

March 14, 2004 by Steve Brandon



Miracles for the Multitudes

Matthew 15:29-39

1. Jesus heals (verses 29-31).
2. Jesus feeds (verses 32-39).

As we begin this morning, I want to give you a little bit of insight into how I prepare to preach to you each week. In my study, I try to immerse my mind with the text at hand. I begin each week by translating the Greek (or Hebrew) text and diagramming it, that I might understand the grammar of the text. Every week, I read 8-10 commentaries on the passage. A commentary is simply a book that is written to explain the Bible. The author of a commentary will often discuss the historical background of the passage, present different possible interpretations of the passage, and explain any translational difficulties that may be present. I read sermons that men have preached on this passage. The number of sermons I read each week varies depending on how many sermons I am able to find on that particular text. In addition, I have some audio resources that allow me to listen to sermons on the text each week. I have tapes and audio files from five different pastors who have preached through Matthew. I try to listen to a few of these tapes each week so that I might learn a few things from other pastors who have preached through the same passage. My goal in all of that is to saturate my mind with as much data about the passage as I can. Throughout the week, I am often on my knees with my Bible open, reading through the passage and praying for God to help me discern the meaning of the text. I trust that God will fill my heart to lead me in leading you as we learn the Bible together each week.

Now, in my preparation this week, I discovered something interesting. Several pastors who preached verse by verse, section by section through the book of Matthew spent very little time on our passage this morning. Rather than spending an entire message on the healing of the multitudes and the feeding of the multitudes, as we will do this morning, they sort of lumped it all at the end of a their messages on the Canaanite woman. I did some mathematical analysis this week and determined that one pastor spent 80% of his time in a sermon on the Canaanite woman and only 20% of his time on the healing of the multitudes and on the feeding of the multitudes. Another pastor spent 90% of his time on the Canaanite woman, with only 10% on the healings and the feeding of the 4,000. Another pastor skipped this passage all together, dealing with it when he preached on the feeding of the 5,000. The reason for this is pretty simple. Much of what is contained in our passage this morning has already been discussed in Matthew.

For instance, verses 29-31 speak about the breadth of Jesus' healing ministry – how He healed the multitudes. Matthew writes, "And departing from there, Jesus went along by the Sea of Galilee, and having gone up to the mountain, He was sitting there. And great multitudes came to Him, bringing with them those who were lame, crippled, blind, dumb, and many others, and they laid them down at His feet; and He healed them, so that the multitude marveled as they saw the dumb speaking, the crippled restored, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel" (Matt. 15:29-31). This ought to sound familiar, because Matthew has already given us six other statements like this in the book of Matthew, where he has squeezed a few verses speaking about the extent of Jesus' ministry in between narrative sections. There are two more occasions in which he does this as well. ^[1]

Also familiar to us are verses 32-39, which speak about Jesus feeding the multitudes. Matthew writes, "And Jesus called His disciples to Him, and said, 'I feel compassion for the multitude, because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not wish to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.' And the disciples said to Him, 'Where would we get so many loaves in a desolate place to satisfy such a great multitude?' And Jesus said to them, 'How many loaves do you have?' And they said, 'Seven, and a few small fish.' And He directed the multitude to sit down on the ground; and He took the seven loaves and the fish; and giving thanks, He broke them and started giving them to the disciples, and the disciples in turn, to the multitudes. And they all ate, and were satisfied, and they picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, seven large baskets full. And those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. And sending away the multitudes, He got into the boat, and came to the region of Magadan" (Matthew 15:32-39). Many of the details here are almost identical to what took place in Chapter 14 and verses 13-21, when Jesus fed the 5,000. This week, I put the narratives side by side and counted up 11 different things that are exactly the same in these two accounts. ^[2]

And so, because of the familiarity of these accounts, many preachers have chosen to go over these verses quickly, assigning them as a final sub-point of a sermon. Everything in my heart cries out, "Not so fast." I believe that narratives are included for a reason. I believe that they instruct us exactly where we need to be instructed. And I'm not willing to relegate this passage to a final sub-point of a sermon. As the spirit of God has inspired His word to include these things in the book of Matthew on several occasions, I believe that we need to hear this message again. They deserve our fullest attention.

