

## **"A 5K Feeding"**

Mark 6:30-44

*<sup>30</sup> The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. <sup>31</sup> And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. <sup>32</sup> And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. <sup>33</sup> Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. <sup>34</sup> When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things. <sup>35</sup> And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. <sup>36</sup> Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." <sup>37</sup> But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." And they said to him, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?" <sup>38</sup> And he said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." And when they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." <sup>39</sup> Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. <sup>40</sup> So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. <sup>41</sup> And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all. <sup>42</sup> And they all ate and were satisfied. <sup>43</sup> And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. <sup>44</sup> And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men. (ESV)*

For the past few months I've been looking at the gospel of Mark. Today is the last sermon I'll do in this series until next year. Next year we'll pick up sometime in the winter right where we left off. Next week I'll preach on an Easter text. Then after Easter we're going to start looking at the Book of Galatians, then we're going to take a break to look at stewardship. Then I'll finish off Galatians during the summer. We've currently been doing the Book of Mark. So far in the first six chapters in the Book of Mark, Jesus wins some and He loses some. He loses some in that many people reject Him. We saw the religious leaders reject Him; we saw His own family think He was crazy; we saw the Gentiles reject Him in the region of the Gerasenes, on one hand. On the other hand we saw Jesus win a lot. We saw Him exercise His authority over lots of things. He exercised His authority over nature when He calmed the storm. He exercised His authority over the demonic world when He cast two thousand demons out of the man whom I called Legion. We saw Him also heal a woman who'd been sick for twelve years, and we saw Him raise a little girl from the dead. Today, as we look at this last passage, it's also a big deal. It's a battle. It's sort of a SmackDown because as Jesus showed His authority over all those things, the big question is whether He can win in a contest of man versus food.

Those of you who laughed know what I'm talking about, don't you? One of the benefits of my insomnia is that I get to watch cool shows like "Man v. Food" at two in the morning. Have you seen "Man v. Food"? It's on the Travel Channel. Basically it's this guy named Adam Richman who goes from place to place around the country taking on all these eating challenges. One place might have a five-pound hamburger that, if you can eat it, you get your picture put on the wall. One place might have the world's hottest chicken wings that if you can eat just six of these things you get your picture on the wall. A couple of weeks ago he ate 180 oysters in one sitting. One that really got my attention was when he went to Beth's Café here in Seattle, and they have a challenge of a 12-egg omelet filled with chili and cheese on a bed of hash browns with a loaf of toast on the side. The whole question is whether he can eat these challenges that these restaurants offer. It's about a half-hour show and at the end of the show it will chink up on the screen who the victor was – Man or Food. Do you want to know how he did with the 12-egg omelet? I'll tell you at the end.

Think about this though, today it's "Man v. Food" when we look at the text, except that it's a complete opposite. You can train yourself to eat fifty hot dogs or something like that, I guess. It's one thing for one man to eat enough food for five thousand people, it's another thing for one man to produce enough food for five thousand people. In other words, it's another thing to basically perform a miracle. This is one of the most common texts in the whole Bible and it's one of the most familiar, yet we tend to overlook how big it really is. At some point Jesus was praying and things just started to multiply. It's big.

Speaking of food by the way, this text that we're going to look at this morning is part of a sandwich. Remember, I've told you that Mark likes to write in what I call "sandwiches." In other words, he takes two stories and by telling the two stories, he takes one of the stories and he'll sandwich it between the beginning and end of another

story. So when Jesus was battling the religious leaders in chapter 4, that was sandwiched between His mother and brothers calling Him crazy. A few weeks ago we looked at the woman who was sick for twelve years. She was sandwiched between the healing of Jairus' daughter. This passage right here is really the bottom piece of bread, I guess, or the top piece of bread - it's part of the sandwich. Sandwiched between this story of Jesus sending His disciples out to preach the gospel and then coming back and ending up in this scene where they have to feed five thousand is this great banquet that Herod gives and the death of John the Baptist. I think that's on purpose. Mark usually makes a sandwich in order to either draw a contrast between two things or to compare two things. When you look at Herod's banquet and then you look at Jesus' banquet of feeding the five thousand, the language that is used there is the same language as that of a banquet – of a party. Herod has a party and Jesus has a party. Herod's party is sort of presumptuous and self-serving and Jesus' party is other-serving. Herod's party ultimately ends up deadly. Jesus' party ends up being satisfying. Which party would you rather go to?

