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Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

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## **Miracles and Lessons Repeated**

**Matthew 15:29-39**

### Introduction

In 1920, a 14 year old farm boy was plowing a field in Utah... as he moved up and down across the acres, plowing in one straight line after another, he began to think about his hobby—electronics; and in the mind of this genius boy sprang an idea that has affected America deeply. The boy's name was Philo Farnsworth, and within 7 years, he had invented the basics of modern television... the first image ever transmitted by television was a dollar sign!

Years later, he was the guest on a show called “What’s My Line” in which people had to guess what he was famous for... they asked a question about his invention, asking if it might be painful when used... Farnsworth hated most of what was on television and wouldn't even permit one in his house... he answered “Yes, sometimes it is most painful.” Television has become one of the forces which has spread evil faster and more efficiently than any before

Amazingly, it works based on the principle of endless repetition... a standard TV screen is a glass tube painted with phosphorous material that glows when struck with a stream of electrons; as soon as the stream of electrons moves on, the phosphor in one spot begins to fade... it must be refreshed constantly

The TV paints the screen with a stream of electrons 30 times per second in the pattern of the plowing of a field... line upon line; endlessly refreshing the phosphor so it won't fade

This principle of repetition to prevent fading is somewhat how our memories work, and somewhat how our character is formed:

- Sow a thought, reap an action
- Sow an action, reap a habit
- Sow a habit, reap a character
- Sow a character, reap a destiny

Repetition works both for good and evil in our hearts

In our account today, we have the lesson of the feeding of a great multitude repeated, first for the disciples, then for us

## I. The Necessity and Value of Repetition

### A. Repetition Established

#### 1. Two miraculous feedings

- a. Matt. 5000 w. five loaves and two fish, 12 baskets left over
- b. 4000 w. seven loaves and a few fish, 7 baskets left over

#### 2. Very close together in Matthew

Mt. 14 – Mt. 15

#### 3. Plus synoptics and John

Mt., Mark, Luke, John	– 5000	[6 total feeding accounts]
Mt., Mark	– 4000	

#### 4. Everyday life: Rhythm of repetition

- Rhythms of life

***Ecclesiastes 1:5-7 The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises. <sup>6</sup> The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course. <sup>7</sup> All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again.***

- Rituals: breakfast, lunch, dinner... a sameness takes over;

Earlier in our marriage, I was washing the dishes by hand; I looked at one of the bowls and said “I wonder how many times I’ve washed this one bowl in all the years that I’ve been washing dishes!”

- Young children especially thrive on the repetition

Daphne, when we put her to bed, must have her special blanket, she lays on her back, immediately begins sucking her thumb and pulls the blanket toward her face, working with her fingers until she finds the corner of the blanket. She does the same thing every single time!!

#### 5. Spiritual life also

Read through Bible year after year

Familiar stories repeated again and again: the story of the call of Abraham, the story of the sacrifice of Isaac, of the birth of Moses and his call at the burning bush

George Mueller: read through the Bible over one hundred times in his life!! Absolutely astonishing!! The repetition of the same Bible stories must have made a powerful impact on him

## B. Repetition Essential

Same lessons have to be repeated endlessly until we learn

- Sin patterns deeply established, themselves burned into our souls be repetition, by habits established by doing them again and again
- Not easily erased... but they are erased by establishing new habits; the consistent reminders from God's word are essential to that

### 1. The Holy Spirit's ministry of reminding

***John 14:26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.***

### 2. Paul's ministry of reminding

***Philippians 3:1 Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.***

***Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!***

***1 Corinthians 15:1-5 Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. <sup>2</sup> By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. <sup>3</sup> For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.***

To Timothy... reminding is of the essence of good pastoral ministry:

***2 Timothy 2:14 Keep reminding them of these things.***

### 3. Peter's ministry of reminding

***2 Peter 1:12-15 So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. <sup>13</sup> I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, <sup>14</sup> because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to***

***me. <sup>15</sup> And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.***

We forget quickly – We must be reminded constantly

### C. Repetition Encouraged

1. Read through the Bible constantly
2. Memorize: the endless repetition is a strong form of meditation
3. As you go through familiar life experiences, ask “What are you seeking to teach me, Lord?”
4. Repeat to each other!”

Surly husband to his wife: “I told you I loved you the day I married you; if anything changes, I’ll let you know!!”

God wants us to say certain things to each other again and again...