And so, this morning, we are going to go through some Scripture passages that may sound familiar to you. They sound familiar because they are! We have heard of Jesus healing the multitudes on six different occasions already. We have heard of Jesus feeding the multitudes only six weeks ago. And so the challenge of my message this morning isn't going to be some great new truth or some great new insight. The challenge of my message this morning for you is to believe and apply what you have heard before and what you will hear again this morning. It's like the story of the new pastor of a church, which has been told often. Indeed, I have heard it told by some in our own congregation. On his first Sunday, the congregation gathered excitedly and expectantly. Everyone was suitably impressed afterward with his sermon. "My, how well he spoke," remarked one. "A superb sermon to be sure," said another. A third chimed in, "If he keeps this up we're in for a treat." On the following week he preached exactly the same sermon. The people were puzzled, but generously surmised that it had probably been too busy

a week to prepare a new sermon. After all, he was moving into a new house and meeting all the people. Yet he preached the original sermon the following week as well, and the week after that. The people were very concerned, and the church leadership decided it was time to confront their new pastor. They met him after the service and asked whether he had any other sermons or whether he planned to preach the same one for his entire ministry. "I certainly hope not," said the pastor, "I plan to begin a new one as soon as you start putting the first sermon into practice."

As familiar as my message might be this morning, remember that it would have been familiar to the disciples as well. The disciples needed this sermon twice, and they still didn't get it. Our text breaks down nicely into two sections. The first is found in verses 29-31 in which Jesus heals the multitudes. The second is found in verses 32-39 in which Jesus feeds the multitudes. I have entitled my message, "Miracles for the Multitudes." This morning, we need to see Jesus in all of His power, splendor, and authority. We need to taste and feel once again what it must have been like for the disciples to witness Jesus heal thousands of people. We need to understand what actually took place when Jesus fed thousands of people. We need to be reminded of the power and authority of Jesus.

1. Jesus heals (verses 29-31).

We are going to pull three observations from these three verses. One from each verse. My aim is to expand your understanding and love for Jesus by seeing His power.

When Jesus heals, ...

a. He heals without announcement (verse 29).

Look at verse 29, "And departing from there, Jesus went along by the Sea of Galilee, and having gone up to the mountain, He was sitting there." Mark gives us more precision about where Jesus went on this occasion. He records that Jesus went into the region of Decapolis, which is along the eastern border of the Sea of Galilee (Mark 7:31). This is gentile territory. We are told that Jesus went "up to the mountain" (verse 29). Let's face it, you don't see many people up high on the mountain. This is somewhat the point. He wasn't seeking a crowd. He was in an obscure place. Those who wanted to be healed would have to make great effort to come to Him.

How different this is from the faith healers of our own day. When they have their healing meetings, they often announce months beforehand where they will be. And they always go to the biggest of cities, where there are many, many people. I have never heard of a miracle crusade taking place in some obscure little town in Montana. But, this is what Jesus did. In the past month or two, I have received five different computer-generated phone calls highlighting some upcoming miracle crusades. The healing ministry of Jesus was vastly different. The miracles of Jesus were so compelling that He could go up into the mountainside to a desolate region without announcement and there attract a crowd of 4,000 people. The ministry of Jesus was powerful.

When Jesus heals, ...

b. He heals everybody (verse 30).

If you were brought to Jesus for healing, you were healed. You never came away from His presence sick. Verse 30, "And great multitudes came to Him, bringing with them those who were lame, crippled, blind, dumb, and many others, and they laid them down at His feet; **and He healed them.**" When Matthew writes that Jesus "healed them," he is referring to those who were brought to Jesus. The lame, who had to be carried to Jesus, were healed. The crippled, who had to be helped to Jesus, were healed. The blind, who had to be guided to Jesus, were healed. The dumb, who had to be brought to Jesus, were healed. The "many others," who had various other diseases, were healed.