Today we're going to look at Herod's party. Herod was presumptuous, and he had a palace, and he had money, and he had all the girls, and he had all the power it seems, and yet at the end of the day, still Israel was like sheep without a shepherd. They were still leaderless. So, who can lead them, or who do they need to lead them? That leads us to our text today. We're going to look at three things this morning. We're going to first look at our need of a shepherd. The second thing we're going to look at is the need of a meal, and the last thing we're going to look at is the feast of Jesus. Let's look at our need of a shepherd.

*<sup>30</sup> The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. <sup>31</sup> And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. (ESV)*

Part of the context here, especially if you look at this account in the other gospels, especially John, is that the area where they were in Galilee was an area that was known to harbor the zealots. Remember, the zealots were the ones who wanted to rebel against Rome. It started in about 6 A.D., and they were constantly plotting to rebel against Rome, or they did rebel against Rome, so this was a place that was constantly alive with sort of Messianic fervor. They were looking for someone to come who would lead them against the Romans. From John chapter 6 we know that they thought that Jesus was this person because it says they sought to take Him and carry Him away and make Him that person. They wanted to make Him their king because they were looking for someone who would lead them. One of the metaphors in the Old Testament for sheep without a shepherd, points to the need of a military leader like Joshua. The army is like a sheep with a shepherd, and what they need is just a shepherd to come and rally their forces to come and help them take over the Roman Empire or take over those who would oppress them.

I always put myself in these texts, and I was reading this and thinking, "Okay, the disciples have gone out, they've been obedient to Jesus, they've preached and they've healed and they've cast out demons. They come back. Jesus sees them and says, 'Whoo, you boys need some rest.' And, they probably felt tired and thought, 'That's great. I was hoping He would say that.' So Jesus says, 'Let's come away to a desert place. Let's go to the wilderness (if you will) to rest.' And they get in a boat and they begin to go up the shoreline. As they're going up the shore, people anticipate where they're going to be. The crowds run ahead of them and wait." I just think, "If I was sitting on that boat and being one of His disciples and expecting to put my feet up and watch TV for awhile or something, and I got to the shore and saw this crowd there, I would have just rolled my eyes and sighed. I'd look over at Peter: 'Nothin's easy, dude. Nothin'. Can't rest, can't do anything. Get in the boat – all we had do is go from point A to point B and rest, but n-n-n-n-n-no. We go and as soon as we get there the people are already waiting and clamoring for us.'" I assume that's what the disciples thought. On the other hand, what's interesting is to see what Jesus thought. Jesus was just as tired as they were. He was just as hungry as they were – He had to be. And yet what does Jesus think and say when He sees them? Look at verse 34.

*<sup>34</sup> When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things. (ESV)*

