

ROOTS  
Filled Full

Good morning ZPC! If you're new this morning or visiting, my name is Jon Graybeal and typically you'd see me leading us in musical worship but Jerry, our Lead Pastor and more importantly his wife Megan decided they would have their baby on Monday and so you're stuck with me this morning. Speaking of the new addition to the Deck clan, we have a picture of Liesel Faith to share. Congrats to the Decks and our thoughts and prayers will definitely be with them in their coming days of what is sure to be certain insomnia. Back in August we launched the ROOTS series and since then, week by week, as a church we are making our way through the Bible and we're using The Jesus Storybook Bible as our guide. So we started back in August and now its February, so where are we? Well since Christmas we've found ourselves in the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) and now we find Jesus in the midst of his going out and teaching, in the midst of his ministry. So grab your bible or your phone with your bible app or you can follow along on the screens as we look at today's text:

--- *Matthew 14.13-21* ---

So here we have it, the first church pot luck, the sacred picnic, the holy pitch in, whatever you'd like to call it. Since Christmas when we looked at the birth of Jesus and moved into the New Testament, its been an interesting struggle to decide which text to use from week to week. The Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, give us options where as before if we were talking about Moses and the Red Sea or Jonah we only had one text to pull from. With that said, the first thing we need to understand this morning is that the feeding of the 5000 is the only miracle, outside of the resurrection of Christ that all 4 Gospel writers record. I don't think that's by accident. It leads us to ask the

question, 'why'? What makes this event so special? As I thought about that question a couple possibilities come to mind. First and most practical is that this event had the largest crowd ever. We call it the feeding of the 5000, but as Matthew points out, the number of those who ate was about 5000 men, **BESIDES WOMEN AND CHILDREN**. So if we do the math and we add wives and children and any others who happened by, most scholars agree that we can safely assume that there are about 15,000 people here. 15,000. In comparison we can gather from the Gospels that the resurrection of Christ involved about 500 witnesses. I was trying to get my head around 15,000 people so I started thinking in the most logical way I know how and started to think which sporting venues seated around 15,000 and amazingly we have one real close to home. Mackey Arena, the home of the powerhouse, the unstoppable, the 16-9, ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in the Big Ten Boilermaker Basketball team (insert sarcasm - remember I am from Kentucky who happens to be 24-0) seats close to that at 14,240. So if you've ever been to Mackey Arena or seen it on TV you have an idea of the amount of people that we're talking about. The Gospel writers, all 4 of them, obviously see 15,000 people as significant and worth including.

Scholars believe another reason this event is included in all 4 gospels is that it is an external witness to the validity of the history. Meaning whenever you study any ancient historical document it's important to both look for the internal evidence as well as the external evidence to see if it's viable. To say should we take this document seriously? For us, what we have to understand is that the Gospel records were written and passed around Palestine about 40 years after the events took place. Meaning that the very things that the Gospel writers write about, the people that were involved, the people that were there that day, that were fed from the loaves and the fish, many of them would have still been alive when the gospels began to circulate. Here's why this is important, if Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were making this up and it never happened this way, or if they were exaggerating some things, those who were there and are still alive would have shot it down really fast. It's a pretty bold move to highlight this miracle in particular simply due to the

shear number of people that witnessed it and are most likely still alive.

One more reason I believe this event is significant enough that all 4 Gospels include it is this; Jesus was making a statement, he was making an announcement. If you notice elsewhere in the gospels, Jesus often wanted to keep the miracles under the radar, on the down lo, keep it hushed up. He didn't want them tweeted or posted or instagrated. But not here, here Jesus is making an announcement about who he is, that he is the Messiah, that he is the King they've been waiting for. This is significant because of its connection to the Old Testament. In the OT the Israelites were out wandering through the desert, they were tired, they were thirsty, they were hungry and God provided for them what? Manna from heaven, God provided them bread and He provided them just enough. So the prophets said, when the Messiah comes, he's going to provide people bread from heaven. So Jesus is making an announcement, He's saying 'This Messiah you've been waiting on, that's me, I AM the Messiah and I'm not just going to provide you with enough, but I'm going to provide you with more than you could possibly need.

