

## JESUS CHRIST, JEHOVAH JIREH (Mk. 6:33-44)

The disciples had recently returned from the mission to which Jesus had sent them (Mk. 6:7-13), and they were full of great reports (v.30). He then took them out of the people's gaze and brought them to a secluded place in which they could rest (v.31,32). However, the peace and quiet was not to last, as Mark records, **33** *And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent [got ahead of] them, and came together unto him. ...* That is the enthusiasm these Galileans had! ... They were in pursuit of a 'super man' ... the 'major attraction' of the day! Everyone wanted to be where He was so they could see what He would do next. He was an absolute phenomenon!

From this ministry in Galilee Jesus would then go north-west toward Tyre and Sidon, then return to come back down again for one last time into Galilee before going on towards Judea and Jerusalem, and to the cross.

So, He has been preaching and working miracles throughout the whole area for over a year ... and the crowds who had come to see Him were getting larger all the time. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke tell us there were five thousand *men* ... and Matthew places it all into the proper context, **Mt. 14:21** ... *beside women and children.* ... So, five thousand men, and double that for their wives ... and maybe even go on to triple it to include their children, the grandmothers, the grandfathers, etc ... There could easily have been well in excess of 20,000 people there that day!

Incidentally, only two of all the miracles Jesus performed are recorded by the four Gospel writers, - the miracle of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand plus. Therefore, in importance, this was a very significant occasion which we can read and study from four separate perspectives. It was so pivotal that John records the people wanted to make Jesus king ... and what a furore that would have caused! If the people would have gotten their way, they would have marched with Him at their head into Tiberias to overthrow Herod ... and then they would have confronted the Roman armies, reclaimed the land of Israel, and established the long-awaited Kingdom. ...

Well, that is not why Jesus came ... and He was going to have none of it, **Jn. 6:15** *When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.*

Fundamental to this miracle is the powerful picture of the Lord Jesus Christ as Jehovah Jireh, the Lord Who provides ... the Great Provider. And the first of His provisions, - as we have already considered, - was when He provided the much-

needed rest for His disciples, **Mk. 6:31** And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while ... We noticed how He had the need for rest when He fell asleep in the boat (Mk. 4:38) ... As the writer to the Hebrews reminds us, **Heb. 4:15** For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. ...

So, with the disciples, He sailed and rested on the short four miles distance by sea from Capernaum to the fairly isolated area on the outskirts of a small fishing village, as Luke tells us, **Lk. 9:10** And the apostles, when they were returned, told him all that they had done. And he took them, and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city [*πόλις*] called Bethsaida. This wasn't the much larger city also called Bethsaida from which Peter, Andrew, Philip and Nathanael came. Instead, this was the small fishing village of Bethsaida Julias (named after the daughter of Caesar Augustus), on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee ... and it was to the outskirts they went.

The people had ran round the top of the Sea of Galilee, - about eight miles, - and were already gathering for 'the next exciting episode', **Mk. 6:33** And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him. ... The people had actually arrived there sooner than Jesus! ... They were watching His boat from the shore.

Yes, but *why* were they in so much of a hurry to see Jesus? The answer is simple, but sad ... they were 'thrill-seekers' ... That's all ... they were simply fascinated by the spectacular. It is not so much what Jesus would *say*, as what He would *do*. ... They could not get enough of watching Him 'perform' these remarkable miracles, - they had never seen the likes of it before! ... And that was the reason they were following Him. It wasn't His preaching ... it was His 'performing'!

So, after the short 'break', - crossing the top end of the Sea of Galilee, - Jesus and the disciples once again launched into the work. From the time He disembarked from the boat (v.34a), He preached nothing else but repentance and forgiveness, and He taught concerning the Kingdom of God, and then He healed the sick ... Luke tells us, **Lk. 9:11** And the people, when they knew it, followed him: and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.

When the day was far spent (v.35). Mark then gives us a solemn insight into the heart of Jesus as He was with that vast crowd, **Mk. 6:34** And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things. ... He saw them

as being absolutely lost! Spiritually-speaking, they had no foundations. They had ‘religion’, but their ‘religion’ was not the religion of their forefathers, - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah and the prophets. Instead, their religion was manmade ... a religion that did not have God in its centre. It was a religion that kept these people in their spiritual darkness. ... And that is the reason John wrote, **Jn. 1:10** He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

Down through the centuries the people of Israel had been the most privileged of all the nations. God had been so good to them. He had given them the Scriptures, and the Covenants, they were chosen by God to be His people, to them were sent the prophets, to them the Gospel was first preached, and it was to them the Messiah was sent. But, despite all their privileges, they had exchanged what God had blessed them with for false and empty religion ... and it resulted in them being lost and wandering, **as sheep not having a shepherd**. ...

And that was how they had been for hundreds of years ... For example, near the end of his life, Moses prayed for a man to take over from him and lead the children of Israel so they would not become **as sheep which have no shepherd** (Num. 27:17). ... In II Kings 22 where King Ahab and King Jehoshaphat forged an alliance against the king of Syria, the prophet prophesied, **I Kings 22:17** And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd. ... And that was also how Ezekiel described them, **Ezek. 34:5** and they were scattered, because there is no shepherd ... **6** My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.

In all those years, these same people by the side of the Sea of Galilee were part of this nation **as sheep not having a shepherd** (Mk. 6:34) and that is why Jesus the Messiah was sent to bring them the truth of God’s Kingdom. And when He had preached to them He attended to their physical needs, **Mt. 14:14** ... he healed their sick. ... Yes, the darkness of their souls touched His heart, as did their pains and suffering. With that great multitude He demonstrated “Mercy there was great, and grace was free”. He felt compassion for every single member of that vast throng, - such is the wonderful love of God. Among those people, there was *none* He did not love. There was *none* He would have rejected ... and yet, *they* only wanted Him as a spectacle, to satisfy their curiosity and to heal them from their illnesses.

