Session 15 Feeding the 5,000 and Walking on the Water (Mk. 6)

1. introduction
   1. In this session, we will look Jesus’ final visit to Nazareth (Mk. 6:1-6a), His third (final) tour of Galilee (Mk. 6:6b), sending out the apostles (Mk. 6:7-13; see session 14), John the Baptist’s death (Mk. 6:14-29), Jesus feeding the 5,000 (Mk. 6:35-44) and walking on the water (Mk. 6:47-52).
   2. These events occurred in Galilee sometime between late AD 28 and the spring AD 29.
2. Jesus was rejected in Nazareth (Mk. 6:1-6)
   1. Jesus was rejected in Nazareth (Mk. 6:1-6a; cf. Mt. 13:54-58). Jesus wanted His disciples to see that even He was rejected by those nearest and dearest to Him so that they should expect rejection as part of kingdom reality. Jesus was rejected twice by people in Nazareth (Lk 4:16-30; Mk 6:1-6).

1Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him. 2…He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying,   
“Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom [Jesus’ new ideas] is this…that such mighty works are performed by His hands! 3Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon?...” They were offended at Him. 4But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country…and in his own house.”   
5He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few…and healed them. 6He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching. (Mk. 6:1-6)

* 1. ***Where***: They questioned the source of His power and wisdom (6:2), knowing that the leaders from Jerusalem had declared that the source of His power was demonic (Mk. 3:22).
  2. ***He marveled:*** For nearly 2 years, many testimonies of His powerful miracles had circulated. Matthew added that He did not do many mighty works there *because of their unbelief* (Mt. 13:58). God chose to limit His miracles in response to His people’s response of faith in Him.
  3. ***Offended***: He had not received His new teachings from them or those in authority, He failed to do great miracles for them; they knew Him only as a manual laborer who was simply one of them. He referred to a well-known saying that highlighted a principle—*familiarity breeds contempt*.
  4. ***In a circuit***: Jesus’ third and final tour of Galilee (Mk. 6:6; cf. Mt. 9:35-38) was in late AD 28.   
     Jesus deeply desired that all hear the good news, so He traveled to many of their villages.
  5. Jesus had commissioned and sent out the 12 apostles (Mk. 6:7-13; cf. Mt. 10:1-42; Lk. 9:1-6).   
     He sent them out in early AD 29. (We looked at the sending out of the Twelve in session 14).   
     He was passionate about partnership with His people, so He anointed them speak the good news.

7And He called the twelve to Himself…to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits…12They went out and preached that people should repent. 13And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them. (Mk. 6:7-13)

1. Herod Antipas killed John the Baptist (Mk. 6:14-34)
   1. Herod Antipas killed John the Baptist (Mk. 6:14-29; cf. Mt. 14:1-12; Lk. 9:7-9). Mark described John the Baptist’s death in more detail than his ministry (Mk. 1:4-8). Why? Because John’s death exemplified the reality that preaching God’s word leads to persecution and sometimes to death. John the Baptist was a very great man (Mt. 11:11)—he is a premier example of being a faithful witness in the face of great persecution. He refused to draw back on the message God gave him.

14Now King Herod heard of Him [Jesus]…he said, “John the Baptist is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him”…17Herod himself had sent and laid hold of John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife; for he had married her. 18Because John had said to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” 19Therefore Herodias held it against him and wanted to kill him… (Mk. 6:14-19)

* 1. Herodias waited for an opportune time to persuade Herod to kill John the Baptist (Mk. 6:21-26).

21Then an opportune day came when Herod on his birthday gave a feast for…the chief men of Galilee. 22And when Herodias’ daughter…danced, and pleased Herod…the king said…,   
“Ask me whatever you want…” 24She said, “The head of John the Baptist! (Mk. 6:21-24)

* 1. The apostles returned from ministry and reported to Jesus, then He withdrew with them by boat to a remote place just southeast of Bethsaida (Mk. 6:30-34; cf. Mt. 14:13-14; Lk. 9:10-11; Jn. 6:1-3). Jesus understood that one of their greatest needs was to receive teaching about God’s ways.

30Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. 31And He said to them, “Come aside…to a deserted place and rest a while.”   
For there were many coming…and they did not even have time to eat. 32So they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves. 33But the multitudes saw them departing, and many… ran there on foot…They arrived before them…34Jesus…saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them…so He began to teach them many things. (Mk. 6:30-34)

1. Feeding 5,000 and walking on water—the Greater moses
   1. Jesus performed two miracles that are intended to be understood together—feeding the 5,000 and walking on the water. These miracles showed Jesus to be the Son of God as the greater Moses who supernaturally provided food in the wilderness and demonstrated His power over the sea.
   2. The feeding of the 5,000 presented Jesus as their *provider* and walking on the water as their *protector* in the face of fearful circumstances. These miracles expressed His provision when human resource is insufficient and His protection when human power is inadequate. These miracles revealed His deity as the Son of God and foreshadowed His end-time miracles (Mic. 7:15).
   3. These two miracles happened at the time of Passover (Jn. 6:4)—the historical event when God saved His people from Egypt. Passover reminded them of the time God miraculously sent manna and controlled the sea. God’s power over food and waterare a key part of Israel’s salvation story.
   4. When Jesus multiplied the loaves and walked on the water, He was declaring that *He was God*, that nothing is impossible with God (Lk. 1:37), and that He was worthy of their love and obedience.
2. Jesus fed the 5,000 (Mk. 6:35-46)
   1. Jesus multiplied food for 5,000 men (Mk. 6:35-44; cf. Mt. 14:15-21; Lk. 9:12-17; Jn. 6:4-13).   
      It occurred in a remote area on the northeast side of the sea, just a few miles south of Bethsaida. Feeding the 5,000 is the *only* miracle recorded by all four Gospels, and Mark referred to it two more times (6:52; 8:17-21), emphasizing how important it was—revealing Jesus’ identity as God.

35…His disciples came to Him and said, “This is a deserted place, and already the hour is late. 36Send them away, that they may go into the surrounding…villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat.” 37But He…said to them, “You give them something to eat.” And they said to Him, “Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread…?” (Mk. 6:35-37)

* 1. ***Give them something to eat***: He called them to do something that was beyond their abilities and resources. He wanted them to *look to Him* as their source to accomplish His will. They looked to their own resources and concluded they were not able to do what He called them to do. A denarius was a day’s wage for manual labor—200 denarii was nine months of wages, about $20,000 today.
  2. Jesus commanded them to sit down. This orderly arrangement of the multitudes into groups of hundreds and fifties is reminiscent of the camp of Israel under Moses’ leadership (Ex. 18:21).

38But He said to them, “How many loaves do you have?... they said, “Five, and two fish.” 39Then He commanded them to make them all sit down…on the green grass. 40So they sat down in ranks, in hundreds and in fifties…41He had taken the five loaves and the two fish…and gave them to His disciples to set before them…42They all ate and were filled. 43And they took up twelve baskets full of fragments…44Now those who had eaten…were about five thousand men. (Mk. 6:38-44)

* 1. ***12 baskets***: Jesus’ provision was so abundant that there were 12 baskets of extra food. This may have represented the 12 tribes of Israel showing that Jesus was the One anointed to lead Israel. Each of the 12 apostles carried a basket, waking among the multitudes, distributing food to them.
  2. This miracle happened just before the Passover in AD 29 (Jn. 6:4). Passover was a time when Israel celebrated deliverance from the oppression in Egypt by God—who intervened with great miracles.

4Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near...11Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them… 14Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.” 15Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone. 16Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, 17got into the boat, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was already dark, and Jesus had not come to them. 18Then the sea arose because a great wind was blowing.   
(Jn. 6:4-18)

* 1. ***The Prophet***: The feeding of the 5,000 energized some of the Galileans to seek to force Jesus to be king as they saw Him as “the Prophet” (Jn. 6:14-15) of whom Moses had prophesied (Deut. 18:15).
  2. ***Alone***: Jesus went up a mountain alone to pray (Mk. 6:46) and to avoid those seeking to make Him king. I would think He was praying for His disciples to receive revelation of Him as the God-man.

