

Lesson 13

Proper 13

The Holy Gospel: Matthew 14:13–21

This miraculous sign was recorded by all of the evangelists in their Gospels. They saw it as a striking display of the Lord's compassion for people in their need and of His power to do something about their need. The miracle surely led the people to think of the Lord's miraculously filling their ancestors' needs with the manna in the wilderness.

"Now when Jesus heard this" refers to the execution of John the Baptist by Herod (vv. 6–12).

188. What does it say about Jesus that this report made Him withdraw to a desolate place? What does it say about Jesus that even at such a time in His life and ministry, He did not decline to minister to the crowd?

189. What motivated the disciples to come to Jesus with the suggestion that He send the crowd away so they could buy themselves some food? How did Jesus challenge them, and how did they respond?

190. How do Jesus' words pose a challenge also for us today? (See 1 John 3:16–18.) How can we best approach the challenge of feeding the hungry of America and of the world?

Matthew did not mention the lad who supplied the loaves and the fish; John did. He also did not mention the distribution of the fish; Mark did. Matthew hurried to the miracle itself.

191. How did Jesus focus attention on the divine nature of what was happening?

The Greek *ephagon*, "they ate," is the word that was used for feeding cattle as much as they can eat to fatten them for market. It emphasizes the abundance of Jesus' provision.

192. What numbers did Matthew include to emphasize the magnitude of the miracle?

The Old Testament Lesson: Isaiah 55:1–5

The banquet invitation is part of the messianic assurance that is so strong in Isaiah 40–66. The Servant Songs of chapters 42–53 picture the Servant as the agent through whom the gift is given, and now this invitation to the free banquet offers the benefit He made available through His faithful service. The promises of Isaiah found their immediate meaning in the assurances they brought to the people of Judah in exile, but they find their ultimate, full meaning in the eternal messianic kingdom.

193. What do the phrases “everyone who thirsts” and “he who has no money” say about those to whom the invitation is given?

194. What does “buy wine and milk without money and without price” say about the One extending the invitation?

195. How were the people of Judah spending “money for that which is not bread” and laboring “for that which does not satisfy”?

196. What did the prophet point to as the key for those who wish to “eat what is good” and “delight yourselves in rich food”?

197. What is the everlasting covenant the Lord made with David? (See 2 Samuel 7:8–16.) Who is the One who will be “a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples” and will, as a result, attract the nations to Israel?

198. How does this Old Testament Lesson tie in with today’s Holy Gospel?

The Epistle for the Day: Romans 9:1–13

There are many indications that the Church in Rome was quite Jewish in cast and may have had misgivings about the approach Paul had taken in including Gentiles in the Church. They did not know Paul in person, so in chapters 9–11 he took up the subject of Jew and Gentile in God’s purpose. He was immediately confronted by his own deep feelings about the general rejection of the Gospel by Jews, and he wanted to express these feelings openly and honestly to the Jewish Christians of Rome.

It was right for Paul to be concerned about the Jews. He was one of them. In his Letter to the Philippians, he wrote of his Hebrew heritage: “circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless” (3:5–6). But when Jesus, the risen Lord, came to him and called him to faith and apostleship, Paul had been led to discount bloodlines and legalistic observance of laws. He was ready to say, “I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead” (Philippians 3:8–11).

Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles and resisted every effort to make Gentiles become “Jews” in order really to be Christians. Yet he had strong feelings for his own people—so strong that he said that for the sake of the people of Israel (if it would turn them to Christ) he could wish “___.” None of us would think of wishing something like that for the sake of the people of America, but Paul did for his people!

Paul’s “great sorrow and unceasing anguish” were caused by the rejection by Jews of their promised Messiah in spite of the fact that historically they enjoyed great spiritual advantages: ___, ___, ___, ___, ___, and ___, as well as ___, and the fact that ___.

