



## OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

THE GOOD NEWS: IT'S YOUR STORY TO TELL

THE MIRACLES (MATT. 14:13-21)

SEPTEMBER 17-23, 2017

### SERMON OUTLINE

#### The Miracles

Acts 9:32-43

God uses miracles in the Spread of the Good News

1. Miracles Change hearts and minds to Believe

2. Miracles demonstrate the Presence and Power of God's Spirit

1 Corinthians 12:7-11, 30

3. Miracles Happen under the Guidance of God's Spirit

*What do I need to do with what I have heard today?*

### MAIN POINT

God's miracles have the power to spread the good news.

## THINKING THINGS THROUGH

*Connect the sermon to the study.*

1. How has God been working in your life this summer?
2. Pastor George talked about the power of miracles and how miracles help spread the good news. Why are people skeptical of miracles?
3. Why do you think it is important to study Jesus' miracles?

**Leader:** Throughout the Gospels, we read countless stories of Jesus and His disciples performing miracles. These miracles point us beyond the amazing things Jesus did and reveal the amazing God He is. Among the things we learn about miracles from these accounts is that they have the power to change minds, are Spirit directed, are not a gift that all people have, and are for a limited time for outreach impact. That last fact is the most important—miracles have the power to spread the good news. Today, God continues to work in miraculous ways in order to reveal His glory and draw people into a relationship with Him. Let's look at a particular miracle from the Gospel of Matthew that shows us Jesus' compassion for others and His desire for people to know Him.

## DIGGING DEEPER

*Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.*

> [HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 14:13-14.](#)

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4. What do we learn about Jesus from these two short verses?
5. How should Jesus' approach shape our expectations for service to others?

**Leader:** The phrase, "When Jesus heard about it" (v. 13) refers to the death of John the Baptist, who was killed by Herod. That the news drove Jesus to solitude shows us the grief he felt over John's death. If we ever question the full extent of Jesus' humanity, passages like this remind us that He experienced all of the same emotions we do. The nature of His ministry meant that He couldn't stay in solitude long, though. Word of Jesus' miracles had spread, and crowds followed Him everywhere He went. They were amazed at all Jesus had done, and seemed to believe in Him, or at least they believed in

## SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

His power. Even in His grief, we see that Jesus never lost sight of what really matters—loving and serving people.

**6. Verse 14 links Jesus' compassion with the healing miracles He performed. If miracles are a critical component in the spread of the good news, then why is compassion so important?**

**Leader:** Verse 14 tells us how Jesus handled the crowds—with loving compassion and with miracles of healing. Healings are the most frequent miracles recorded in the Gospels, and they reveal God's compassionate love and mercy for His people. By healing people, Jesus showed His power over physical life (and even death, see John 11), which established His authority as the Son of God and opened the door for people to have faith in Him. The compassion Jesus showed through His miracles shows us His love for people, and His desire that all people know Him as Savior and Lord.

> [HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 14:15-21.](#)

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**7. How does the attitude of the disciples in verse 15 compare with the character of Jesus in verse 14?**

**8. In verse 16, we read that Jesus told His disciples to get the people food. What do you think Jesus was trying to teach them with that question?**

**9. What circumstances has God used in your life lately to push you beyond your abilities and stretch your faith in Him?**

**Leader:** The crowd was large—with women and children, it was probably as many as 20,000 people. It would have cost nearly eight months' wages to buy enough food to feed all of those people. But the issue wasn't money, nor was it a matter of supply. For Jesus, this was an opportunity to display His power as the provider of all things. Jesus forced His disciples to look beyond their meager abilities and resources to see God's bigger plan at work. Like the disciples, we have a hard time seeing beyond our limited abilities to God's abilities and plan. As you lead this discussion, think about how your limited vision hinders what you see God doing around you.

**10. What can we infer about God's character from this miracle?**

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**Leader:** Jesus didn't just provide for the people; He provided extravagantly. Every person ate until they were full. They were satisfied. This is just another reminder of the mercy and compassion of God. He doesn't skimp and provide the bare minimum. Jesus took five loaves of bread and two fish and multiplied it exponentially. And God was not only generous in the past; He is generous today as well. God has blessed us so richly, giving all things to us—including His Son to die for us.

### DOING LIFE TOGETHER

*Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.*

**11. How have you recently seen God's glory displayed in a way that has led you to trust Jesus more deeply than you did a year ago?**

**12. One of the ways we tell the story of the good news of Jesus is by modeling His compassionate love in our relationships with others. What would be a specific opportunity you might have to do that this week? How can we encourage and hold one another accountable in that effort?**

### PRAYER

Close your group time in prayer. Pray that we would see Jesus not just as a miracle worker, but as our Lord and Savior who loves us and wants us to look more like Himself. Pray that we would be concerned about His mission and share His compassionate love for others.

