

Miracles



Small Group Resource
August 2026

Matthew 14: 12-21



BIG Idea!

FEEDING THE 5000+

Within the Gospel of Matthew there are two accounts of Jesus feeding great multitudes of people, with only a few loaves of bread and some salted fish. Chapter 14 records the first of these miracles, taking place immediately after Jesus learns of John the Baptist's execution. Despite His grief, Jesus had compassion on the large crowd who had tracked Him down in the wilderness. As well as healing their sick, Jesus instructed the Disciples to share what meager rations of food they had. Miraculously, 5000 men, plus the women and children who were present, were fed that day. In fact, 12 baskets of food were leftover. A significant number, confirming in the minds of many that Jesus really was the "new Moses". For just as Moses called down manna from Heaven in the wilderness, here Jesus had demonstrated that He could provide for all 12 tribes of Israel (Exo 16:14-18).

DIGGING Deeper!

Context:

It is significant that the feeding of the 5000+ appears in all 4 Gospels. Everything from the terrible event preceding the miracle, the desolate location and the ordinary nature of the food which was multiplied (barley loaves and salted fish being a staple part of the Galilean diet) serves to ground the story in its time and place.

From the Jewish perspective, both the setting and time of day were deeply significant. As the messiah-apparent, Jesus was expected to behave like the heroes of Israel's history. While Jesus frequently subverted these expectations, miraculously feeding 5000+ Jews in the wilderness clearly placed Jesus in the same leader/saviour role which Moses occupied in Exodus. The fact that evening was approaching, which signalled the beginning of a new day within Jewish culture, served to underscore this comparison. In the Exodus story, God provided Quail in the evening and manna in the morning (Exo 16:11-18). In this story, Jesus provided both bread and meat on the eve of a new day.

In practical terms, the crowd who had followed Jesus were about to be stuck in the wilderness, in the dark with no food. Symbolically, both they and their forefathers had followed their leaders into the wilderness, before finding themselves in need of divine provision. For Moses, this meant intercession. For Jesus, however, He was able to address the people's needs *directly* and yet cooperatively. Jesus did not summon food from Heaven, rather He multiplied what food the people had. This difference in provision highlights important differences between Moses and Jesus, the latter being the Messiah and the Son of God, as well as highlighting the unique characteristics of this new Kingdom Jesus had come to establish.



Start by checking in with how everyone is doing and ask a state of your soul question.



Today's Reading: **Matthew 14:12 - 21**

READ the verses out loud.

THEN and THERE

Imagine meeting Jesus during the feast. What would you say to him

Read Digging Deeper.

DISCUSS

Has anyone had an experience with miracles? What was it like?

QUESTIONS to Consider

1. How do you think Jesus felt, trying to escape the crowds only to have thousands follow Him into the desert?
2. What does this story tell us about Christ's character?
3. What do you think about Jesus telling His Disciples "You feed them"?
4. Do you think miracles like this still happen today?
5. What impossible thing could you pray for today?

PRAY for each other and invite God into the impossible situations you are in or you know about..

1

PRAYER POINT

What can you pray for this week, for yourself, your family and friends?

2

ACTION POINT

What is our area of need?
How often do we ask God to meet them?

3

MISSION POINT

What does this miracle teach us about God's view of Hospitality?

Matthew 14: 22 - 33



BIG Idea!

JESUS AND PETER WALKING ON WATER.

Directly after the miraculous feeding of the thousands—where the disciples distributed bread provided by Jesus — they find themselves struggling with fear during a violent storm. As Jesus approaches them walking on the water, He demonstrates absolute mastery and authority over the chaotic waves. The repetition of these interconnected events across the Gospels underscores the immense weight they held for the early Church.

This narrative captures the paradox of the disciples' journey: they participate in miraculous acts through the Messiah's power, yet are easily overtaken by doubt and fear. This tension is highlighted by Peter. Responding courageously to Jesus' invitation, Peter steps onto the sea, only for his faith to falter. The moment he focuses on the wind, he begins to sink, and cries out in desperate need for rescue. For believers today, Peter's experience offers profound hope. As we engage in the miraculous callings of God, we will inevitably encounter moments where we succumb to fear and doubt. When we do, this story provides the assurance of Jesus' immediate presence; His hand always extended to catch us the moment we cry out. When living in the turmoil of life, we can be assured that we are seen by God. He does not always remove us from the storm; instead, He meets us within it, inviting us to have faith in Him. The all-powerful Creator is present within us through the Holy Spirit, empowering us to bring light to a broken world. Ultimately, our response must mirror that of the disciples: one of worship, acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah King, the Son of God, and the Saviour who holds us as His beloved children.



DIGGING Deeper!

Context:

In Matthew's gospel there is an immediacy that sounds more like Mark in that Jesus to rushes to get the disciples in a boat to head for the other shore. In John's gospel there is no such urgency however there is a hint that the people were wanting to make Jesus the Messiah King that would start the revolution against the Roman tyranny they were living under.

Jesus not only dismisses the disciples from such conversations but he himself retreats to the solitude of a mountain to realign himself with the Father in prayer. Experienced sailors and fishermen battle against the tempest on the lake and struggle to make headway on a journey that would usually take them several hours at the most and were seen still fighting the waves between 3 – 6am when Jesus joins them walking on the water.

