

They record a lot of the same events, but they also each give different stories and fill in different details. When we put all four together, we know a lot about our Savior. Of all the miracles Jesus did, only two miracles are recorded in all four gospels. Can you guess what they are? This one—the feeding of the 5,000. What do you think the other miracle is that’s recorded in all four gospels? It’s the story of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead on Easter morning. Those are the only two miracles recorded in all four gospels—Jesus feeding over 5,000 people and Jesus rising from the dead.

Why repeat these two stories more than any others? The whole purpose of the Bible is this: *“These words are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name”* (John 20:31). The purpose of the Bible is to give us faith in Jesus. So the story of how Jesus rose from the dead is indispensable. Jesus died on the cross for our sins—including our doubts and our worries. Then Jesus rose so that you can go to heaven. But sometimes we Christians talk as if all God’s blessings are kept up in heaven and we have to fend for ourselves here on earth. That’s not true at all! So God made sure to tell us how Jesus feed the 5,000. Your salvation is by Christ alone. But so is the food you eat. So is the job you have. It’s all in Christ alone. I can place my hope in Christ alone from food to forgiveness to salvation—everything!

I wish I could tell you I’ve got this down perfectly. I don’t! But I can see the blessing God holds out to us. Our hope doesn’t depend on the place we live. It doesn’t depend on the amount of money we have. Our hope doesn’t depend on how well our relationships are going. On Christ alone my hope is found. When you have a disagreement with that person you care about, it hurts. But remember you’re trusting in Christ alone. When you fail in a way that you didn’t think possible. When you think thoughts that make you ashamed. When you do again what you promised never to do, your hope isn’t placed in you. It’s in Christ alone! When finances are tight, when you don’t know how you’ll make it through the next year, it’s scary. But remember your hope is really placed in Christ alone.

There was once a little boy whose mom packed him a lunch. As he went off for the day, maybe to play with some friends, he came across a crowd of people excited about something—he wasn’t sure what. So he went to see. Before he knew it, this little boy was being led to the very front of the crowd. The man at the center of all the attention took his little lunch—and used it to feed thousands of people. What do you think that boy went home thinking? The Bible doesn’t tell us, but I bet that boy had two thoughts on his mind. First, this Jesus guy is cool! He can do anything! I want to trust in him. Second, it feels good to let God use us—and whatever he’s given us big or small—according to his plan. When you’re overwhelmed, go to Jesus and pray, “Jesus, you can feed 5,000 people with a little boy’s lunch. You can even raise yourself from the dead. So please let me trust in you—for everything. Then grant me the patience to watch you guide my life.” In Christ alone.

Mark 6:35-44
Pastor Nathan Nass

Pentecost 8
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³⁵ By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. “This is a remote place,” they said, “and it’s already very late. ³⁶ Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.” ³⁷ But he answered, “You give them something to eat.” They said to him, “That would take eight months of a man’s wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?” ³⁸ “How many loaves do you have?” he asked. “Go and see.” When they found out, they said, “Five—and two fish.” ³⁹ Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰ So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. ⁴¹ Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. ⁴² They all ate and were satisfied, ⁴³ and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. ⁴⁴ The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

In Christ Alone

I think I know how they felt—Jesus’ disciples. They stood there staring at a huge crowd—over 5,000 people. They felt at least partially responsible for all those people. It was late in the day. Everybody was hungry. What were they going to do? They must have felt overwhelmed. It was too much! I think know how they felt—it sounds like soccer camp! So many kids! A number of our volunteers admitted to taking naps in the afternoons this week. Not cat naps. Long naps! Of course, I’m thankful for every child who came. We only had 160 kids at soccer camp. Can you imagine having 5,000 men and their families all together—I don’t think we’re going to let our camp get quite that big! Overwhelming. Stressful. You know the feeling.

The disciples’ day wasn’t supposed to go like this. They had just gotten back from a mission trip. They were excited, but tired. So Jesus had said, *“Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”* They got in a boat and sailed across the Sea of Galilee to relax. But when they got to the other side, there were thousands of people! The people had run about 8 miles around the lake to meet them. The disciples just wanted to relax. But how often does that work out? It would be nice if life’s challenges would always come one at a time and only after a full night’s rest. But that’s not how it works! When you’re tired, the last thing you want is to be around a big crowd...

Not Jesus. Jesus is always focused on people. We so often focus our lives on things or details or events in the calendar. Jesus is always focused on people. The verse before our lesson is beautiful. It said, *“When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.”* Jesus always had time for people. But the disciples didn’t! So the disciples faced this challenge. They were tired and hungry. They could see that these thousands of people were

tired and hungry. The stress piled up. They got frantic and worried. Does that happen to you?

Well, the disciples did a good thing: They went to Jesus! *“By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. ‘This is a remote place,’ they said, ‘and it’s already very late. Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.’”* It was good they went to Jesus, but look at what they said. Was it a prayer or a command? *“Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.”* Prayer or command? It’s a command, right? When they felt overwhelmed, they went to Jesus and told him exactly what to do!

