

The feeding of the five thousand



John 6:5–14 / Matthew 14:13–21

One day the Lord Jesus was preaching on the shores of Lake Gennesaret. Many people were gathered around him. He did not want to send the people home hungry and requested his disciples to feed them. They brought him five loaves of bread and two fishes thinking: "This will never be enough for so many people!" Jesus Christ asked everyone to sit down. He took the food, gave thanks and broke the bread and gave it and the fishes to his disciples. They distributed these and all ate their fill. Amazingly there was even quite a lot left over.

The children learn that the Lord Jesus feels for those who are hungry and suffering.

At the time of the Lord Jesus, a small boy lived near Lake Gennesaret. We will call this boy Peter. Our story commences where Peter is walking as fast as he can in the direction of a village. The bag he is carrying slung over his shoulder, bobs up and down as he hurries along. He appears to be at home here and knows the way well. He has probably been helping to tend the sheep for a few days and is now returning home. He sees a little girl waving to him—his sister. Why should she be waiting for him here outside the village?

"Come quickly," she calls out to him: "Father and Mother and everyone else in the village have gone down to the lake. The village is completely deserted. I only remained here to wait for you."

Quickly she explains to her brother what has happened. The Lord Jesus came through the village a little earlier with some of his disciples. He healed the sick potter. Curious to see what else may still happen, the villagers have all followed him down to the lake. Peter is also intrigued by now. He would like to meet this Jesus. They run to the place where a large crowd has assembled.

There is a great jostling and pushing. "Come!" He firmly takes his sister's hand as he does not want to lose her in the crowd; they are looking for their parents. The little girl whispers ex-

citedly: "There are Philip and Andrew, two of Jesus Christ's disciples. They are always with him so he must be close by." The two children force their way through the crowd of adults until they are very close to the Lord Jesus. Now they can hear every word he says. They listen very attentively. The Lord Jesus speaks of God, his Father in heaven. He says that God loves all people, and tells many stories to explain what he means. Many people want to speak to him and ask his advice. He takes time for each and every one. Even the old man who can only make himself understood with great difficulty, feels that Jesus understands him. Peter sees the joy in the old man's eyes. He is amazed. Doesn't the Lord Jesus become tired? He too would like to speak to him, but he is too shy.

Andrew is looking concerned. He says to Jesus: "It will soon be dark. These people must be hungry." The Lord Jesus simply answers: "Why don't you give them something to eat." The disciples look at one another in bewilderment. This could really become difficult. Philip says: "It is impossible; we will never be able to get sufficient food for all these people, there are thousands of them. Should we not rather send them home?" The Lord Jesus shakes his head.

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Peter has been listening attentively. He is also feeling hunger pangs already. He remembers that he still has some bread and fish in his shoulder-bag, but it isn't much. He would gladly want to help, but can he offer so little? Will the Lord Jesus accept it? Shyly he tugs at Andrew's sleeve and shows him what he has to offer. Andrew takes it to the Lord Jesus who smiles,

Jesus Christ is everybody's friend

gives thanks to God for the loaves of bread and the fishes, then prays and blesses the food. He asks everyone to sit down. Soon it becomes quiet. He now instructs his disciples to distribute the bread and fish amongst the people.

Peter is very happy that he was able to please the Lord Jesus. The way in which Jesus accepted his modest gifts, greatly impressed the boy. He is so engrossed in his happy thoughts that he does not notice at first that his sister is excitedly tugging at his hand. She has found their parents. Quickly the children run up to join them. There is so much to talk about; they have all made such great new experiences today. They, too, are offered of the bread and fish and may take as much

as they like. Peter shares a piece with his sister. How good it is to sit together like this and chat. He even has a little left, but when he offers it to his father, his father says he has had enough. So they hand what is left to Andrew, who gathers it all in a large basket.

On their way home his sister says: "Did you notice? There were still twelve baskets left over!" Peter says nothing; he is far too happy.

2/3



One day the Lord Jesus was preaching at Lake Gennesaret. Thousands of people were gathered to hear him speak. They had become hungry. In order not to have to send these people home, Jesus offered to feed them. He blessed some bread and fish. From these everyone could eat their fill and there was even a lot left over.



Jesus Christ also blesses today.

- 1 The disciples do not know what to do. What does the Lord Jesus have in mind? How could this story continue?
- 2 The children look at and describe the picture. By means of this picture they briefly recount Peter's experiences. (The Lord Jesus is the central figure. He blesses the food. On his instructions the disciples distribute the bread and the fish. Thousands of hungry people can eat their fill.)
- 3 Could we experience something similar today? We compare the picture with the photograph. (Today the ministers come to us in the divine services by Jesus' commission and dispense God's word. These words are food for our soul. Thousands listen, 'eat their fill' and experience blessing. Jesus Christ also blesses today.)