

THE BETTER BREAD

Matthew 14:13-21 Pew Bible pp. 970

8/27/17 Pastor Jarrell Jones

- Announce text
- (Children will not be dismissed for Children's Church)

Introduction

- Last week, concluded mini-series on parables of J, Matt 13
- I want to continue today with a passage from the next chapter in Matt.
- Matt. 14 begins with account of John's arrest and rather gruesome execution
- Text for today immediately follows; **read**

The Bread of Belief

- Brief explanation of the account's action including geography
- The obvious intention of the author is to communicate that on the occasion described something extraordinary occurred.
- How do you feed a crowd of about 5000 men, plus the women and children, with five loaves of bread and two fish?
 - Under normal circumstances, you don't.
- So skeptics have tried to explain away the miraculous:
 - Jesus got those in the crowd who had been hiding food for themselves to share it with their neighbors
 - The miracle was not physical but spiritual; everyone received only a small fragment of food but went away satisfied spiritually
 - A nice story that symbolically portrays what will happen when we all sit down with Jesus in heaven, but that was not really an actual event in J's earthly ministry
- These alternative versions for which there is not a shred of evidence only serve to highlight that Matthew (along with all the other Gospel

writers) intended to convey that something very unusual went on: something supernatural; something miraculous.

- Like the account of changing water to wine, walking on water, calming a storm with a word, all testify that J demonstrated public power to alter and manipulate the laws of nature. Not things that any normal human being can do.
- He did things ordinary human beings cannot do.
 - **Magicians**—admittedly illusionists
 - **Superheros**—admittedly imaginary
- **The Gospel** writer is testifying that in a specific time in history and a specific place on earth, a man Jesus, took 5 loaves and 2 fish, prayed over it, and somehow multiplied it so that thousands of people were fed to being full, and that there were even 12 baskets left over, more than they had when they started.
- The account creates a crisis of belief.
 - You are called to render a verdict: did Jesus feed thousands of people starting with only five loaves and two fish, or not? Thumbs up or thumbs down? Yes or no?
- If not, you can go along with your life as it is. Continue to define reality as it comes to you. You can do whatever you want to with your life.
- But if this account is true; if Jesus really did feed thousands of people beginning with five loaves and two fish; it changes everything.
 - You are forced to take seriously the possibility that Jesus is who He said He was: the Son of God.
 - If Jesus is the Son of God, then there is a God.
 - If there is an all-powerful and eternal God, then the universe didn't just happen; it was created.
 - It is no surprise then that Jesus had at His disposal the power God used to create the world.
 - You must take seriously what Jesus said He came to do:
 - To tell us about God, what He is like, what He expects; and about ourselves and what our situation is before God.

- To die on a cross so that you could be forgiven of sins that were killing you and condemning you to hell.
 - You must take seriously the claim that on the third day Jesus rose from the surrender to Him as the Lord of life.
- It was the bread of belief.
- Do you believe J fed the multitudes starting with only a few loaves and fish?
 - Do you believe that Jesus is God's Son?
 - Do you believe that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead?
 - Have you opened up your heart, asked Jesus to come in, and surrendered yourself to Him, to live, follow, and obey Him?
 - Are you willing to do that right now?
- This passage speaks of the bread of belief.

The Bread of Compassion

- Jesus' intention was to get away, get some down time, find solitude
- When His boat touches shore, He is greeted by more of what He was trying to get away from
- Contrary to the way most would have reacted, Matt. notes that J had compassion on them.
 - Why? He saw that they were needy, and he cared about them.
 - He was able and willing to set aside His own needs to meet the needs of others.
- One need the people had was for restoration of body—they had no healer
- Another need the people had was spiritual. Another Gospel says Jesus had compassion on them because He saw they were like sheep without a shepherd, so He taught them many things. Will say more about the spiritual need in a few moments.
- A third need the people had was for physical sustenance; for food.

