

Mark 6:30-44

The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, 'Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.' For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is now very late; **send them away** so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat.' But he answered them, 'You give them something to eat.' They said to him, 'Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?' And he said to them, 'How many loaves have you? Go and see.' When they had found out, they said, 'Five, and two fish.' Then he ordered them to get all the people to sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and **gave them to his disciples** to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. And all ate and were filled; and **they took up twelve baskets full** of broken pieces and of the fish. Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men.

### How a Miracle Flows

When we think about Jesus' ministry here on earth during the days that he physically dwelled with us, the miracles certainly stand out in our minds, and of all the miracles, this feeding of the 5000 *men* is a whopper – more than twice as many people might have been fed that day if women and children were among the crowd as they most likely were.

Sometimes miracles flow right from God, like the times Jesus healed the blind or the leper, like when he calmed the storm and the raging sea. But sometimes we get to take part in those miracles. Today I want you to see how you and I are often invited to participate in the miracle, and we'll look at Mark's account of the feeding of the 5000 (plus) as well as my recent experience in Haiti to make the point. I will also use this text to show you that when we become willing participants in the miraculous works of God that the miracle not only flows out from us, but also flows back to us; just as God takes care of the needs of others, he takes care of our needs at the same time. Through it all, God is glorified, so it's not just a win-win situation; it's a win-win-win situation.

We begin with Jesus, the disciples, a hungry crowd, five loaves and two fish, and the first thing you have to recognize is an act of faith. Somebody gives the loaves and fish to the disciples. Someone gave up his dinner. That's important, because faith is the first ingredient in any miracle. If you don't trust God to do something spectacular, you won't give him anything to work with. If you don't believe that it's worthwhile to invest your resources in the people of Haiti, you wouldn't offer any support. If the lad with the five loaves and two fishes didn't think that such small provisions could make a dent in the hunger of that crowd, he might have kept his provisions to himself rather than give them Jesus' disciples. Instead he took a chance, a small leap of faith, giving up all the food he had on hand on the off chance that something amazing might happen.

From there provisions flowed to Jesus, and all he did was bless it and break it and give it to his disciples, which is significant, because he demonstrated both faith and thanksgiving to the disciples. And then Jesus hands the same bread and fish back to his disciples; the miracle, which hardly seems like much of a

miracle so far, flows back into the hands of the disciples, who now make their own leap of faith by obeying Jesus' command to set the food before the groups of people, to do something that must have seemed absurd to them – another act of profound faith, trusting that Jesus was not bonkers but that somehow, someday, something amazing might happen, and it did.

But the miracle doesn't end there. All the people in the crowd eat and are satisfied, which is amazing in itself, but our God does not neglect the needs of the disciples, and when all is said and done each one ends up with a basket containing more food than what was originally distributed to the 5000 plus. The miracle, in other words, flows back to the ones whose faith made the miracle possible to begin with. The net result is that everyone is both amazed and has a full belly. On top of that they have the joy that comes from being part of the miracle.

1. The usual way of seeing this miracle: Jesus did, it all.
2. Close examination reveals otherwise – the joy of participating.
3. Our reluctance to participate: the way we do the math
4. Having the faith to try otherwise allows miracles to occur
5. Miracles not only flow from us; they flow toward us. More goes out and more comes back.
6. Proof of God's abundance and giving. Example: Jude Exantus