So we've wrestled a bit with why all the gospels include this miracle, but there's one more nugget of background information worth noting. Immediately before the feeding of the 5000 the gospel writers give us a glimpse into a feast that is happening at Herod's. A gluttonous feast that ends in John the Baptists head on a silver platter. The 'feasts', both Herod's and Jesus' paint a really interesting picture when placed together the way they are in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

John has been killed and we see Jesus 'withdrawing' in v1 to a secluded place by himself. Many believe that Jesus' retreat to a deserted, solitary place was a survival move, a reaction to the beheading of John the Baptist. That perhaps he was scared for His life, scared for His head as well. I don't see it that way, I see Jesus grieving. John, the preparer, the one who baptized Jesus, Jesus' cousin and friend was brutally murdered. I believe this is

an instant where we see Jesus, fully divine, wrestling with what it is to be fully human as well.

But it's not long before the crowds find out where Jesus is and they catch up to him and we know what happens from there. Jesus is teaching, healing and the day goes on and it's late and people are hungry. With 5 loaves and 2 fish Jesus feeds some 15,000 people

Since all 4 Gospels record this account, we have 4 variations on the event to learn from, so I want to turn for just a minute to John.

---- *John 6.5-9* ----

John includes something that Matthew doesn't, a boy. A boy with 5 small barley loaves and 2 small fish, a BOY with 5 SMALL loaves and 2 SMALL fish, a small, insignificant lunch or dinner perhaps. What do we know about the boy? We know that he is young and we know that he is poor. We know that he is poor thanks to John's description of the bread. John tells us that the boy has barley bread. In the first century, barley bread was commonly referred to as the poor man's bread, or the bread of the poor. I don't know about you but often when I've heard or when I think of this passage I think of 5 loaves and 2 fish and my loaves are 5 loaves of really nice looking French bread or maybe ciabatta bread and the fish are some beautiful salmon filets. In reality the barley bread would have been more like dried up crusty biscuit, the size of a twinkie and the fish would have been something more like a pickled sardine of some kind.

The poor, ordinary, young boy is offering up his small, ordinary, insignificant meal. And what Jesus is able to do with the small, with the poor, with the ordinary, with the insignificant is nothing short of miraculous. The 15,000 people who followed Jesus to this out of the way spot were fed and fed until they couldn't eat anymore and even then there were still leftovers, 12 baskets full.

I find it interesting that all 4 Gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all explicitly number the loaves and the fish. All 4 accounts say 5 loaves and 2 fish, its very precise. I imagine that if I found myself recalling the miracle, it would be easy to say, 'and then a boy brought some bread and fish' rather than providing an exact count. As disciples, as Christ followers, I think we can learn something from this. Commentator Frederick Bruner puts it this way:

Disciples should always count to 8!

Meaning, the disciples are only counting their immediate realities, not the reality that should impress them most which is the reality that their Rabbi is the son of God capable of miracles and healings and walking on water and calming storms with a simple, quiet voice 'peace, be still'. Disciples, we, us, Christ followers, should always count to 8. We often feel that we have an insufficient, insignificant 'five and two' with which to address our personal 'five thousand'. The Christian faith is nothing if it can only count to seven, if it does not believe that Jesus is risen and can do things beyond our own realities.

Disciples should always count to 8

Church family, we should always count to 8. Counting to 8 requires faith, it requires that we see past our realities, it requires we look for the realities that God is crafting and it requires that we recognize our role in kingdom stuff.

You see when 15,000 people are gathered and they get a glimpse of God at work, a glimpse of kingdom stuff, it changes the world. Imagine the reaction when word gets back to Herod that 15,000 people were gathered to hear and see some carpenter from Bethlehem. He would have seen it as an uprising, an earthly kingdom in its early stages that is a huge threat to his own. Those with Jesus, those who were fed and watched Jesus heal and heard Him teach began to murmur, began to talk about Jesus as King, that He would sit on a throne and rule....they didn't get it.

