

Title: 'Hope you like leftovers  
Text: Matthew 14.13-21  
Theme: Jesus is better than Moses  
Series: Matthew #79  
Prop Stmtnt: Jesus knows how to provide for his people in the wilderness.

Read Text:

We have had several members of our congregation write books. Most recently, Amanda Stevens wrote a book that was published by the David C. Cook Publishing Company. Her book, *Seek and Hide*, is the 1<sup>st</sup> book of a 4-part story. That means that when she wrote the 1<sup>st</sup> book, she had to anticipate the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> book. The story line and details in the 1<sup>st</sup> book have to compliment and coordinate with the story line and details in the other 3 books. If you are going to write with a lot of detail, then you have to keep track of a lot of details, so that the series has internal integrity as well as a logical and compelling story line. I recently read it and enjoyed it. But it got me thinking, Amanda is the only writer of her books. She knows the story line and the sub-plots. She can set up events to come in the later books by foreshadowing them in the earlier ones so that when they happen, the reader has some moments of “ahh” as well as some resolution. But, what do you think would happen if you took 39 other writers in addition to Amanda and had them each write a book or two and then put all of those together in one series. How much sense would that make? In fact, just to really make it interesting, let's have these 40 authors write over a period of about 1,500 years without any of them ever seeing the entire series. What are the chances of this story actually making any sense at all, much less having internal integrity with its details and subtle, yet powerful foreshadowing and plot anticipation through imagery? But, that is the Bible: 66 books, about 40 authors who put together 1 series.

I have been studying the Bible rather intensely for about 35 years and I still feel like I am splashing around in the kiddie pool. This book is absolutely fascinating. And what is fascinating is that there is not only a logical and compelling story line, but the details and foreshadowing, the promises and fulfillment continue to amaze us with manifold “aha” moments. When, on Monday or Tuesday I start preparing the next sermon, I do not sigh and resign myself to hours of labor and study. Rather, I come at it with this sense of anticipation of what is going to amaze me this week, because every week, I see something that didn't see before. And what I see is not just a detail or interesting nuance. I discover things that end up being like high-octane fuel for my faith in God, love of God, joy in God and worship of God. Often times I finish writing out the sermon on Thursday, and by then, I am so ready to preach this because this is such good stuff, and I can't wait to tell you because I want you to share in the discovery and the joy but I have to sit on it for two more days. And such was the case again this week. Like many of you, I have heard this story of Jesus feeding the 5,000 many times.

If Cathi was teaching on this text she would say, this is the sort of thing that happens when you let a bunch of men be in charge of the logistics of an event. They don't have anything to eat, and didn't even think about it until they got hungry and without a pizza

joint that delivers, they are hopeless. But, we imagine all of these hungry people milling about while the disciples are scratching their heads trying to come up with some solution when this kind little boy in a bowtie and penny loafers (or at least a clean robe and combed hair) walks up and offers his lunch to the disciples, who take it to Jesus who feeds everyone. And what is the moral of the story? Be like the little boy. Offer what you have to Jesus and he will do amazing things with it, right? And there is some truth to that. The problem is, that even though this is the only miracle that Jesus performed that is recorded by all four gospels, none of them say a thing about this little boy walking up and offering his lunch. Now, I am not saying that Andrew stole it from him, and the kid is traumatized over losing his lunch. But, I am saying that it sounds more like Andrew who offered up the kid's lunch, not the kid who offered up his lunch. Actually, when we read loaves we think of a larger amount of bread that can be sliced up and used to feed several people, but these were not modern loaves, but were more like the size of a bun. So, no, this kid did not have an overprotective mom who gave him enough food for a small army, but he really had a modest amount that was suitable for him and maybe enough for his brother (if he had one). Jesus is going to take the meager lunch of a boy and use it to feed thousands who will eat all that they could possibly want and still have enough left over for carry out. But get this straight. This story is not about a boy who gave his lunch to Jesus. This story is about Jesus who knows how to provide for his people in the wilderness.