You’d think that wouldn’t happen. Who has a right to tell God what to do? Except how often don’t we do that very thing? When you talk to God, do you pray or command? I served at a church in Houston for one year to help start a Hispanic church there. During the year, there was a big celebration at church. The English speaking members wanted to invite the new Hispanic members to bring some food to the party. So I asked the ladies coordinating the event what the Hispanic members could bring. They said, “Oh, they can bring whatever they want to bring, as long as it’s a Texas sheet cake.” I said, “Huh? That doesn’t seem to give them many options.” “Oh, don’t worry. They can bring anything they want to as long as it’s a Texas sheet cake.” How often isn’t that us with God? “God, do whatever you want. I trust in you. Do whatever you want as long as it’s exactly this one thing that I want!” Is that faith?

Here was Jesus’ surprising response, *“You give them something to eat.”* The disciples had acted as though they were in charge, so Jesus said, “Okay, if you’re in charge, give them something to eat!” How often doesn’t God let us have our own way to teach us a lesson? Sometimes when we tell God, “Do it my way...” God says, “Okay, I’ll let you do it your way and see how that turns out!” As John writes about his same event in his gospel, he says that Jesus wanted to test his disciples. I think the test was this: Whom would they turn to? When they faced a big challenge—feeding 5,000 plus people—whom would they trust in?

Instead of trusting in Jesus, they started to do the math. How much food would it take? Let’s put it in terms we can understand—pizza. How much pizza would it take to feed 5,000 men and their families? We fed 50 volunteers at soccer camp with 18 pizzas. So let’s estimate 3 people per pizza. There were 5,000 men, plus women and children. Let’s imagine there were 12,000 people—the same size as the city of Saint Peter. 12,000 people would need about 4,000 pizzas. A large is \$7.99 at Dominos... plus a tip for the semi-truck pizza delivery guy. That would be about \$35,000. That’s exactly what the disciples came up with: *“That would take eight months of a man’s wages!”* they said. What were they admitting? “Jesus, we can’t do it!”

And I bet Jesus smiled! That was the whole point, right? They couldn’t do it! They couldn’t solve this challenge on their own. Remember how the Bible called this a test for his disciples? This was the test: Do you trust in Jesus? Not just trust in Jesus for eternal life in heaven—as if that were a small thing. Do you trust in Jesus for everything?

This whole trusting in God business sounds so simple, right? Then why are we so worried? Why do we get so stressed? Why do we live at such a frantic pace? It seems like you finally get your finances in order, then garage door breaks again. You make great vacation plans, and then someone gets sick. You get your marriage headed in the right direction, and then suddenly you have a bad day or a bad week. You try to steer clear of conflict, but then that coworker or neighbor challenges you right to your face. How do you react in those situations? Worried? Stressed? Is that a sign our trust isn’t placed in Christ alone?

Here’s why this is so important: We’re saved by faith in Jesus. That’s the most important message of the Bible. That’s what we emphasized all week long at soccer camp. So if we can trust in Jesus to save us from our sins and take us to heaven, can we can trust in Jesus for our marriage, for our food, for our job? Of course! Or, on the flip side, if I don’t trust Jesus with something as simple as the weather or my health, am I really trusting in Jesus for my salvation? Do you see why even such common things like worry are really such a big deal? Now, if you worried today, I’m not saying that you don’t have faith in Jesus. I am saying, however, that if we constantly worry about _____, then we may not be trusting in Christ. In whom is your hope placed? Here are warning signs: Worry. Feeling overwhelmed. Stressed out.

Jesus wants to take all that away. Watch him do this miracle! Jesus makes it seem simple. Remember what we’re talking about here—like 4000 pizzas! *“How many loaves do you have?”* he asked. The disciples went and searched. They must have been disappointed to say, *“Five—and two fish.”* I picture Jesus saying, “Oh, great! That’s plenty!” The disciples must have thought, “Huh?” Jesus takes that little bit of food—and what does he do? He gives thanks to God. He knew where every good and perfect gift comes from! And he started handing out food. It shouldn’t have taken long, right? Just five loaves and two fish...

Except, the food kept on coming. It must have been shocking! How did this miracle work? We don’t know many details. Did he just keep handing them more and more bread and fish from the basket? Did tons of food just appear? I picture it like snack time at soccer camp. We have great volunteers, so when I turn around, the food’s there! Then more kids come. And there’s more food. Then more kids come. And there’s more again. It must have been amazing! Can you see the disciples’ eyes grow wider and wider? More? And more? And more? What do you think was going on in their hearts? “Wow! Jesus can do everything!” It hadn’t been written yet, but maybe they thought something like the words of the hymn we sang before the sermon: “In Christ alone, my hope is found.” Our hope is not in Christ plus our plans. It’s not in Christ plus all my talents. It’s not in Christ plus the money I’ve got saved up. It’s not in Christ plus my spouse or children or friends. In Christ alone, my hope is found. You can place your hope in Christ alone for everything—from the food we eat to forgiveness and salvation.

God really wants you to believe that. Here’s proof: There are four gospels in the Bible. Four books at the beginning of the New Testament that tell about the life of Jesus. Remember what the four gospels are? (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John). They all tell about the life of Jesus.