

SOUL FOOD: FEEDING THE 4,000

WHO DO YOU SAY I AM? THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW, PART 6 · MATTHEW 15:29-39 · NOVEMBER 7, 2021 · PASTOR MATT ERICKSON

"Jesus called his disciples to him and said, 'I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way.'" (Matthew 15:32)

Jesus' Amazing Healing (Matthew 15:29-31)

Great crowds with great needs
Great healings and great praise

Jesus' Compassionate Heart (Matthew 15:32-33)

"I have compassion for these people ..."

Jesus' Abundant Feeding of a Great Crowd (Matthew 15:34-39)

Recognizing the needs of the crowd and limited provision
Jesus' action: take – give thanks – break – give
The miraculous provision for the crowd

Why Are There Two Miraculous Feedings?

Reemphasizing the power and compassion of Jesus
Emphasizing how Jesus' ministry begins with the Jews but also reaches the Gentiles.

Seeing Jesus Again

His compassion moves Him
His miracles touch real needs: healing and feeding
His work for the Jew first, but also for the nations

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. When have you experienced generous provision for a great need in your life? What happened?
2. This week we continue our series, "Who Do You Say I Am?", by looking at Matthew 15:29-39. Begin your study in prayer by asking God to speak to you through the Scripture. Then, whether you're on your own or with others, read that passage aloud.

3. *Background:* This story of feeding the 4,000 echoes the story of feeding the 5,000 (14:13-21) in many ways, with the biggest apparent difference in the numbers. While we may wonder why this story is here, there are at least two possible reasons: 1) Matthew wants to reemphasize the power and compassion of Jesus again; and 2) as this story takes place in a largely Gentile area, it emphasizes how Jesus' ministry begins with the Jews but also reaches the Gentiles.
4. How would you summarize the activity of Jesus in Matthew 15:29-31?
5. What is the response of the crowd to Jesus' miracles in verse 31?
6. What do you think it means in verse 32 that Jesus has "compassion for these people"? You may want to look up other appearances of this same word (Greek: *σπλαγχνίζομαι*; *splanchnizomai*), in Matthew 9:36; 14:14; 18:27; 20:34.
7. Why do you think the disciples may not understand what Jesus could or would do?
8. The fourfold action of Jesus in verses 35-36, like that in 14:19, echoes that of the Last Supper (26:26), where Jesus initiates the communion meal. Why might this be important?
9. Again, the people are fully satisfied and there are leftovers from this meal (vs 37). What does this tell us about Jesus' provision and His capacity as the Messiah?
10. What is one thing God is speaking to you through this study? If you're on your own, write that down, pray over it, and share it with someone this week. If you are with a small group, share your answers with one another before closing in prayer.

DIG DEEPER:

This week dig deeper in one or more of the following ways:

- Memorize Matthew 15:36
- Pray and reflect on Jesus' phrase in 15:32, "I have compassion for these people." Ask God to show you His compassion for you. Ask God to show you His compassion for others. If the Lord brings someone specifically to mind, pray for them. If the Lord brings to mind a tangible way you can minister to them, do it.
- Journal, draw, paint, or ink this story or some aspect of it as a way of reflecting on who Jesus is and how you most need to meet with Him.
- Consider reading Christopher J. H. Wright's book, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* or Henri Nouwen's book, *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World*, which depicts the spiritual life through Jesus' fourfold action in this story (taken – blessed – broken – given).