“Keep reminding them...”

- a. God loves you with an everlasting love
  - b. Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture
  - c. God’s promises are true concerning the New Heaven and New Earth
  - d. God’s word teaches us to say No to ungodliness!!
  - e. God’s Spirit helps us keep the law by putting sin to death
  - f. We have a responsibility to evangelize the lost
5. For me as a Pastor: verse by verse exposition involves repetition!

So Matthew 15:29-39 brings us to some familiar themes: Christ’s healing ministry, Christ’s power to feed multitudes... the fact that these powerful actions really happened in the past and that they were merely SIGNS of Christ’s future eternal healing of our souls and bodies, and of Christ’s eternal feeding of our souls and bodies in His Kingdom

## II. Christ’s Wholesale Healings (vs. 29-31)

***Matthew 15:29-31 Jesus left there and went along the Sea of Galilee. Then he went up on a mountainside and sat down. <sup>30</sup> Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them. <sup>31</sup> The people were amazed when they saw the mute***

***speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.***

A. The Location (vs. 30)

1. “Left there” – Tyre and Sidon

- a. Sent only to lost sheep of Israel

Matthew Henry: “Having let a crumb fall under the table (for the Gentile woman) He now returns to make a full feast for the children.”

- b. Spends very little time in Gentile regions

- c. YET don’t despise what he did there (Syro-Phoenician woman)

Sometimes God may send you to accomplish only one thing, other times, a river of things... don’t despise the day of small things or of great things

2. Along the Sea of Galilee

His home base – already greatly blessed

Attracting followers like Pied Piper!

3. Up on a mountain and sat down

- a. A desolate region... nothing happening there, no life...

- b. Jesus consecrates it by His presence and His power... he turns a meager sparse hillside into the throne-room of the living God, the throne of grace

- c. He sits down and opens a hospital more powerful than the Mayo Clinic

Great Physician ready for his patients

He sanctifies some desolate mountainside, a humble rock or patch of grass that he sat on...

**NO PLACE IS INSIGNIFICANT IF GOD IS WORKING THERE!**

Thankfully, though, we don’t know the exact place: if we knew what rock it was He sat on to perform this river of miracles, there would probably be a shrine there and pilgrims would come from around the world and touch it as though it were a magical idol

B. The Volume (vs. 30)

***“Great crowds came to him...”***

1. What a huge multitude of sick people!
2. Experience in Haiti: large crowds pressing in on us
3. Jesus' power is LAVISH, FULL, COMPLETELY EQUAL TO THE TASK!
4. God is not STINGY
5. Yet it takes 3 days!
  - a. Personal interaction w. each one... a word here, an admonition there, a touch with his hand... Jesus didn't NEED to heal this way... He could have healed thousands of people in an instant with a single word... but He chose to heal them slowly and personally
  - b. Notice also: How patient the people are! Confident that Jesus would heal them, they waited for Him patiently

#### C. The Variety (vs. 30)

#### *the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others*

1. What a varied wreck sin has made of the human body!
2. Our capabilities (when healthy) are astounding

#### NOT A SINGLE CAPABILITY IS FREE FROM ATTACK BY SIN—DISEASE

We can't say, "There's no disease of the fingernails" Yes there are! There are fungi that attack the fingernails and cause them to discolor and fall out

"Well, there's no disease that attacks the eyelids"... Yes there are! A parasite causes a malady called Trichiasis, that causes the eyelid to curl in toward the eyeball, causing all the eyelashes to rub on the cornea and eventually cause blindness

#### Diseases attack EVERY SINGLE PART AND FUNCTION OF THE HUMAN BODY

If a Pastor could but heal one disease perfectly, he'd spend his whole time healing people from all over the world! For example, if God gave me the ability to heal diabetes perfectly, flawlessly, by simply touching the sick person's head, I would easily spend one hundred hours a week healing a crowd of people from all over the world... you would not be able to park here on Sundays, you might not be able to get into Durham itself

Diabetes currently affect almost 250 million people worldwide; the number is expected to rise to 380 million by 2025: if I took five seconds with each sufferer, I could heal twelve people per minute; 720 per hour... if I worked twenty hours a day, seven days a week, for the next eighteen years, I would heal 94.6 million diabetes patients... I would have LOST

GROUND in those 18 years... there would be 130 million NEW sufferers, and I only healed almost 95 million

