

Not-So-Brief Perspective on The Freshness That Comes With Faith

The feeding of the five thousands is one of the two miracles (the other being the Resurrection of Jesus Christ) recorded in all the four Gospels. What is so significant about this miracle? That the miracle was performed just before Passover is telling.

The Celebration of the Passover is one of most important celebration in the calendar of the Jews. In the Passover, unleavened bread (to signify the haste in leaving Egypt) and the roasted sacrificial young lamb (the blood that offered protection from the angel of death), were eaten to remember the LORD spared the lives of the Israelites as the angel of death passed over their houses.

In this special Passover, Jesus performed the feeding miracle to allude to a greater miracle that was to come very shortly. The bread that was fed to the multitude will satisfy for that moment but for those who understood the meaning of the miracle and believe, the Bread of Life will satisfy forever (John 6:35). Although there was no lamb then, Paul declared Jesus to be Passover Lamb, sacrificed for us (1 Corin 5:7).

So, one way that God refreshes our faith is to see anew what God has done for us. In this instance, when we come to the Bread of Life, we will always be filled. We escape death because we believe the Passover Lamb's blood is over our lives.

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Warming Up

1. Name some festivals associated with food.
2. What are some of the occasions that Christians come to eat together?

Into the Passages

Prologue to The Feeding of the Five Thousands and Jesus walking on water - John 6:4, Exodus 12 (The Tone)

3. The timing of the miracle. What was the event that the Jews was about to celebrate prior to the miracle (read John 6:4)? To the Jews, what is so significant about this event?
4. What were the two important elements crucial in the celebration (Exodus 12)?

The Feeding of the Five Thousands - Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:31-44, Luke 9:10-17, John 6:1-15 (The Tension & the Twist)

5. What can you infer about the disciples' response to the crowd's need?
6. Why did Jesus involve His disciples in this miracle?

Jesus calms the disciples - Matthew 14:22-34, Mark 6:45-54, John 6:16-21

7. Why did Jesus insist that the disciples cross to the other side, immediately after the miracle? What was the mental state of the disciples?
8. Why did Jesus walk on the water? Was the disciples sure that it was Jesus walking towards them?
9. Why did Peter ask to be call out into the water?
10. After this incident, who did they say Jesus was (Matt 14:33)?

Moving Forward

The Christian faith is Person-centred and that Person is Jesus. We read on in the narrative that Jesus is faithful and the disciples (bar one) grew in faith, empowered by the Holy Spirit and were faithful themselves in fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus.

In the present climate of fear and uncertainty (much like the storm that we read), all of us need to hear Jesus' assurance to take courage as He is in our midst. Let us respond to His call to draw near to Him.

Life Together

In a community of believers, there are different people in different seasons of faith. Paul exhorts us to accept one another's faith as God has accepted us. (Rom 14:1).

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These notes are primarily for the Into the Passage portion, and are to be used just as guidelines or commentary notes. Most of them are my own thoughts, so take that with a grain of salt. Let the Word of God lead you to truth, not these notes.

Into the passages

Prologue to The Feeding of the Five Thousands and Jesus walking on water - John 6:4, Exodus 12 (The Tone)

11. The timing of the miracle. What was the event that the Jews were about to celebrate prior to the miracle (read John 6:4)? To the Jews, what is so significant about this event?

The people were about to celebrate the Passover - a not-to-be-missed event in the Jewish calendar. The Passover is to commemorate the delivery of the people from Egypt.

12. What were the two important elements crucial in the celebration (Exodus 12)?

The two important elements were the unleavened bread (indicating the haste they had in wanting to leave Egypt) and the sacrifice of the young lamb and the smearing of the blood on the door posts (to signify to the angel of death to passover that house)

The Feeding of the Five Thousands - Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:31-44, Luke 9:10-17, John 6:1-15 (The Tension & the Twist)

13. What can you infer about the disciples' response to the crowd's need?

The disciples lacked Jesus' compassion. Although they saw the need, they were not meeting those needs.

14. Why did Jesus involve His disciples in this miracle?

God's plan for the disciples is Christ-likeness. They were to do what Christ Himself would do.

Jesus calms the disciples - Matthew 14:22-34, Mark 6:45-54, John 6:16-21

15. Why did Jesus insist that the disciples cross to the other side, immediately after the miracle? What was the mental state of the disciples?

We can speculate that the disciples were part of the crowd that were getting ready to make Jesus king. Although they had a real physical need then (they were hungry and had not eaten), their perspective were all physical. They could not understand why Jesus was trying to do even after they have been with Him for some time. Jesus was probably sad and withdrew to pray.

Mark tells us that the disciples' hearts were hardened and they did not understand the significance of the miracle (Mark 6:52)

16. Why did Jesus walk on the water? Was the disciples sure that it was Jesus walking towards them?

The disciples had taken the only boat (John 6:22). Jesus saw that His disciples needed help (Mark 6:48), so He walked towards them [Jesus could have just appeared on the boat but I think that would have caused a few cardiac arrests on the boat. Jesus could have flown and that would have caused their hearts to seize too. Bear in mind their fragile state of mind]. One less scary possibility was that He could have commanded the wind and the waves from the shore.

Two possibilities - the disciples could not recognize Jesus or they could recognize Jesus who was revealing His divinity and it was the Divine nature of Christ that was freaking them out. I prefer the second view. It is consistent in the OT that whenever God chose a partial revelation of Himself, the people could not stand His holiness.

17. Why did Peter ask to be called out into the water?

I believe Peter had faith that it was Jesus. Peter asked for Jesus' invitation which Jesus gave and Peter responded.

18. After this incident, who did they say Jesus was (Matt 14:33)?

The disciples exclaimed and worshipped Jesus. "You really are the Son of God!"