#### I. What does Matthew want you to see?

Don't miss the contrast between the kind of meal that Herod had and the kind of meal that Jesus was part of. We could quickly scan this text and list some of the contrasts: 1) The kind of people who were there 2) The kind of atmosphere 3) The kind of leadership that was provided 3) The kind of food 4) The result, etc. But Matthew also wants you to see that Jesus is a leader who not only reminds you of Moses, but in reality, Moses was a preview of Jesus. Specifically...

##### A. **He wants you to see the compassion of your King.** (13-14)

(Identity section) Jesus and his disciples attempt to get away into a more private setting for some rest and recovery. We are also getting close to the time when Jesus will turn and head to Jerusalem in order to die. The disciples do not know this, yet. But, Jesus wants to get them alone so that he can prepare them as much as possible for this. So, they get into a boat and go to a desolate place, near the little town of Bethsaida, (map slide) which is on the northern edge of the Sea of Galilee and which is, interestingly enough, just outside of the territory of Herod Antipas, whom we encountered last Sunday. However, the crowds anticipate where Jesus and the disciples are going and they hurry to get there ahead of them and they do.

Jesus is God who robed himself in the flesh of humanity. He subjected himself to the limits of an earthly body, which meant that he got hungry, tired, and thirsty. But Jesus also fully entered into and experienced human emotion. He grieved. He felt empathy and sympathy. He was exhausted both physically and emotionally. He knew what it was like

to be worn out. So, here he is, getting away with his disciples, not only dealing with the death of his cousin, John, but knowing that John's death pre-figured his own. And, he cannot get away. The people are there waiting for him. They need him.

It is not easy to minister to others when your own life has just been broadsided. Have you ever been driving back and forth to a hospital, or a nursing home or funeral home, overwhelmed at your circumstances and you see all of the cars that pass you by and you think, these people have no idea what I am going through right now. Or the worker at Walgreen's or CVS says, "have a nice day" and you think, "if only you knew what I was dealing with. It is so hard to maintain even a basic functional focus in life when you are hurting, much less having to minister to others. Jesus had real needs. His cousin had died and he was going to die. And here were thousands of people who were demanding a piece of him. But, what Jesus does here is not simply go through the motions of caring for people because it was expected of him; he really cared for them. He healed their sick. Jesus was with them and healed them. He healed them because he had compassion on them. And this is what is so beautiful for us to realize: When Jesus saw the crowd, he considered their needs as being more important than his own. That is how much he loves. He saw them as people who were being harassed and trampled by leaders like Herod. They needed a shepherd. They needed someone who would heal them and they needed someone who would feed them. So, does anyone understand what it is like to minister to others even when your own heart is breaking or when you are exhausted? Yes. Jesus! In fact, he does perfectly and in our place, what we do imperfectly.

But, this brings up a very practical problem. Jesus spent so much time healing, that it was now evening. The sun was beginning to set and the disciples tell Jesus that he needs to send the people away in order to get some food from the nearby villages because no one made plans for this. I do not read into this that the disciples are being selfish and wanting to simply get rid of the people and are using the food thing as an excuse. Sure, it is likely that they are hungry too but, this is a real issue. Where are all of these people going to eat? While the nearby villages were the only logical option, it was not a great option since this crowd was probably at least 10,000 in size and would have overwhelmed all of the villages in the area. Capernaum and Bethsaida were no more than a couple of thousand each. So, Jesus tells the disciples to feed them. In fact, Jesus says, "they need not go away." Isn't that amazing? "They need not go away." These people were hungry, tired, and needy. They had already interrupted the schedule and demanded a great deal of attention, preoccupying Jesus and the disciples all day. I think we would all agree that in view of the disciples getting back from their preaching trip and Jesus dealing with the news of John's death that Jesus had already gone above and beyond spending the day healing all of these people. But, this is how he treats needy people. That means that this is how he treats you and me! You do not need to go anywhere. But there is something else that Matthew wants you to see.

