

JESUS IS LIFE-GIVING BREAD

Matthew 14:3-36; Mark 6:16-56; Luke 9:11-20; John 6:4-71

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Jesus, the disciples and the multitudes

Key-locations: Different locations around Lake Galilee: Capernaum; Bethsaida; the desert

Key-repetitions:

- Crowds (many): A great crowd followed Jesus (Jn 6:2); Jesus saw a crowd coming toward him (Jn 6:5); Jesus asked Philip where they could buy food for so many people (Jn 6:5); the people wanted to make Jesus king by force (Jn 6:14-15); the crowd went to Capernaum in search of Jesus (Jn 6:22-25); many disciples heard Jesus' words, complained and abandoned him (Jn 6:60-66).

- Bread: The disciples didn't have enough money to buy bread for the crowd (Mk 6:37); the disciples had only five pieces of bread (Mt 14:16-17); Jesus multiplied the bread, the people ate and there were 12 baskets of leftover bread (Mt 14:19-20; Jn 6:11-13); the crowd said that their ancestors ate the bread of Heaven; Jesus talked about Bread of Heaven and the Bread of Life (Jn 6:31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 41, 48, 50, 51, 58).

Key-attitudes:

- The hatred Herodias felt for John the Baptist and Herod's fear of him.
- The cruelty of Herod, Herodias and her daughter.
- The compassion Jesus felt for the crowd.
- The animation and the great hope of the crowd that followed Jesus. Their hope increased with the multiplication of the bread and fish.

- The disciples' fear during the storm.
- The self-centeredness of the crowd.
- The sternness of Jesus when he spoke to those who followed him for self-centered reasons.
- The hostility that dominated the dialogue, between Jesus and the crowd, about the Bread of Life.
- The deception that the crowd felt toward Jesus at the end of the dialogue about the Bread of Life, in contrast with the trust felt by the disciples.

Initial-situation:

During the second year of Jesus' ministry, his popularity with the people grew. John the Baptist was in prison and the multitudes who had formerly sought out John now sought out Jesus because they heard about the things he was doing. However, religious leaders became furious with Jesus because he did not respect their traditions, especially those regarding the Sabbath day.

Initial-problem:

An opportune time came for Herodias to kill John the Baptist when Herod celebrated his birthday.

Final-situation:

After the feeding of the five thousand and the dialogue between Jesus and the crowd about the Bread of Life, many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. After those events, Jesus went around in Galilee, purposely staying away from Judea because the Jews there were waiting to kill him.

BIBLE STORY

Death of John the Baptist Mt 4:12; 14:3-5; Mk 1:14; 6:16-20; Lk 3:19-20

During Jesus' first year of ministry, King Herod visited his brother Philip. Herod became infatuated with his brother's wife, Herodias. She left her husband to live with Herod.

John the Baptist then accused Herod of living in adultery with Herodias.

Herod had John imprisoned. Herodias was furious with John and wanted to kill him. But Herod was afraid because many people revered John as a prophet of God (Mt 14:3-5), and Herod was convinced that John was a holy man (Mk 6:16-20). John remained in prison during the second year of Jesus' ministry.

Herodias got her chance to kill John the Baptist during the celebration of Herod's birthday. Herod gave a banquet for his high officials, military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. Herodias' daughter entered the banquet hall and danced; she pleased Herod and his guests.

King Herod told the girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you. Whatever you ask

I will give you, up to half my kingdom."

The girl went out and asked her mother, "What shall I ask for?"

Herodias answered, "The head of John the Baptist."

The girl ran back to the king and demanded, "I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter."

Herod sobered up; he was greatly distressed, but did not want to break the promise he had made in front of his guests. He immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. Herod presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother (Mk 6:20-29).

Five Thousand Fed Mt 14:13-21; Mk 6:30-44; Lk 9:10-17; Jn 6:1-13

Jesus heard about the death of John the Baptist and withdrew by boat with his disciples to a remote place (Mt 14:13).

Many people saw Jesus and his disciples leaving, and realized where they were going. People from surrounding towns took off running and got there first. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he felt compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. He started teaching them many things. When it was late in the day, his disciples interrupted him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already very late. Send the people away so they can go to the nearby farms and villages to buy themselves something to eat" (Mk 6:33-36).

Jesus asked Philip, "Where can we buy bread to feed all these people?"

Philip answered, "Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each person to have a bite!"

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small loaves of barley bread and two small fish; but they won't go far with so many people."

Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass for the people to sit on.

There was about five thousand men in the crowd. Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to the people who were sitting. He did the same with the fish. The people ate as much as they wanted.

When all the people had enough to eat, Jesus told his disciples, "Gather the leftovers so nothing is wasted." The disciples filled twelve baskets with leftovers from the five barley loaves (Jn 6:5-13).

After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this man is the Prophet who was to come into the world!" Jesus knew they intended to grab him by force and make him king (Jn 6:14-15).

Jesus Walked Across the Water Mt 14:22-33; Mk 6:45-52; Jn 6:16-21

Immediately, Jesus ordered his disciples to get into the boat and cross to the other side of the lake, but Jesus stayed and dismissed the crowd. Then Jesus went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was by himself. The boat was far out in the lake, knocked about by the waves because they were rowing against the wind. Jesus saw the disciples straining at the oars (Mt 14:22-23; Mk 6:45-48).

Somewhere between three and six o'clock in the morning, the disciples had only rowed three to four miles. Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. He intended to pass by them, but the disciples saw him walking on the lake. They were terrified. They screamed out in fear, "It's a ghost!" (Mt 14:25-26; Mk 6:48; Jn 6:16-19).

