

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: August 30, 2009

Change of Plans: Feeding the 5,000

by Dan Trygg

“They went away in the boat to a secluded place by themselves. ³³ The people saw them going, and many recognized them and ran there together on foot from all the cities, and got there ahead of them. ³⁴ When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things. ³⁵ When it was already quite late, His disciples came to Him and said, ‘This place is desolate and it is already quite late; ³⁶ send them away so that they may go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.’ ...³⁹ And He commanded them all to sit down by groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰ They sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. ⁴¹ And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed and broke the loaves and He kept giving them to the disciples to set before them; and He divided up the two fish among them all. ⁴² They all ate and were satisfied, ⁴³ and they picked up twelve full baskets of the broken pieces, and also of the fish. ⁴⁴ There were five thousand men who ate the loaves.”

Mark 6:32-36,39-44

Earlier in the chapter, **Jesus had made a very strong point to the disciples that they needed to get some time away from the crowds to rest.** They needed to “stop-and-stay-stopped” for a little while, in order to have some time to share and process their experiences of their brief missionary tour, and to be able to re-gather their strength and focus. The disciples did not at all disagree with His counsel. In fact, **they immediately left the busy ministry activity on the western side of the Sea of Galilee, and started off eastward across the lake.** Several of the disciples had been professional fishermen, and were very familiar with the lake, and its surrounding countryside. They knew just where to go to find a desolate, deserted spot that would be conducive to a private, restful setting for a retreat.

Unfortunately for their plans, the crowd on the shore saw them crossing the lake, and decided to run around the northern end to meet them when they came ashore. Jesus and His men were heading to the area around Bethsaida (Lk. 9:10). If they started out from Capernaum, this was about three miles by boat, but four or five miles by land. As the people traveled, they told others where they were going. People from the towns and cities along the way joined those pursuing Jesus, so that when He arrived there was a great multitude. The men alone numbered 5,000, and there were also probably women and children. The crowd could easily have been 10,000, or more.

Even though their purpose was to get alone, when Jesus disembarked from the boat and saw the crowd, He felt compassion for them. Obviously, they were a select group of very eager, desperate and motivated people to leave whatever they had been doing to follow Him in this way. They had put forth strenuous effort to get there ahead of Him. Both Matthew and Luke record that there were sick people among them (Matt. 14:14; Lk. 9:11). **He could see their spiritual hunger and desperation for God’s hand to work in their lives.** For a second time, **He saw them as sheep without a shepherd, ...lost, confused, harassed and beat up by life,** and many of them were stuck and had been depressed (Matt. 9:36). Jesus’ ministry had given them renewed hope. Because of all this, **Jesus welcomed them, and began to teach them concerning the Kingdom of God, and was healing their sick** (Lk. 9:11).

It is an important observation to recognize that **Jesus, as a human being, was limited in knowledge and made plans that were frustrated, interrupted or did not work out as He intended.** This was part of the reality of His choosing to live as a human (Phil. 2:6-8; Heb. 2:17). An important aspect of this is that *He had his own will.* He was an individual person, with His own understanding and ability to choose. Satan tried to convince Him to choose to act independently of His Father in heaven (Matt. 4:1-11), but **Jesus kept entrusting Himself to God, His provision and His judgment for His life** (I Pet. 2:23). *His purpose was to do the will of His Father, and to accomplish His work* (Jn. 4:34; 5:30; 6:38). The reality of this meant that often the Father initiated things in Jesus’ life that the Lord responded to. He said that He did nothing from Himself, but only what He saw the Father doing (Jn. 5:19,30). **Not only did Jesus submit to the will of the Father, but He was actively watching for what the Father was initiating, so He could jointly participate in what the Father was doing.** What this meant for Jesus, was that **the Father was always interrupting His life with Divinely orchestrated lessons and opportunities.** Because Jesus *wanted* to do the Father’s will, He responded to these interruptions. **He changed course to accommodate what the Father was bringing into His life. The same will be true for us.** Ephesians 2:10 says that “we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we might walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). In other words, **God is going to slip “Divine appointments” into our lives, and we need to be willing to yield to what He is doing.**