#### **B. You have a problem that you cannot fix. (15-16)**

People like to say that God will never give you more than you can handle. That's not really true, is it? Jesus tells the disciples to feed these people. He was giving them way

more than they could handle. They couldn't do that! All they had were about 5 little rolls and 2 pieces of fish that have not been refrigerated, but some little grubby boy without hand sanitizer and wet wipes has been carrying them around all day. You want to eat that? I didn't think so! Here is the deal. We all love Jesus when he loves us and has compassion on us and feeds us and provides for us. We would all love to have a king who gives us everything that we need. But, Jesus is not Santa Claus. He demands that you acknowledge that you have a problem that you cannot fix. He is teaching his disciples that they cannot help all of these people, so he gives them more than they can handle. But here is the rest of the story. While Jesus will give you more than you can handle, he will never give you more than He can handle.

This is a powerful moment in this story. There are at least 10,000 people here and they need food. There are 12 disciples who are in way over their head. Who do the people need? They need Jesus. Who do the disciples need? They need Jesus. What happens when you put this together? In other words, what do people need? They need leaders who know that both the people and the leaders need Jesus! No one is ready to lead until he knows that not only his people need Jesus, but that he needs Jesus. Dad's, you cannot save your families, but Jesus can. Your family needs a dad and a mom who looks like Jesus and who points his family to Jesus. But you cannot do that unless you know Jesus and love Jesus and study Jesus and spend time with Jesus. And the more you do that the more you realize that you cannot rescue anyone, but you can point them to the One who can. We all need a loving shepherd who has the authority of a king.

There are two types of people who refuse to embrace Christ. 1) Those who do not own the reality of their need and 2) Those who do not accept the reality of his grace. It's too good. I am not good enough, etc.

### **C. He wants you to see the provision of your King. (17-21)**

This miracle, like all of Christ's miracles, is amazing. He tells the disciples to bring the bread and fish to him. The bread and fish in the hands of anyone else won't do anything but feed a boy. But in the hands of Christ, it will feed everyone who is in need. There is no need that Jesus cannot meet. Then, like a father at a meal, he has everyone seated. Then he prays and says a blessing. By the way, here is a little side note. Sometimes people will ask a person to pray and will say, "Will you bless the food?" When we pray before a meal, we do not bless the food. We bless God. We thank God for his provision. We are supposed to ask him for daily bread aren't we? (Matt 6.11) But I am guessing that most of us did not pray that today. And yet we've eaten and will eat some more. Before you eat, it is such a good practice to bless God. That is what Jesus did. He blessed God, that is, he thanked God. He took the bread and the fish and (v.19) and blessed God. (more on that in a minute) Then he broke the loaves and gave them to his disciples and they distributed them to the crowds. And guess what? The people who were served first did not get more than the people who were served last. There was so much for everyone that "all ate and were satisfied." And there were 5,000 men, besides the women and children. So, yes, a bunch of guys can organize an enormous meal and get everyone fed and have enough food, and even have some left over, if one of the guys happens to be Jesus.

## II. What does God want you to see?

This account is sounds so much like two other accounts in the OT. Once again, Jesus is fulfilling the plan that God established to bring a Messiah to this earth. This is the story of the Bible because this is the story of creation. This is the story that is written on our hearts even if we do not realize it explicitly; it is there in the DNA of our souls. I was reminded of this again when I watched the 3<sup>rd</sup> Hunger Games movie. The hero is not living in plush surroundings ordering people around. The hero is one of us, who lives with us, who is willing to die that we might live, in contrast to the “formal” leader who lives in luxury and kills others that he might live. Our culture is full of stories like this. Why? Because we have been made in the image of Jesus. It resonates with us. It is the story of the Bible. We see another example of this here. Moses was a preview of what Jesus would be like. So, what does God want us to see? He wants us to look back and see how he connects all of the dots.

### A. **Look back**

#### 1) Moses

Moses brought the children of Israel out of Egypt and was headed toward the land of Canaan. He had an enormous group of people for whom he was responsible and he had no idea how he was going to feed them. What did God do? He provided manna. He provided bread, day after day after day to sustain his people in the wilderness. And it worked. But there was something even more important that was going on. The miracle of manna pointed forward to Jesus coming, so that when he sat the people down and fed them with bread from heaven that they would recognize the symbolism of the event.

