Matthew 14:20a They all ate and were filled.

Did you happen to catch that one line that was found in our Old Testament reading? First, understand that our Old Testament reading is really about the kingdom of heaven, about the wonders of eternal life and salvation that God was promising to his people. It is a picture of the grace and mercy of God given in the language of a vast banquet, a free banquet that is filled with wine, milk and bread. Did you notice that it is the bread that is highlighted? That’s the line that I am referring to. That line said, **“Why do you spend money on what is not bread and waste your labor on something that does not satisfy?”**

The picture is that in the Lord’s kingdom, his eternal and free kingdom, what is going to count is the heavenly food, the wine, milk and bread. What will be especially important is the bread, bread that satisfies and if you grasp the context right, it is bread that gives life. The question highlights the bread’s importance, “Why do you spend money on what is not bread?” Why would you buy or eat or chase after that which is not life giving bread. Because if you are not eating the true bread of the Lord then it is bread that does not satisfy, that cannot give or bring life. And if it is not life giving bread why would you pursue it?

It is that very idea that Isaiah wants the people of Israel to contemplate. They were a people who had turned away from the truth of God. Isaiah wants them to contemplate: Why are you pursuing what is not godly and good? Why are you not involved in working for the best bread, the true bread of the Lord? And then did you see how Isaiah’s words transitioned? Contemplate what he says: **“Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good. Satisfy your appetite with rich food.”** This next line is where you are lead: **“Incline your ear, and come to me. Listen well so that you may come to life. Yes, I surely will make an everlasting covenant with you, the faithful mercies promised to David.”**

Did you see how you went from bread, free, satisfying bread to hearing the Lord? To hearing the promises of God that bring life, that bring everlasting life because of the promises of God? When you hear these words of Isaiah and you begin to truly contemplate them it is clear that Isaiah is not emphasizing our works or ways but is trying to get his nation focused and fixed on the Lord God and his wonderful promises and gifts. It is these promises and gifts of God that will be everything.

And then comes the history before us. As this history of the feeding of the 5,000 comes to an end what does Jesus say? He declares himself **“The bread of life!”** Should we be surprised? And in that same discussion he says, **“the words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.”** In other words, do you see how the feeding of the 5,000 is really the lesson of Isaiah in physical form? Jesus took the opportunity to partially fulfill and to reemphasize this awesome prophecy that people might grasp his truth and wonder. Our theme for today will be: **FILLED WITH JESUS.**

We are so very familiar with this history of Jesus. What we learned is that Jesus has just heard about the death of John the Baptist and Jesus would like some time for himself and for his disciples, a number of whom had been followers of John. So Jesus heads off into what he hoped would be a deserted place, away from the crowds and their demands. But it was not to be. The crowds manage to follow Jesus. Please contemplate that. These crowds, lots and lots of people went out of their way to see, to hear and to have Jesus in their presence. It is clear that to the people of this time and day, Jesus was important. At this point they haven’t been swayed by their religious leadership to reject and abandon Jesus, but don’t worry they will. Me, I just like to sit back and think about what it would be like to have people just swarm to church. To have so many people show up that we just don’t have enough room!

That’s not the way of the world, is it? We are told by Jesus that the path of salvation is narrow and that few will travel on it, but the way of destruction and death is wide and many will be on it. And we have our excuses, don’t we? So I just wonder, for those of you here and those of you who will read or listen to this later, I ask, “Would you go out of your way for Jesus?” Maybe better yet, “Do you go out of your way for Jesus?”

So here is this large group off with Jesus in the wilderness. It is getting late and it is the disciples of Jesus who suggest that the people be dismissed so they can go find food for themselves and perhaps even give them time to find shelter or make it home safely. It is no doubt a timely suggestion, but Jesus knows something even better to do. Jesus replies to his disciples: **“They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.”**

The disciples are aghast! As you read the other accounts it is clear that the disciples are aware of the cost that feeding such a group would be. The disciples had already calculated that it would take about 200 day’s wages to feed this crowd. They didn’t have that kind of money. And then it is revealed that all they had was five loaves of bread and two fish. Now, five loaves and two fish might be alright for a group of twelve, but for a group of well over 5,000, this wasn’t going to go far, so the disciples thought. And by the way, aren’t we so often like these disciples? We figure and calculate costs here and there and so often, especially when it comes to our church, we take the attitude “We can’t.” Like the disciples we so easily forget that Jesus is with us and He can! Remember that, Jesus can!

Then comes the wonder and marvel of Jesus. The people are told to sit and to do so in groups of 50. (In case you are wondering, it is because of those groups of 50 that we are able to have such a precise number of the men there. Yes, men and women would have sat in separate groups, so note we are told there were at least 5,000 men there! In other words, there may have been 10,000 people there, including women and children.) All of this just so we can truly get the scope of what takes place.