199. Why was Paul so pointed in saying Christ is “God over all, blessed forever. Amen”?

Paul followed that with a strong argument, backed up with Scripture, that “not all who are descended from Israel [Jacob] belong to Israel [God’s chosen ones].” He was saying clearly, “It is not the children of the flesh [biological descendants] who are the children of God, but the children of the ___ are counted as [Abraham’s] offspring.”

200. How did the experience of Abraham and Sarah validate Paul’s argument? (See Genesis 21:8–14.)

201. What did Rebekah’s being told “The older will serve the younger” and Malachi’s saying “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated” add to Paul’s argument?

202. How did Paul apply this Bible history to the mystery of God’s gracious election of those who are His own?

203. What did all of this say to the Church in Rome? What does it say to the Church today about our mission?

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Heavenly Father, though we do not deserve Your goodness, still You provide for all our needs of body and soul. Grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may acknowledge Your gifts, give thanks for all Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The Holy Gospel: Matthew 14:13–21

188. Jesus' feelings for John, His faithful way-preparer, surely were a major reason for His wanting to get away for a time, but other circumstances entered in too. His disciples had just returned from their apostolic mission, and Jesus needed time alone with them to help them assess their experience. John's death underscored for Jesus what lay ahead also for Him, and the thrust of His ministry changed as a result. Jesus' readiness to minister displayed His sense of priorities. The Son of Man had come not to be served, but to serve.

189. The disciples were motivated simply by the practical realities of the situation—and perhaps wanted their Master to bring a busy day of teaching to an end. John tells us Jesus asked them, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?” (John 6:5). The disciples had puzzled about this but had not looked beyond the material circumstances. Jesus challenged them by telling them that they should give the multitude something to eat. All they could come up with was the five loaves and two fish—the material reality. They had not progressed to the point where they could say in faith, “We have nothing to give them, but You can feed them if You want to.”

190. Jesus still says to us about the hungry, “You give them something to eat.” We may best approach this challenge through personal sharing with hungry individuals and families with whom we come into contact, through our financial support of responsible agencies of Christian social ministry such as LCMS World Relief, and through our encouragement of appropriate government programs that will not only supply present needs but will also equip people to supply their own future needs.

191. Jesus focused attention on the divine dynamic in this event by looking to heaven and blessing the bread and the fish. He probably spoke the usual mealtime prayer used by Jews, but His doing it in that setting, blessing what really was an insignificant supply, lent a drama to the event that the crowd did not miss.

192. Numbering the five loaves and two fish and the crowd at five thousand men, besides women and children, and telling of the twelve baskets of leftovers showed the size of this miracle. The baskets were probably the small wicker baskets often carried by Jewish travelers to assure that they would have kosher food to eat.

The Old Testament Lesson: Isaiah 55:1–5

193. “Everyone who thirsts” and “he who has no money” describe people who know their need but have no way of filling it themselves. “Everyone” is truly universal in its invitation to this free messianic banquet—all you have to do to qualify is recognize both your need and the fact that you can't fill the need yourself.

194. “Buy wine and milk without money and without price” emphasizes the gracious character of the Inviter. He has provided the banquet at His own expense.

195. They were seeking material wealth in Babylon and confusing their priorities in life. When we seek first “all these things” and think of “the kingdom and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33) as just an add-on that doesn’t require much of our attention or effort, we have things turned around. Then we are buying what is not the bread of life and are laboring for temporary things that cannot supply the deep life-satisfaction that God wants to give.

196. The key for those who wish to “eat what is good” and “delight yourselves in rich food” is hearing and obeying the Word of God. We call Word and Sacraments the Means of Grace because of their Spirit-powered invitation to feast on what is available nowhere else.

197. The everlasting covenant the Lord made with David was that his throne and dynasty would be established forever. The line of David did rule Judah right up to the time of the exile in Babylon, and those who returned to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple were led by Zerubbabel, a prince of the Davidic line. But the promise of an everlasting kingdom in which the throne of David is established forever *has* to refer finally to the Son of David who came as the promised Messiah—the One who said, “My kingdom is not from the world” (John 18:36).

