



MINISTRIES

A Ministry of the Athens Universal Life Church
Dr. Rob White – Senior Minister
<https://aulc.us>

TITLE: Count to Eight

SERMON IN A SENTENCE: The Feeding of the Five Thousand demonstrates that all things are, indeed, possible, when we include Jesus in the equation.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 14:13-21

Today's scripture lesson comes from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 14, verses 13 to 21.,,,,

Starting at verse 13:,,,,

When Jesus heard about it, He withdrew from there by boat to a remote place to be alone. When the crowds heard this, they followed Him on foot from the towns. ,,,,

As He stepped ashore, He saw a huge crowd, felt compassion for them, and healed their sick.,,,,

When evening came, the disciples approached Him and said, "This place is a wilderness, and it is already late. Send the crowds away so they can go into the villages and buy food for themselves." ,,,,

"They don't need to go away," Jesus told them. "You give them something to eat." ,,,,

"But we only have five loaves and two fish here," they said to Him.,,,,

"Bring them here to Me," He said.,,,,

Then He commanded the crowds to sit down on the grass. He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them. He broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds.,,,,

Everyone ate and was filled. Then they picked up 12 baskets full of leftover pieces!,,,

Now those who ate were about 5,000 men, besides women and children.,,,,

-- May the Lord add His Blessing to the reading of His Word!,,,

-- Hello, I am Doctor Rob White with the A U L C Ministries with our message this week.,,,

-- I am happy that you can take a few minutes out of your busy week to be with us today!,,,

Things had not been going well. A few days ago, Jesus had been snubbed in his own hometown. Then the king, who had murdered John, turned his attention to Jesus. Jesus got into a boat and sailed to a deserted place where he could get away from it all—but the people found out where he was going and headed there on foot. They came by the hundreds—and then by the thousands. Everyone wanted to see Jesus—to hear him—to touch him—to ask him for something. It was quite an honor—unless you needed some time by yourself—time to think—time to pray—time to heal.,,,,

Jesus needed that kind of solitude, but it was not to be. Wherever he went, the crowds found him. On this day, the crowd was huge—five thousand men, Matthew says—plus women and children. Eight thousand—ten thousand—twenty thousand—we don't know how many—only that the crowd was huge.,,,,

We would expect Jesus to be annoyed. He was looking for solitude, but ended up with a crowd. At some point he surely wanted to say, "Leave me alone! For God's sake, go away!" That must have occurred to Jesus, but only for a moment. When he saw how needy they were, he had compassion on them. Matthew tells us that he cured their sick. The Greek word that Matthew uses for "sick" is *arrostous*. It means "wretched ones. When Jesus saw truly wretched people—people who desperately needed his healing touch—he was filled with compassion. He turned his attention to those who needed him.,,,,

Jesus got so caught up in ministry that he failed to see that it was getting dark. His disciples noticed, however, and they came to talk to him. "Jesus, it's time to let these people go home," they said. "Time to let them find something to eat! It's getting late, Jesus, and people are hungry. Send them home.".,,,,

Note the tone of their voice. Most of the time, the disciples addressed Jesus as Lord. They treated him with respect. They deferred to him. But not here! Here they talked to him as if he were an absent-minded professor in need of a dose of reality. "It's getting late. The people are hungry." The disciples even tell Jesus what to do. "Send the people home so they can get something to eat.".,,,,

But Jesus said, "**They don't need to go away. You give them something to eat**". The disciples looked at each other. "What are you talking about Jesus? There must be ten thousand people here. We don't have any food! We have nothing—nothing at all—except five dinner rolls and a couple of fish!".,,,,

Jesus said, "**Bring them here to me**". Then he ordered the crowd to sit down, and he lifted up his eyes to heaven—and he blessed the bread and broke it—and then he had the disciples distribute the bread—

and everyone ate and everyone was filled. Thousands of them! They ate and were filled! And then the disciples collected the leftovers, which filled twelve baskets. There was more at the end than there was at the beginning. And Matthew says, "Those who ate were about five thousand men" ,,,,

Amazing! Then he tells us that there were women and children present too. Even more amazing! Matthew wasn't trying to say that the women and children were unimportant. He was adding them at the end so that we might know that the crowd was twice as large as we had thought. We call this the Feeding of the Five Thousand, but it was probably the Feeding of the Ten Thousand.,,,,