#### 2) Elisha

The feeding of the 5,000 is also prefigured by Elisha who performed a similar miracle in 2 Kings 4.42-44, though on a smaller scale. Again, the preview is clear. This event pointed forward to a greater event. Jesus is greater because...

### B. **Jesus did what Moses (and Elisha) could not do.**

- 1) Jesus was available in a way that Moses was not.
- 2) Jesus did the providing while Moses could not.
- 3) Jesus died efficaciously.

While Moses offered to die for the children of Israel, it would not have accomplished anything. However, the death of Christ for his children did accomplish something. The death of Christ secured our pardon because it paid our debt.

- 4) Moses died, but Jesus rose again and lives forever.

### C. Look forward

But there is more. It will not be long when Jesus does scale back his public ministry and spends much more time alone with his disciples. He will also turn and set his face toward Jerusalem because he knows that his mission is to go to the cross. His feeding of the crowd is very similar to him feeding the disciples in the upper room. There, in the upper room he says a blessing and then breaks the bread and gives it to his disciples. And then he tells them that they are supposed to do this and keep doing this until he comes back for them, because when he comes back we are going to all do this together. So, this event of feeding the 5,000 is actually related to how we observe communion. The men who serve, are taking what has been given to them and are giving it you just as Jesus gave the food to his disciples who gave it to the people. So it...

#### 1) Anticipates the Last Supper

But, there is more. The last supper is not really the last supper. It is the last supper before Christ dies, but it is not the last supper. It also...

#### 2) Anticipates the Marriage Supper of the Lamb

Isaiah was a prophet who ministered to the southern kingdom of Judah during the Assyrian destruction of the northern kingdom. Isaiah anticipated the day when the Babylonians would overrun Judah and the city of Jerusalem and the Temple would fall and crumble. But, Isaiah knew that this would not be the end. He spoke of a day of reunion and feasting that would come. But, Isaiah saw something that most others did not. Isaiah saw that there was coming a day when people from all the nations would gather in a celebration meal with the LORD and it will be the LORD who will prepare this meal. (Isaiah 25.6-9)

Jesus describes this event in a bit more detail in his Parable of the Wedding Feast – Matthew 22.1-14 and in his Parable of the 10 Virgins – Matthew 25.1-13.

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb – Revelation 19.6-9

“Blessed” – happy, joyful, exuberant, delighted, full and satisfied are those who are invited to this event. This is not just a wedding that you do not want to miss, this is THE wedding that absolutely overwhelms all other weddings. This is the wedding of the King to his bride. The King came to the earth to call his bride, to woo his bride, to die for his bride so that she could be forgiven and declared righteous. The King/Savior came to so that his bride would know that no one would ever love her like he does and he called her to trust him and to love him in response to his love for her. The bride is all of the people of God from every tribe, language and nation who truly trust in Christ alone as their Savior and King. And one day, she will live with him forever and ever and ever.

### III. Stuff to Chew on:

- My daughter says, “don’t sweat the petty stuff and don’t pet the sweaty stuff.” We tend to be really concerned about food, but Jesus makes it clear that the earth is his and everything in it. Here is even more reason why if you are a follower of Christ seeking to honor him that you do not need to worry over what you are going to eat. He will make a way.
- Will you believe that Jesus is compassionate and powerful? Will you accept the fact that he loves you so much that he will set aside his needs, even his very life for yours. If he will do that, that you might be pardoned, do you think that his concern for you has become less?
- Christ involved the disciples in this miracle. They had to believe him to a degree to take the food to others. Then, they had to gather up the leftovers. (etc.)

This week, many of you are going to be involved with shopping for food, preparing food, serving food and of course fretting over food. You have a great opportunity to be reminded that as much as you love the people you are going to be serving and look forward to the time when everyone gathers together and are stuffed and satisfied with what you have made, you have a King who loves you infinitely more than you love your family. And he is making arrangements for a home, a family, a gathering, a meal, and a city for you that will never end. He’s that kind of a King. It is not a place where you will be trapped in, but a place where you will finally be free: free from sin and death to love him with all of your heart, to worship him with all of your might and to enjoy him and be delighted in him and satisfied in him with all of your being. He’s that kind of a king. He provides for his people, even in desolate places.