

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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THE NEED
OF THE
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Living Stream Ministry

Anaheim, CA • www.lsm.org

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The Gospel of John is a book of pictures. It speaks of the divine life and of the functions of this divine life. Both the divine life and its functions are spiritual things. Since it is very difficult to describe them in human language, the Apostle John received the wisdom from the Lord to write his Gospel, not only with plain words, but also with figures. Because plain words are inadequate, John also used figures and pictures. In a sense, every case is a picture. In [chapter five](#) is a vivid picture of the enlivening of the impotent man. In [chapter six](#) we have another picture showing us the need of the hungry and life's feeding.

THE HUNGRY WORLD AND THE FEEDING CHRIST

[Verses 1 through 15 of John 6](#) reveal to us the hungry world and the feeding Christ.

The case in [chapter six](#) portrays a scene which reveals where we are in our condition. There is a contrast between the scene of [chapter five](#) with

the one in [chapter six](#). The scene in [chapter five](#) is in the holy city, but the scene in [chapter six](#) is in the wilderness. A pool is in the scene of the previous case, and a sea is in this case. The people in the former case are associated with the pool, and the people in the latter case are involved with the sea. The pool is related to religion's healing, while the sea is related to the people's living. The person in the case of [chapter five](#) was very weak, needing healing and enlivening, but the people in the case of [chapter six](#) are hungry, needing food and satisfaction. The pool is sacred, being of the Jewish religion; the sea is secular, being of the human society. The person by the pool was impotent, needed life's enlivening, and was waiting for healing. The people in this case are hungry, need life's feeding, and are seeking for nourishment.

THE SATAN-CORRUPTED WORLD

In typology, the land signifies the earth created by God for man to live upon, and the sea signifies the world corrupted by Satan in which fallen mankind lives. The sea represents Satan's organized and systematized world where humanity is occupied and enveloped. In this world mankind is hungry and has no satisfaction. In

this world mankind is troubled and has no peace. The scene in this chapter portrays all of humanity living in the world corrupted by Satan. They are not living on the land created by God. In the world corrupted by Satan there is no real satisfaction, there is always hunger. Neither is there any peace, for the wind and the waves are always on the sea making trouble for man.

THE TRANSCENDENT POSITION

In typology, a mountain signifies a transcendent position. Moses was brought to a mountain in order to receive God's revelation ([Exo. 24:12](#)). The Lord Jesus went to the top of a mountain when He was transfigured ([Matt. 17:1-2](#)). The Apostle John was also brought to the transcendent position of a mountain when he saw the eternal vision concerning the New Jerusalem ([Rev. 21:10](#)). So, in this picture, the sea is on a low level, and the mountain is in a transcendent position. The sea signifies the world corrupted by Satan, and the mountain signifies the high, transcendent position where Christ is and where we must be with Him. The Lord did not feed the people by the sea. He led the multitude to the top of a mountain. If you

wish to be fed by Christ and to be satisfied with Christ, you must go with Him to a high place. Satisfaction with Christ depends upon our being led to and fed with Christ on the mountain. The mountain is above both the Satan-corrupted world and the God-created earth. Neither the sea nor the earth is a suitable place for us to feed on Christ. If we are going to feed on Him, we must be transcendent above the Satan-corrupted world and above the God-created earth. If we are to enjoy His feeding, we must be on the mountain with Him.

THE REDEEMING LAMB OF GOD

The Passover in [verse 4](#) signifies Christ as the redeeming Lamb of God who shed His blood for our redemption and gave His flesh for our feeding ([1 Cor. 5:7](#)). At the Passover, people slay the redeeming lamb, strike its blood, and eat its flesh ([Exo. 12:3-11](#)). This typifies Christ as the redeeming Lamb of God who was slain that we might eat His flesh and drink His blood ([John 6:51-56](#)), thus taking Him in as the life supply for us to live by.