People simply didn't leave the presence of Jesus unhealed. In Matthew 4:23, it says, that He was "healing *every* disease and *every* affliction among the people" (ESV). They brought to Him, "all who were ill ... demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them" (verse 24). Matthew 8:16, "He healed *all* who were ill." Matthew 12:15, "many followed Him, and He healed them *all*." If you just touched the fringe of His cloak, you were healed (Matt. 14:36). The ministry of Jesus was powerful. If you know even a little bit about the healing ministries today, you know that this isn't the case. Many who come sick, return sick.

When Jesus heals,

c. He heals completely (verse 31).

Verse 31 reads, "the multitude marveled as they saw the dumb speaking, the crippled restored, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing." Those who couldn't speak before they came to Jesus could speak when they left the presence of Jesus. Those who had withered arms or legs before they came to Jesus had fully functioning arms and legs when leaving. Those who couldn't walk before they came to Jesus would take up their bed and walk home. Those who needed a guide to find Jesus because they couldn't see, no longer needed a guide, because they could see.

We have seen examples of these types of miracles already in the gospel of Matthew. Turn back to chapter 9. At the beginning of the chapter, a **paralytic** was brought to Jesus. This man couldn't walk, and so he needed to be brought by his friends. In verse 6, Jesus says, "Rise, take up your bed, and go home." And he rose, and went home." He was completely healed. In verse 27, we find two **blind men** following after Jesus saying, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" He then asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" they said, "Yes, Lord" (verse 28). So, Jesus touched their eyes and they could see. In verse 32, a **dumb man** was brought to Jesus. After Jesus cast the demon from this dumb man, the man spoke. Turn over to chapter 12. In verse 10, a man with a **withered hand** was brought to Jesus. After a bit of discussion, Jesus restored his hand "to normal."

You have to catch the extent of Jesus' healing. We have some people in our congregation who are sick with some of these diseases. I think of one woman who many of you know, who has had a good portion of her left leg amputated and has been confined to a wheel chair for more than ten years. Her hands have been deformed because of rheumatoid arthritis. If she were one of this multitude that came to Jesus, Jesus would have created a new leg for her, restored her hands to normal, and given her the strength to walk. She would come to church next

Sunday in standing upright. I think of another man in our church, who was born with a hearing problem. He was up front at the beginning of the service, calling us to worship. Recently, he has had a cochlear implant to help him hear. It has helped, but it hasn't fully solved his hearing difficulties. If he had been among the multitude that came to Jesus, he would have left with perfect hearing and understanding. We don't have any blind people in our church, but just imagine those who you know who are blind being blind no more. Perhaps some names like Stevie Wonder or Ray Charles come to mind. Imagine Christopher Reeve or Joni Erickson Tada walking once again. This was commonplace in the time of Jesus.

The multitudes saw what Jesus was doing, and they were totally amazed. They understood that Jesus was doing something entirely miraculous. They could see new limbs that were formed. They could see people walk who clearly couldn't walk before. They saw people who had never spoken before in their life begin speaking fluently and clearly. They saw how the blind people could now see. Verse 31 says that "the multitude marveled" as they saw these things take place. They marveled because the miracles were evident. The verse also says, "they glorified the God of Israel." Remember earlier that I said that this was gentile territory? You have gentiles glorifying the God of Israel.

This is our application this morning: Worship Jesus! I have labored with these verses to attempt to demonstrate exactly how powerful Jesus was. He healed without announcement. He healed everybody. He healed completely. Jesus didn't walk the planet as a weak, sentimental little man. He walked the planet as a very powerful man who could heal anybody who came to Him. He is worthy of all of our worship. Rock Valley Bible Church, let's be about worshipping Jesus!

2. Jesus feeds (verses 32-39).

Let's begin looking at this wondrous miracle by beginning with verse 32, "And Jesus called His disciples to Him, and said, 'I feel compassion for the multitude, because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not wish to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way'" (Matt. 15:32).

This is a great picture of our Lord. Here Jesus is, up on the mountains, pouring Himself into this needy multitude for three days. He has set up His clinic and has begun to receive His severely diseased patients. Each of them have gone away from the presence of Jesus totally healed. And it appears as if they didn't go back home when they were healed, but remained with all of the others who came to see Jesus. In fact, they remained for three days!

