

## The Fame of Jesus: Serve to Bless

### Matthew 14:13-21

**MPS** Jesus is Messiah who is worthy to be served that His Name might spread and bless all peoples.

**OBJ** Jesus as Messiah moves His followers to serve His Fame to bless others by **Three Motivations**.

**INTRO** Jesus wants us to radically reorient how we think about the most ordinary experiences of everyday, so we will serve to bless. **Are you ready to walk away today thinking differently about everything you see?**

#### **READ** Matthew 14:13-21

*Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. <sup>14</sup>When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick. <sup>15</sup>Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves." <sup>16</sup>But Jesus said, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." <sup>17</sup>They said to him, "We have only five loaves here and two fish." <sup>18</sup>And he said, "Bring them here to me." <sup>19</sup>Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. <sup>20</sup>And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. <sup>21</sup>And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children. **Matthew 14:13-21***

**Jesus withdraws by a boat to a desolate place to be alone.** This is likely a response to the news that John has been executed by Herod. Grieving over the news of John's death and weighed down by the reality of what was before him, Jesus withdrew to be alone with the Father, the most regular practice of Jesus. But when he arrived at the other side, people were already waiting on him. And it didn't take long for word to spread and the crowd to grow. Matthew records Jesus felt compassion for the crowd, so he healed their sick. **No one has ever felt the weightiness of sin's brokenness in this world more acutely than the One who came to make all things new; and He tirelessly served to see people's lives blessed.**

By late afternoon Jesus' disciples approached him to recommend dismissing the crowd so they could eat. But Jesus tells the disciples to feed the crowd. They respond that they only have five loaves and two fish, a meager portion from a boy. Jesus tells them to bring it to him. He instructs the people to sit down on the grass, a posture that typically signals preparation for a meal. He then takes the loaves and fish, looks up to heaven and says a blessing, breaks the loaves and gave it to the disciples, and instructs them to feed the crowd. The next thing Matthew records is that all ate and were satisfied, twelve baskets full of broken pieces were left over, and thousands were fed. And with that Matthew makes no further comment. **Jesus takes a meager portion measured to feed a boy and blesses it to satisfy the multitude of thousands.**

**TRANS** Pause here for a moment and let this sink in. Those who have heard it so many times are likely to move quickly past without due consideration. And those who have heard it for the first time to dismiss with speculation of fairytale or hyperbole. Both are wrong responses to this record of Jesus' fame.

Honestly, I am curious what transpired between verses 19 and 20. **Was the multiplication immediate, or slowly as they served the people?** Dozens of questions immediately come to mind. But for Matthew, none of those are important to record. Matthew aims to show us Jesus' response to the multitude, then reveal what Jesus can do by the difference of what was given to Him versus what the disciples collected. And in this way, let the fame of Jesus stand on the power of the difference Jesus made by a miracle.

**Jesus is Messiah who is worthy to be served that His Name might spread and bless all peoples.**

Redemptive-Historical Purpose / Literary Purpose



**Matthew 14 records miracles that frame Jesus as Messiah.**<sup>1</sup> The feeding 5,000 is one of the most well-known stories in all the Bible. The only miracle of Jesus recorded in all four gospels.<sup>2</sup> Matthew reveals Jesus identity as the Messiah of God.<sup>3</sup> His mighty works demonstrate that he is powerful, but more importantly prove that He is God, and form the stories of his fame of which Herod heard. [Jesus feeds thousands not merely to satisfy their hunger nor amuse their imaginations, but to command their attention that He is the Messiah of God come to satisfy their souls.](#)

[Jesus is Messiah who is worthy to be served that His Name might spread and bless all peoples.](#)

[OBJ Jesus sends His followers to serve His Name by Three Motivations and Three Principles.](#)