- The disciples wanted to send the people away, but Jesus had a another idea: *you* give them something to eat. Which meant, let's together feed these people.
- Jesus perceived the crowd's physical needs, He cared about them, and took steps to meet them.
 - God knows you have physical needs, He cares for you, and He takes steps to meet your physical needs.
- This has been true from the beginning.
 - Adam and Eve in the Garden... God made us dependent beings.
 - What happened when sin came in
 - Sin made it more difficult for God to do what He intended to do originally
 - Sin causes hunger today, not lack of resources
 - The lesson of manna in the wilderness
 - Jesus, from Matt. 6

²⁵ “...I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. ... ²⁶ Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. ...

²⁸ “And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, ²⁹ yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. ...

³¹ “So don't worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ ³² These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs.

³³ Seek the Kingdom of God^[e] above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. NLB

- This is a lesson for us: God knows what you need, and when You put Him first, He promises to provide for your needs.
- When it comes to the matter of providing for your needs, some of you take your work and your ability to provide for yourself and your family too seriously.
 - You think this is something you must do above all else.

- You feel there will be a serious catastrophe if you don't put your job first.
- You spend long hard hours at work, you work overtime and weekends because you think everything hangs on your shoulders.
- You elevate your work to a virtual act of worship; workaholism.
- But when you do so, you lose sight of the need to put God first in your life:
 - to make time for God before everything else, including your work;
 - to honor God with your time as you should with your tithe;
 - to take a day each week to focus on the worship and service of God;
 - to seek first things of heaven, not things of earth.
- I am not commending irresponsibility or using your faith as an excuse for idleness. I am saying that if you have a job, you should view it as a blessing that God has given you and a tool to accomplish His purposes in your life and in the lives of others
 - Don't make it into an idol to gratify your own need to feel important and worthwhile.
- In feeding the multitudes, Jesus shows that God knows and cares about our physical needs, and acts to provide for them.
- This is the bread of the Lord's compassion.

The Better Bread

- Jesus multiplied the five loaves and two fish to reveal to the world who He was.
- Jesus fed the multitudes to reveal that He cares about our physical needs and can be trusted to provide what we need.
- But there is another reason... It is suggested by the fact that Jesus did not turn the bread and fish into Crispy Cream donuts and Sushi and provide Starbucks to wash it down.
- We Americans have a high idea of what we "need" to live...

- But Jesus supplied only the basics.
 - Same with Israel in the wilderness and manna.
- But today, all the Lord promises is “our daily bread.” Matt. 6
- When Jesus was fasting in the wilderness and Satan tempted Him to turn stones into loaves when He, what did J say? Man shall not live by bread alone...
- Jesus here is quoting Deut 8:3
- *He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with **manna** which you did **not** know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that **man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.** Deut 8:3*
- Read the rest of Deut 8. God predicts how the Israelites will inherit houses, lands, fields, cities... And warns them sternly, not to forget the lesson of the manna: man does not live by these things alone, but by the Word of God.
- Jesus ultimate goal was not to heal everyone in the crowd or to fill their bellies; it was to lead them to understand that they had a deeper, far more important need, a spiritual need.
- He wanted them to understand that He offers spiritual food that leads to eternal life, and that that kind of food was infinitely more important than earthly food.
- Here we draw the connection between this account and the Lord’s Supper.
- We just give you a bit of bread, and taste of juice. It is not even enough for a decent snack.
 - But the point is not to feed your physical body.
 - The point is to remind you of the much more important spiritual bread and spiritual drink that we obtain through faith in Jesus.
- We spoke earlier of coming into a saving relationship with Jesus through faith in Christ. This is our spiritual birth; we need to nurture our spiritual life with spiritual food.
- Engage in the spiritual disciplines:
 - God’s Word—food; eating must be frequent and regular...

- Prayer—breathing
- Fellowship--spending time in and with family
- Serving—like exercising or going to work
- Witnessing—like learning to talk
- Just as eating and drinking are essential to sustain physical life, so the spiritual disciplines are essential to sustain spiritual life.
- The Lord's Supper reminds us of this truth. It reminds us of the better bread.

Conclusion

- Truth to take home (read aloud): God promises to provide the material things we need to live when we put Him first in our lives.
- Challenge: Put God first, and trust Him to provide the material things you need to live.
- Allow the LS this morning to remind you of these things.