I want to linger here for a few moments. They were with Jesus for three days. Can you imagine? There are 4,000 men in this crowd (verse 38). Matthew indicates clearly that this was only a count of the men, which indicates that women and children were certainly in present, probably in sizable numbers. Perhaps this translates into 3,000 families that have come to see Jesus. With a few children in each of these families, the size of the crowd could easily excel 10,000 people! We are told that they stayed with Jesus for three days. When the sun set, they didn't go home. Rather, they found a place along the ground where they might sleep for the night. When it was morning again, the Jesus' Clinic was opened once again for business.

I know that there are some of you who don't like camping. You don't like the noisy bugs, the pesky mosquitoes, the hard beds, the poor night's sleep, the campfire smoke, the lack of showers, the dirt, and things like that. These people faced all of these difficulties. These people faced them all unprepared. Do you have any idea how long it takes to prepare for a three-day camping trip? When we have gone camping, it takes several days of planning and preparation, and several hours of work to pack it all up. I don't think that they heard about Jesus being up in the mountains, only to spend half of a day packing up their camping gear. They had no idea that they were going to be there for three days! They were unprepared for such a long stay. Their food was scarce and their sleeping arrangement were poor.

Why did they endure the inconvenience? The presence of Jesus was so wonderful. It was wonderful to watch Him heal the people as they came, one by one. It must have been breath-taking. If I were there, I think that I would have squeezed my way into the front to watch everything that Jesus was doing. It would have been amazing watching him form legs and hands. It would have thrilling to see the expression of those blind from birth, who could see for the first time. It also would have been eager to listen to everything that Jesus was saying. We have no indication that He was formally teaching, but Jesus was always teaching. Certainly, heavenly wisdom was pouring from His lips on this occasion as it always did. It lasted for three days.

Have you ever tasted of this? Have you ever been in a church service, or attended a conference, where you were really disappointed that things were finished? I've been there. I have been in church services that have been stunning. I know that every time that I have had the opportunity to go to Minneapolis for the Bethlehem Conference for Pastors, I am often saddened when the final hour of the conference is finished. I spoke this week with a pastor who had the opportunity to travel to Los Angeles this past week and attend the annual Shepherd's Conference at Grace Community Church. He told me that on Friday night, R. C. Sproul was speaking on the Sovereignty of God, and when it was finished, my friend was disappointed that it was over. He told me that he wanted R. C. to keep on going! He said it was so wonderful that he was going to give me the tapes. This is what these people experienced. Being with Jesus was so wonderful that they didn't want to leave.

Would you have remained with Jesus for three days? Or would the prospect of remaining in the mountain, outside, for three days have been too much for you to take? When the desire is there, people will put forth great effort. Inconveniences will be overcome. Some of you know that the boys basketball team from Winnebago High School made it to the state finals this past weekend. They ended up in 2nd place. I play soccer each Friday night on a team with several non-Christians guys from Winnebago. One guy I play with told me of how he drove 2 ½ hours to watch the quarter-finals game on Friday afternoon. After the game, he drove 2 ½ hours back to Rockford. He was planning on driving back down there again to watch their other games on Saturday. I have seen parents drive for hours to see their sons play basketball. I have seen grandparents drive for hours to see their grandchildren recite some poetry and Scripture for three minutes. Here, we see thousands of people remaining in the outdoors to be with Jesus for three days. When the heart is willing, the feet are swift.

I ask you, do you have a passion to see Jesus? Do you have a passion to be with His people? Do you have a passion to hear His word expounded? Because if you do, you will make great efforts to be at church and to read His Word. You won't be externally coerced. You will be internally driven to seek what you desire most to experience. These people had a passion to see Jesus. They were there for three days

and didn't leave. Jesus constrained nobody to stay.

But in verse 32, it was time for them to turn off the lights, because the party was over. Why? I believe it was because every last diseased person was healed. There was nobody left with any disease that needed healing. But, those who remained until the end got a treat to enjoy.