So what leads Jesus to have compassion on the crowd is just this: It is that they are like sheep without a shepherd. A question is, "What kind of shepherd do they need?" The answer is really that they need three kinds of shepherds – everyone does. First they need a priestly shepherd. This whole text, looks backwards. It sort of recalls the Exodus and Israel in the wilderness and God providing food for them. So they need a priestly shepherd like Moses – someone who can represent them before God. They need compassion. Jesus has compassion because at this point they don't have someone who can represent them before God. But they also need a prophetic shepherd. They need a shepherd like Ezekiel who could teach them, who can tell them the word of God and who can tell them where this salvation is to be found. Finally, they need a kingly shepherd. They need a shepherd like David. That's what the Book of Ezekiel says. He says, "One day I'll send my shepherd David to shepherd them, Israel." So they need a priestly shepherd, a prophetic shepherd, and a kingly shepherd. And Jesus has compassion on them. It's a good thing that Jesus had compassion on them because Jesus is the priestly shepherd, the prophetic shepherd, and the kingly shepherd. Jesus is the priestly shepherd because Jesus is the One Who will represent them before God. He'll represent them before God primarily by dying for their sins. We're heading this week into Holy Week and where we're celebrating on one hand that Jesus is our king. On the other hand we celebrate the fact that He died for our sins – that He took them away and when He rose from the dead He now represents us before God. He is a priestly shepherd. You want a shepherd who can represent you before God. But also he's a prophetic shepherd. He teaches them. It says He sat there and taught them many things. Finally, Jesus is also the kingly shepherd. That's what we celebrate today. He rode through Jerusalem on a donkey.

You know the beautiful thing about Palm Sunday? We talked about this in staff meeting. You would only ride through some place like that on a donkey if you were a king - if you were totally in charge. Look at the Book of I Kings where David's about to die and they're not sure who's going to be the king. There's some political jockeying and David says, "Here's what I want you to do. I want you to go get my donkey; not my war stallion, but my donkey. Put Solomon on it and walk him through the town." What does that mean? When you go through town on a stallion it means that you might not be all the way in charge and you might need to put down an uprising. When you go through on a donkey that means you have nothing to worry about – that you're completely in charge. Jesus, even though He is going into Holy Week toward the cross, He is completely and utterly in charge. That's the kind of king and that's the kind of shepherd that you and I need. That's what kind of shepherd the crowd needed. Do you have that kind of shepherd? Do you know that Jesus represents you before God? Do you know that He teaches you? Do you know that He is the One Who will govern you?

I was reading a book when I was in Ethiopia by Richard Loveless. He says, "The longing of every human heart is a righteous government." I never thought of that before, but as soon as I read it, it made all the sense in the world. That's why people on the left are arguing for one thing and people on the right are arguing for another thing. But there's only one place to find righteous government and that's where you have a righteous governor. Jesus is utterly and completely righteous as your king and your shepherd. The question is, "Will you bow to Him? Will you shout Hosanna to Him?" You see, you need a shepherd but you also need a feast. That's where Jesus goes with this next. Look at verse 35.

<sup>35</sup> *And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late.*

<sup>36</sup> *Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat."*

<sup>37</sup> *But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." And they said to him, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?"<sup>38</sup> And he said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." And when they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." (ESV)*

It's interesting the relationship that Jesus has with His disciples. In some ways it reminded me of a boss and an assistant or a secretary – a good assistant. A good assistant will come to the boss and say, "Boss, it's time to shut down. It's time to go home. It's time to do this." The disciples come and say, "Hey, it's getting a little late. There's nothing to eat here. You ought to send these people home and to the villages so they can buy something to eat." A good assistant will say that to you. On the other hand, every now and then the boss has to say, "We're not going to do that. We're going to do something else." What Jesus tells them to do had to be shocking to them. They'd come and they'd said, "The people do not have any food. You need to send them out." The disciples think they're being compassionate, I imagine. Jesus says to them, "You give them something to eat." "Humm? What are we supposed to give them?" They said, "It would cost two hundred denarii to feed

these people." Two hundred denarii was a year's wages back then. You can almost imagine them being sort of cynical and saying, "You expect to spend a year's wages on these people and just give them that year's wages on one meal and then they go?" Jesus says, "You give them something to eat."