### [1. Jesus proves He is the Messiah, the Christ of God.](#)

As Jesus receives the news of John's death, He knows the time for His identity to be made public has come. Matthew presents this miracle for the same reason Jesus performed it, to reveal that He is the Messiah, the Christ of God. Jesus feeding the hungry reminds us of God's provision of manna, bread from heaven (Exodus 16), of how God fed many men through Elisha (2 Kings 4:42-44), and even foreshadows how Jesus will introduce the Lord's Supper. So Jesus came doing the works of God, just as the prophets foretold. But nothing more of this passage matters if we move past this revelation for us today; Jesus is worthy because He is God. Jesus says, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* (John 14:6) [Of first importance for all who encounter Jesus is this; to understand that He did not come to entertain, impress, awe, or even only to aid. Jesus reveals Himself for you to believe that He is God, and to trust Him for salvation. Jesus is worthy of your whole life worship. Have you settled in your heart and mind to trust in Him?](#)

### [2. Jesus serves people to meet their ultimate need of salvation from sin.](#)

Jesus repeatedly met physical needs, but it was always to reveal that He was God who had come to bring eternal salvation. His compassion for people is regularly recorded and demonstrated by His mighty acts, but His ministry is never to minister to one's physical state without addressing their eternal soul. [Jesus meets physical needs to invite people to believe for eternal healing.](#)

Matthew reveals Jesus' focus in how he records the miracle. Jesus' power is amplified by the small portion brought to Him and the collected amount brought back after everyone had eaten. And don't miss that last word that describes how every person was affected by the miracle; everyone that ate was *satisfied* (14:20). Think about this: when Herod exercised his power, everyone was traumatized, but Jesus satisfied. Food spoke to the immediate needs of people as a sign to reveal Jesus as the Messiah who had come to save to satisfy their ultimate need. [Jesus' power is sufficient to meet the greatest need of eternal salvation for all who believe in Him.](#)

[Jesus waits today, inviting you to believe in Him. His power will always far exceed your need. Have you trusted Jesus to satisfy the great need of your soul, the forgiveness of your sin?](#)

### [3. Jesus sends His followers to serve and bless so people will believe in His Name.](#)

<sup>1</sup>John Nolland, [The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text](#), New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005), 587. Nolland writes, "The feeding miracle is framed by material that is centrally interested in the identity of Jesus and so is to be read primarily in terms of its contribution to christology."

<sup>2</sup>Donald A. Hagner, [Matthew 14–28](#), vol. 33B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1995), 415. Hagner notes, "In this pericope, which is the only miracle of Jesus found in all four Gospels (cf. John 6:1–15),"

<sup>3</sup>R. T. France, [Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 1, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 238. France notes, "The fact that all four Evangelists record it (and Matthew and Mark both record a second such incident) indicates that it was important to their understanding of Jesus."



Jesus performs this miracle to prove that He is God. But for his disciples, Jesus draws them in to the moment to understand serving in His Name.<sup>4</sup> Jesus' compassion for people means His disciples have a responsibility to minister to the crowds so He can meet their spiritual needs. And surely his disciples learned this third lesson about serving, that a lack of natural resource never means lack of supernatural provision for ministry. [Jesus sends Christ-followers to serve in His Name that people might believe in Him.](#)

### Three Principles for Serving in Jesus' Name

#### 1. Serving Jesus' Name is essential to spreading Jesus' fame.

When we come to know WHO Jesus is, we know He is worthy of our whole life serving His Name. Jesus taught His disciples that ministry in the most normal of life circumstances is most impactful to reveal the most potent of eternal realities, namely that He is Lord! Ours is not to be somebody so we can make Jesus look better; living sacrifice is better than "sham-wow"! [Christ-followers serve with our whole life to testify that Jesus is worthy and invite others to believe in Him.](#)

#### 2. Jesus' power is essential for serving His Name.

Jesus' counters the disciples' conclusions to teach them to trust His power. Consider the back-and-forth of verses 15-16, 17-18, and 20-21; each noted by a "But..." (*ho de*). Jesus radically re-orientes the disciples' thinking about ministry in normal circumstances. They want to send the crowds away. Jesus says for them to feed them. They remind Jesus how little they have. Jesus invites them to bring their little to Him. Jesus blesses and breaks the bread, then sends the disciples to serve. We don't know all the how, but we do know what happened; every person got served until they were satisfied. Matthew's point is not simply feeding people, but the abundance of Jesus' power and blessing that remained when everyone was satisfied. The amount left over compared to the amount they started with demonstrates the vast sufficiency of His power and provision that far exceeds the need.