The disciples must have been amazed. Matthew doesn't say that they were amazed, but they must have been. I don't think that the crowd realized what had happened. They certainly didn't express any amazement. But the disciples knew exactly what was going on. They knew that the crowd was huge—and hungry—and that nobody had any food—except for five small loaves and two fish. However you counted, the situation was desperate. Five loaves and two fish add up to seven bits of food—enough, perhaps, for a small family—certainly not enough for this great crowd. The disciples knew that they were on the verge of a crisis. "Send them home," they urged. ,,,,

But Jesus said, "**They don't need to go away. You give them something to eat**" The disciples, who had tried to get Jesus to face reality, tried one more time. "We can't feed them, Jesus. We have no food—nothing—nothing at all except five small loaves and two fish." And Jesus responded, "**Bring them here to me.**" The disciples brought the loaves and fish to Jesus, and he blessed the bread—and broke it—and sent the disciples among the crowd to feed them—and everyone ate—and they were all filled. Amazing! The disciples must have been amazed!.,,,,

You see, the disciples had assessed the situation correctly. The crowd was huge. It was late. They had only five small loaves and two fish. Five plus two equals seven. Seven bits of food wouldn't feed the front row of this great crowd. "Send them home, Jesus," they urged.,,,,

But there was something wrong with the disciples' math. They added five plus two and got seven—and concluded that there was no hope. One scholar ,(Dale Bruner) says, "They should have counted to eight." He means that the disciples had forgotten the one most important reality—and that was Jesus. They had gotten their arithmetic right and their math wrong. They had added correctly and concluded wrongly. Five plus two add up to seven. In that, they were correct. But their equation was wrong, because they forgot to include Jesus. If you are involved in the God's work and fail to include Jesus, you always get the wrong answer. Always!.,,,,

Most of us like to think of ourselves as realistic people. We like to think that we face facts. We know how to add, subtract, multiply, and divide. We can get the numbers and tally the columns. BUT—and this is very important—BUT, if we are involved in a faith enterprise—and all of life, after all, is a faith enterprise—if we are involved in a faith enterprise, we had better not forget the single most important part of the equation—and that is Jesus! Because Jesus transforms everything he touches! Everything!.,,,,

That means that, when we walk with Jesus, everything becomes possible. It doesn't matter if our bank account is empty. It doesn't matter if we reach in our pocket and find only lint. It doesn't matter that we are not especially smart—or talented—or beautiful—or charming. If Jesus is with us, the sky is the limit! That is the message of this story. ,,,,

Now that doesn't mean, "Believe and grow rich!" There are some preachers who will tell you that Jesus wants you to be rich—that he wants you to live in a mansion—that he wants you to drive a Mercedes—that he wants you to wear a Rolex. But that is not consistent with the Christ of the cross—the man who had no place to lay his head. It isn't what this story—the Feeding of the Five Thousand—means. Look carefully, and you will see that Jesus did not serve fillet of sole. There is no mention of a lovely Chardonnay. No green beans almandine. No dessert flambé. Jesus fed them bread, the most basic of foods. But all ate, and all were filled. They felt good. They were satisfied. They were happy. They were not hungry anymore. That was quite a feat for someone who started with five small loaves and two fish! Quite a feat indeed!,,,

The promise of this story is that, if we will truly sit at Jesus' feet, Jesus will provide what we need—even if the numbers don't add up. In fact, we can say that, if the numbers don't add up, it is because we have forgotten to put Jesus in the equation. We have added five plus two to get seven—when we needed to add five plus two—PLUS JESUS—to get eight.,,,,

The stories of impossible possibilities among those who love Jesus are legion. I cannot tell you all of them, but I would like to tell you one. ,,,,

Don Davis is a retired Presbyterian pastor who lives near San Diego. As a young man, Don seemed not to have many prospects. One of seven children born to a steel-worker and his wife, he was raised during the Great Depression in an area of southern Ohio known for poverty even in good times—and the Great Depression was bad times—terrible times. ,,,,

Don's parents took the kids to church every Sunday. As Don saw the preacher standing in the pulpit, something stirred in him—a call to ministry. Jesus planted the idea in his heart that he should be a minister. Don had a vague idea that ministers had to go to college, but that was all he knew about ministers—except that he was going to be one someday.,,,,