The incredulity of the disciples reminded me of Moses. Remember what's happening here is like the Exodus. Jesus is sort of pulling together this new Israel. Remember what happened with Moses when people needed food? It's one of my favorite passages just because it always makes me laugh – not the complaining part. Remember, Israel was in Egypt and they had been walking in the desert for not very long, and God provided manna for them. After awhile they got tired of the manna and so they said to Moses, "Oh, that we had meat. We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks and the onions. But now our strength is dried up and there's nothing at all but this manna to look at." Then a little later Moses says to the Lord, "Why have You dealt ill with Your servant, and why have I not found favor in Your sight that You lay the burden of all this people on me?" He says, "Where am I to get meat to give to this people for they weep before me and say, 'Give us meat that we may eat.' I'm not able to carry all these people alone. The burden is too heavy for me." This is my favorite line. He says, "If you would treat me like this, kill me at once if I find favor in your sight that I might not see my wretchedness." In other words, the people are complaining so much that Moses says, "God, if you love me please smite me. Do me a favor and just get rid of me because it's undoable. There's no way to do this." What's interesting here is Moses' lack of faith because it's much like the disciple's lack of faith. God had brought them out of Egypt. God had provided manna. Was it any big thing for God to also provide them meat? Yet Moses is sort of, "Woe is me. How am I supposed to do this?" Moses forgot because God answers him. He says, "Is the Lord's arm too short?" The disciples had been with Jesus all this time and still they're asking these questions. It would seem odd to us if we didn't do the same thing. It's amazing to me how much people in church worry. I'll be honest with you. One of the most miserable times I've ever had in my life was the year 2009 between the months of say October and December. Can you think of why that might be so miserable? Because everyone was worried about the budget and worried if God was going to provide. And where He's done it every year for the past 125 years, but next year's the year He's not going to do it? "Lord, how can we do it?" And we need to be wise and all of that kind of thing, but there comes a point where you have to trust that Jesus is going to provide for you. Is your knee jerk reaction "Jesus will take care of us, now let's figure out what the wise thing to do is" Or is it, "What's the wise thing to do? We'll think about Jesus taking care of us later." The disciples are still knee jerk, "We can't do it in and of ourselves." Did you notice what Jesus' focus is on? The disciples focus on what they don't have. Jesus' focus is on what they do have. He says, "What have you got?" "Five loaves, two fishes." "Go get 'em." That's it. People have to eat. People need a meal, and the question is, "Who's going to provide it for them?" If you look to the disciples to provide it for you you've got nothing. If you look to Jesus you have everything. In the Old Testament, one of the themes that comes up over and over again is God provides for his people not in the midst of opulence but in the midst of the wilderness. In fact, it almost seems like Jesus creates the crises here. It's almost like Jesus keeps teaching, keeps teaching, keeps teaching because He knows this is going to happen. It's sort of like God taking Israel out into the wilderness, don't you think? We tend to look at our lives and think, "Man, I'm in the middle of this mess. God, just get me out of it." When in fact God probably put you in the middle of that mess so that you would look to him and say, "God, will you provide for me? I'm in the wilderness, will you provide for me? I'm in the wilderness, will you give me rest? I'm in the wilderness, will you give me food?" Jesus' answer always is, "Yes." No one who calls on Jesus will he not hear. No one who asks for forgiveness of sins will He not forgive. No one who looks to him for provision will not receive it – at least the provision that He sees fit to give.

So, what's the feast of Jesus? What does He give them? Let's look at the last few verses, finally.

*<sup>39</sup> Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. <sup>40</sup> So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. <sup>41</sup> And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all. <sup>42</sup> And they all ate and were satisfied. <sup>43</sup> And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. <sup>44</sup> And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men. (ESV)*

That's another allusion, by the way. It starts with looking back to Moses and the Exodus. Remember what Moses did? Shortly after the text I read to you in Numbers, God says, "Break the people down." He says, "Thousands, hundreds, fifties, tens. Break them down into these groups." That is probably how they could count

them. People say, "How do they know there were five thousand people there?" If they're broken down into groups of fifties you can look out and see. He says, "Break them down." Then Jesus does something interesting. He takes bread and He breaks it, He gives thanks, and He distributes it through the disciples to the crowd. Now, doing that, by being the One who breaks the bread, by being the One who prays, Jesus Himself is the host of the table. Jesus is the One who's throwing this party. But does that language sound familiar to you? Let me read it to you again.