Last Sunday we had a potluck here at church. Really, it's not a potluck at all. Here at Rock Valley Bible Church, we don't believe in luck. Everything happens through God's providence; luck has nothing to do with it. So, we actually had a "pot-providence" after church last Sunday. Anyway, our habit, as a family, is to be one of the last families out the door. There are a couple of reasons for that. We want to be with the church. We don't want to leave. We find our joy with you. Also, if you want to talk to me, you just need to hang around the church after the service. You'll be able to talk to me then. As your pastor, I want to be accessible to you. Anyway, last Sunday, we were almost the last ones to leave (somewhere near 3:15pm) and there was this blueberry dessert still sitting on the counter. I tasted it and it was wonderful! There was something about the bottom crust that I liked very much. Yvonne can give testimony to this. I even made her taste a bit on Sunday. Since nobody had claimed it, and since we were the last ones out of the building, guess what kind of dessert we were going to enjoy all week long? If your pastor begins to expand at the waist, you'll know why: the desserts at our "pot-providences" are too good to pass up. That's the fringe benefits of hanging around.

Those who remained until the end of Jesus' ministry on the mountain received a treat to enjoy. They got a free lunch. Before Jesus dismissed them, He was concerned with the welfare of this multitude. He said, "I feel compassion for the multitude, ... and I do not wish to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way" (verse 32). This is the compassion of Jesus. He has been working hard for three days. He has healed every person that has come to Him. He has turned nobody away. Now, it's time to go, and He is concerned for their stomachs. He is concerned that they might travel back to their homes in comfort. This isn't a life-or-death issue. You don't die from lack of food for three days. Oh you may be weak. You may have a headache. You may need help along the way. But you won't die.

Jesus isn't merely looking out for His own personal interest. Rather, He is looking out for the interests of others (Phil. 2:4). Why do you think that He went to the mountain in the first place? Perhaps He wanted to pray, as He did in Matt. 14:23. Perhaps He wanted a bit of peace and quiet, away from the crowds. But, when the crowds came, He welcomed them and began to heal them. They weren't an inconvenience. They weren't a bother. He had compassion on them, and he wanted to help them. And then, when it was time for them to be dismissed, He still cared for them. This is like the doctor, who treats an individual, and then makes a house call when his patient comes home in order to see how his patient is doing. This is like the waiter, who comes back to your table and says, "Is everything here alright?" This is like the father, who tucks his children in bed at night, so that the last thing that they remember before they go off to sleep is the kind intention of their father, kissing them on the cheek. This is Jesus. Don't ever think that Jesus is only concerned about forgiving your sin, and then letting you alone to deal with the difficulties of life after that. Jesus was caring for their diseased bodies as well as their empty stomachs. Jesus is concerned with your illnesses. Jesus is concerned with your financial difficulties. Jesus is concerned with your marital problems. Jesus is concerned with your anxieties. Jesus is concerned with your welfare. He said, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

In the instance of our text this morning, He wants to give them food as they travel. I travel from time to time. And when I do, I know the value of a little food in my stomach. I am always certain of packing my bags with a few granola bars or some fruit. I often take along a can of pop to drink. So, Jesus mentions to His disciples that He would like to get some food for these people. In verse 33, "the disciples said to Him, 'Where would we get so many loaves in a desolate place to satisfy such a great multitude?'"

We look back at these disciples and can't believe that they said this. We can't believe how quickly they have forgotten what Jesus did only a few months before along the northern shore of the sea of Galilee. We wonder, "What is wrong with these disciples?" **But, it is easy to forget the provision of God in the past. It is hard to believe that He will provide again in the future.**

One of the greatest illustrations of this is Israel, when they were redeemed out of the bondage of Egypt. They saw God display His awesome power in the plagues. Many of these plagues only struck the Egyptians, but not the Hebrew people. In one case, it was dark over the whole land, except in Goshen where the Israelites were. On the night of the Passover, "the LORD struck all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the first-born of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of cattle" (Exodus 12:29). But, none of the Hebrew children or cattle died. They saw the angel of God move the pillar of cloud between the Egyptians and the Hebrew people to protect them (Ex. 14:20). They saw the LORD split the Red Sea, so that they could escape the Egyptians who were pursuing them (Ex. 14). Yet, when they escaped into the wilderness and were thirsty, what did they do? Did they say, "God, you have provided for us miraculously thus far! Will you be gracious to us and provide for us the needed water?" No, they grumbled against the Lord (Ex. 15:24). Why? They lacked faith to believe that the same God, who had provided for them in the past would provide for them in the future.

