



After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. 2 And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. 3 And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. 4 And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. 5 When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, **Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?** 6 And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. 7 Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, 9 There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? 10 And Jesus said, **Make the men sit down.** Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. 11 And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. 12 When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, **Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.** 13 Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. 14 Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world. (John 6:1-14)

This miracle is recorded in all four Gospels: (Matt-14:15, Mark-6:35, Luke-9:12)

The chapter before us is one of profound meaning, and with Sacramental implications, that lends meaning to the Bread of the Lord's Supper. The first part of the chapter (1-14) finds Christ feeding the multitudes in signification of His feeding the Bread of Heaven to all who will come to Him. In verses 15-21, Jesus leaves the multitudes because they would have made Him king by force. He even sends His own disciples away to shelter them from the influence of the crowd just as He may do with us today. Herod has beheaded John the Baptist and so Jesus had passed over the Sea of

Galilee so as not to unnecessarily fuel the passions of the Jews. The disciples perhaps basked in the warmth of public popularity until Jesus parted them from the crowd. They went from popularity to peril on the stormy night Sea. Though Jesus had fed the multitudes with spiritual and physical bread, they preferred only the physical bread and would have dreamed of a life of leisure under such a Sovereign. The whole chapter centers on bread, but more importantly, the Bread of Heaven. In the last chapter, Jesus satisfied the thirst of the Woman at the Well with the Water of Life. But He will also satisfy our hunger with the Bread of Heaven. Perhaps the salient point here is that the Water of Life is a door through which we once gain eternal life, but the Bread of Heaven is for daily consumption. If we truly love the Word and hunger for it, we will never be filled completely. It is a joyful hunger that drives us ever deeper into that Word. It is almost certain that a year has passed since the incident at the Well in Chapter 5.

*"After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias."* The crowds had been flocking to Jesus over the past many days so that he had no time for rest, or even for eating. It was for this reason that He withdrew to a desert wilderness. When amidst a constant roar of voices and traffic, it is a relief to go to a place desolate of such voices and traffic, and breathe air that is fresh and not laden with the odors of man. *"And he said unto them, **Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while:** for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat."* (Mark 6:31)

*"And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased."* An interesting contrast here between Christ traveling a great distance seeking a single soul, and now we see a multitude seeking Jesus. There reasons, however, were physical and not spiritual. He was the Great Physician whose services were free as well as sure.

*"And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples."* In a previous devotion, we discussed how mountains afforded us an environment more greatly surrounded by heaven and less encircled by the world. The higher you climb the mountain, the less of the world and its people we see around us. Even seclusion was impossible for the Lord. Not only did our Lord have no place to lay His weary head, but He could not even find a quiet place apart from those who constantly sought Him for reasons other than spiritual enlightenment. What percentage of members of the First Church would not be there was it not for the prospects of finding clients to improve their physical means and wealth? The mentality of the crowd forever seeks to manipulate the Lord for a personal, private agenda—to get something **from** Him rather than simply to **be with** Him.

*"And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh."* This is a discreet mention of the Passover so that we may better understand the full chapter dealing with Bread. *"When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, **Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?"*** Though Jesus knew these people came to Him for the wrong reason, and would turn against Him in due course, He nonetheless took pity on them as a father for an erring lad whose ambitions are amiss. He viewed these multitudes as sheep without a Shepherd (Mark 6:31). The location is a wilderness mountain area. There are no villages conveniently at hand. A starving soul would become desperate in searching for bread in this place. Jesus knew what He would do, but He wanted to contrast between the lack of human ability to satisfy the need alongside His abundance of grace in doing so. *"And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do."*

*“Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.”* If the disciples traveled a great distance to buy bread at the nearest village, it would cost a great deal of money and would still be insufficient to feed all. Those who DID receive would have received only *“a little.”* The need seems hopeless of satisfaction. Have you ever had a need that seemed hopeless of satisfaction? Did you ask our Father in Heaven for provision? Did He ever fail you?