And that's just ONE DISEASE... diabetes; what about AIDS? Cancer? Heart disease? Kidney failure? M.S.? All of those would still remain to trouble the human race

But he DOES give us a remedy for an infinitely worse disease: SIN, which brings wrath and eternal suffering in hell

The remedy is the GOSPEL of Jesus Christ... it is perfectly effective, its healing is eternal, it is free of charge, and can be administered not just by one miracle-working pastor but by any Christian

AND YET very few people care enough to come... there are still empty spots in the pews, people just aren't that interested

Jesus did a river of healings not to banish illness from the surface of the earth, but to prove His power to forgive sins

### 3. Jesus needs NO DIAGNOSTIC TOOLS or TECHNIQUES!

Immediately recognizes need

Supernaturally meets it!

***Mark 7:37 People were overwhelmed with amazement. "He has done everything well," they said. "He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."***

D. The Result: Praise and Worship (vs. 31)

***Vs. 31 The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.***

1. Christ's ultimate goal: our happiness in God's glory!
2. Everyone healed: No one sent home sick!
3. But JUST "SIGNS": Pointing to further reality!
  - a. Even Jesus' perfect miracles were only temporary SIGNS
  - b. A sign is not the final destination... it merely points the way
4. Permanent healing not possible in this present age
  - a. Feeding lasted for a day (John 6)... and they were immediately there the next day for another meal

***John 6:26-27 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. <sup>27</sup> Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.***

b. Healing perhaps a little longer (Mt. 12:43-45)

***Matthew 12:43-45 "When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. <sup>44</sup> Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. <sup>45</sup> Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation."***

Even the most powerful, the most perfect, the most awe-inspiring miracle working ministry in history was only TEMPORARY in its effects... every one of the bodies He fed and healed now lies moldering in the grave... BUT

5. Wonder leading to worship is ETERNAL

- a. Christ's true healing ministry was to the human heart
- b. Twisted by sin into thanklessness and unbelief... now cured and able to worship God
- c. This is the ultimate purpose of Christ's ministry... that we would praise God eternally

### III. Christ's Compassionate Feedings (vs. 32-39)

A. Christ's Pity Declared (vs. 32)

***Matthew 15:32 Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way."***

1. Compassion the most frequently stated emotion of Christian
  - a. Why? Some feel God doesn't care
  - b. Sovereign plan just grinds very fine, moving on like a mindless, heartless machine
  - c. NO! God deeply cares about our suffering
2. Christ states his own compassion Himself (usually that's the task of the gospel writers!): **I HAVE COMPASSION FOR THESE PEOPLE**

## B. Christ's Priorities Discovered (vs. 32)

“Three days ...” !!!

1. Only THEN DOES He feed them??
2. Obviously
  - a. He cares about food
  - b. But NOT as much as we do!
3. Some “Their god is their stomach”
4. For ALL of us: Food way too important!
5. John 6: “Do not work for the food that spoils”

## C. Christ's Forgetful Disciples Employed (vs. 33-34, 36-37)

***Matthew 15:33-34 His disciples answered, "Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?" <sup>34</sup> "How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked. "Seven," they replied, "and a few small fish."***

1. Amazing how quickly they've forgotten the 5000!
2. Jesus will openly comment on this in Mt. 16

APPLICATION: This is why we need repetition: We are SO PRONE TO FORGET the great works of God in our lives.

ILLUS: Joshua: Miraculous crossing of the Jordan River... one man from each of the tribes was instructed to take up a stone from the dry riverbed as a memorial to the great miracle God did in stopping the river

***Joshua 4:6-7 In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' <sup>7</sup> tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever."***

Set up reminders in your life of the great works of God for you, so when He resumes training you by hardship ...

How quickly we MURMUR saying “Is God among us or not?”

3. Note how Christ EMPLOYS them anyway!!
  - a. Calls them

- b. Tells them of His compassion
- c. Asks “How many loaves do you have?”
- d. Gave loaves to disciples and they in turn to the people
- e. Had them pick up the seven basketfuls

As God’s “Fellow-workers”... we are His “Co-Laborers”

“As the Father has sent me, I’m sending you”

YET we are so faithless, our hearts are hard and forgetful

Stand in awe, therefore, of the great power of God – to build a kingdom with co-laborers like us!

