

## **Sermon Draft**

**Text: Matthew 14:13–21**

**Sermon: “Seeing Through Hearing”**

There are times when we gather here mostly to listen to Jesus. And that’s good and we could never have too much of that. Listening to Jesus. But today I want us to watch Jesus, to watch while we listen. They say a picture is worth a thousand words, and, well, if the picture is of Jesus, maybe it’s a million words.

Maybe a better way of saying all that would be this: often when you and I speak back and forth, I say, “This is the Word of the Lord,” and you say, “Thanks be to God.” But maybe sometime you could reply, “These are the works of the Lord,” and I’d think you were on to something.

Words and works are all the same with Jesus. So today let us listen, but while we listen, let us watch, too, and see what the picture is worth.

Jesus has been teaching much, and many have heard. Sowers. Seeds.

Nets. Treasures. And on and on. The text now shifts from listening to watching. Jesus begins to work miracles. Watch him.

Matthew opens this section by showing us the reaction of Jesus to some pretty terrible news. We can see Jesus sigh and watch his head drop a bit and his shoulders sag ever so slightly? If we had been close enough to see but not close enough to hear, we would have known that the news was bad just by seeing the posture of Jesus change. He is a man who often carries heavy burdens, but no matter how accustomed Jesus has become to hearing bad news, he is not calloused, and bad news strikes him like it strikes you and me.

Jesus hears that John the Baptist you know, the Elijah who is to come, the sight to be seen in the desert, the baby jumping in the womb, that one he is dead. He was killed. John the Baptist is dead. And Jesus is upset, and his body shows it. We don't hear what he said, if he said anything, but we do see what he needs: we see him walk away to spend a little time by himself, alone. Well, alone enough, because, of course, we know Jesus is never really alone, just as we're never really alone, because God is with us to sustain us wherever we go.

So, Jesus walks away with head hung low and a weight on the shoulders, and he doesn't stop to teach us a lesson or whisper some insight. But we do see, as he walks away, that it is definitely okay and more than okay sometimes to drop everything to spend a little time leaning on God, especially when the weight on your shoulders seems too heavy to bear alone. See Jesus pray.

The next time we see Jesus, he sees the crowd gathering around him. We are not sure how long he actually got to spend in prayer, but we can be sure it didn't feel like enough. Is it ever enough? A crowd has gathered, a great crowd, five thousand people plus. We're not exactly sure why they're there, why they're here again. It might be because they heard about John the Baptist, and they had to find their place of refuge to think things through, and for them that was near Jesus.

They might be there to hear teaching like they have before because Jesus has just finished that long section of teaching, and maybe they've come back for more.

It could be that they're here because they want Jesus to heal them or lead them.

We don't know exactly why they're here, but they are, and we can imagine the sight. Can you see five-thousand-plus people gathering in the wilderness and trying to get closer to Jesus? No stadium seating, no microphones. What a logistical mess. If we had been there, we might have stayed hidden and let the ushers take care of it while we prayed.

Jesus, though, accepts this interruption and steps from his boat into a sea of humanity. He shows much compassion on the crowd that's gathered around, and we see him start to heal the sick that are among them. Do you see Jesus healing the sick?

Do you see him setting aside his weight and burdens, even though they were great, in order to carry the burdens of this enormous crowd? His needs were great. He needed time to spend in prayer and devotion and reflection and sadness. But he drops it all, and we see him taking care of others, holding their hands and removing their bandages and

clutching their eyes and ears. We can even see the people who find healing in him jumping away and shouting praises. What does the face of a person who is caring for thousands look like?

I've seen Cindy work frantically with what seemed like eight hands and arms just to take care of ten on Thanksgiving or Christmas but five thousand with physical and emotional injuries and scars? How can you do that? How fast would we have to move? We wouldn't be able to stop and hear each of their stories but that would seem so unlike Jesus. Did time slow down, or did he speed up? Who knows for sure, but it is an amazing picture, an ordinary-looking man whom we, of course, know to be the very Son of God healing and caring for a massive gathering of people. See him heal.