46And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray. (Mk. 6:46)

1. Jesus walked on the water (Mk. 6:47-52)
   1. Jesus walked on the Sea of Galilee (Mk. 6:47-52; cf. Mt. 14:24-33; Jn. 6:16-21). The feeding of the 5,000 was a miracle that was meant to teach the disciples a lesson about Jesus’ identity as the Son of God and walking on the water confirmed this. The fourth watch was between 3 am to 6 am.

45Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida… 46He departed to the mountain to pray.47When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea…48Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them.   
Now about the fourth watch of the night [3 am–6 am] He came to them, walking on the sea…  
49And when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed it was a ghost, and cried out…  
50but immediately He talked with them and said…, “Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.” (Mk. 6:45-50)

* 1. ***Immediately***: Jesus immediately made His disciples depart for the other side of the sea (Mk. 6:45). He urgently sent the disciples away by boat, possibly to hinder them from stirring up the multitude even more by giving them further details about the miraculous aspects of feeding the 5,000 (since the apostles did not yet understand Jesus’ deity or mission). Also, He wanted to teach them about who He was in context to walking on the sea—only God has power over creation and its laws.
  2. ***The other side***: Mark described the disciples as going by boat to “the other side” (Mk. 6:45) simply because they had to “cross some water” to get there; however, they did not travel very far.
     1. ***Review***: After the disciples returned from their preaching tour and reported to Jesus, He withdrew with them by boat to a remote area just *southeast of Bethsaida* (Mk. 6:30-34; Lk. 9:10). It was close enough for people to walk there. Jesus fed the 5,000 in that remote area.
     2. After feeding the 5,000, Jesus sent the disciples ahead of Him by boat and then went to a mountain to pray—the disciples rowed northward towards *Bethsaida* (Mk. 6:45), but a strong wind drove them slightly south-westward toward *Capernaum* (Jn. 6:16), and they landed at *Gennesaret* (Mk. 6:53). Capernaum was 6 miles west of Bethsaida—both cities are on the northern coast of sea in the same direction by sea.

16…His disciples…17went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was already dark, and Jesus had not come to them. 18Then the sea arose because a great wind was blowing.   
19So when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea.   
21They willingly received Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land… (Jn. 6:16-21)

* 1. ***Walking on Water***: This was a far greater miracle than when He calmed a storm (Mk. 4:35-41). This demonstrated His power over the laws of nature. He had power to enable Peter to do the same. In addition to walking on water, Jesus caused the boat to immediately be at the land (Jn. 6:21).   
     God gave Adam dominion over the sea (Gen. 1:28)—he lost that privilege when he sinned. As the new Adam, Jesus walked in and restored God’s original purpose for humanity (1 Cor. 15:45).
  2. ***Do not fear***: They feared that a ghost was coming toward them (Mk. 6:49), and Peter feared the wind when walking on the water (Mt. 14:30). Because Jesus is the Lord, we do not need to fear the most desperate need for provision or protection, even in seemingly impossible situations.
  3. Peter walked on the water (Mt. 14:28-31). Only Matthew reported this in his gospel. Peter boldly asked Jesus to enable him to walk on water (14:28). Jesus gave him a word of command and promise (14:29). Peter started out in faith with his eyes fixed on Jesus, but soon focused on the strong winds and became afraid, then doubted Jesus’ word to him, and began to sink (14:30).