#### D. Christ’s Power Displayed (vs. 36-38)

***Matthew 15:36-38 Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and they in turn to the people. <sup>37</sup> They all ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. <sup>38</sup> The number of those who ate was four thousand, besides women and children.***

1. Miracle of creation: something out of nothing
2. Perhaps as He broke it after giving thanks, it was at that moment multiplied
3. Power – Total Satisfaction

“Satisfied with seeing His likeness

4. 7 basketfuls – more leftovers (“large basket”... larger than the feeding of the 5000)

Christ’s compassion and power will combine to satisfy you temporarily now, eternally then

“New Heavens and New Earth”

Great power on display

Plenty of joy, labor, heavenly food and fellowship for everyone

Food and fish – Plenty, but meager fare! Future infinitely better! God’s full power and creativity applied to our eternal happiness and satisfaction

#### E. Christ’s People Dismissed (vs. 39)

*Matthew 15:39 After Jesus had sent the crowd away, he got into the boat and went to the vicinity of Magadan.*

Nothing left, so he dismisses the crowd

But some of them almost certainly were converted that day –

Temporarily dismissed from His side

Later they will be reunited to feast with Him forever in Heaven

#### IV. Applications

How do these miracles relate to our lives?

Signs of Christ's deity, so worship and trust

Signs of Christ's priority, so focus on kingdom work not temporal needs and desires

Signs of procedure, so get involved in Christ's work by stepping out in faith

##### Should be

Trusting, not anxious

Focused on kingdom, not health or food

Hopeful of future heavenly life

Actual in service

Learning from repetitious experiences?

Application in four areas: on forgetfulness, on temporary needs, on worship, on Kingdom service

##### 1. On Forgetfulness

Luke 24: HOW SLOW OF HEART YOU ARE TO BELIEVE ALL GOD HAS SPOKEN!

Acknowledge your tendency to forget – to forget God's Word, God's mighty acts

We read a couple of chapters in the bible, close the book, and can hardly remember what we read

We go through a financial struggle, question God, murmur against Him, doubt that he hears prayer and then God marvelously comes through, meets every

need in some incredible way – then, two or three months later some new trial comes, and you start all over again ... questioning God.

EVEN WORSE: habitual sin! We then, say, do some sinful thing – God convicts us

## 2. On Temporary Needs

Trust the Lord's compassion and power, to meet your temporary needs

Compassion – remind yourself frequently that Christ cares deeply that whatever pain and suffering you're enduring. He's not some distant operator of a nuclear power plant concerned only about keeping the reactor running and unconcerned with any of the "little people."

He wept in front of Lazarus's tomb, though he was about to raise him from the dead.

Power: These miracles display again and again that Christ can do anything at all.

Illness – Small or great, annoying or life-threatening, yourself or loved one – NO LACK OF POWER

Provision – Food, clothing, shelter, jobs, transportation, some extras ... nothing is lacking from the One who can

"From these stones make children for Abraham"

Wisdom – God knows the perfect timing for His compassion to make His power to alleviate your suffering. Not moment too late – too soon.

But acknowledge that almost certainly you care way too much about temporary feedings and healings

Our bodies are wasting away

This world will pass away

Repent from over preoccupation on improving your temporary situation.

## WHY BUY DECORATIONS FOR A HOTEL ROOM?

Focus on the eternal, let God take care of the temporal. Mt. 6:33

## 3. On Worship (vs. 31)

Let your heart be moved again with the greatness of Christ.

As their stomachs were completely filled w. physical food, let your hearts be completely filled w. spiritual food

Read the Bible for reasons to praise and worship Christ

### Corporate worship

Come each week ready to be filled with awe/wonder of Christ. Stimulate yourself. Come into this sanctuary with glad hearts, but sober wounds, ready to be SATISFIED in Christ.

Sing the praise songs, pray, listen carefully -- choose your spiritual food, stimulate your cold hearts

### Private worship

Daily meet w. the Lord, QT – read the bible carefully, looking for reasons to give honor and glory to Christ

Chose your spiritual food carefully

MEDITATE, stimulate your cold heart

### Eternal Worship

Our future!!

Revelation 4-5

## 4. On Kingdom Labor

Christ deeply desires you to labor with Him in the establishment of the kingdom.

No, you don't need to be perfect

The disciples weren't!!

But yes, you need to get a basket and help gather broken pieces – or help hand out the next batch of God's bread

Use your spiritual gift!

Talk to someone about Christ!

Take a faith step this week.

Grow in prayer for missions.

Invest yourself more fully.