



Stuff They Didn't Teach Me In Sunday School



Episode 139 - A Tough Teaching to Swallow (John 6)

Feeding Five Thousand

In the accounts of this event in Matthew, Mark and Luke, the topic of feeding the crowd is not brought up until late in the day, after Jesus has been teaching the crowd. It almost seems like an afterthought, as though Jesus was too preoccupied with teaching to give any thought to the crowds' growing hunger. John corrects that mistaken view, showing us Jesus was planning on this meal from the very beginning, even while the crowds were still making their way toward Him. It is an important reminder that Jesus is constantly attentive to our every need.

- Why is it so easy to think God doesn't know or care about all our needs, or that He doesn't have a plan to provide for them?
- Why do you think Jesus asked Philip about buying bread to feed the crowds when He knew all along what He was going to do?

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). "Daily bread" calls to mind the manna God faithfully provided the Israelites day after day for 40 years, while they made their way through the wilderness. Our great Creator has promised to provide for all our physical needs as we pass through the wilderness of this earthly life, until we reach the Promised Land of heaven.

- Describe a time you were in need and how God provided for you in a timely, unexpected way.
- Why is it important to remember and talk about those acts of providence over and over again?

Walking across the Sea of Galilee

Having been healed of diseases as well as taught and fed by Jesus, the crowds are ready to make Him their king. But their idea of God's Kingdom isn't God the Father's idea. So Jesus sends the disciples across the Sea of Galilee by boat, while He remains to dismiss the crowd and pray in the hillside. Then late in the night, Jesus walks to them across the sea.

- Why were the disciples frightened when they first saw Jesus? (Mark 6:48-52.)
- A good number of Jesus' disciples were fishermen who had grown up and made their living on this sea. Why did Jesus perform so many miracles on these waters (miraculous catches of fish, storms stilled with a word, walking on the water)?
- Why do you think Jesus wanted His disciples to see this miracle, but not the crowds that followed them?

The Bread of Life

The Jewish crowds that gather around Jesus show just how fickle sinful humans can be. When He does something they like, they travel across land and sea to find Him. But when He says something they don't want to hear, they quickly turn their backs and walk away.

- What were the crowds really looking for when they crossed the Sea of Galilee in search of Jesus?
- What are some of the good and bad reasons people search for Jesus in the Bible and at church today?

Jesus exposed the wrong motives of the crowd. They were not really seeking to be part of His Kingdom; they wanted Him to provide food and healing for their kingdom.

- What percentage of your prayers would you guess focus on the earthly gifts Jesus gives (food, money, health, etc.), rather than your spiritual relationship with your Savior?
- What would you consider a good balance between physical and spiritual requests?

- What are the greater gifts Jesus wants to give to the crowds and us?

Not accepting that Jesus would give His gifts for free, the crowds ask what works they must do. In reply Jesus tells them the work God requires of them is simply to believe Jesus is the Son of God, the promised Savior.

- Why is it so difficult to accept we don't have to do anything to receive God's good gifts but simply believe He loves us and gives them to us for Jesus' sake?
- How can it help us grasp this wonderful gift if we think of the things earthly parents do for their young, helpless children?

As Jesus' discussion continued, He realized the crowds were getting increasingly troubled and offended by what He was saying. Despite the miracles they witnessed, they were finding it extremely difficult to believe this man could be the mighty Son of God (see verse 42). But rather than ease up, Jesus pushed His point harder, even saying they must eat His flesh and drink His blood.

- Why do you think some of the disciples turned away from Jesus?
- What things happen in life that can make it difficult to trust firmly in Jesus as our God and our Savior?
- Why is it so important to accept God as He reveals Himself to us and not try to judge Him by our own faulty reasoning?

When Jesus saw many in the crowds deserting Him, He asked His disciples if they wanted to leave as well. Peter replied, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that You are the Holy One of God."

- When we struggle through life and find ourselves questioning God's will and His love for us, how does Peter's question, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" put us back on track?