On encountering Jesus walking on the water they cry out in fear and terror where he speaks courage and peace to them. Peter, known for his impetuosity, leaps out to accept Jesus' invitation and finds himself sinking as he gave into his fear only to be rescued by Jesus immediately and they get into the boat. The storm is calmed and they go on their way to the other side.

If Feeding the thousands is a picture of the vocation of a disciple to take part in the miraculous Kingdom of God, this story is a picture of a life of faith, or maybe more accurately of faith mixed with doubt and fear which is the common state for us as Christian believers.

Start by checking in with how everyone is doing and ask a state of your soul question.



Today's Reading: Matthew 14: 22-33

READ the verses out loud.

Read Digging Deeper.

DISCUSS

When was the last time you felt nudged by the Holy Spirit to do something out of the ordinary?

QUESTIONS to Consider

1. What sticks out to you about these verses?
2. How is this story helpful for us in our journey as disciples of Jesus?
3. What does it feel like when you feel the nudge from God to do something specific?
4. What is the most outlandish thing you have done as a response to God's prompting?
5. When do you feel like you failed at doing something in faith? What do you think God's response to that was?

PRAY for each other that we would feel the nudge to do something outside our comfort zone and do something about it.

1

PRAYER POINT

Pray that God would give us courage as we obey his call to serve other.

2

ACTION POINT

Do one act of kindness this week as you are prompted by the Holy Spirit.

3

MISSION POINT

Acknowledge one place where you might need to take a risk as you follow Jesus this week.

Matthew 15: 10-28



BIG Idea!

ULTIMATE WORTH

At the beginning of the chapter, we find Jesus criticising Israel's religious leaders for their hypocritical stance on purity (Matt 15:1-20). Yet, in the very next story, Jesus seems to contradict His own values. When approached by a non-Jewish woman, begging Jesus to heal her demon-possessed daughter, Jesus appears to ignore her. It's not until the Disciples are suitably irritated that Jesus addresses the woman, only to dismiss her request with a derogatory ethnic term (Matt 15:26). It was as if Jesus had suddenly decided that His miracles were the exclusive purview of ethnic Jews. A wider reading of Matthew's Gospel, however, reveals numerous occasions where Jesus interacts with and heals multitudes of non-Jewish persons (Matt 4:24-25; 8:5-13). The famous singular example is undoubtedly the Centurion's servant, healed by Jesus despite being a considerable distance away from Him. The fact that a non-Jewish woman should request the same miracle a few chapters later, but be rebuffed in such an uncharacteristic manner, suggests that Jesus was deliberate in His apparent contradiction. Christ's ruse was intended to draw out the profound statement of faith, made with determined humility, that we see in verse 28. Jesus casts Himself in the role of the hypocritical religious leaders, contrasting their values with the values of His redemptive ministry which were so powerfully affirmed by an incredible women, whom Christ's own countrymen would have dismissed as 'impure'.



DIGGING Deeper!

Context:

In Mark chapter 7 we are provided with a second, complementary account of Jesus' dealings with the Canaanite woman (Mark 7:24-30). Mark's source places Jesus within a home on the outskirts of the city of Tyre. Jesus' intention, it seems, was to rest. However, word gets out and soon a local woman appears at the door, begging Jesus to heal her daughter. Mark describes the woman not as a Canaanite but as a Greek, born in the local area. It is notable that being Greek would not have bought this woman any special treatment in Jewish eyes. The Greeks were, of course, previous oppressors of the Jewish people, regarded just as poorly as the Canaanite's, Syrian's and Phoenician peoples who also laid claim to the region we know today as Lebanon. Indeed, the geopolitical nature of the lands north of Galilee make for an interesting backdrop to the events of Matthew 15 and Mark 7. Aside from the historical grievances between Israel and her northern neighbours, the story of Elijah and the Widow from 1st Kings 17 took place within the same region. In spite of Elijah being 'Israel's Prophet' God calls Him to the aid of a woman and her son on the verge of starvation near the city of Sidon (1 Kings 17:7-24). Through Elijah, their meagre supply of bread is miraculously multiplied and the woman's son is returned to life following a terminal illness. Significantly, these themes of bread and healing are repeated in Matthew and Mark's account, involving yet another non-Jewish family.



1

PRAYER POINT

What can you pray for this week, for yourself, your family and friends?

2

ACTION POINT

What are the equivalents to the racial tensions we see in Jesus day? How can we address them?

3

MISSION POINT

Are there people, or types of people, that we struggle to care for? Can we imagine them receiving a miracle?

Start by checking in with how everyone is doing and ask a state of your soul question.



Today's Reading: Matthew 15: 10-28

READ the verses out loud.

THEN and THERE

Try to imagine the cultural divides of Jesus day. Imagine trying to build a community in the midst of these deeply held ethnic tensions.

Read Digging Deeper.

DISCUSS

What do we make of the tactics Jesus uses to challenge the woman in this story?

What does this teach us about God's character? Is it ever appropriate for a Christian to behave in this way?

QUESTIONS to Consider

1. What sticks out to you about these verses?
2. What do you suppose the mother was thinking when Jesus initially refused to heal her daughter?
3. What can we learn about God from the woman's response in verse 28?
4. How would you explain the concept of faith to someone?
5. Did this story challenge your definition of faith?

PRAY for each other that we would see how God wants us to see and communicate with others.