Some scholars insist that this witness and leader is David himself; others point to Israel as a nation. However, the One who truly expanded the thrust of His people to attract and to include the nations into a spiritual Israel is the One who gave Himself as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world and commanded, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). It is He, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the true witness, leader, commander, and attraction.

198. This lesson offers the free messianic banquet; the Gospel shows the Messiah providing a free banquet for the multitude. Both emphasize the grace of God in Christ.

The Epistle for the Day: Romans 9:1–13

Paul felt strong ethnic ties to his people and the historic faith but did not gloss over or dismiss the difference between the old dispensation of Law and promise and the new dispensation of grace and fulfillment. Before Christ came, the Jews had every advantage. Now that Christ has come as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—all have salvation in only one way: through faith in Jesus Christ. (See Galatians 3:26–29.)

Fill-in Answers: Paul’s feelings for his people were so strong that he said he could wish “that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers.” He was echoing Moses’ earnest intercession for Israel after their idolatry. (See Exodus 32:31–32.)

Historically, the people of Israel enjoyed great spiritual advantages: the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the Law, the worship, and the promises, as well as the patriarchs, and the fact that from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. As your group fills in the blanks regarding the Jews’ spiritual advantages, expand on the significance of each of them:

Adoption—We would add “as sons and daughters.” This indicated full rights of inheritance in God’s family as God’s chosen people, descendants of Abraham.

Glory—This refers to the *Shekinah*, the glory of the Lord that rested in a bright cloud on the tabernacle and displayed God’s continuing presence with Israel.

Covenants—With Abraham, the Lord established the covenants of land, seed, and blessing, especially the blessing that would bless all families of the earth. These promises were repeated again and again to the patriarchs, and all came together and were fulfilled in the coming of Christ!

Giving of the Law—This refers especially to the ceremonial law, the sacrificial system by which God mediated His grace to Israel and which was a prototype of the Messiah. (See Hebrews 9:1–14.)

Worship—The daily worship by priests and people in the temple was the binding factor for all Jews everywhere. Until the Babylonian captivity, it housed the ark of the covenant in the Most Holy Place. The temple was the only place at which the people’s sacrifices were to be offered.

Promises—Especially the promises of the Messiah and the new covenant He would bring. (See Jeremiah 31:31–34.)

Patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the revered fathers of the race, the original recipients of the covenant of grace and blessing.

From their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ.

199. Paul pointed to the Christ as “God over all, blessed forever” to stress the glorious Good News of Jesus, the promised Messiah, and the crucial importance of believing in Him as way, truth, and life and not rejecting Him in unbelief—and not laying requirements on others that negate the message of salvation by grace through faith in Him.

Paul’s strong argument was that “the children of the promise are counted as [Abraham’s] offspring.”

200. Abraham and Sarah took matters into their own hands, and Abraham fathered Ishmael by Hagar. Though Ishmael was a natural son and dearly loved, Abraham finally had to send Ishmael and his mother away. God renewed the promise that was to be fulfilled when Sarah finally gave birth to the son of the promise, Isaac. (See Genesis 21:8–14.)

201. Rebekah’s twin boys were both Isaac’s biological sons, but Esau, the firstborn, was passed over, and Jacob, who was born second, was chosen to carry the covenant promise. This choice was made even before they were born. Later events validated the Lord’s choice of Jacob. (See Genesis 25:21–34.)

202. Paul wrote that the sons of the promise were chosen “in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of Him who calls.” In writing to the Galatians, Paul used Sarah and Hagar figuratively to contrast following a law covenant with embracing the covenant of grace. (See Galatians 4:21–31; Romans 8:28–30; Ephesians 1:3–14.)

203. The Church in Rome was reminded that they were chosen by grace through faith in Christ and not because of ethnicity or their works. The Church’s mission is always to be all-inclusive in its outreach with the Gospel, reaching out to all in Jesus’ name and leaving the results in the lives of those who hear the Gospel in the hands of the One who does the choosing—and then being fully accepting toward those whom our Lord has chosen.