

A summary of John 6:1-15.

However, it is helpful to read John's account in conjunction with the other three gospel writers' account (Matthew 14:14-23, Mark 6:34-44 and Luke 9:12-17). By putting the four accounts together (the same account with different variations), we may get a more complete and a richer picture with more burdens that may impact our church life and our living.

1. Alone with the Lord: Matthew 14:13. Jesus withdrew to a desert place (in John 6:3 He went to the mountain) to spend time alone with the Father, to be close to Him and fellowship with Him. We also need to spend time alone with the Lord. The majority of our time, we are by ourselves, and so we can use that time to talk to the Lord and listen to Him.

2. Compassion on people to meet human needs: Jesus had compassion (Matthew 14:14 and Mark 6:34). In the church life, there are many people with many human needs. Jesus taught the people and proclaimed the kingdom of God (Luke 9:11). However, He met the human needs in order to bring people to know Him and to know the kingdom of God (the church). In the same way, when we care for people, we must be sensitive to their human needs in order to bring them to the point where they can know Christ and give themselves to Him. The base is divine (Christ and the church), but the means is very human. But how does Jesus meet the human needs in this account, and how is this carried out in the church life?

3. Pillars must be raised up: Jesus spent time alone with the Father, but He also spent time alone with His disciples. Indeed, He fed the five thousand (not including women and children), but not directly. He fed them through the disciples. He had a team of serving ones who grew to know Him and to know His heart, and to know themselves, and who were willing to be perfected. There are several aspects related to this burden.

- **Pillars have a close fellowship with older or more mature brothers and sisters.** The apostles gathered together to Jesus to report to Him all that they had done and taught. There was a very good fellowship between the apostles, Jesus and one another. Pillars have many prayers and fellowship together. They are not independent.

- **Pillars dive into the church life.** This does not just mean serving or laboring a lot. It means knowing as many brothers and sisters as possible, individually, one by one. Do I know the individual needs of the saints? If I don't know the needs, how can I serve? It is not a question of just doing many things, and speaking many things, but knowing the saints. The less I know the saints, the less I should speak.

- **Therefore, the pillars must contact many people.** We can see this in Mark 6:33. Many people recognized, not just Jesus, but the disciples also. Do people recognize us, know us? If people do not recognize us, they will not come, in principle. Very few come only because they have seen Christ and Christ alone. In general, they will come because they know someone. People come because someone spent time with them and invited them. Often, we ask new ones who invited them. Invariably, they will say who invited them. Pillars must contact and know people.

- **Pillars are tested and perfected.** In each of the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke), Jesus tells His disciples to give the multitude something to eat. However, only in John's gospel, Jesus asks, not the disciples as a whole, but Philip, specifically, where to buy bread to feed the people. This is the same Philip whom Jesus found in John 1, and who in turn found Nathanael. This means that the Lord will test us the more we respond to Him, love Him and follow Him. The less we love Him, the less testing. The more we love Him, the greater the testing. Philip failed (and so do we). However, this gave the Lord an opportunity to perfect Philip, not directly, but through Andrew. Often, we are perfected by other brothers and sisters in the church life.

4. **We may not have, but we need to know who has:** The disciples did not have anything, but Andrew knew a lad (a little boy) who had five loaves and two fish. The Lord wants each individual believer to provide food. Even if we do not have, we may know a little boy (signifying a new believer with a pure heart) who has. Do I know someone who has something to offer to the Lord? We must know what new believers have from the Lord. Never assume the younger ones know nothing or have nothing. In fact, we need to wait for them to say something. This shows that it is impossible for us to meet every need. The older ones should never think they can meet every need. They need the younger ones and the newer ones to bless the church. Eventually, the little boy gave what he had to the disciples. This means that the newer ones also need the older ones. Both complement each other and together bless people.
5. **We offer who we are.** The little boy had five loaves and two fish. These loaves were made from barley grown in the ground. The fish were caught in the sea. Both loaves and fish represent a particular living that is made by people (in this case farmers and fishermen). This indicates that we offer to the Lord who we are, according to the environment the Lord has placed us in. For example, a student lives among students. His or her offering to the Lord is necessarily, and quite naturally, fellow students that are contacted, and brought to the Lord. Often, we think that our offering is our time or money. This is not incorrect, but here in John 6, the offering is the barley and the fish, that is the people around us to whom we are related (our friends, our neighbors, our relatives, our coworkers). This is an uphill battle. It is not easy for one person to know and love the Lord.
6. **The Lord will break who we are (Matthew 14:19, Mark 6:41 and Luke 9:16).** We may think that we have served well or spoken well or met a certain need. The Lord will break us to cause us to realize that we have nothing to boast about. Only the Lord can meet the needs. If I gave two hours of my time, or spent some money, or even contacted someone and brought him to the Lord, it was because the Lord told me to do it. I have no boast. Eventually, the Lord alone is the One who feeds and blesses.
7. **Actually, our service is, at the best of times, ineffective!** We see this in John 6:14-15. All the human needs were met by Jesus, yet, at the end, the people only recognized Him as a prophet and a human king. They did not acknowledge Him as the Son of God, nor as the Messiah. This shows that we may labor hard (and we must) to sow the seed and preach the gospel. Yet people still do not know Christ. How ineffective is my service! We must not think that the church life is so easy to meet this need and that need. Yes, people may be satisfied, but they still may not know Christ. This is a practical example of being broken. We have nothing to boast about, yet at the same time we have nothing to be discouraged about. Perhaps the Christ in me is very small. That only means I need to grow more. Christ is everything and does everything.