*<sup>41</sup> And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples . . . (ESV)*

It's the same language that you hear at the Last Supper. He takes bread and He breaks it and He gives it to the disciples. You see, what's happening in this feeding of the five thousand is a miracle for sure, but there's something bigger than that. It's a miracle that Jesus produces this stuff, but the bigger miracle is coming. What it does on one hand is look back to where God provided for Israel in the desert – when God provided food for them in the wilderness. But it also looks all the way forward to the very end of time when Jesus will have this great wedding feast. In Revelation 19 if you want to look it up, at the end of time Jesus will provide this feast where Jesus will break bread with all those that are called His beloved, His bride. But in the more immediate future it points to something else. Right now He's feeding the crowd with real bread that He's taken and He's broken and He's given. If you remember John's account of this event, the feeding of the five thousand, the next day the people come and they say, "Give us some more of that bread." Remember what Jesus says to them? "I am the bread." That's crazy talk. "I tell you the truth. Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you cannot see the kingdom of God." The feast of Jesus isn't just bread that He gives you to sustain you with. The feast of Jesus is Himself. It's his very self that you and I need for our very survival. If you're not a Christian you need to trust Him to forgive your sins. If you are a Christian you need to trust Him to get you through to the very end. Do you? Or are other things sort of crowding Him out? I love the end of this where it says,

*<sup>42</sup> And they all ate and were satisfied. (ESV)*

Do you know what's interesting when you watch "Man v. Food"? He's never satisfied. I mean that seriously. He went to Beth's Café and got the 12-egg omelet filled with chili and cheese and peppers on a bread of hash browns, loaf of toast, and he ate the whole thing except for one bite. He got to the end of the whole thing and there was one bite on the plate. People were cheering, "Eat it! Eat it! Eat it!" And he got up and walked around and sat down and looked at that one bite and he just said, "I can't. Can't eat it." Even I was talking to the TV. I'm going, "Dude, it's one bite! Put it in your mouth and chew it. You can throw up after the show, but eat it right now." Just looking at that bite made him sick. Every show at the end of one of these massive meals, five-pound hamburgers, 64-ounce steaks, he's not satisfied. In fact at the end of these shows he's sickened by them. "I never want to see oysters again." "I never want to see Jalapeño peppers again." "I never want to see ground beef again." You see, just filling yourself up doesn't necessarily mean you're going to be satisfied. Even if the act feels good, the end product doesn't necessarily follow. When Jesus feeds the crowd, all eat and they're satisfied. When you feast upon Jesus you're satisfied. Do you know what's so beautiful about that satisfaction? It doesn't necessarily mean you're full. Did you ever think about that? When you're satisfied with something that means, "I could eat a little bit more of that, I liked it so much." Or, "I can't wait until next time." The crowd ate and they were satisfied. They didn't have want for anything else. The question is, "Where are you with that? Are you content? Are you satisfied? Is Jesus what you need? Is He all you need?" When you feast upon Jesus, do you say, "Man, that's good," or do you look around and say, "Man, I wish I had more money. I wish I had more stuff. I wish I had a better this. I wish I had better that." What Jesus is pointing to is the one thing that can satisfy us, and that is himself. That's it.

Most of us run around sort of like Scrat. Did you ever see, "Ice Age"? If you haven't seen it you need to get it and watch it, if for nothing else than to watch the things in front with Scrat. Scrat is basically this Neanderthal kind of squirrel with fangs and his whole life revolves around catching this one nut. Nothing else matters. And he's never satisfied. The beauty of the gospel is that Jesus is the One who catches the nuts. Guess who they are? That's you and me. But when Jesus grasps you, when He catches you He never lets go. You should take comfort in that. Think about that.