Obviously, Jesus isn't the only person to notice this outrageous crowd and their overwhelming needs. Matthew shows us now the perplexed faces of the disciples of Jesus as they try to problem-solve without him, huddling together with furrowed brows and teeth cutting into their

bottom lips as they try to crunch and crunch the numbers, but it never works. The disciples see the day is dragging on and the sun is getting lower in the sky.

They see a couple people in the crowd rub their stomachs because dinner time is fast approaching but there is no place to go and eat or buy food. They see the needs of the people, and they see their own inability to care for them. Finally, one of the disciples comes to Jesus and says, “Jesus, we happened to notice that there are an awful lot of people out here, and you may not have noticed, but we have noticed, that they didn’t seem to remember to bring dinner. There isn’t a Golden Corral for miles and we are outside the radius of every pizza delivery joint in the area, so we just don’t know how to feed these people. You’ve gotta send them home. Please, Jesus, send this problem away.”

Can you picture Jesus still busy at work, healing the sick? He doesn’t even have to look over his shoulder to see the faces of his disciples when he says, “Don’t send them home. Don’t send them away.”

Feed them.” “Well, Jesus, I just don’t think you’re fully grasping the difficulty of this situation. We can’t feed all these people. We only have five small loaves of pita bread and two meager fish and besides we were kind of hoping to have some alone time with you.” Can you blame them though?

Then Jesus stands up, takes the bread, breaks it and gives it. Do you see the picture? Jesus taking the bread, breaking it and giving it to them? What a beautiful picture. Jesus has settled the crowd, has them sit, and then he holds this humble loaf up toward heaven, says a blessing breaking the bread. Then gives it. And everyone ate to his or her satisfaction, and the disciples even gathered more than they started with. Miraculous! What do you think the people who were gathered thought? What did they see? Did they know that a miracle had just occurred a miracle that would be passed down for thousands of years?

Did they know that in this moment they were getting just a brief glimpse of the reign of God? Did they know that what they were

experiencing at that moment was the closest thing they had ever seen to a little taste of heaven? Do you see it? The meal itself seems mundane not fresh baked bread and Beluga caviar, just bread and fish.

But it is an actual glimpse of the reign of God breaking in and giving us just a little glimpse of heaven, where the feast is always enough and more than enough because Jesus is there. Jesus changes everything. He changes the rules of the natural order of things when he feeds five thousand with meager supplies. And he gives us a little glimpse of heaven to carry us through. What a picture! See him provide! See him pray and break and give and feed thousands. Simple, but miraculous.

What a sight!

So, what have we seen? Jesus' face fall under the weight of mourning loss. We have seen his face lifted as he works all hours of the day healing. We have seen his face pointed toward heaven as his bread feeds thousands. Now picture his face in your life. Where have you seen him working through simple things, offering you a glimpse at the



kingdom? Because he does, he is! Jesus provides with simple means and miraculous ways in our lesson and He still provides for us today.

Sometimes through the simple but kind words of comfort spoken by a loved one at the right time. Or, in the memory of him claiming us with water and His Word. Is it in the small meal of a little bread and a little wine that is given to us for forgiveness, for life, for salvation.

In this life, you and I need all of those moments when God feeds us and nourishes us and forgives us, because this life is filled with the pain of death that we can't bear and diseases that we can't understand and heartache and hunger that we can't overcome alone. But the promise of Jesus is that we are not alone, even when we step away to catch our breath. Because the Jesus who was crucified for our sins died with the promise that he would conquer death, and in his resurrection, we have just a little glimpse of what new life in him looks like today and forever in the Father's house. Hanging on the cross, alone, arms spread in giving, eyes pointed heavenward praying, carrying the weight of all,

laying himself down to take up our burdens. There, can you see Him there on the cross, giving His life for you and me? And even now Jesus promises to feed us, with enough to carry us through in simple things like his word and promise. See him work again and again. See him in wafer, wine, and water.

Amen