28Peter answered Him and said, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.”  
29So He said, “Come.” And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water   
to go to Jesus. 30But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out…, “Lord, save me!” 31And immediately Jesus…caught him, and said to him,   
“O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” 32And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33Then those who were in the boat…worshiped Him, saying, “Truly You are the Son of God.” (Mt. 14:28-33)

* + 1. Jesus corrected Peter (Mt. 14:31), implying that he had not yet believed Jesus was God.
    2. ***You are the Son of God***: After seeing Jesus feed the 5,000 and walk on water, they now understood Jesus’ identity as the Son of God, and on the very next day they reaffirmed this belief (Jn. 6:69), but they did not yet grasp His mission to die on the cross (Mt. 16:21-23).
  1. ***Hardness of heart***: Mark concluded his account of the miracles of feeding the 5,000 and walking on water by interpreting the root issue—they did not understand the main message He intended for them to see when He multiplied the loaves because their hearts were hardened (Mk. 6:52).

52For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened. (Mk. 6:52)

* + 1. The message was that He is the *Sovereign Lord* with all authority and that He called His disciples to *partner with Him,* promising to be their *Provider* (feeding the 5,000) and *Protector* (power over the sea) so that they could complete God’s will in their life.
    2. They had not yet believed that He was God, even after having been given sufficient reason to believe—He revealed His power over demons, sickness, death, food, seas, storms, and more.
    3. They did not take seriously the implications of divinely orchestrated events set before them.
    4. All His miracles—those in the Scripture and those released in our lives—reveal who He is.
  1. The disciples were corrected on several occasions for “hardness of heart”—this does not speak of them being rebellious, but of not properly esteeming the things that God said or did before their eyes and not holding on to the message intended for them in those events (Mk. 6:52; 8:17; 16:14).

17But Jesus…said to them, “Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened? 18Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember? 19When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?” (Mk. 8:17-19)

14Later He appeared to the eleven…and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. (Mk. 16:14)

1. Jesus’ bread of life message (Jn. 6:22-69)
   1. The feeding miracle set the context for Jesus to reveal Himself as the Bread of Life (Jn. 6:32-59).   
      In the synagogue in Capernaum(Jn. 6:59),Jesus used this miracle to compare Himself to bread and to explain His identity as the Son of God to those who were following Him only because of His miracles. Many are *only* interested in Jesus because of His ability to bless their circumstances instead of honoring Him as God—seeing Him as worthy of our wholehearted love and obedience.

22On the following day…24when the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there…they also got into boats and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus…26Jesus answered them, “Most assuredly… you seek Me…because you ate of the loaves and were filled.” (Jn. 6:22-26)

* 1. Jesus was bread *from heaven*, which was far superior to what Moses gave the children of Israel. He said seven times that He came *from heaven*—thus, He was divine (6:33, 38, 41, 42, 50, 51, 58). Jesus did not say He *had* the bread from heaven, but that He *was* that bread from heaven. They accepted Him as an anointed man of God, but not as One whose origin was in heaven—thus as God.

32Jesus said to them, “…Moses did not give you the bread from heaven…33For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven”…35Jesus said…, “I am the bread of life…40everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life…” 41The Jews complained about Him, because He said, “I am the bread which came down from heaven.” 42And they said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph…? How is it then that He says, ‘I have come down from heaven’?” (Jn. 6:32-42)

* 1. Jesus compared the physical bread that Moses provided with His Person as the Living Bread from heaven. He spoke of eating His flesh and drinking His blood as a metaphor for believing on Him. When He referred to drinking His blood, He was signaling that He would one day shed His blood for them. Eating blood was offensive to the children of Israel (Lev. 3:17; 17:10-14).

49“Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and are dead…51I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh…” 52The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, “How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?” 53Then Jesus said to them, “…unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. (Jn. 6:49-53)

* 1. Many of Jesus’ followers were offended by His message on being the Bread of Life. Even today people are offended at Jesus for various reasons related to His message and leadership. They want to relate to Jesus *on* *their terms*, but Jesus requires that people relate Him as God *on His terms*.

61…He said to them, “Does this offend you? ... 62What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? 66From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. 67Then Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you also want to go away?” 68But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” 69Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Jn. 6:61-69)

* 1. Peter, speaking for the apostles, said that they now believed that Jesus was the Son of the God.