

"As they sat in these orderly groups upon the grass, the gay red, and blue, and yellow colors of the clothing which the poorest Orientals wear, called up in the imagination of St. Peter a multitude of flower beds in some well ordered garden." (Farmar.) **By hundreds and fifties**—"The individual divisions consisted partly of a hundred and partly of fifty." (Meyer.) There were in each two rows of 100 and a shorter one across the end of 50—twenty groups of 250 each. Luke says "by fifties in a company." There were three fifties at each "symposium" or "table." The women and children ate by themselves, and were not counted. (Matt. 14: 21.)

41. He looked up to Heaven—"In prayer we should use such outward gestures as most fitly serve to express the inward disposition and holy affections of our heart and soul." (Potter.) A devout attitude is an aid to worship. **Blessed**—i. e. praised God—the usual expression for prayer at a meal. Luke says "he blessed them," i. e. the loaves and fishes—"an intimation of the benediction uttered in prayer, which was effective in causing the increase." (Meyer.) John says, "he gave thanks." Jesus acted as the head of a family. He praised God for his goodness and gave thanks, at the same time he "consecrated" the food, and imparted to it its miraculous power of increasing itself. "'Twas seedtime when he blessed the bread, 'Twas harvest when he brake." Asking a blessing upon food before meals was a universal custom among the Jews, and was practised both by Christ and by the apostles. (Luke 22: 17, 19; 24: 30; Acts 27: 35.) (Abbott.) "But why ask a blessing specially on food? Because food is the basis

of life, the source of supply for all other things, so that all are included under it." (Ellicott.) **Blessed and brake** are in a tense which signifies that the action was performed once for all, *gave* is in another tense and denotes that he kept giving the bread continuously "bit by bit, to" his disciples to distribute; with the fish there was no need of this bit-by-bit giving—one assignment sufficed. [Hence "divided" is in the same tense as "brake."] The dividing of the *fishes*, and the taking up of the fragments of the *fishes*, are both peculiar to and characteristic of Mark." (Alford.)

42. And were filled—We cannot tell the exact point at which the miracle took place. It would seem most reverent and natural to place it in the distribution by Jesus to the apostles. We are told by all four of the evangelists that the meal was a plentiful one.

43. Baskets—Each of the Twelve fills his basket. The word denotes the small wicker basket in which each Jew carried his day's food to avoid pollution. The Jew was called "basket-carrier" by the Romans. At the feeding of the four thousand, the basket was the large rope basket. **The fragments**—pieces broken by Christ and not distributed. Why were they required to gather up the fragments? (1) to bring out the preciousness of the food which had been given; (2) to teach economy—wastefulness is sinful; (3) our food, especially, should be used with care—life depends upon it; (4) it was the bountiful provision of the miracle at Cana repeated. An overflowing supply for future wants.

44. Five thousand men—There were women and children besides. (Matt. 14: 21.)

SUMMARY AND REVIEW.

The lesson sets forth the compassion of Jesus and his power to relieve. Whatever other reasons he had for removing to the eastern side of the lake, the one given in the lesson was no doubt the principal one. He did not think of himself (surely he was more tired than they), but of the weary apostles, so crowded by the thronging multitudes, and busy with waiting on their Master, that they had no time to take their meals, so he said to them——(let scholars supply the ellipses.) **Write Jesus pities the Weary**. They set sail for the quiet retirement of the mountains across the lake, but what did the crowd do? (Illustrate by map). So when Christ and his disciples reached the other side they found some of them there before them, and the rest kept coming until there was such a multitude clustered near where Jesus was, and scattered all over the plain looking for him, that when Jesus saw them he was——, because they were as——. (**Write The Wandering**).

Some had carried their sick friends all the way along with them; and we never read that Jesus passed by a sick person without healing him. St. Luke tells us that besides preaching to the people, he "healed them that had need of healing." (**Relieves the Sick**.) John tells us that Jesus was the first to think of how this great multitude, miles away from any town, were going to get their suppers, and made up his mind that they should all be his guests for that evening. (Refer to the Lord's Supper, where we are again his guests. Also how each may have him as his guest. Rev. 3: 20.) But he wanted to see whether the disciples would remember what he did at Cana. So he asked Phillip——(John 6: 5). How much did he say it would cost to give them all their suppers? What did the disciples ask Jesus to do? What did he tell them to do? How much food could they find? How was the multitude arranged? They were guests at Jesus' table.

Now, before distributing to the people, Jesus does something that we should notice very carefully. Read verse 41 (to "blessed"). Jesus teaches us to thank God every time we sit down to eat. (Impress upon the scholars the duty and propriety of "asking a blessing" at meals.) Through the blessing of Jesus **Scant Supply** becomes amply sufficient to relieve **The Supperless**. By trying to do what Jesus told them, the **Obedient Service** of the disciples resulted in accomplishing what seemed at first impossible. Only **trust Jesus and try**, and you can do anything he asks you to do. (8)