

INTRODUCTION 引言

As the summer is in full-swing, two things keep rising: temperature and inflation. It may be a good reason to eat less as food is getting more expensive. Besides food, another indicator most people pay attention to is gas price. Some politicians seize the opportunity to advocate for alternative energy source. One official is very happy to get a new electric car. She said from now on, she can zip past gas stations without worrying about the cost of gas. I hope she can get a cheap source of electricity to charge her car. One time I saw an electric car when I was pumping fuel. I wondered why it stopped at a gas station. Perhaps the driver needed to buy something other than gas. That prompted me to think: when do we go to God? Some Christians may say they get near to Jesus when they have needs. Does it mean that they keep Him in the trunk like a spare-tire when they feel self-sufficient? Let us ponder on that when we study a well-known miracle in the Bible. Five-loaves-and-two-fish is the only miracle that is recorded in all four gospels. Those passages complement each other by adding further details to the story. On that day, Jesus and His disciples sailed across the Sea of Galilee. It is actually a lake, but the locals called it a sea. Another name for the place is the Sea of Tiberias. John says that a crowd was going after Jesus because they saw Him perform miracles to heal sick people. There were five thousand men on the scene. Assume each man had a family of four, then there could be about twenty thousand people. The focus of the story is about meeting the needs of the multitude. Jesus used the miracle to help his audience examine why they chased after Him. We can ask ourselves the same question: what do we want from Jesus? In other words: why do we follow Him?

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Critical Problems 迫切的問題

The disciples were facing some critical problems. At that time, Jesus wanted to escape from people quietly. He and the disciples were so busy serving others that they did not even have time to eat. If even Jesus needed rest, so should we! The most spiritual things to do when we feel overwhelmed are to eat and sleep. How would you feel if you are one of the disciples when people kept coming? You have a long day. You are tired and hungry. But people knew where to find Jesus like ants smelling sugar. Jesus was not upset. Mark 6:34 says He **... had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd...** The disciples might look at the crowd as a nuisance, but Jesus saw them as sheep to minister to. They did not only need food and water, but a shepherd to guide them too. Therefore, Jesus taught them and healed some patients. Our perspective will change if we put ourselves in the shoes of those who are seeking help. A few months ago my wife had some urgent medical issue that she had to see a specialist. Someone recommended her to a particular doctor's office. Normally, those doctors are very busy. I was so glad that they could see her in a few days. I thanked the receptionist for squeezing my wife into their schedule. She replied: "We just try to help as many people as we can." People may have critical problems at any moment. They may call you up after your work day is over, interrupt your dinner or even sleep. They need help and they need it now. We should learn from Jesus and show compassion to others. When the emotion touches your heart, it will motivate your actions.

After Jesus finished His ministries, dinner time was getting near. Now a new problem emerged. Where to get food for everyone? The other three gospels all state that the disciples asked Jesus to dismiss the crowd so that they could find food nearby. Jesus asked Philip where they could buy food for the people. Philip's hometown Bethsaida was not too far away. He knew where the closest McDonald's or Kroger was. Verse 6 tells us Jesus' real intent: **He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do.** Jesus wanted to examine how much Philip knew about His supernatural power. When God puts us in a difficult situation, He may also be checking on our faith. We should not get panic and overwhelmed by the problem. But we should not get prideful and overestimate our own ability either. Rather, we submit to God, rely on His wisdom and strength until we arrive at a solution. Philip evaluated the situation from a human standpoint. He reasoned that even eight months' wages of an ordinary workman would not be sufficient to buy enough food. Another disciple Andrew came forward with a second proposal. Look at verse 9: **"There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?"** It was more of a lament than a solution. That amount of food can only feed one or two persons. Both disciples failed in their faith test. They concentrated on what they did not have instead what they did have. Through the miracle, Jesus taught the disciples to focus on who He was. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who will care for His sheep. Do not limit what Jesus can do based on what we have. Very often, in our personal life or in church ministries, we focus on manpower but not God's power. We sit down and calculate but we forget to kneel down and pray. The more we estimate, the bigger is our fear. We realize that we do not enough money, time, talent and resources. Surely we should not put God to a test by saying: "Lord, if you don't give me what I want, then I don't think you're real." Also, if a certain thing is in God's plan, then He will do it with or without us. God involves us in the process to increase our faith. Therefore, helping us know Him more is more important than getting problems solved. Before God can change the world, He needs to change our mindset first.