In [Genesis 2:9](#), Christ was typified by the tree of life. The tree of life, belonging to the vegetable life, is good for producing and generating, but

has no blood for redeeming. At the time of [Genesis 2](#), man was not yet involved with sin and thus had no need for redemption. However, in [Genesis 3](#) man fell. Immediately after man's fall, God came in to deal with that fall by slaying sacrificial lambs to redeem Adam and Eve and to make coats of skins to cover their nakedness ([Gen. 3:21](#)). Thus, the vegetable life itself is no longer adequate for fallen man; there is the need of the animal life. We need life not only for feeding, but also for redeeming. So, in [chapter six](#) of John we firstly have the barley loaf, which belongs to the vegetable life and is good for feeding. As we shall see, since man has fallen and needs redeeming as well as feeding, the Lord Jesus turned the bread into flesh ([6:51b](#)). The bread is made from barley, while the flesh contains blood. Barley bread is of the vegetable life, but the flesh with the blood is of the animal life. Eventually, in [John 6](#) Christ is shown not only as the tree of life signified by the bread, but also as the Lamb of God signified by the flesh and blood. In the Lamb of God there are two elements: the blood for redeeming and the meat, the flesh, for feeding. At the Passover, the people struck the blood and ate the meat. It is the same with us today. We accept Christ in

the way of redeeming as well as in the way of feeding. He is both the vegetable life and the animal life, the feeding life and the redeeming life.

THE GENERATING ASPECT OF CHRIST'S LIFE

The loaves are of the vegetable life, signifying the generating aspect of Christ's life. As the generating life, Christ grows in the land, the God-created earth. In order to regenerate us, He grew on the God-created earth for reproducing.

Barley signifies Christ resurrected. According to the Scriptures, barley represents the firstfruit of resurrection. The Lord told His people in [Leviticus 23](#) to offer the firstfruits of their harvest each year. In the land of Palestine, barley ripens earlier than any other crop and is the first of the harvest. Hence, it typifies the resurrected Christ ([Lev. 23:10](#)). Therefore, barley signifies the resurrected Christ, who is our life supply. As the firstfruit, He can become our bread of life. So, barley loaves represent Christ in resurrection as food to us. The feeding Christ is the resurrected Christ.

Perhaps someone will ask how Christ could have been resurrected in [John 6](#) when He had

not yet been crucified. Even before His crucifixion, Christ was the resurrection. In [John 11:25](#) He said, “I am the resurrection and the life.” He did not say, “I shall be the resurrection,” for He was the resurrection already. When the Lord told Martha that her brother would rise again, she, through her poor expounding of the Scriptures, postponed the resurrection for two thousand years to the coming age. When she did that, the Lord seemed to say, “I am the resurrection now. With Me, the eternal One, there is no time element. The past, present, and future are all the same to Me.” Eternal means to have no time element. Both before and after His crucifixion, He is the resurrected Christ. It is the resurrected Christ who can be life to us and can be bread to feed us. We are feeding on the resurrected Christ.

The number five signifies responsibility, the responsibility of Christ in feeding us. The number five is composed of four plus one. The number four represents the creatures ([Rev. 4:6](#)), and the number one represents the Creator ([1 Cor. 8:6](#)). The Creator and the creatures added together take responsibility. The number five is not composed of three plus two, but of four plus one. Look at your hand. It is composed of four

fingers and a thumb. It would be very awkward if your hand had three fingers and two thumbs. Four fingers with one thumb enable the hand to do many things. The five barley loaves signify that the Lord as the Creator (one) added to the creatures (four) bears the responsibility to feed us. In His humanity, the resurrected Christ bears this responsibility.

THE REDEEMING ASPECT OF CHRIST'S LIFE

The two fishes are of the animal life, signifying the redeeming aspect of Christ's life. As the redeeming life, He lives in the sea, the Satan-corrupted world. The barley comes out of the land, representing the earth created by God, while the fishes come out of the sea, signifying the world corrupted by Satan. The Lord Jesus came not only to the earth created by God, but also to the world corrupted by Satan. If He had come only to the earth created by God, He would only have been represented by the barley loaves. But since He also came into the world corrupted by Satan, He is also represented by the two fishes. He had nothing to do with the corrupted world. Just as fish are not salty though they live in salt water, so the Lord was not corrupted by Satan

though He lived in the Satan-corrupted world. The Lord is like the fish that can live in the salty environment of the sea without being salted by it. In order to redeem us, He lived in the satanic and sinful world. But yet He was sinless, unaffected by the sinful world. As the generating life, Christ lived as a proper man in the God-created earth. As the redeeming life, Christ lived in the Satan-corrupted world without being affected by its corruption.