The disciples find themselves in the same situation as Israel. Though they had seen Jesus feed the 5,000 only a few months before, they didn't even think about the possibility of Him doing it again. There were many mouths to feed. Feeding four thousand men, some with wives and some with children is not an easy task. Last night, a bunch of us attended the annual fund-raising banquet for the Rockford Area Pregnancy Care Center. I heard that there were 625 people at the banquet. It was amazing to watch the effort that it took to feed that many people. This weekend, my nephew, Colin has been staying with our family. Yesterday afternoon he was in our kitchen with the other children watching Yvonne bake some bread. Yvonne was explaining to him how she needed to bake a lot of bread because uncle Steve likes to use objects when he preaches to make a point. She explained how I was going to be preaching on the feeding of the 4,000. He asked, "Are you going to make 4,000 loaves of bread?" Even he understood what a huge task this would be.

It would take 2,000 pounds of fish and 400 dozen rolls of bread to feed this many people. And these disciples didn't even think about what Jesus had done before. In their minds, there was no way that they were going to be able to feed this many people, especially out in the boondocks where they were. The disciples asked, "Where would we get so many loaves in a desolate place to satisfy such a great multitude?" (verse 33). Why? **It is easy to forget the provision of God in the past. It is hard to believe that He will provide again in the future.**

Do you want to be a man or woman, who trusts God for the future? Be a student of the past. Read your Bible and see what God has done for Israel. Read your Bible and see what Jesus has done for your soul. Look back in your life and continue to remind yourself how much God has done for you. Look back and see how He has guided you through your difficulties in the past. You had the mounting guilt of a life that was lived in rebellion against God, and He wondrously forgave your sin as you believed in the suffering of the death of Christ to forgive your sin. You had financial difficulties, and God helped you through them. You had marital difficulties, and God helped you through them. You had difficulties at work or at home and God was faithful. You were dead in your sin, but God drew you to Himself. Then, remember that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8). He was faithful to you in the past. He will be faithful to you today. He will be faithful to you in the future. He provided for you in the past. He will provide for you today. He will provide for you in the future.

The disciples should have known this. In verse 34, I believe that Jesus was trying to jog their memories. He said, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven, and a few small fish." Perhaps when they pulled out the bread and the fish to show Jesus what they had, they may have begun to remember what He did with the 5,000.

Perhaps these disciples remembered what Jesus had done when "He directed the multitude to sit down on the ground" (as verse 35 said). "Oh, yeah, I remember when Jesus did this before. I know what's going to happen." Perhaps it clicked when Jesus "took the seven loaves and the fish; and gave thanks" (verse 36), saying a typical Jewish blessing like, "Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who bring forth bread from the earth."

Perhaps it clicked when Jesus broke the bread "and started giving them to the disciples" (verse 36). Perhaps it all clicked when they began to see the bread miraculously multiply as they reached into their bags to get bread or more fish, as the disciples were distributing the food among the multitudes (verse 36). The bread that takes three hours to rise and 20 minutes to bake was created instantly in their bags, with the appearance of age. The fish, that takes three months to grow, were not only instantly created, but also pickled and preserved perfectly, as if it was done by the best chef in Jerusalem.

Perhaps it all clicked when they began to offer more bread and more fish to people, but they gave them the "No thanks, I'm full" look. You know what I'm talking about, right? You go to a restaurant and eat a bunch of food, and then comes the dessert tray. The waitress says, "Any room for dessert?" And, you look at her, like she's crazy. You reason in your mind, "You saw how much food you served me. And you now see that it is all gone. How in the world could anybody have room for dessert?" The disciples were getting this look from people. They attempted to give them more bread or more fish. But, they had eaten and "were satisfied" (verse 37). Perhaps it all clicked when "they picked up what was left over of the broken pieces" and filled seven large baskets to the rim (verse 37). The seven large baskets were filled with more fish and bread than they started with. ^[3]

Perhaps it all clicked when they counted the number of people that Jesus fed: 4,000. "Wow, that is almost as many as Jesus fed before!" Perhaps it never clicked at all. Look down to Matt. 16:9-10, "Do you not yet understand or remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets you took up? Or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many large baskets you took up?" Jesus had done a miraculous thing in front of their eyes. They may have seen it. They may have experienced it. They may have even tasted of the food that they were given. But, they failed to grasp the meaning of it. Jesus said, "You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread?" (Matt. 16:8).