2. Spiritual Provision 屬靈的供應

The disciples were facing some critical problems from the crowd. Jesus came to their rescue. Besides giving them a physical provision, Jesus also supplied a spiritual provision. He had some lessons for the audience to learn. The Lord asked the disciples to have the crowd sit down in groups. That makes distribution of food more effective. It would also prevent a chaos if they all rushed forward to fight for food. Jesus then gave thanks before He performed the miracle. It was customary for a Jew to say grace before a meal, just like what Christians do today. Barley loaves are the most basic bread people could afford at that time. The fish were possibly cooked and preserved small fish. Our thankfulness will come naturally if we admit that every blessing comes from God. I once saw a young man saying grace before he ate some snack during break time. I was encouraged by that simple gesture. If we keep a habit of thanking God on small things, then we will surely thank Him for bigger things. Jesus could have created food from nothing. But in this case, He multiplied the meager portions donated by the boy. God can use whatever He gives us first to bless others. He can use a small apartment to reach gospel friends. He can use ten dollars you drop into the offering box to minister to others. He can use a Saturday afternoon or a week-long mission trip you commit to serve people. We can experience the joy of working with God if we allow Him to use our resources to bless other. In this miracle, Jesus invited His disciples to serve as His ministry partners. He divided the food and they delivered it to the people. No matter what we do, we are only God's assistants. The ultimate glory goes to Him.

With Jesus' provision, everyone had a good picnic. In fact, Jesus was so generous that there were twelve baskets of leftover. Do not try to impose any spiritual meaning to the number, whether it symbolizes the twelve tribes of Israel or the twelve disciples. All we can say is there was enough food for each disciple to carry in his own container. Now everyone had their stomach full. How did the crowd react to the miracle? Look at verse 14-15: **14 When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!" 15 Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.** This "Prophet" probably refers to a prophecy in Deuteronomy 18. God foretold that He would send His message through a prophet like Moses. Some people thought that Jesus was the person God talked about. He displayed God's power and He taught with authority. They had good Bible knowledge, and they evaluated the situation through God's Word. We should learn from them. But they arrived at a wrong conclusion. Jesus was the Messiah they had been waiting for. However, He did not come to liberate them from the oppression of the Romans, much like Moses delivered their ancestors from slavery in Egypt. Jesus came to save people's souls. Therefore, Jesus denied their request and retreated to the hillside alone. Finally, our Lord could get some rest. The crowd kept looking for Jesus until they found Him on the other side of the lake. Jesus pointed out that those people sought after Him just for some free meals! Jesus encouraged them not only to look for a physical and temporary food, but a spiritual and eternal provision only He could give. Jesus referred to eternal life. He told the crowd in verse 51: **"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."** Since the audience's mind was still on physical food, they found Jesus' advice offensive. How could anyone eat Him? Therefore, many of them left. Then Jesus asked the twelve disciples if they wanted to leave too. Peter played the spokesperson again in verse 68-69: **68 ... "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, 69 and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."** At this point, the disciples only had superficial belief about who Jesus was. But at least Peter knew that Jesus came from God and He was the source of truth. This miracle is more than feeding people. It was a teaching lesson for the disciples and the crowd. John likes to use the word "sign" to describe Jesus' miracles. A sign gives us some information. It is like a notice-board. For example, a road sign gives us the direction to go to a certain place. We will miss the message if we only analyze the metal plate and the pole. Jesus' miracles prove that He is the supernatural God. He wants people to believe in Him, not just getting answers for their temporary problems.

CONCLUSION 結論

There is a big difference between following Jesus and chasing after Him. Jesus does not only intend to solve our problems. He wants us to receive Him as our Savior and Lord. Even today, some people treat Jesus like a spare-tire. They look for Him only when they have needs. They may come to a church for various reasons. They may have an emotional baggage. They may be looking for friends, business clients or a place for their kids to have fun. They will be gone when their needs are met. Only those who seek after Jesus for the words of eternal life will continue to stay. As such, helping people with their needs is only part of our task. We should also introduce them to Jesus. He is the Bread of Life. Only He can satisfy people's deepest spiritual need.

INTRODUCTION 引言

隨著夏季如火如荼，有兩樣東西不斷在上升：氣溫和通貨膨脹。隨著食物越來越貴，少吃一點可能是個很好的主意。除了食物，另一個大多數人關注的指標是汽油價格。一些政客抓住機會鼓吹其他能源。一位官員很高興買到一輛新的電動汽車。她說，從此她經過加油站便不用停下來，也不用擔心油費。我希望她能找到便宜的電源來給她的車子充電。有一次我在加油時看到一輛電動汽車。我懷疑它為何停在加油站。也許司機需要買汽油以外的東西。這就使我聯想到一個問題：我們在什麼時候會去找神？有些基督徒可能會說，當他們有需要時，他們會靠近耶穌。這是否意味著當他們感到自給自足時，他們便把主放在行李箱當備胎？當我們來學習聖經中一個大家都熟悉的神蹟時，讓我們思考一下這一點。五餅二魚是唯一在四福音中都有記載的神蹟。這些經文相互補充，提供更多故事的細節。那天，耶穌和祂的門徒坐船渡過加利利海。它實際上是一個湖，但當地人稱它為海。那個地方的另一個名稱是提比哩亞海。約翰說，一群人跟著耶穌，因為他們看到祂行神蹟醫治病人。當時有五千個男人。假設每個人都是一家四口，那麼便大約有兩萬人。故事的重點是滿足大眾的需求。耶穌用這個神蹟幫助聽眾審視他們為何釘著耶穌。我們可以問自己同樣的問題：我們想從耶穌那裡得到什麼？換句話說：我們為什麼跟隨祂？

