

Giving Thanks for the Sufficiency of God's Provision

Matthew 14:13-21

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Introduction: We read in Psalm 92:1, "*It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, & to sing praises unto Thy name, O most High.*" This coming Thursday we will as a nation recognize a Day of Thanksgiving. Though little acknowledged or remembered by many, Thanksgiving Day has great significance in the history of our nation. Recall with me the true origin of Thanksgiving. [Fall of 1620; 102 people on board "between decks"; only one death, an "irritated" crew member; natural disinfectant in the beams of the ship; 66 days at sea; landed at Cape Cod, Mass; found cleared land & fields; helped by Squanto -how to plant corn; summer of 1621 was severe drought; Pilgrims called for day of prayer & fasting – by end of day, a gentle rain fell & revived the corn crop; provided grain for the first Thanksgiving; both Indians & Pilgrims eating together – thanking God for providing for them all.] As we saw this morning, the giving of thanks should not be limited to only one day of the year, but rather should be the constant theme & attitude of the believer (Eph. 5:20). We considered this morning the example in the life of Christ in which He publicly gave thanks. In Matthew 11:25-30, we saw Christ giving thanks for the simplicity of the Gospel's message. Here in our text for this evening, we see Christ giving thanks for the sufficiency of God's provision. The context involves the compassionate ministry of Christ (:13-36) where we can learn 3 lessons: (1) the Lord can meet my physical needs (:13-21), (2) the Lord can meet my spiritual needs (:22-33), & (3) the Lord can meet the physical & spiritual needs of others (:34-36). Consider with me then this evening the first lesson. We can rely on & we should rejoice in the sufficiency of God's provision.

I. The instructions of Christ > He demonstrates the sufficiency of God's provision.

A. "Give food" (:13-18)

1. The **setting** (:13a) > "*When Jesus heard of it...*"

- a. John's death &/or Herod's reaction (cf. 14:1).
- b. Jesus' departure - to be alone with His disciples; to be away from Herod's dominion.

2. The **scene** (:13b-14)

- a. Note the curiosity of the crowd.
- b. Note the compassion of Christ.

3. The **suggestion** (:15)

- a. The situation of the multitude ("*evening*" - first evening was 3 p.m. to sunset; second evening was sunset to dark, see :23).
- b. The solution of the disciples (their unwillingness to get involved??).

4. The **surprise** (:16-18)

- a. Christ's command > "*Give ye them to eat.*"
- b. Disciples' concern > "*We have here but 5 loaves & 2 fishes.*"

Application: Christ is teaching them that they cannot be true "shepherds" of the flock in their own strength (or resources) but they must receive such power & strength from the Lord. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity."

B. "Get (sit) down" (:19a)

1. The specific **arrangement** (cf. Mark 6:39-40):

- a. Previously standing to hear His preaching & teaching.
- b. Presently sitting by "*hundreds & by fifties*" on the green slope of the hillside.

2. The special **allowance**:

- a. All are able to see what Jesus would do.
- b. All are able to be served orderly.

- C. "Give thanks" (:19b) - "... & looking up to heaven He blessed..."
 - 1. Translates the word "*eulogesen*" (or word "eulogy"); He "said the blessing" - offered praise & thanks to God.
 - 2. Corresponds to our saying "grace" before a meal; customary among the Jews of that day - see John 6:11, "*& when He had given thanks...*" (Is that your custom?).
- D. "Give out" (:19c)
 - 1. The Lord blesses their meager resources; multiplies them to abundantly provide for all.
 - 2. The Lord first fills the hands of His disciples, then they can give to the multitude. Those who give out the Word must first be filled with it themselves. "Minister from the overflow." (cf. Deuteronomy 6:6-9)
- E. "Gather up" (:20) (cf. Jn. 6:12, "*Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.*")
 - 1. The principle of **sufficiency** > a rich & plenteous supply (cf. Eph. 3:20) [an adequate & immense supply].
 - 2. The principle of **economy** > nothing is to be wasted (Jesus orders the surplus to be saved). Illustrate with an example (eating up children's leftovers) & with an extreme (WWJD - SUV's?). [Contrast liberal theology's attempts to "explain away" this miracle.]

II. The **interrogation** for Christians > Do we display the sufficiency of God's provision?

- A. Are we thankful for our daily **bread**? > Matthew 6:11
 - 1. Grace said at our meals?
 - 2. Gratitude shown for His provision?
 - B. Are we thankful for our daily **blessings**? > Psalm 68:19
 - 1. We should study thanksgiving in the Psalms.
Examples: Thankfulness for His Word (Ps. 19); peace (29:11); forgiveness (32:1-2); protection (34:7); salvation (40:1-3); sustaining (55:22); providence (57:2); prayer (66:19-20); goodness (84:10-12); etc.
 - 2. We should show thanksgiving in our lives.
 - C. Are we thankful for our daily **burdens**? > II Corinthians 12:9
 - 1. The burden of trials brings patience - James 1:2-3
 - 2. The burden of suffering brings comfort - II Corinthians 1:3-4
 - 3. The burden of sorrow brings sympathy (empathy) - Galatians 6:2, Romans 12:15)
- Illustration: "Everyday Thanksgiving"

Conclusion: Are you truly thankful for the sufficiency of God's provision? Have you experienced the simplicity of the Gospel's message? We can be thankful this evening that the Gospel is simple enough to be understood by a child. Though we may never be considered "wise & prudent" in the eyes of the world, we can be recognized as "babes" - those with child-like faith - to whom the Gospel message is revealed. Have you become as a little child & been converted? Have you experienced "*repentance toward God & faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*"? (Acts 20:21). If so, you can declare with Paul, "*Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift*" (II Cor. 9:15). God has not only provided eternal salvation for us in His Son, but He continually provides material sustenance for us through His Son (Mt. 6:33). As a believer, how will your Thanksgiving Day be this year? Are you continually giving thanks for all that God has done, is doing, & will do? Are you thankful for your daily bread? Are you grateful for your daily blessings? And are you thankful even for your daily burdens? Jesus is seen in the book of Matthew giving thanks for the simplicity of the Gospel's message as well as giving thanks for the sufficiency of God's provision. Could that be said of you this evening as well? Are you relying upon the sufficiency of God's provision? And are you rejoicing in the sufficiency of God's provision?