Commentator Leon Morris says this 'He who is already King has come to open His kingdom to us, but in our blindness we try to

force Him to be the kind of king we want, thus we fail to get the king we want, and also lose the kingdom that He offers”.

If you're a Christ follower in this room this morning, we are called to participate in something. Jesus didn't say in the Great Commission go and make church attenders, he said go and make disciples, go and make people who will offer up their insignificant lunches and watch what I can turn that into. We are invited into this thing called church, we are invited, we are called, we are thrown into this thing called the Kingdom and we each have a part to play.

I have a friend named....well we'll just call her Brook. Most Monday afternoons I spend a couple hours with Brook. Brook is full of life, she's an amazing artist and loves her dog Jack more than just about anything in the world. Something that I've come to learn about Brook is that she often comes to school hungry. She has a hard time focusing, she's restless and more often than not she's just plain grumpy. Brook is 6 years old and she's in my daughter Emma's kindergarten class. Most every Monday from noon til 2 I hang out with Emma's class and help out wherever the teacher needs me to help out. I watch week after week as Brook struggles in school in large part because she comes hungry and literally depends on the school system for lunch and snack. We either like to think things like this don't happen on the north side of Indianapolis, or we naively let ourselves believe that issues like this are confined to certain parts of the city. Just this week I learned of a ZPC'er who is going out of his way to help a homeless man who has been using Marsh to stay warm on these brutally cold nights. Marsh, that's a half-mile down the road from where we're sitting right now. It's a dangerous thing when we start to think that 'our' world is 'the' world. The north side is not immune to poverty, or to hunger. As Christ followers we're called to bring heaven on earth, not to wait on heaven to come to us. We're called to be ushers, to join with God in kingdom stuff.

Two weeks ago Jerry introduced us to the “ordinary” brown house, which we now call the Jeremiah House. The Jeremiah House is an example of us being about kingdom stuff. It's an

example of what is possible when we see beyond the seemingly ordinary, beyond the seemingly small, beyond the seemingly insignificant and look to a place where we see the potential in the ordinary for kingdom stuff to take place.

You may or may not know that every Friday afternoon the doors of ZPC are opened up and for 2 hours something beautiful happens, something kingdom happens. The Zionsville Food Pantry is housed right here within our walls, and every Friday those in our community who are in need of food for themselves and for their family can come and receive food and personal care items, its that simple. God is already at work. There are approximately 120 families that utilize the Food Pantry every week and last month, the pantry had its largest number in 23 years, 490 individuals utilized the pantry last month.

We can learn from Jesus in this passage. Jesus not only cares about hungry people, He does something about their hunger, He feeds them. He doesn't hand out a tract or dull out advice on life or advise fasting or point them somewhere else. He feeds and so can we.

This morning I introduce to you, the ordinary brown bag. When you leave today your family will be given a bag that looks exactly like this. It's simple, attached to the bag is information regarding the food pantry and in the info you will see a list of items the pantry needs. We want you to take the bag home and fill it with items on the list and then next Sunday when you come to church bring that bag back with you. As you walked in today, you walked past a bin, that bin will be there next week and you can simply place your bag in the bin. That food will help stock the pantry that others rely on for a very basic need, food. Simple. And week after week after week that bin will be out there, calling you to pick up a new bag, take it home and fill it up and bring it back with you.

Brothers and sisters, this is kingdom work, not a charity. Mere charity doesn't work because charity can often be much more about guilt relief than about kingdom work. This is kingdom work. This is using the ordinary, whether it's a can of tuna,

toothpaste or laundry detergent, this is using the ordinary to bring heaven on earth, to usher in the kingdom that Jesus had in mind 2000 years ago in a remote, out of the way place with 15,000 of his close friends. Amen.....

Benediction:

So God, when we see the ordinary, may we see an opportunity to bring heaven to earth, may we not see our 5 and 2 as insufficient or insignificant, but rather be confident that you can and will do immeasurably more with our 5 and 2 if we bring it to you and may we always count at least to 8. Amen