In the presence of Jesus, you have no physical worries. If you lack food, Jesus can create it. In their minds, Jesus was small. But as Jesus ministered to the multitudes, He demonstrates His power. He can heal thousands. He can feed thousands. Don't doubt the authority and power and majesty of Jesus. Our passage this morning causes us to reflect upon His power. He is capable of wiping your sins away. Believe Him and trust Him in these things.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on March 14, 2004 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] To help you get a feel of the nine passages that Matthew squeezes into his narrative to focus our attention upon the extent of the healing ministry of Jesus, I have listed them below.

Matthew 4:23-24 (These verses come just after Jesus calls His first disciples and right before He preaches the Sermon on the Mount). "And Jesus was going about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people. And the news about Him went out into all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, taken with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them."

Matthew 8:16 (This verse comes just after Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law and just before He challenges a few men who want to follow Him). "And when evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill."

Matthew 9:35 (Jesus had just healed a dumb man and is just about to send out His twelve disciples to announce the nearness of His kingdom). "And Jesus was going about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness."

Matthew 12:15 (The context here is of Jesus withdrawing from the Pharisees, who were seeking to kill Him). "And many

followed Him, and He healed them all."

Matthew 14:14 (This verse is found just after the story of John the Baptist's execution and the feeding of the 5,000). "And when He went ashore, He saw a great multitude, and felt compassion for them, and healed their sick."

Matthew 14:35-36 (At the end of the feeding of the 5,000, we have another one of these all-inclusive statements). "And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent into all that surrounding district and brought to Him all who were sick; and they began to entreat Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were cured."

Matthew 15:30-31 (These verses come from our text this morning, just after the account of the Canaanite Woman and the feeding of the 4,000) "And great multitudes came to Him, bringing with them those who were lame, crippled, blind, dumb, and many others, and they laid them down at His feet; and He healed them, so that the multitude marveled as they saw the dumb speaking, the crippled restored, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel."

Matthew 19:2 (This verse comes just after Jesus explained what Biblical forgiveness looks like and just before the Pharisees confront Him again, this time, on the issue of divorce). "and great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them there."

Matthew 21:14 (In this verse, we find Jesus in the midst of a crowd, battling the Pharisees. It is almost parenthetical). "And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them."

[2] There are many similarities about these miracles.

1. They both take place in a desolate place (14:15; 15:32)
2. Jesus was motivated by His compassion for the multitudes (14:14; 15:32).
3. The disciples were confused as to how they would be able to feed this many people (14:16-17; 15:33)
4. Jesus begins with only a few loaves of bread and a few fish (14:17; 15:34).
5. Jesus orders the multitudes to be seated (14:19; 15:35).
6. Jesus took the food, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to the disciples, who distributed it among the people (14:19; 15:36).
7. When every one was finished eating, they were all satisfied. Nobody left hungry (14:20; 15:37).
8. After the meal, the disciples gathered the leftovers, which amounted to more than Jesus began with (14:20; 15:37).
9. When the crowd was counted, it was only the men that were counted (14:21; 15:38).
10. Jesus dismissed the multitudes (14:22; 15:39).
11. As soon as the crowds were gone, Jesus left the scene (14:23; 15:39).

[3] There were probably more leftovers here, than when they fed the 5,000. When they picked up the scraps from the 5,000, they picked them up in hand-baskets, which you could carry in your hands. When they picked up the scraps from the 4,000, they picked them up in large provision-baskets, which were large enough for a person to sit in, as the apostle Paul was when he was let down over the wall at Damascus (Acts 9:25).