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Critical Problems 迫切的問題

門徒們面對著一些迫切的問題。那時，耶穌想悄悄地離開人群。祂和門徒忙著服事別人，連吃飯的時間都沒有。如果連耶穌都需要休息，我們也應該休息！當我們感到壓力無法負荷時，最屬靈的事情就是吃飯和睡覺。如果你是門徒中的一員，當人們不斷湧來時，你會有什麼感覺？你忙了一整天，又累又餓，但是人們像螞蟻聞到糖一樣，知道在哪裡可以找到耶穌。但是耶穌並沒有生氣。馬可福音 6:34 說耶穌 **…就憐憫他們，因為他們如同羊沒有牧人一般…**。門徒可能看到人群便覺得厭煩，但耶穌卻視他們為需要服事的羊。他們不僅需要食物和水，還需要一個牧羊人來引導他們。於是耶穌教導他們並治癒了一些病人。如果我們設身處地為尋求幫助的人著想，我們的觀點就會改變。幾個月前，我的太太緊急需要看專科醫生。有人推薦她去某個醫生的診所。通常，那些醫生都很忙。我很高興他們能在幾天內看她。我感謝接待員把我的太太擠進他們的時間表中。她回答說：「我們只是盡可能幫助多一些人。」人們隨時都會遇到迫切的問題。他們可能會在你下班後打電話給你，打斷你的晚餐甚至你的睡眠。他們需要幫助，而且現在就需要。我們應該向耶

耶穌學習，對別人表示憐憫。當情感觸動你的心時，便會激勵你的行動。耶穌完成祂的事工後，晚餐時間快到了。於是出現了一個新的問題。去哪裡找食物給所有人？其他三卷福音書都說門徒要求耶穌驅散人群，讓他們到附近買食物。耶穌問腓力去哪裡買食物。腓力的家鄉伯賽大就在附近，他知道最近的麥當勞或 Kroger 在哪裡。第 6 節告訴我們耶穌的真正意圖：**他說這話是要試驗腓力；他自己原知道要怎樣行。**耶穌想看看腓力對祂的超自然能力了解多少。當神讓我們陷入困境時，祂也可能在檢查我們的信心。我們不應該對問題感到恐慌和不知所措。但我們也不應該驕傲和高估自己的能力。相反，我們應該順服神，依靠祂的智慧和力量，直到我們找到解決辦法。腓力從人的角度評估情況。他推斷，即使是一般工人八個月的工資也買不到足夠的食物。另一個門徒安得烈提出別的建議。請看第 9 節：**「在這裡有一個孩童，帶著五個大麥餅、兩條魚，只是分給這許多人還算什麼呢？」**與其說那是個解決方案，倒不如說是一個感嘆。才一點點食物大概只能夠一兩個人吃。兩個門徒的信心測試都不及格。他們專注於他們沒有的東西，而不是他們擁有的東西。通過神蹟，耶穌教導門徒要看見祂是誰。耶穌是會照顧羊群的好牧人。不要讓我們所擁有的限制耶穌的作為。很多時候，在我們的個人生活或教會事工中，我們關注的是人力，而不是神的能力。我們坐下來計算，卻忘記跪下來禱告。我們越去計算，我們就越懼怕。我們發現自己沒有足夠的金錢、時間、人才和資源。當然，我們不應該妄求說：「主啊，如果祢不給我想要的東西，那我祢便不是真實存在的。」此外，如果某件事在神的計劃中，那麼無論有沒有我們，祂都會成就。神邀請我們參與在過程中，是要增加我們的信心。因此，幫助我們更多地認識祂比解決問題更重要。在神改變世界之前，祂需要先改變我們的心態。

