

THE MIRACLE OF THE LOAVES AND FISHES

Reading: Mark 6:34-44

Of all the miracles described in the Lord's Word, there is only one that is spoken of in all four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. And that miracle is the miracle of feeding five thousand people—a true story about a time when there did not seem to be nearly enough food. The Lord gave not only enough, but far more, so that there were many baskets of fragments left over.

In the story, Jesus saw a great multitude, and He was moved with compassion for them. Why was He so concerned for them as He looked at them in this place? It was because they were like sheep without a shepherd. They had deep needs. Human beings need to know what is right and what is true, and so in His love He began to teach them many things (Mark 6:34). His teaching went on to the day's end, and it must have been a great feast for their minds, for here was the Lord Himself, speaking directly to them.

A crowd of thousands of people far from the towns would need a lot of food as the day drew to its close. The disciples had some money, but even if they went off to a town and spent all of it, it would hardly begin to feed all those people.

“How many loaves do you have? Go and see,” the Lord told the disciples (Mark 6:38). They obeyed the Lord and found that they had five loaves and two fishes. Out there in the green grass the Lord commanded that these crowds sit down in groups of hundreds and groups of fifty.

Then the Lord blessed and broke the food and began to hand it to the disciples. Did they get enough? Yes, for “they all ate and were filled” (Mark 6:42). It was more than enough. To show that there was more than enough, the Lord told the disciples to begin to gather what was left over. At the end, they had twelve baskets filled with what remained after everyone had eaten as much as they wanted.

There was more than enough! What the Lord gives overflows. Psalm 23 says, “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies...my cup runs over” (Psalm 23:5).

The miracle that happened that afternoon, while the disciples were giving and giving and giving, pictures something that takes place in heaven. Perhaps the disciples wondered, as they handed out the food, whether any would be left for them? Yet, after they had been giving and giving, they ended up, not with *less* food than they started with, but *more!*

Think of food as representing your happiness, or all your good fortune. In

heaven the angels try to share and give, and something amazing happens. Listen to what is taught in the Heavenly Doctrine:

When an angel does good to any one, he also communicates to him his own good, good fortune, and happiness, and this with the desire to give the other everything.... Then good flows in unto him together with good fortune and happiness, much more than he gives (Arcana Coelestia 6478, emphasis added).

Emanuel Swedenborg saw that this really does happen. He wrote,

It has been given to me to know this from much experience; and from this also it may be seen that the Lord is in every single thing, for the Lord is such that He wants to give Himself to all, and hence good fortune and happiness are increased with those who are likenesses of Him (Arcana Coelestia 6478).

If you understood what was just said about the Lord's wonderful presence, you understand one of the greatest truths. The Lord said, "The bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world" (John 6:33). He also said, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).

The Lord showed His power to give when, with the compassion of love, He gave food to the disciples so that the people might have enough to eat, and much left over.