We will not cure every hunger nor clothe every nakedness in this world. But we must never dismiss His power and reduce ministry to what we can accomplish. When we serve in His Name, we know that our ministry serves His power; we minister while He multiplies the provision. When you serve in Jesus' Name, you are never 'just passing out sardines and cold rolls.' Serving Jesus' will always be through our strength, and often the lack of it, but never in our strength. Serving Jesus is about considering what He wants to do before we conclude what we cannot do. We must counter our natural mindset to implement His supernatural power. We depend on the power of His Name. Serving in Jesus' Name means every need and work goes to Him before we go to people. [Christ-followers serve because ministry in Jesus' Name is always accompanied by His power to save.](#)

#### 3. Serving Jesus' Name changes the servant when we experience His power.

Those in the crowd were satisfied by the miracle, but their response is not recorded. We don't know all they knew about the miracle, though later it will be clear when the news of Jesus' fame reaches Herod. But consider those who DID serve and saw the miracle AS IT manifested right in front of their eyes. They were changed as they knew what they started with, saw how it multiplied, and gathered up more than twelve times what they started with. The disciples started by all brining one basket to Jesus to bless. But when the serving was done, each one brought a basket back to testify to Jesus' power! The best time to bask in the full glory of Jesus' power is at the end of the day when the baskets get collected that testify to His power. Friend, you miss the biggest blessing of serving when you are always first out the door.

You've got to be present when the baskets are collected to behold the wonder of Jesus' miraculous power. Showing up week after week, serving to love, encourage, and teach, it is often like passing a basket on the lawn. With each person you think, "I don't know if I have enough to go around." Weekly faithfulness in serving can be exhausting. The Evil One will see to it that every opportunity for you to be discouraged and doubt will arise. But when you serve faithfully you get to see a child learn to Jesus, or Christ being formed in a student, a marriage on the brink begin to heal, or another confesses

<sup>4</sup>D. A. Carson, "[Matthew.](#)" in The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 340. Carson notes, "but the text focuses more on Jesus' compassion (14:14), on the responsibility of the disciples to minister to the crowds (v. 16), and on this miracle of creation."



Christ and is baptized. Yes, the daily, weekly, and seasonal demand of ministry is exhausting. I never find my energy sufficient for the demand of the work. When the first basket rolls in, you say to yourself, “well, maybe everything wasn’t a complete waste of time.” But by the time the last basket gets brought in, when you hear and see the testimonies of lives changes, even in exhaustion, there is always the glory of wonder and awe at the unending power of God at work. And THAT changes me. I want to be there when the last basket gets brought to Jesus because I want to see ALL His wonder-working power and be changed by it. And I want you standing beside me too, LifePoint. [The miracle of Jesus’ power is always most powerfully displayed at the end of the day! And that is the moment your heart is most changed, because you’ve beheld the glory of Jesus’ power.](#)

[Jesus is Messiah who is worthy to be served that His Name might spread and bless all peoples.](#)

**CLOSE** Jesus proves that He is God by His mighty works, and that He has come to meet our greatest need. [Have you repented of your sin and trusted Jesus to receive His forgiveness and cleansing from sin?](#)

Jesus sends His followers to serve in His Name so others can know Him and believe. [Christ-follower, are you serving so the Name of Jesus can bless and spread to all people?](#)