Jesus immediately told them, "Calm down. It's me. Don't be afraid."

Peter replied, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you on the water."

Jesus responded, "Come on."

Peter got out of the boat and started walking on the water toward Jesus. When Peter saw the strong wind and the waves, he became afraid. He started to sink. He shouted, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. Then he said, "You have so little faith! Why did you doubt?" (Mt 14:27-31).

When Jesus and Peter climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading. The men in the boat worshiped Jesus, saying, "You really are the Son of God" (Mt 14:32-33; Jn 6:21).

Jesus the Bread of Life Jn 6:22-59

The next day, the crowd went to Capernaum looking for Jesus (Jn 6:22-24).

They found Jesus on the other side of the lake in the synagogue in Capernaum. Jesus told the crowd, "I tell you the truth. You are looking for me because you filled your stomachs with bread, not because you understood my miracles. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, food the Son of Man will give you. God the Father has placed his seal of approval on him."

They asked Jesus, "What does God want us to do?"

Jesus answered, "God wants you to believe in the one he has sent."

They asked him, "What miracle will you perform so we may see it and believe in you? What will you do? Our ancestors ate the manna in the desert."

Jesus answered them, "I tell you the truth, Moses wasn't the one who gave you the bread from heaven. My Father is the one who gives you the true bread from heaven. The bread that God gives is the man who comes down from heaven and gives life to the people of the world."

They said, "Sir, from now on give us this bread."

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. People who comes to me will never go hungry. People who believes in me will never be thirsty. I did not come down from heaven to do my will but to do the will of the Father who sent me. This is what my Father wants: that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will bring them back to life on the last day" (Jn 6:25-40).

The Jews began grumbling because Jesus had said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They said, "Isn't this Jesus, the son of Joseph? Don't we know his father and mother? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?"

Jesus answered, "Stop grumbling! People can't come to me unless the Father who sent me makes them want to come. If they do come, I will bring them back to life on the last day. Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him will come to me. I tell you the truth, he who believes in me has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna bread in the desert, but they died. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will not die but will live forever. My flesh is the life-giving bread that I will give so that the people in the world may live."

Then the Jews started arguing among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

Jesus insisted, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will bring him back to life on the last day. My flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me, and I live in him. In the same way that the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna bread and later died. Whoever eats this bread will live forever." He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum (Jn 6:41-59).

Many Disciples Abandoned Jesus Jn 6:60-71

Many disciples heard Jesus' words and said, "This is a difficult teaching. Who can understand it?"

Jesus was aware that his disciples were grumbling and he told them, "Does this offend you? The Spirit gives life; human strength and willpower is of no use. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Yet some of you refuse to believe." Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him.

After this, many of Jesus' disciples turned their backs on him and returned to the lives they had lived before they began following him.

Jesus asked the Twelve, "Do you want to leave with the others?"

Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, there is one else for us to go to. You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are God's Holy One."

Jesus responded, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Still one of you is a devil!" Jesus meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. He was one of the Twelve but would later betray him (Jn 6:60-71).

After the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus went around in Galilee, purposely staying away from Judea because the leaders of the Jews there wanted to kill him (Jn 7:1).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When Jesus wanted to be alone with his Twelve, how did he react to the crowd that came toward him?
2. How did Jesus feed the crowd that had about 5000 men?
3. How did the disciples react to Jesus walking on water?
4. How did Jesus make comparisons between manna, the bread of Heaven, and himself as the Bread of Life?
5. What teaching of Jesus do you find hard to accept?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. Jesus is omnipotent. He manifested his power over:
 - Matter: he multiplied bread and fish (Jn 6:11).
 - Gravity: he walked on water (Jn 6:19).
 - Nature: he stopped the storm (Mt 14:32).
 - Space: the boat immediately went from the middle of the lake to the shore (Jn 6:21).
 - Human emotions: he removed the disciples' fear (Jn 6:19-21).
2. The person who is aware of his limitations, but gives his all to Jesus will experience God increasing the little he turned over to the Lord. A boy gave his five small loaves of bread and two small fish to Jesus and saw it multiplied to feed five thousand (Jn 6:8-11).
3. Despair felt when facing a storm of life, can give a desperate person an impulse to step out in faith toward Jesus. The disciples had rowed more than nine hours, they could not win against the wind, the sea and the storm. They knew the dangers of the sea. They knew widows of fishermen who had lost the fight against the sea. The disciples saw Jesus walking on the sea and they knew that only he could liberate them from the storm (Mt 14:24-25). The fear of the sinking boat in the angry sea gave Peter courage to do the impossible. He saw Jesus as his

only hope and stepped onto the water (Mt 14:28).

4. Jesus rejects self-centered people who want to follow him only for temporal benefits. He criticized the people who looked for him only because he gave them food (Jn 6:26-27).
5. Jesus, the true Bread of Life, fulfilled the meaning of the miracle of manna in the Old Testament (Ex 16:1-3, 13-16, 31). Jesus is the true Bread of Heaven and the Bread that God the Father gives (Jn 6:32). He is the Bread of Life (Jn 6:35, 48). He is the Bread that is superior to manna (Jn 6:50, 58). Manna was unable to prevent the death of those

who ate it; however, those who feed on Jesus will never die (Jn 6:58).

6. Each person has to make a decision as to what he will do with Jesus. The basic choice is: accept and follow him or reject and turn against him. When Jesus asked his disciples if they would also leave him, he was showing that they could either accept or reject him (Jn 6:67). There appeared to be different responses to Jesus: some left; some stayed and believed; and Judas stayed but sought to use Jesus for self-centered gain (Jn 6:60-70). But in reality there were only two responses to Jesus: accept him or reject him.