number 6 – God gives us more than enough – not just enough to survive, but plenty to thrive. God gives us an abundance of blessing – even enough that there are baskets full of leftovers. This is a particularly important lesson in our consumer driven culture of scarcity. We fear there is not enough. We think I need to take care of my own and provide for my future. We worry about security. We sometimes think we have to compete for resources, and hoard our gifts. But this miracle reminds us and countless stories in the Bible remind us again and again. God is generous and bountiful. God is full of blessing. God will always supply more than enough of every resource. Think abundance. Think yes. Think God can.

Number 7 – I think there is a “twist” in these miracle stories. I think there is a subtle underlying message that God likes it when we try the impossible. God rewards us, God blesses us, God provides for us, God works through us – when we try, when we make the effort, even in the face of what seems impossible. Here we have 5 loaves of bread. Let’s feed 5000 people. Sure. Why not? I think God likes it when we have courage to move forward, when we have faith to try something new, even when it doesn’t seem to make sense. That happens in a lot of Bible stories – not just this one. The friends who cut a hole in the roof to get their friend to Jesus. The woman who presses thru the crowd just to touch the edge of Jesus robe and be healed. Even Jesus own mother at the wedding in Cana who says – Jesus will get more wine for you. All of these are rewarded for faithfulness in the face of impossible odds. I think God likes that. I think God blesses that. I think God empowers that. Trying. Making the effort. Here are 5 loaves – let’s feed all of Gardner, let’s reach all of Kansas, let’s dream. God blesses that effort. God rewards us when we try. Keep that in mind as this church tries to grow. As your session tries some new programs. As we ask you to reach out in new ways into the community and world, to change even so that others may come to Jesus. God blesses us when we try, when we believe. And on a personal level as well. What impossible dream are you reluctant to try? Have courage. Step out in faith. Try the impossible.

Number 8 – God can be trusted. God’s promises are true. This miracle story reminds us of all the times God has fed God’s people in the past. It points forward with hope to all the ways God will feed us in the future. Like communion, which we will share today, the bread reminds us of God’s presence with us past, present and future. The bread reminds us we ate today, we will eat tomorrow. God gives us each day our daily bread. And God will give us this bread, this feast for all eternity. We are promised a great banquet feast in the kingdom of heaven. Believe it. Look forward in hope. God can be trusted. God’s promises are true.

And Number 9 – related to that – God’s promises are true and can be seen in the life, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The bread broken reminds us of Christ’s body broken. The bread broken reminds us that we are forgiven and made whole in Christ. We are united with Christ so our brokenness is healed and we are restored to new life. The miracle we remember in communion is that Jesus suffered and died so that we could be forgiven and reunited with God for all eternity. It doesn’t make sense. God’s grace, God’s love, God’s redemption doesn’t make sense. But it is true. Anything is possible. Everything is possible – thru Jesus Christ our Savior.

And finally, number 10 – this miracle story reminds us that God’s kingdom begins NOW – not some time in a future far away, not just in heaven. But now. We are God’s people now. We are in God’s presence now. We are fed and nourished now. Miracles happen now.

Jesus fed 5000 people one day, and a few days later fed 4000 more, and a few days later fed 12 around a table in an upper room, and a few days later fed 2 on Emmaus road, and a few days later fed all who gathered on a beach or in a boat or wherever two or three are gathered. Jesus fed and Jesus feeds that we all may be nourished and satisfied, that we all may be filled to overflowing, that we all may share this abundance, that we all may be energized to live as God’s people and bring other people to the table of Christ.

Jesus feeds us – all of us - and twelve baskets of bread are left over – for what? For us to take up those baskets of abundance and to go out into the world feeding all who would receive these gifts of a loving and gracious God. Feed my sheep. Care for my people. Feed my people.

That is our calling.

And God has made us ready – through bread blessed, and broken, and shared in the grace of Jesus Christ. Amen.