The number two means testimony ([Rev. 11:3](#)). The two fishes are a testimony that Christ is sufficient to bear responsibility in feeding us.

We have seen that barley, which is of the vegetable life, represents the generating life and that the fish, which are of the animal life, represent the redeeming life. Now we must ask, if the human race had never fallen, would Christ as our regenerating life still have been necessary? Yes. Before the fall of Adam, God put him in front of the tree of life. The tree of life has nothing to do with sin. Therefore, man must take God as his life by eating the tree of life. Even [John 12:24](#) states that the Lord was the one grain of wheat that fell into the ground and died, after which He was raised up to become many grains. This too had nothing to do with sin, for, according to

the Scriptures, the vegetable life is to produce or to generate much fruit. The one grain of wheat bears many other grains. Hence, it represents the generating life.

As we have seen, before man fell, he ate only of the vegetable life ([Gen. 1:29](#)), but after he fell, he also ate of the animal life ([Gen. 9:3](#)). Before the fall there was no need for the shedding of blood. But after man fell he needed the animal life because redemption requires the shedding of blood. The vegetable life was sufficient before man sinned, but after he sinned the animal life became necessary.

The offerings in the Old Testament always had both the vegetable life and the animal life. For example, the Passover had the slain lamb, which represented the animal life, and the unleavened bread, which represented the vegetable life. These two different lives are necessary in order to meet all of our need. Also, the meat offerings of Leviticus were accompanied with the meal offering. The meal offerings were made of fine flour, vegetable oil, and frankincense—items of the vegetable life. In Leviticus, the meal offerings could never be accepted without the meat offerings. That was exactly what Cain did. He only offered vegetables to God and was

rejected, while his brother Abel offered the sacrifice of an animal whose blood had been shed and was accepted ([Gen. 4:3-5](#)).

We need the Lord Jesus to be both our generating life and our redeeming life. By His death on the cross two things came out of Him—the blood to redeem us and the water to generate us ([John 19:34](#)). His shed blood brought redemption to us, and the water from His wounded side imparted His life to us. The five barley loaves were accompanied by the two fishes. It is impossible for barley to shed blood; therefore, it could never redeem us. The two fishes represent the animal life for redemption. The Lord is represented by both the barley loaves and the fishes, for He is our vegetable life to generate us and our animal life to redeem us.

THE LIFE SUPPLY TO US

It is interesting to note that the five barley loaves and two fishes came from a small boy, not a big man. This is very meaningful, because the Lord wants to indicate to us that He is our life, not as someone big, but as someone small. Both barley loaves and fishes are small items, signifying the smallness of Christ as the life supply to us. The miracle-seeking people considered Him

as the promised prophet (6:14; Deut. 18:15, 18) and would have forced Him to be their king (6:15), but He would not assume the position of a giant in religion. Rather, He preferred to be small loaves and little fishes that He might be small enough for people to eat. All of this reveals the smallness of Christ. He is small enough for us to eat. Whatever we eat must be considerably smaller than we are. We are much bigger than the bread and fish that we eat. We cannot eat something that is larger than we are. If it were larger than we are, it could eat us. Everything we eat is even smaller than our mouth. If it is larger than our mouth, it must first be cut into pieces. A small boy brought five small loaves and two small fishes. This means that the smallness of the Lord Jesus is most precious to us.