*“One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?”* I like Andrew very much. He is one who seeks people out and brings them to the Lord. He brought Peter first to Jesus, and now he brings the boy with the bread and fish. There is something in the meager provision of the lad that, though Andrew knows will fail of satisfying the multitudes, he also knows that Christ is a Lord of surprises. His trailing comment: *“...but what are they among so many?”* is spoken with a sense of expectant apprehension.

We would do well to recognize in our ministries that it is not our bread that we serve, but the Bread of Christ. He is the One who supplies; His servants are the ones who serve. *“And Jesus said, **Make the men sit down.**”* All things before the Lord must be done in good order. No matter how hungry a man becomes, he will always enjoy a meal more if seated at leisure. *“Let all things be done decently and in order.”* (1 Cor 14:40) No one seriously believes the small supply will meet the great need – perhaps only one or two people could receive a bite from such scarce supply. But Jesus knows what He will do. As He made a young boy victor over a great giant, a little girl the guide for Naaman, the Captain of the Hosts of Assyria, and a partially disabled lad to head a three hundred man army to defeat another of one hundred and twenty thousand in Gideon. We think we have not enough for our purposes, but look at what God can do with our small provision!

*“Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.”* That is a large number of men, but there must have been women and children there in addition. But five thousand alone is a great number to feed with only five loaves and two fishes. One drop of the blood of Christ would be sufficient in saving the whole world, were they to come, from their sins. There was not a molecule of water, mineral, or organism when God set out to create all that we know of the world. He can start with nothing and end with everything. He didn’t need the boy’s bread and fishes, but He was inclined to reward the great generosity of a small lad. He does not need tithes and offerings from us, either, but He takes what little resources we share and multiplies an hundred fold.

*“And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.”* Remember: the bread belongs to Christ! It is His provision to us. He took the bread (almost as if at the Last Supper), and gave thanks. How many meals are eaten every day in homes across America without a word of thanks to God for providing that meal? He handed the bread and fishes to His disciples to serve those seated on the ground. What an honor and privilege we have to be servants of God and discover the Bread of Heaven and the Water of Life to either great numbers, or even one soul! Each person got plenty to eat until they wanted no more. Have you ever read a particularly touching and inspiring bit of Scripture and find that you must stop for now and digest that which you have read?

*“When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, **Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.**”* In the economy of heaven, nothing is lost. We must be wise and careful stewards of those resources God has placed at our disposal. Our own administration will fall short unless it is watered with prayer and the counsel of heaven. Not only were five thousand (at least) fed with such a small amount, but there were leftovers!

*“Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.”* Baskets in those days were not like the little baskets a girl would use to gather the eggs. These baskets were more than bushels. There were twelve of these baskets left over – enough to feed another five thousand! I’m sure the little boy went home with more loaves and fishes than he brought to Christ. We all profit greatly from our investments of love and charity.

*“Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.”* No mere man could have performed the miracle these men witnessed. They knew, without a doubt now, that this was the prophesied Messiah spoken of by the prophets. I wonder why the learned Pharisees, seeing like miracles, could not believe for they saw as many as the disciples had seen?

When you look back across that long, winding road of your life, do you recognize that Christ was right there beside you even when you were being foolish and contemptible? Did you often feel shame at your disobedience knowing that the hedges did not hide your sinful acts? Do you remember that moment when you began to realize how utterly helpless you were to amend your own soul and felt the imperative to call upon the One who bled and died at Calvary just for YOU? Recall, if you will, the warm glow that filled your heart when you turned to Christ for succor. Yes, there does remain a Balm in Gilead, and that Balm is Christ:

*There is a balm in Gilead  
To make the wounded whole;  
There is a balm in Gilead  
To heal the sin sick soul.*

There is a healing Balm in Christ for our sin-plagued souls. Have you benefitted from that Balm, Friends?