At the end of that long day, - and after all His teaching and preaching, - it was getting late, **Mk. 6:35** ... the day was now far spent. He would have been tired. The disciples would have been tired, and the people also would have been tired.

The disciples could see nothing else for it than to send the multitudes away back home to where they came from, and that is what they said to Jesus. <sup>35</sup> And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed: <sup>36</sup> Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat. It was perfectly obvious they, - the disciples, - had next-to-nothing to eat! But, send the people away off to look after themselves for we definitely have not sufficient to feed them with, and they are not really our responsibility anyway.

What was Jesus to do? He knew what He was going to do ... These people needed feeding and He was going to feed them. How was He going to feed them? With what?! ... Well, here we have a simple illustration of what is called 'common grace'. Common grace is what God gives to all people, regardless of whether they acknowledge His goodness or not. And here were people who had no intention of making any commitment to Jesus and yet He was prepared and planning to look after their needs. That is common grace. ... God even looks after people who don't look after Him. He gives them many good things they don't deserve, **Ps. 136:1** O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

This means He didn't go in among the people and individually say, "you deserve to be fed, but you don't". There was no discrimination of any kind for His provision would be for all. He has already fed them spiritual food, and now He is about to feed all who were there with physical food. ... They were in a 'desert place' ... not a 'desert desert' place, but a lonely solitary place, indicated by Mark specifically recording how the people sat on *green* grass (v.39). This was springtime on a beautiful Galilean hillside, overlooking the stunning Sea of Galilee. Idyllic! ... In the company of Jesus ... and yet the stark spiritual reality was the people were like sheep having no shepherd.

And then Jesus said to the disciples, <sup>37</sup> He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. ... You disciples, *you* give them something to eat. ... But Lord, what have we got?! ... Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat? Or, as John records it, **Jn. 6:5** ... he [*Jesus*] saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? <sup>6</sup> And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. <sup>7</sup> Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.

But can you see what lay behind the words of Jesus? ... What had the disciples just come back from doing? ... <sup>30</sup> And the apostles gathered themselves together unto

Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. Previously He had sent them off <sup>13</sup> And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them. ... They had put their faith into action *then* and done many mighty works for the Lord, so why can't they do the same *now* and provide the food for this great multitude since they had already experienced the miraculous power of God throughout the towns and villages?!

They had been studying the Scriptures ... They could have looked back to when the Hebrews were travelling through the wilderness with Moses, and every morning they went out and there was manna waiting for them ... And there was also Elijah, at the brook Cherith, being fed every day by the ravens ... And there was the widow of Zarephath who went out to her near-empty barrel of grain every morning ... and there was always sufficient. ... Does God only do miracles for other people, and not me?!

And Andrew speaks up, **Jn. 6:9** There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? ... Look at the expressions on the disciples' faces, *unbelievable!* ... In fact, that is exactly how the disciples were behaving ... *unbelieving!* ... That is a poor testimony for believers ... to *unbelieve!*

Nevertheless, Jesus <sup>39</sup> ... commanded them [*the disciples*] to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. <sup>40</sup> And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties. He is the God of order, and for His provisions to be distributed His Word had to be obeyed. ... What a job it would have been getting all those *thousands* of people into order! But it had to be done the way Jesus commanded for He is not the author of confusion (I Cor. 14:33).

And the crowd is sitting in their rows, waiting in anticipation ... And the disciples are wondering what is happening. Well, it happens, <sup>41</sup> And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, ... He presented His Heavenly Father before that great multitude (**Jn. 17:4** I have glorified thee on the earth), ... and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all. <sup>42</sup> And they did all eat, and were filled.

It was late in the day but the Lord worked it out that all the people who sought food would be fed, and be on their way home before the evening. He looked after their every need. They returned better than they had arrived. They were full up. They were satisfied.

That is the provision Jesus handed out that day and, in fact, when it was all over **43** they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes. No one went away hungry ... if they did it wasn't Jesus' fault!

Twelve baskets ... one left over for each and every one of the twelve tribes of His beloved Israel for whom He sent His Son, **Mt. 1:21** ... and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Another verse springs into mind, **Rom. 11:26** And so all Israel shall be saved for God has already provided in the sacrifice of His Son the sufficient amount of His ransom paid for the salvation of His ancient and beloved people. Here is how He has it planned, **Amos 9:14** And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel [... *these people who are presently wandering as sheep without a shepherd ...*], and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. **15** And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God. ... **Zech. 13:1** In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. ... **14:8** And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem ... in summer and in winter shall it be. **9** And the LORD shall be king over all the earth.

The Lord Jesus Christ ... The Great Provider ... the *Jehovah Jireh*. He does not give us what we deserve. Instead, He gives us what we do *not* deserve. He even gives us what we never would have considered asking for. ... That is *grace* ... God's sovereign, electing, and sustaining grace. ... That is why He came ... to be our ransom on Calvary, to take our sins upon Himself so that we would believe in Him as Saviour and Lord and become acceptable onto His Father as His sons and daughters, and inheritors of the Kingdom. Saved, and born again of the Holy Spirit!

... And the wonderful conclusion to that special day down by the shores of Galilee was this ... **Mk. 6:42** And they did all eat, and were filled. ... It was a miracle of God's grace upon an undeserving people ... What a powerful testimony to His marvellous love and excellent glory. ... "I hunger and I thirst; Jesus, my manna be". Amen.