2. Spiritual Provision 屬靈的供應

門徒們面對人群一些迫切的問題。耶穌來伸出援手。除了賜給他們物質上的需要以外，耶穌還提供了屬靈的供應。祂有一些功課要聽眾學習。主吩咐門徒叫眾人成群坐下，這使得食物的分配更有效率，也可以防止他們爭先恐後地衝上來搶食物。然後，耶穌在行神蹟之前先作感謝的禱告。猶太人習慣在飯前謝恩，就像今天基督徒做的一樣。大麥餅是當時人們能負擔最便宜的麵包。魚可能是煮熟和醃製的小魚。如果我們承認所有的祝福都來自神，我們便會很自然地感恩了。我曾經看到一個年輕人在休息時間吃點心之前謝飯。我看到後覺得受到鼓舞。如果我們養成在小事上感謝神的習慣，那麼我們一定會在更大的事情上感謝祂。耶穌本可以從無變有創造食物。但是在這個神蹟中，祂倍增小男孩所捐獻微薄的食物。神可以使用祂賜給我們的東西來祝福他人。祂可以使用一個小公寓來接觸福音朋友。祂可以使用你投在奉獻箱的十美元來服事他人。祂可以使用你所擺上的周六下午或是一週的宣教旅程服事別人。如果我們讓神使用我們的資源來祝福他人，我們便能體會到與祂同工的喜樂。在這個神蹟中，耶穌邀請門徒成為事工的夥伴。祂把食物分開，然後他們把食物送到人們的手中。無論我們在做什麼，我們也只是神的助手而已，最終的榮耀

都歸給祂。有了耶穌的供應，每個人都有一段美好的野餐時光。事實上，耶穌的供應是如此的豐盛，以至於有十二籃剩餘的食物。不要猜想這個數字有什麼特別的屬靈意義，比如是像徵著以色列的十二個支派還是十二個門徒。我們只能說，每個門徒都有足夠的食物裝在自己的容器裡。現在每個人都吃飽了。他們對神蹟有何反應？請看第 14-15 節：**14 眾人看見耶穌所行的神蹟，就說：「這真是那要到世間來的先知！」****15 耶穌既知道眾人要來強逼他作王，就獨自又退到山上去了。**這裡的「先知」可能是指申命記 18 章中的一個預言。神說祂將來會差遣一位像摩西那樣的先知來傳達信息。有些人認為耶穌就是神所說的那個人。祂展示了神的能力，並帶著權柄教導人。他們有很好的聖經知識，他們也用神的話語評估現狀。我們應該向他們學習。但是他們得出了錯誤的結論。耶穌的確是他們一直在等待的彌賽亞。然而，祂並不是要把百姓從羅馬人的壓迫中解放出來，就像摩西將他們的祖先從埃及的轄制中解救出來一樣。耶穌是來拯救人的靈魂。因此，耶穌拒絕他們的要求，並獨自退到山上去。終於，我們的主可以得到一些休息。但人群繼續尋找耶穌，直到他們在湖的另一邊找到了祂。耶穌指出，他們找祂只是為了一些免費的食物！耶穌鼓勵他們不僅要尋找物質和暫時的食物，還要尋求只有祂才能賜予的屬靈和永恆的供應。耶穌是指到永生。祂在第 51 節告訴群眾：**「我是從天上降下來生命的糧；人若吃這糧，就必永遠活著。我所要賜的糧就是我的肉，為世人之生命所賜的。」**由於聽眾的心思還是停留在物質的糧食上，他們覺得耶穌的建議令人反感。怎麼可以把祂吃掉呢？因此，他們中間許多人離開了。然後耶穌問十二個門徒是否也要離去。彼得在第 68-69 節再次扮演代言人：**68 …「主啊，你有永生之道，我們還歸從誰呢？69 我們已經信了，又知道你是神的聖者。」**在這個時候，門徒對耶穌的身份只有膚淺的認識。但至少彼得知道耶穌是從神那裡來的，真理的源頭。這個神蹟不僅僅是要餵飽人，也是對門徒和群眾的教導。約翰喜歡用「神蹟」(或是翻譯為「標誌」) 這個用詞來描述耶穌的超自然能力。一個標誌告訴我們一個信息。例如，路標給我們去某個地方的方向。如果我們只分析金屬板和桿子，我們便會錯過那個信息。耶穌的神蹟證明祂是超自然的神。祂希望人們相信祂，而不僅僅是解決他們暫時的問題。

CONCLUSION 結論

跟隨耶穌和追著耶穌有很大的分別。耶穌不僅要解決我們的問題，祂希望我們接受祂成為救主和生命的主。就算在今天，也有一些人把耶穌當作備胎。他們只有在有需要時才尋求祂。他們可能出於各種原因來到教會。有些人可能有情感包袱，他們或許在尋找朋友、客戶或孩子玩樂的地方。當他們的需求得到滿足時，他們便會離開。只有那些尋求耶穌永生之道的人才會繼續留下來。因此，幫助人們解決問題只是我們任務的一部分。我們也必須把耶穌介紹給他們。祂是生命的糧。只有祂才能滿足人最深的屬靈需要。