

It is hard to believe that there are only two weeks left in Lent. It seems as if just yesterday we were celebrating Christmas and the New Year, along with shoveling a lot of snow! Now, Daylight Savings Time has already begun and Spring will soon be here.

During the season of Lent we look at various events in the life of our Savior leading up to Passion Week – where we remember his sacrifice for our sins ... for the salvation of those who believe in him as Savior and Lord.

Today we look at one of the Miracles of our Savior – the feeding of the 5000 plus people, and I'll explain more of that in a minute. The one unique thing about this miracle, is that it is the only miracle that is recorded in all four of the Gospels. That alone should tell you how important it is. (As an aside, even if it is only recorded in one Gospel, it is still important, because as we know the Gospels compliment and complete one another giving us a fuller picture of the life and work of our Savior.)

As we look at the passage we see that the timing of this miracle was just before the Passover – probably 10-12 days. It was just before the third Passover that Jesus would be celebrating since his baptism. Soon he would enter Jerusalem to offer himself up for us. As we look at the passage that is before us, we will see the similarities between the feeding of the 5000 and the Passover.

We see that many people are following him because of the signs ... the miracles that he was doing – and so he went up on a mountain to get away from all the people – and they still followed him! Remember, the miracles were not an end to themselves – they were to authenticate who he was – that he indeed was the long-awaited Messiah ... the Christ who had been promised for over 1000 years.

As we see, even though Jesus tried to get away, the people followed him. Again, remember that this was late in his ministry, so even if the people had not been eyewitnesses to his miracles, they certainly had heard of them. And so they followed him – not only for the miracles, but also for his teaching, as we shall see.

Our passage is a familiar one – as I said, it is recorded in all four of the Gospels. And as we compare Scripture with Scripture, we see some additional facts that are important for us.

Mark tells us this: Mark 6:34-36: *“And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things. When the day was now far spent, His disciples came to Him and said, “This is a deserted place, and already the hour is late. Send them away, that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat.”*”

We see a couple of things in this passage – that Jesus had compassion on them and so he began to teach them. Remember, the miracles were to get their attention to his teaching. Jesus was the 2nd person of the Trinity come to earth and we know that he revealed God to the people of his day and to us. The other thing that we learn is that it was late in the day, so he probably taught them for a while.

In Matthew, we see another important fact. Matthew 14:21 says: *“Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.”* It is interesting, because Jesus fed a lot more than 5000 people,

even though the headings on some of our Bibles say something like: “The Feeding of the 5000.” In all probability there could have been 10,000 or more people that Jesus fed that day. Quite a crowd.

And he did it all with a small boy’s lunch – 5 barley loaves and two small fish, as our passage says. Jesus blessed the food – distributed it – and when everyone was full they gathered up the remains – and they filled 12 baskets with the fragments of the barley loaves. No one went away hungry. But thankfully we don’t read that they had any fish left over!!

The miracle is pretty simple and clear. Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes and fed thousands of people, with leftovers. And we know that Jesus fed the multitude the same way on at least one other occasion that we have recorded for us.

Ironically, those who don’t believe it was a miracle have come up with various explanations as to what really happened. My favorite is that Jesus and the disciples had a lot of food stored in a cave and they passed it out to Jesus as others passed out the food. I don’t know about you, but it is easier for me to believe the miracle, than that Jesus deceived all of us.

We also see something in the words of the disciples that indicate that a true miracle took place when they said that “*Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them.*” A denarius was a days wage, back in those days. So what Philip is saying is that the bread of 200 days wages would not be enough to feed them all. Again, a miracle in the making.

The point of it all is that God has promised to provide all of our needs, and here we see that Jesus not only provided for their spiritual needs but also for their physical needs by feeding them (as well as healing them). We also see that God provided for them abundantly – every one was full and there were lots of leftovers.

It is in this that we see the similarities in the Passover which celebrates the Jews deliverance from Egypt. You know (or should know) the story, how God “passed over” the houses that had the blood of the sacrificed lamb on the doorpost. In every house that did have the blood of the lamb, the first-born in that house died – from Pharaoh’s house to the lowest servant.

It was following this that the Jews left Egypt. It is estimated that there probably well over a million people that Moses led out of Egypt. Exodus 12:37 says: “... about 600,000 men on foot, besides children.” Scholars tell us that the 600,000 men, were males of military age – it did not include wives, children and the elderly. So it was quite a number of people who were provided for when they left Egypt.

God provided for their deliverance through the blood of sacrificed lamb. Again, we know that as we compare Scripture with Scripture that all this looked forward to the Lamb of God – the Lord Jesus Christ, who would sacrifice himself for us and our salvation – to deliver us from our sins – the greatest need that we have.

In addition, we know then that God provided for them in their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness – he provided them meat, bread and water and He protected them – even though they had a lot of unbelief.

Again, God had promised to go before them and that they would be able to go into the promised land. But because of unbelief – only Joshua and Caleb believed – the rest would die in the wilderness. In spite of their unbelief – God still provided for their physical needs – with food and protection.

This is a picture of what we see with Jesus feeding the multitudes on more than one occasions. They had a great need – temporal as it were – they were hungry. And he fed them, with left-overs. OK, it wasn't a meal at a five-star restaurant – but it met the need of the moment.

So as we prepare to finish with the season of Lent and approach Passion Week, let us always remember that Jesus came to earth for us and our salvation – the greatest need that we as human beings have.