Most Christians, including ourselves, always think of our Lord as someone great. But in [John 6](#) the Lord Jesus does not want to be great. He wants to remain small enough to eat. There is a song that says, “How Great Thou Art,” but we have a sweeter song which praises the Lord for His smallness. If the Lord were only great, we could never touch Him. Praise Him that He has become so small! Perhaps you have been a

Christian for many years and yet have failed to realize how small the Lord is. To think of the Lord as a great prophet is merely a religious thought. If the Lord only became a great prophet and was enthroned as a great king, He never could have been a little piece of bread. He never could have been our food supply. Before He could become our food, He first had to become small. Thus, He was symbolized by five small barley loaves and two small fishes brought by one small boy. We need to be impressed with the smallness as well as with the greatness of the Lord. He was even born in a small manger, brought up in a small town, and raised in a lowly family. He did not come to be a religious giant. He was a little Nazarene, having nothing to do with greatness or bigness. Oh, He is so small!

Are you bigger or smaller than a piece of bread? You must admit, of course, that a piece of bread is smaller. Since the Lord comes to you as a piece of the bread of life, you must say to Him, "Lord, I praise You that You are smaller than I am. Now You can become my food. If You were greater than I, You could never be my food." As far as the greatness of our Lord is concerned, of course, no one is as great as He is, but we must also be impressed that as far as

the smallness of our Lord is concerned, no one is as small as He is. He is bread that is small enough for us to eat.

In [Matthew 15](#) we see that the Lord not only became the loaves, but also the crumbs, which are small fragments of a loaf. Many of us were not qualified to take Him as loaves. However, surely we are qualified to take Him as crumbs. Do you remember what the woman of Canaan said to the Lord when she asked Him to help her and He said that it was “not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs”? She said, “Yes, Lord; for even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table” ([Matt. 15:27](#)). The Canaanite woman was not offended by the Lord’s hard words and by the fact that He referred to her as a dog. She seemed to be telling the Lord, “Yes, Lord, I am a Gentile dog, but the Gentile dog has his portion. The children’s portion is on the table, and the dog’s portion is under the table. Lord, You must realize that now You are not on the table but under the table, because the naughty children have cast You away. Now that You are under the table, You can be my portion.” The Lord admired her faith. We all need to enjoy the Lord in such a lowly way. Do not wait to go to heaven to enjoy Him.

Get Him from under the table where He is right now. Praise the Lord that on the earth He is so small and available now! He is available at any time according to our appetite. However much we can take of Him, He will be that much to us. And the leftovers always surpass what we can eat.

THE OVERFLOW OF THE RICHES OF CHRIST'S LIFE SUPPLY

This chapter not only brings out the smallness of the Lord, but also the richness of the Lord. Just five loaves are rich enough to feed five thousand people. The twelve baskets left over signify the overflow of the riches of Christ's life supply, which fed people over one thousand times. That five loaves fed five thousand people means that it fed them one thousand times. According to the Scriptures, the number one thousand signifies a complete unit. For example, one day in the court of the Lord is better than a thousand ([Psa. 84:10](#)). One thousand is a full unit. Hence, the five loaves can fill five thousand people. This reveals how rich and how unlimited the Lord is. The multitude could eat as much as they wanted, for the supply was unlimited. Even two little fishes were sufficient for all.

Twelve baskets of fragments were left over. Why were there not five, eight, or eleven baskets left over? Because the number twelve signifies eternal completeness and eternal perfectness. This means that even the fragments are eternally full and eternally complete. Even a small, fragmented Christ is full of a richness which can never be exhausted. He is so small and yet so unlimited. Have you ever compared His smallness with His unlimitedness? He is the little Nazarene, yet He has been feeding all of the generations. He has never been reduced. Before the feeding of the five thousand, there were five loaves and two fishes; after the feeding of the five thousand, there were twelve baskets left over. Therefore, after the feeding of the five thousand, more surplus remained than what was there originally. This portrays the richness of Christ, for there is always something left over after the multitude has been fed.

For twenty centuries, Christ has been feeding thousands upon thousands of people. Today, He is still rich, for there are still twelve baskets full. We need the revelation of the richness of the smallness of Christ. In form, He is the five loaves and the two fishes, yet thousands and thousands of people have been eating Him for

twenty centuries. And He is still here. He can never be reduced or exhausted. Oh, how we must praise Him for His smallness in form and for His richness without limit!

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