Now Jesus takes action. He has a prayer. Then he begins to break the bread and give it to the disciples to distribute. I don’t know how long it took the disciples to realize the miracle that was taking place but I believe they eventually got it. I mean, when you come back for the next batch of bread and realize that you have now taken bread to 3 separate groups, and you are only one of the 12 guys doing this, you grasp that a tremendous miracle is taking place. I would imagine you are awed, maybe even stunned. I would imagine that as you are passing out bread, you can’t help but gush with the wonder of it all to the people who get that bread. Can’t you just hear, maybe Peter? “It’s a miracle, people! We had five loaves of bread and Jesus keeps giving us more and more and more! I’ve already taken bread to over 300 people! I am telling you, there is a miracle, a wondrous and vast miracle happening right here, right now!

Now, please, take into account who and what Jesus is and take into account the wonder of the words of Isaiah and I think you can see why I say this is that prophecy brought to partial fulfillment in the life of Jesus. Jesus was passing out free bread! Jesus was supplying the needs of the people, the physical needs of their stomachs. What is more, Jesus had spent the whole day preaching, teaching and healing the sick. So note that Jesus has already taken care of physical needs as well as given the best and most wonderful spiritual food for these people. In one simple (for Jesus) and wonderful miracle Jesus has filled these people with everything they need.

And that, in a nutshell is the whole point of Jesus. Now as I make some applications here, I want you to grasp a very important thing. I do not intend by my applications to undermine in any way this miracle. It happened just as reported. Jesus fed over 5,000 men with just five loaves of bread and two fish. Everybody was satisfied. Everybody was taken care of. This food was miraculously, by the power and majesty of Jesus, multiplied so that this mass feeding could take place. The miracle happened because of the power and wonder of Jesus.

But I think there are lessons here that we need to hear and contemplate. For instance, the bread was absolutely free. The same with the fish. No one was charged anything. Out of pure grace and mercy, Jesus supplied what was needed. Now translate that to Jesus. Jesus is our bread of life. He is absolutely free. No one is to be charged. God has supplied us with forgiveness, eternal life and salvation in Jesus, just because God has the power and he is filled with the grace to do so. How this so speaks to the truth of God’s salvation. It is free. It is because of God’s grace and power. And it completely and totally satisfies the needs of salvation. Jesus fills our complete needs.

Were there people in this crowd who would eventually give up everything for Jesus? I believe the answer is yes. Down the line, they would die for his name, be persecuted, shamed and harassed to no end. It was a high cost to pay, but they would do it because they grasped and understood this awesome gift of God in Jesus. That in Jesus all their needs, their spiritual needs are completely fulfilled. And once you understand that your spiritual needs are totally and gracefully met, then you also grasp that God in Jesus will take care of all else too! That is truly filled with Jesus.

How about another lesson. I think this obvious, but I’ve not heard others speak of it. You don’t get to eat the bread, to be a part of this wonder, get the thrill of the miracle unless you are there! What a simple fact. Not a single person who skipped out got a thing. Not a single person who decided this was too far to go for Jesus found any blessing at all. Either you were there and were a part or you were not there and you totally missed out.

This is still, in many ways, the way Jesus works. You need to come to him. You need to seek him out, to be looking for his marvel and wonder. And for those of you who constantly turn your back on gatherings where Jesus is present, do you grasp how much you have missed? That sermon that would have addressed your doubt, you missed its power for you. The words of the pastor that would have taken your drooping heart and caused it to soar with the joy of Jesus…you didn’t get that. The balm of God’s Word, either in the readings we had or the songs we sung, that balm that would have soothed and medicated your wounded soul, you missed that! And I am going to guess that should someone try to encourage you to make church and God’s Word a part of your life, you will dismiss them with a “Yeah, well there’s nothing there for me!” Only it is not that that there was nothing for you it’s the fact that you weren’t there to get fed! You missed out on the wonder and marvel of Jesus.

Because in truth, Jesus is wonderful and marvelous, every awesomeness all wrapped up in one. He is the one who gives us life and salvation. No, not because we deserve it, but because in his grace and mercy he gives it. He has given his Word, the wisdom of God for the saving of our souls. He has given up his exalted position of glory to come and be the slave of salvation, to give his all that this precious gift of God could be ours. This gift called eternal life. And as Isaiah proclaims, it is an eternal banquet with wine and milk and bread all without cost because of God’s love.

And yes, Jesus gave his life. This is still something that completely fills me with awe. God’s Son Jesus came to be the atoning sacrifice for my sins, indeed for the sins of the whole world, that everyone and anyone who believes in Jesus can get this free and certain gift of life. Because he took my life to the cross and gives me his life. His holy, pure, righteous and eternal life, that God’s kingdom, God’s gracious promises of heaven are surely and truly mine.

All of this because Jesus is my bread. He is the source of life and salvation. He feeds my soul and yours with his precious love, his undaunting, gracious care. I am always saddened when there are so many in this world who flee and pass by the diner of Jesus for their souls. Jesus is the Word. He is the clear and precise revelation of all that the Father would have us know and believe. And His Word is not filled with demands and “you’d betters” but rather Jesus simply puts forth the fact that to believe in Him is to have eternal life and salvation free and certain because He is Jesus the Savior.

My dear souls, Jesus truly fills our need. This miracle gives us a glimpse of his power and majesty and how Jesus is willing to supply what we need. He especially came to supply the bread of life and the living water of His Word, that we might be his children and heirs of eternal life. Thank you Father, for this gift of Jesus. Thank you Jesus to granting us all our needs. Amen.