

JESUS FEEDS 5000

John 6:1-21
Key Verse: 6:5,8

Lesson #15

There are seven miracles or signs recorded in the Gospel of John. This reading contains two of them. Jesus' signs are not for the purpose of convincing unbelievers. They are given to teach believers. In this case, he teaches his disciples about his person and work and about his will for them.

While most of the events in chapters 5-12 take place in Jerusalem, these two events, the feeding of the five thousand and Jesus' walking on water, take place in Galilee. The long discourse with the Jews who are only interested in getting more bread follows these two miracles. This discourse shows how the materialism and unbelief of the Jews who rejected Jesus contrasts with the growing faith of Jesus' disciples.

When Jesus saw the large crowd coming to him, he asked Philip, "Where can we buy enough food to feed all these people?" The author tells us that Jesus was testing Philip. Philip's clever mind begins to turn. He quickly calculated how much bread would be needed. It amounted to a lot of money--probably more than they had ever had. Perhaps Philip intended to let the matter drop at this point. But Andrew spoke up, "There is a boy here who has five loaves of barley bread and two fish." Andrew thought about what he had rather than what he didn't have. He took stock of his resources and brought what he had to Jesus. Jesus said nothing to Philip, but he took what Andrew brought and fed the crowd. The disciples helped. They organized the crowd and they picked up the left over pieces.

Jesus taught his disciples to share in his work, not with limited human reason and ability, but with faith. Men who look at God's work like Philip did are limited by their own clever minds and human ability. Men who act in faith like Andrew are the men through whom Jesus works today.

Jesus was training his disciples for a bigger job. When he finished his work and left to return to God, he gave his disciples a very large task to do. He told them to go and make disciples of all people everywhere. They were few in number and limited in material resources but they accepted this task in the spirit of Andrew. This is still our task--to evangelize the world. We have no money or power--but when we bring to Jesus what we have, he will use us in his work.

In the second miracle, Jesus walking on water, Jesus showed his disciples how difficult it is to be in a rough sea without Jesus in the boat. And he showed them how different the circumstances become when Jesus comes to join them. Jesus promised to be with us to the end of the age when we accept his command to do his work. He is with us in a dark and hostile world; he is with us in every changing scene of life; he is with us in the Christian fellowship; he is with us in the worldly environment of our class rooms or jobs. His presence makes a difference.