



"Fed by Christ"

by Matthew Christians

based on Matthew 14:13-21
Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost
August 3, 2008

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

So, how about it? Are you hungry? Let's play interactive sermon today: please raise your hand if right now you are hungry. Wow! A lot of you must have eaten breakfast/dinner already. But actually, that's not what I meant. You think I'm talking about food, don't you? But I'm not. I'm talking about a deeper hunger. I'm talking about spiritual hunger. Do you hunger for life? For meaning? For salvation? Do you perhaps hunger to be with God? To know God? [Raise your hand if you do]. That's better. Because the answer to that question is ALWAYS "yes." The answer is "yes, of course I'm hungry for something spiritual, why else would I be here?"

William Knippa once said that "there is a hunger deep within the heart and soul of all people that can only be satisfied by the presence of the living God." Do you believe that? That all people are hungry? Yearning? Longing for something that can only be satisfied by the presence of the Lord?

You should believe it... because it's true! All people hunger for the presence of God, even if they don't realize it. St. Augustine, an African bishop way back in the fifth century, once said it this way... speaking to God, he said "[Lord,] You have made us for Yourself." "You have made us for Yourself, and [so] the heart of man is restless until it finds it rest in You." I think there's something profound in that. Something worth thinking on... pondering

over. All of us are hungry, whether we know it or not. We are hungry for the presence of the living God.

The marvel of it, of course, the marvel of God's love and grace is that He knows what we need, even if we don't. He knows our need. And He meets that need. He feeds us. You and I, and all people that know and bear the name of Christ, we are fed by the cross and the empty tomb. The beauty of your faith is that Your Jesus feeds you. He comes to satisfy that great hunger you have for His saving presence.

That, I believe, is the central message of today's Bible story, the account of Jesus feeding the 5,000. The feeding of the 5,000 is probably the best-known of all Jesus' miracles; it's the only miracle recounted in all four of the Gospels. It's a fun story, but what I love best about this miracle is what it means. The striking picture it paints of how Jesus sees and understands our needs, our hunger, our yearning for something more, something meaningful, something lasting. The feeding of the 5,000 paints a stunning panorama of how the Christ sees our need and meets our need. How Christ feeds us. It's a story that—quite frankly—captures the imagination and points us again and again to Jesus Christ our Savior. Listen to the story one more time. Starting at verse 15:

When it was evening, the disciples came to [Jesus] and said, "This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves." But Jesus said, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." They said to him, "We have only five loaves here and two fish." And he said, "Bring them here to me." Then he ordered the crowds to sit down... and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing.... And they all ate and were satisfied.

Pretty amazing to see what Jesus can do, isn't it? And that's the first thing we don't want to miss: Jesus. Makes sense, doesn't it? I mean to see fish and bread multiplying without seeing the One whose power made the happen would be to miss the point, wouldn't you think? But actually, we do that all the time. We focus on the gifts but fail to recognize the giver. We focus on what we have and fail to see the Jesus who gives it to us. I mean, really... how often do you focus on the gifts in your life, your goods, your property, your everything... without recognizing that everything good comes from God?

That's what the disciples did. They were so focused on the need, the hungry need of 5,000 plus people sitting on a hillside that they failed to see God. They failed to see the One

who gives all good gifts. They failed to see Jesus. Why else would they be telling Jesus to send them away? The disciples were just like you and me— they were being pragmatic and earthbound. They were trying every which to find solutions to their problems and forgetting all about the Lord of life who promises to provide for us.

"Where will we get what we need?" they ask. "There's no way WE can feed all these people. Send them away!" It's as if they forgot who was with them. It's as if they forgot who Jesus is, what He can do, and how He longs to provide for us.

Don't be like those disciples. Don't take God for granted. Don't forget that God provides what you need because He loves you and cares for you. God loves you (can you ever say that enough??!?) And God takes care of those He loves. And He has, hasn't He? Aren't you indeed clothed? Fed? Day to day, month to month, year to year... hasn't God provided for you? [raise your hand if you, at some point in your life, have starved to death? Nobody? (think about it :)] Jesus said, *"Do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For ... your heavenly Father knows that you need them all."* That's good news. Thanks be to God!

But.. [I don't know], maybe we should pause for a second. Take a step back... Look at the story a little bit closer. Is that all there is? People hungry—Jesus feeds? Is that what Isaiah meant when He spoke through Holy Spirit in our Old Testament reading? When He said *"Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat!"* Was Isaiah talking about dinner?

Or should we maybe be thinking, too, about what Jesus said to the woman at the well? Do you remember? It's John chapter 4. Jesus said, *" Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life"* (vv.13b–14).

Remember, only Jesus can satisfy the hunger of the heart and soul. Sure, we prefer to find our own food maybe, find our own way, make our own rules, live our own lives. But such a meal does not —can not!— sustain us. In a spiritual sense, we remain hungry, under-nourished, and bound for death. Our hunger cannot be satisfied by fish and bread, steak and potatoes, or burgers and fries. It's rooted deeper than the lining of our stomach walls. We hunger for the relationship that God first established in the garden and which we destroyed. God has placed that hunger within us. And there on that mountain, Jesus shows that He will

indeed satisfy His people's hunger.

The real question, though... the real question is "what?" What do we hunger for? I'll tell you. The answer is forgiveness. We hunger for forgiveness. The weight of sin and guilt hangs mercilessly around our necks. I can wash my hands... I can accomplish great deeds. I can walk the straight and narrow, clean up my act, be nice to my spouse, buy gifts for my children... I can do my best at work and at home... and you know what? It won't matter. I can be best person in the world and it still won't have any effect on my sin, my terminal disease. At best, maybe my efforts will be appreciated by others and I'll feel good about myself for a while, but it won't save me!

Unless nourished by forgiveness, the soul that sins will die. The soul that sins will inevitably die unless... unless it is nourished by forgiveness, the life-giving forgiveness Christ won on the cross.

And that is why you're here today. You are here to be fed by Christ. You are here because the bread of life has taken your sins, your pain, your guilt, your hatred, your afflictions... He has taken your hunger, your eternal hunger... He has taken everything that would crush you, destroy you, everything that would plunge you into despair and death, Jesus took upon Himself. It was heaped up on Him. And it broke Him.

On the cross, His body, Jesus' body, was broken. The Bread of life was broken and laid in a tomb. But that Bread did not decay. Nor did He stay dead. Christ was resurrected. Sin could not hold Him. Death could not hold Him. Satan could not hold Him. He lives and continues to feed the hungry through His Word and Sacraments.

The hungry gather around the Lord, drawn by His love. We gather around Word and Sacrament to be fed. And we ARE fed. We are fed with forgiveness.

So... let's eat! Savor today the goodness and the grace of a Savior whose presence is real, whose love is unconditional, and whose acceptance of us will culminate in a heavenly feast that will have no end! Thank God that you are, now and eternally, FED BY CHRIST!

May the peace of God —which surpasses understanding— guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

[\[Home\]](#)

[\[Sermon Archive\]](#)

[\[Site map\]](#)