It was probably morning when Jesus and His men traversed the lake, because there was a young boy in the crowd who had a lunch of five tiny loaves of barley bread and two fish, probably hurriedly packed by his mother as the excited crowd passed through their hamlet (Jn. 6:9). **Jesus had been teaching and ministering all day, and the afternoon sun was beginning to decline, when His disciples urged Him to send the people away, so that they could**

buy something to eat from the neighboring villages and farms. Jesus, however, told them, “*You* feed them.” They looked at each other and exclaimed, “How could we do that? It would take over six months’ wages to buy enough bread for each one to have even a little!” (Jn. 6:7) Jesus had said this to test them, because He already knew what He was going to do. **He asked, “What do you have?” Andrew mentioned the little boy’s lunch.** *Apparently, the little boy had already approached Andrew to offer to share it for those who were hungry.* (Only the gospel of John tells us about where the bread and fish came from. Don’t you wish we knew more of *his* story? He was willing to sacrifice his meal so that others might have something to eat. In the innocence of a childlike faith, he came to offer the little he had to help meet the need. *His obedience* was critical to what God was going to do. He was merely responding to God, offering what was his to give. How God would use that was not his concern. He was not limited or discouraged by the apparently impossible situation. He was living by faith, obediently doing as God asked him. Even Andrew seemed to be limited in his vision, “But what are these loaves and fishes to so many people?”) Jesus and His disciples had nothing at all of their own supplies or stores, but **God was already at work, indicating what He wanted to do and supplying even the limited supplies they had to work with.** *God* was the supplier. Jesus recognized the hand of His Father prompting the little boy, and used his lunch as the basis for a miraculous supply

Jesus commanded His men to seat the people in groups upon the green grass, and the disciples sat them in groups of fifties and hundreds. They had to break up the crowd into manageable groups to facilitate the distribution of what God was going to supply. **We see this principle over and over again in the scripture. God repeatedly organized His people into sub-groups in order to provide communication, oversight, accountability and supply.** Moses broke the congregation up into groups and sub-groups, and set over them leaders. There were commanders of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens (Ex. 18:19-26). God appointed tribal commanders and utilized standards, or flags, for each tribe, so that people could rally together according to their family groups, and be led out together in ranks (Num. 2:1-31). Likewise, priests and Levites were organized according to family groupings, and assigned their duties (Num. 3). This clarified who was responsible for what, and provided oversight and accountability within their family lineage. Later on, under Nehemiah, people were organized according to where they lived and what their interests were (Neh. 3), in order to break down the mammoth task of rebuilding the walls into clearly defined and manageable parts, so that the work could progress effectively. **Organization, delegation and administration are important to effectively carry out God’s plan on a wider scale.** In the NT, large numbers of new converts would be organized into small home gatherings, where effective teaching, open sharing, and practical ministry could happen (Acts 2:42-47; cf. Eph. 4:11-16). It would eventually become necessary to relieve the apostles of distributing food to the needy, and appoint *other* workers for this need (Acts 6:1-7). Here, **Jesus instructs His men to break down the overwhelming crowd into manageable groups small enough to see that everyone was getting food, and to be able to reach to each person.**

Then, the Lord took the five loaves and two fishes, and looking up into heaven, He blessed and broke the bread and fish and kept giving them to the disciples. They, in turn, distributed the pieces to all the people. **Jesus was doing the miracle, but the disciples were partners in the work.** You can imagine that this process went on for a long while. **Breaking up food for 10,000 people, and carrying out baskets of food to somewhere between 100 and 200 groups, until everyone was served, would have taken quite some time.** Jesus and the disciples had crossed the lake, looking for rest, but instead it turned out to be another busy day. It ended with a lot of physical activity. **In order to participate in this miracle, the disciples had to be willing to be servants.** Food service like this would normally have been done by domestic servants, but Jesus and His disciples had none. Jesus’ command, “*You* give them something to eat” took on a very practical meaning. Although they did not purchase the food, they delivered it to the people. **How important it is for every part of the Body to do their work!** If Jesus had started multiplying the food, but no one had distributed it, the nourishment would not have gotten to the people. **The servicing of the food was a necessary part of the miracle, and required some hard work on the part of the disciples.**

Everyone ate and was satisfied. Afterwards, Jesus instructed them to gather up the leftovers, so that nothing would be lost or wasted, and they picked up twelve large baskets full (Jn. 6:12,13). **The miracle was quite obvious, especially when it was all accomplished.** According to John’s account, when the people realized what He had done, they made the connection to a prophecy Moses had spoken, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your countrymen...” (Dt. 18:15). During the time of Moses, God had provided Israel with manna in the wilderness. They could see a definite parallel in this miracle that Jesus had performed (Jn. 6:31). As a result, **the crowd began to want to make Him king. So Jesus compelled His disciples to get into the boat and leave** (Matt. 14:22), **while He dismissed the crowd.** John tells us that the Passover was at hand (6:4). By dismissing the disciples, and not giving in to the crowds, Jesus managed to avoid a confrontation with the Jewish and Roman authorities. Thus, He was able to survive for another year. This gave Him more time to prepare His apostles for their future ministry.