### MEMORIZE

When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick. —Matthew 14:14

### SPOTLIGHT ON THE PASSAGE

MATTHEW 14:13-21

**14:13-14.** While we cannot be certain of the specific reason Jesus withdrew, it seems to fit the context if we understand him to be moving further from the centers of opposition to the countryside. It is also possible that Jesus had heard Herod was beginning to focus attention on him (14:1-2), so he withdrew to avoid the kind of treatment John had received.

Matthew's language gives a fourfold emphasis to Jesus' desire for solitude: (1) he withdrew; (2)

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he went by boat so the crowds on foot could not follow him; (3) he went to a solitary place; and (4) he went privately, emphasizing separation from the crowds, not from his disciples. If we assume that Jesus withdrew to mourn John's death, we see that Jesus had a deep emotional side and desired to be alone with his circle of friends.

In Luke 9:10 we are told that the "solitary place" was near Bethsaida, which was most likely on the northeast coast of the Sea of Galilee. The people, in such desperate need of a shepherd, and perhaps also being shaken by John's execution, followed by foot when they learned of Jesus' departure. From the towns emphasis on the desolate setting to which they followed Jesus.

Verse 14 implies that the crowd arrived at Jesus' destination ahead of him (clearly stated in Mark 6:33-34). It is possible that his journey by boat never took him out of sight of land. Those on land could have watched as they ran, anticipating where he would land. The crowd was large, and the crowd was needy. Even though he had not had a chance to process his grief over John, the Messiah-King had compassion on the people, and he went back to work, healing their sick. So strongly motivated was he to fulfill his mission of compassion that he put aside his deep personal needs until later that evening (14:23).

**14:15-16.** But his compassion did not stop at healing their sick. As evening came the people grew hungry. Jesus acted on their need for food, but not before setting his disciples up for an important lesson. Dinnertime had come and gone, and the disciples drew Jesus' attention to the solitary place, with no food sources present. Apparently this location was not as remote as that in the second feeding (15:32-33), because the walk to a nearby village market was not unreasonable. The disciples urged Jesus to send the people away to buy food.

This was not an unreasonable request, assuming there was no food source present. However, there was another food source present, so Jesus treated their request as ridiculous. "Why should they go away? Provide them with food yourselves," is the impact of Jesus' challenge (the "you" is emphatic in You give them). He knew the disciples would not understand, but he issued the challenge to get their attention and to make it obvious how far they had to go in learning faith. This entire miracle is a lesson in the disciples' training.

**14:17-20.** Matthew got right to the point by abbreviating the story, leaving out details such as the boy who provided the loaves and fish (John 6:9) and the additional objections the disciples put forth in Mark 6:37. The five loaves and two fish were probably so small (John 6:9) that one or two men could have eaten them in a single meal. This crowd needed a recipe that would feed ten thousand or more (the five thousand of 14:21 are only the men; we must estimate the additional women and children). The possibility of a feast arose when Jesus said, Bring them here to me (14:18). He himself would be the provider.

Jesus ordered the people to sit down on the grass. With the loaves and fish in his hands, he looked up to heaven (heaven represents God himself) and gave thanks, which means "speak well of, praise." There is no object for "gave thanks," but this was the common way to speak of giving thanks for one's food. A good Jew would thank God for providing each meal, but this prayer was even more significant. It acknowledged the God of heaven as the source of authority and power behind the miracle that was about to happen. However, this act of provision was no more difficult for God than his normal, daily provision of food. We should not minimize the miracle of this passage, but let it raise our awareness of God's constant provision for our daily needs.

Jesus then broke the loaves and fish and began distributing the pieces to the crowd through his disciples. We do not know if Jesus kept giving arm-loads to the disciples or whether he gave each of them a small portion that multiplied as they handed it out. All Matthew tells us is the result: They all ate and were satisfied. And, as is characteristic of our gracious God, he provided more than was needed. The twelve baskets indicate the abundance of provision. These baskets may also relate to the fact that this was a feeding of Jews (represented by twelve tribes), in contrast to the Gentile feeding (15:32-39), where there were seven baskets of leftovers.

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**14:21.** To this point, one might assume the crowd was a few score or possibly a few hundred. This would be miracle enough. But now we learn one last astounding fact—the crowd was far more than five thousand, very possibly ten thousand or more, if women and children were counted. Choose some stadium or arena and picture what fraction of the seating would be filled by ten thousand people. Then imagine these people all being satisfied by five loaves of bread and two fish. Then you will begin to comprehend the impact of this miracle—and, by extension, the impact of God’s provision of our every need through Jesus, the Messiah-King. And, by personalizing it, the impact upon those twelve disciples.