

B. All were filled: "And they all ate, and were filled" (42).

1. There must have been 10,000 pieces distributed.

Mathew says there were "about five thousand men, besides women and children" (14:21).

2. In magnitude, this was the Lord's greatest miracle, demonstrating both the goodness and creative power of Jesus.

VI. BROKEN FRAGMENTS (6:43).

A. Twelve basketfuls: "And they took up broken pieces, twelve basketfuls, and also of the fishes" (43).

1. "And when they were filled, he saith unto his disciples, Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, that nothing be wasted" (John 6:12).

2. God provides plenty for all, but none for waste.

3. He who came to save, not to destroy, would have been out of character if history had recorded him as a mere waster and consumer rather than as one who built, restored, healed and supplied.

B. Like the prodigal son, our generation is wasteful.

1. I. File, "Conservation."

2. Waste is sinful, and in our time is often damning.

VII. EFFECT OF THE MIRACLE: "When therefore the people saw the sign which he did they said, This is of a truth the prophet that cometh into the world" (John 6:14).

CONCLUSION -

I. Let us remember with compassion the millions of shepherdless sheep and hungry hearts who cannot "live by bread alone" (Matt. 4:4; Deut. 8:3), many of whom have never heard the word of life.

II. Jesus is truly "the living bread" (John 6:51,68; 20:30,31).

III. Let us follow Jesus, not for the loaves and fishes, but "for the food which abideth unto eternal life" (John 6:27).

IV. Let us remember God as we inventory our resources and our talents.

V. God still employs "earthen vessels" in dispensing spiritual food (Mark 16:15; 2 Cor. 4:7).

VI. Let us wisely conserve our bodies, as temples of God's Spirit, and our resources as good stewards who will give account.

STUDIES IN MARK--LESSON FIFTEEN

Feeding The Five Thousand

Mark 6:30-44; Matt. 14:13-21; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-14

INTRODUCTION -

I. LESSON LINKS AND CONTEXT.

A. After the death and burial of John the baptist, the disciples of the Lord came to Jesus to report on their work (6:30).

B. It was the spring of the year: "Green grass" (Mark 6:39; Matt. 14:19; John 6:10). The Passover was "at hand" (John 6:4), A.D. 29, one year before the crucifixion of Jesus.

II. NATURE AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE LESSON.

A. This very familiar and important miracle is the only one of the Lord's recorded by all four gospel writers. "The most spectacular"? "Surprising"?

B. It is a story of much lasting human interest with many special features worthy of careful study, helpful in our "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor.5:7).

C. The miracle proves the power of Jesus, "the living bread" of life, to nourish our souls with eternal food (John 6:27,35,51,68).

DISCUSSION -

I. MULTITUDES FOLLOW JESUS (Mark 6:30-34).

A. Seeking rest: "And the apostles gather themselves together unto Jesus; and they told him all things, whatsoever they had taught. And he saith unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while. For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat" (30,31).  
1. John's death had created considerable excitement. Hearing of the works of Jesus caused Herod to think it was John raised from the dead.

2. A number of factors contributed to making it a busy time for them.

B. They went away: "And they went away in the boat to a desert place apart" (32).

1. They followed Jesus to "a desert place" east of the Sea of Galilee, near Bethsaida (Luke 9:10). Mentioned by Josephus as being at the northern extremity of the lake.--Lamar.  
2. "For rest" (6:31). Life needs rest as well as work, food and prayer. It is wise and proper

for Christians to take the rest necessary for recreation from strenuous toil.

C. They ran: "And the people saw them going, and many knew them, and they ran together there on foot from all the cities and outwent them" (33).

1. "A great multitude" followed Jesus "because they beheld the signs which he did on them that were sick" (John 6:2).

2. Jesus said some followed, however, because they "ate of the loaves and were filled" (John 6:26).

3. Some say it was 20 miles by land; but Jesus went with those who rowed across.

D. He had compassion: "And he came forth and saw a great multitude, and he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things" (34).

1. Jesus "welcomed them, and spake to them of the kingdom of God, and them that had need of healing he cured" (Luke 9:11).

2. "And he healed their sick" (Matthew 14:14).

II. THE GOOD SHEPHERD FEEDS THE PEOPLE (Mark 6:35-38).

A. Day far spent: "And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him and said, The place is desert, and the day is now far spent. Send them away, that they may go into the country and villages round about, and buy themselves somewhat to eat" (35,36).

1. They too were concerned about the needy people who had followed hastily without food sufficient for the journey.

2. Evidently having consulted together, they were ready to suggest a solution (cf. John 6:5,6).

B. Give ye them to eat: "But he answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat" (37a; Luke 9:13).

1. Their seemingly inadequate supply, with God's help, was adequate for their present needs.

2. We need to learn this truth and be content (Phil. 4:11-13,19).

C. Inventory of resources: "And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred shillings worth of bread and give them to eat" (37b; John 6:7)?

The suggested amount was large, though not large as we reckon money.

D. How many have ye: "And he saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes" (38).

1. "One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, who

hath five barley loaves, and two fishes: but what are these among so many" (John 6:8,9)?

2. That lad's most famous lunch became a blessing to 5,000, and a noble example to millions, because he made it available for the Lord's use.

3. "And he said, Bring them hither to me" (Matt. 14:18). Jesus can use our seemingly small resources to his glory and to our eternal credit.

III. "DECENTLY AND IN ORDER" (6:39,40).

A. By companies: "And he commanded them that all should sit down by companies upon the green grass" (39).

1. Jesus created an orderly universe (Genesis 1 & 2).

2. "He who breaks the bread of life for hungry humanity should proceed in an orderly manner"--Cox.

B. In ranks: "And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties" (40).

1. "Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand" (John 6:10).

2. This expedient insured that each would get some food, saved "much time and labor in distributing the food" (McGarvey-Pendleton), and provided a situation to guarantee the genuineness of the miracle to be done openly.

3. "God is not the God of confusion, but of peace" (1 Corinthians 14:33,40).

IV. "IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS" (6:41a).

A. Looking up to heaven: "And he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake the loaves..." (41a).

1. "And he gave to the disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all" (41b; John 6:11).

2. In giving thanks for the loaves and fish he created, he blessed them, recognizing "God as the source of all good things" (James 1:17).--Cox.

B. This great, remarkable, sublime, thankful action and similar acts of Jesus are examples for us (1 Thes. 5:18).

V. THE MIRACLE PRODUCED FOOD FOR ALL (6:41b-42).

A. He gave to all: "And brake the loaves; and he gave to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all" (41b).

1. A sublime moment: As the Lord "broke" it, the food was multiplied.

2. God's word is likewise inexhaustible, even though divided and distributed.

3. God still works through human instrumentality (John 6:51; cf. Matt. 28:18).