What Don didn't know was that it couldn't be done. He didn't understand that there was no money for college. He didn't realize that it was an impossible dream. He just knew that God had called him and that, somehow, he was going to be a minister.,,,,

When Don started high school, shortly before the outbreak of World War II, he had to choose between a vocational track and a college-prep track. He chose the college-prep track, because he knew that he was going to study for the ministry. When his father heard about it, he was furious. "Get those big ideas out of your head," he said. "You're not a rich kid! You have to realize what kind of family you are from!" ,,,,

It wasn't that Don's father was a mean man—or even that he wasn't a man of faith. He was just doing what good fathers have always done—trying to help his son to get his feet planted solidly on the ground—trying to put him in touch with reality—trying to steer him away from certain failure. "Get in the vocational track," he advised. "You have to get a job once you graduate from high school." Good advice! Sensible! Reasonable! Or so it seemed. Five plus two adds up to seven—always. There were seven kids in Don's family—seven mouths to feed. However Don's father figured it, he came up with the number seven—and that meant that Don should forget college.,,,,

But Don stayed in the college-prep track. He wasn't trying to defy his father, but he knew that he was going to be a minister. He knew he was going to go to college. He didn't know how he was going to work it out—he just knew that somehow, with God's help, he would do it. Somehow he understood

that five plus two PLUS JESUS is an entirely different proposition. With Jesus in the equation, anything was possible!,,,,

Then during his last year of high school, Don's math teacher, Wade Carpenter, asked Don to stay after class one day. He told Don that the Navy had a program—the V-12 program—in which they sent qualified young men to college. That was news to Don. He had never heard of the V-12 program. Mr. Carpenter urged Don to apply, and even drove Don to the town where the Navy gave exams. Don took the test, passed, and spent the next three years studying engineering at the University of South Carolina.,,,,

After graduation, Don was commissioned as a Navy ensign, and spent the next year on the aircraft carrier Shangri-la. When he completed his active-duty obligation, he got out and went to seminary. He was ordained as a Presbyterian pastor in 1951, and has been in ministry ever since. With Jesus, the impossible became possible—the dream became a reality!,,,,

A couple of nice postscripts:,,,,

Don's father was able to make the trip to South Carolina to attend Don's graduation and commissioning in 1946. Don walked across the stage in Navy uniform and received his diploma from a university trustee. Then Admiral Nimitz presented him with his commission-- Admiral Nimitz himself—the same Admiral Nimitz who had just won the naval war in the Pacific! Can you imagine how astonished Don's father must have been! How glad he must have been that Don had not taken his advice!,,,,

And then, a few years later, Don was driving down Highway 30 in Oregon—half a continent away from the place where he had gone to high school. As he passed a truck stop, he glanced over and saw a man who looked like Wade Carpenter. He stopped, and sure enough, it was his old teacher. They spent a couple of hours talking about all the things that had happened since the day that Carpenter had driven Don to the Navy exam—and Don finally had a chance to say thanks!,,,,

That's the kind of thing that happens when we put Jesus front-and-center in our lives.,,,,

I don't know what kind of plan that God has for you. I don't know what kind of vision that God has set before you—or what kind of burden that God has placed on your heart. You might be concerned about world hunger—or you might just be concerned for Joe and Suzy down the block. God might have called you to go to seminary—or just to witness for Christ where you are now. God might have called you to be a missionary to Africa—or just to be the best father or mother that you can be. Whatever the call, it is likely to stretch you. You will be tempted to say, "Get someone else, Lord! I can't do it! I have nothing—nothing but five small loaves and two fish.",,,

But Jesus says, "**Bring them here to me.**" If you will do so, you will find that it matters not how little you have. It matters only that you bring it to Jesus. If Christ calls you to teach Sunday school, he will help you to change a child's life. If Christ calls you to help the homeless, he will provide homes. If Christ calls you to be a Christian witness, he will give you people who are ready to hear the word. If Christ calls you to feed the hungry, stand back! You will find that five plus two PLUS JESUS makes everything possible!,,,,

-- That's our Lord's message for this Lord's Day and I hope you got a blessing out of it!,,,

-- Go out this week and be a blessing and be blessed! -- For the more you are a blessing, the more you,,, will be blessed!

-- Thank you all for watching and listening and we will see you all next week!

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