

## Feeding the 5000

### 1 story 3 perspectives

Who have you been listening to in 2017? In a survey done mid 2017 it showed we Australians on average watch 17.5 hours of television a week. Another survey showed Australians are using internet for about 19 hours a week. That's a lot of time we spend listening and watching the tv and internet isn't it. Compare that to the Church survey results which show that 53% of people do prayer or bible reading less than once a day outside of Church. They are some challenging statistics aren't they? Well in today's passage we are going to see why we should be listening to Jesus.

I really like books and movies that tell and retell the same story multiple times. Now that may sound boring telling the same story multiple times, but what the storyteller does is, each time they retell the story they tell it from a different perspective or give more information so that the reader or viewer gradually gets a greater and greater understanding of what is actually happening. I am going to do that today. We are going to look at the Feeding of the 5000 from 3 different perspectives, each time getting more information about what is happening and who Jesus is. And for each perspective we will look at how they shaped peoples response to Jesus and how it might shape our response now. To get these different perspectives I am going to do something a little different for

my talk this morning, I am going to give 3 different first person narratives of what happened.

Jesus the provider

The first perspective we are going to look at is Jesus the Provider. This is going to be from the perspective of one of the Galileans that have been following Jesus.

So I have been following Jesus for a few days now and its been amazing to see what he can do. He healed my aunt a week ago, she was suffering from some sort of sickness and all Jesus had to do was touch her and she got better. He didn't ask for money or anything. This is great. I figure if I keep following him around it means anytime I get sick I don't need to go to the doctor. I just need to go up to Jesus and Bam I get healed. Anyway we have been following Jesus and his disciples and they go up this mountainside and there's a whole crowd of us following him. But then my stomach starts growling. Look I know what you are thinking, I am a big guy and all I think about is food. But its not just me, everyone in the crowd is getting hungry. We have been following him all day and its way past time for food. The problem is there is nowhere nearby to get food and its not like I have got much money on me anyway. Well you wouldn't believe it but Jesus basically does a majorly supped up version of Israeli Masterchef and he starts feeding the 5000 men plus their families! Do you know how much food that would take? I reckon it would have to have been over 2500kg of food,

that's the same weight as about 5 horses. And not only that, there was more than enough. I saw his disciples picking it up for leftovers. Now if I can just convince Jesus to come back to our village he would save us so much money. That feeding of the 5000 saved us people over 6 months wages. Jesus not only heals the sick he is also providing free food!

So that is the first perspective of our story. This perspective reveals Jesus as someone who can provide but unfortunately that is really all those people see. These people follow Jesus because he provides things that they need and want, for the physical stuff that they're receiving. Unfortunately they're not actually listening to him, and that's the KEY, they're not hearing what he says, they're just receiving the physical benefits of what they get from Jesus. Verse 2 says they followed because they saw the signs performed NOT because of the message he taught. And that can be a little like us today, we end up treating God or Jesus like Santa. The only time we really think about God is when we want something. We ask him for things and that's all we do, we end up saying God we need this, we need that. We don't listen to him. So as we start our NEW YEAR, let's make a big effort not to just ask things from God, though of course we're able to, but we also should spend time listening.

So let's go to our next way of viewing Jesus. This time from the perspective of Jesus as prophet. This is going to be from the perspective of a nationalistic Jew.

So Jesus has been doing some pretty amazing miracles and what I saw today just topped it off. Jesus and his disciples are on a mountainside when a great crowd of people come to him and he ends up feeding thousands of people from just a few barley loaves and fish. Isn't that amazing? No, not amazing because its free food, that's just what that large Galilean was saying. Doesn't Jesus's actions remind you of anything? No? Well, It reminds me of the prophet Elisha in the second book of the Kings (2 Kings 4:42-44) where it says 42 ... bringing the man of God twenty loaves of barley bread baked from the first ripe grain, along with some heads of new grain. "Give it to the people to eat," Elisha said. 43 "How can I set this before a hundred men?" his servant asked. But Elisha answered, "Give it to the people to eat. For this is what the LORD says: 'They will eat and have some left over.' " I mean come on that is so much like what Jesus did, It even mentions Barley.

Second Jesus reminds me of Moses. Now you might be thinking, what? What does all this have to do with Moses? Well, Do you know what time of year it is? Its Passover. It is the time when we remember that Moses took us out of Egypt and then received the mana to feed us from heaven. And so when I see Jesus feeding us now, it reminds me of Moses. And also, do you remember what Moses said in Deuteronomy (Deut 18:15) The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites.

Do you know what this means for us? Jesus is a prophet and it means he might be the one to overthrow those horrible Romans. Forget that lousy Herod, lets make Jesus King. If God lets him do miracles like this feeding surely God will give him power to overthrow the Romans. And if he won't do it of his own free will, we might just have to force him to be King.

So that's our second perspective of this story. Unlike the first group of people who only wanted to get something from Jesus. This second group of people at least listened to Jesus. They listen and recognise him as a prophet. They have looked a little deeper, so isn't that Great? Well yes and no. Yes they have correctly identified him as a prophet, but unfortunately these people have like the first group are just using Jesus for what they want. They have taken what they've heard and only applied it to how they want Jesus to be. Can you see what it says in verse 14-15 it says they knew he was a prophet and therefore they wanted to make him King by force. They want to force Jesus into who they want him to be rather than what Jesus is. At this time of the Passover these people are reminded about getting out from being under the rule of a Gentile nation. And although Jesus will eventually overthrow all Kings its not something they should be forcing on Jesus. Its in Jesus own timing that it will happen.

again, I think we can learn something from this today. I think too often we too hear part of Jesus' message and then shape him into what we want.

I'll give you a couple of quick examples..

During the recent debate on gay marriage, I heard a number of Christians say, that Jesus is all about love, so therefore he would approve of gay marriage, Now, I feel although they have heard the message of Jesus love. I think that they are applying it for our own wants. They like the previous perspective are taking Jesus truth and using it for their own agenda. How do I know this? Because if we listen to what else Jesus says it's very clear that Jesus supports traditional marriage.

Let me give you another example.

I've also heard Christians really focus on anyone who has trouble with sexual sin, sometimes treating people who struggle with this as a second class person or an extra bad sinner while ignoring other types of sin. However this too is making Jesus into something different. By only focusing on sexual sin they often completely ignore Jesus many comments about other sins including greed and selfishness. This is just as bad as the other way, we're adapting Jesus message to what we want him to say and be, and what it tends to be is something that doesn't make us look bad, isn't it? We tend to focus on aspects of Jesus that point out other people's faults and leave us looking good. But that's not what truly listening to Jesus is. Jesus message needs to be taken for what he wants to say, not for what we want to make him say.

Its interesting to note that at the end of the passage from Deut 18 that the Jewish nationalist read out it says The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. **You must listen to him.**

And that brings me finally to the third perspective of this story. Where Jesus is God. This time from Philip the disciples perspective.

I have been following Jesus with the other disciples for a little while now and Jesus is really starting to attract crowds. So Jesus leads us up this mountainside and gets us to sit down. But then he sees this large crowd arriving. And do you know what he does next? He asks me where to buy food for all these people? Just because I used to live in nearby Bethsaida, how am I supposed to know how to feed all these people. Then Jesus does this amazing miracle. He gets the people to sit down and then after giving thanks he ends up feeding them all from just 5 loaves and 2 fish. We even collected 12 basketfulls at the end. Now I heard that some of the nationalists are saying that Jesus is a prophet. And look I think they are partially right, but I think he is so much more as well. I mean think about it. It wasn't Moses who fed the Israelites with Mana from heaven. It was God. Elisha fed 100 with 20 loaves. Jesus fed 5000+ people with just 5. Jesus is clearly so much more than just a prophet. There are so many references from the prophets about God feeding us abundantly. Also think about our setting here. See all that

green grass we sat down in. Still doesn't ring a bell? How about if I say lay down instead of sit and pastures instead of grass. It reminds us of Psalm 23, The lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing, He makes me lie down in green pastures. Still not convinced. Ok let me tell you what happened straight after Jesus fed the 5000. The other disciples and I took a boat across the lake and when we were in the middle of it we saw Jesus walking on the water! And he said It is I which could also be like saying I am. Which is another way God refers to himself in Exodus. It seems to me that Jesus is showing he is more than a prophet, he is saying that he is God.

Now although I have just portrayed Philip as figuring out Jesus was God, it was a perspective that the disciples didn't seem to fully comprehend until Jesus resurrection. But the disciples did see that Jesus was more than a prophet and this final perspective is really how we today should be viewing this miracle and Jesus in general. It's not ignoring the fact that he is our provider, we are encouraged to ask him for things. It's not ignoring the fact that he is a prophet, he certainly is a prophet and we should listen to all of what he says. But we can't twist that into something that would suit us, what we need is this third perspective where we realise that Jesus is God. And if Jesus is God it means we not only should listen to him but also obey him.

This is something that we need to remember as we go into the NEW Year. There are many people, even from other

religions who see Jesus as a prophet, that his words are good words, and that they actually do listen to some of it. But we need to listen to Jesus complete message and obey it. We need to realise that he is more than just a prophet, he is God, he is someone who needs to be listened to and obeyed. That may sound obvious but too often we think that all being a Christian involves is going through the motions of listening to sermons, reading the bible and coming to church. Listening to sermons, reading your bible, and coming to church although good, is not the complete response God is looking for. Because listening and not obeying, reading your bible and not obeying, coming to church and not obeying is not what God wants. God wants you to listen, understand and obey.

I want to encourage you to come and listen to the rest of the sermon series on JOHN 6, I have given you just a taste of some of the things that we can look out for, because in the rest of John 6 Jesus himself answers questions, gives more insights and gives commands based on the feeding of the 5000. So in the coming weeks as the various preachers share with you what Jesus said remember today's sermon, that we should be listening and more than that as we listen to Jesus words we should obey. So I leave us with the question who will you be listening to in 2018?

AMEN