**Thesis:** Have you ever felt lost in the crowd? Like you’re just a number moving along with the flow of life? During Jesus’ ministry, he encountered multitudes of people nearly everywhere he went. But despite the driving numbers, he never let anyone get lost in the crowd. He knew each person who came to hear him teach, saw every person who approached him for healing, and cared about every heart that sought him out. From our greatest of needs to our smallest, Jesus knows them all and will meet them with a compassionate heart.

**Introduction:** Welcome to The Jesus Podcast, a year of stories showcasing the depth of Christ’s love and the glory of God’s truth. I’m \_\_\_\_ your host from Pray.com. Thanks for joining us today. I’m excited to explore more miraculous moments with you. As we jump in, be sure to take a second and follow the podcast!

**Context:** Among Jesus miracles, there are several that stand out as iconic. One of these is Jesus feeding the 5,000. As most of his miracles were directed at one individual, this miracle ministered to thousands of people at once. As Jesus begins healing the crowds, the day is getting late and the disciples consider sending the people away to gather food in the villages. But Jesus has another plan. Despite the mass numbers, which likely amounted closer to 15,000 after counting the women and children, the Lord had a plan to effectively minister to them all. As we dive into our story, we’ll have a glimpse into one of Jesus’ more vulnerable moments after hearing news of his cousin John’s martyrdom. But Jesus knows his comfort comes from his Father in heaven and that his plan will redeem the brokenness of this world. Without allowing grief to consume his purpose, he moves with incredible Spirit-empowered love to stay focused on the mission at hand.

**Message:** Shortly before the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus is found in a contemplative and somber scene, mourning the loss of his dear cousin John, who had so boldly made straight the path of the Messiah by proclaiming the coming kingdom and heralding Jesus as the Lamb of God. Though Jesus knew he would see John again and that John had purposed in his heart to live out his calling to his dying breath, we’re given a sobering reminder that Jesus was completely human and felt the same emotions we feel when losing a loved one.

But this wasn’t going to derail him from what he knew he needed to do, to continue to press on according to his Father’s will. Though the world would give Jesus reasons to abandon his mission, nothing would be strong enough to change the Lord’s heart of compassion. Nothing would cause him to cease from looking at the people of the world as sheep without a shepherd. He had come to seek and save the lost. Though many would come to revile and persecute him, his eyes were set on the ones who needed him most. The ones who would receive him as their Savior.

It’s moving to know that there is nothing that could ever change Jesus’ heart of compassion for this creation. While the old covenant is filled with examples of God’s justice and righteous judgment, like the flooding of the earth during Noah’s days in Genesis 6-9, and the opening of the earth to consume ungodly priests in Numbers 16, we know that God’s wrath was satisfied when Jesus took our sins on the cross and put them to death through his own death. This means that even in our most sinful times, God is calling us to repentance. Even in our most severe acts of rebellion, God’s grace is sufficient to cover our sins. He has not and will not turn his face from those made in his image.

So Jesus begins to heal the crowds who have come to him. But as the day goes on, it’s clear that the numbers are too great and that something would need to be done to feed the people before the sun goes down. As the disciples ask Jesus what to do, the Messiah turns this into a learning moment for them. Though they spent hours each day walking and talking with Jesus, hearing him preach on the kingdom of God, and perform miracles like no other, they still had a lot to learn about God. Jesus wasn’t upset with their questions or confusion. Rather, he saw it as an affirmation of their desire to grow as disciples. They didn’t want to think or act like other men anymore. They wanted to be like Jesus. And as they faced these problems, they were learning to come to him with them.

In the same way, we always have more to learn about God. Learning is good and leads us to greater faith. We should never hit a point as followers of Jesus where we feel like we’ve retained all the knowledge we can about God. Our God is magnificent and there will always be more that we don’t know about Him. So press into the learning process as a disciples. Take the time to bring your questions to God. While we might think the people who have more questions are further behind in their faith, those who are willing to ask their questions of God often show signs of being closer to God because they’ve learned they can be open with him. Learning from Jesus requires time and patience. It teaches us to be open to new possibilities with God. And, just as importantly, it calls us to be humble, never assuming we know the answer apart from God.

Rather than giving the disciples the answer at first, he wants to show them the pattern of thinking we should have when trusting in God. So he sends them out to gather what food they can. In an unfortunate conclusion to the disciples, all they can find is a young boy with five barley loaves of bread and two smoked fish. It’s at this point that the disciples are going to learn another lesson. Not from Jesus, but from this boy, who willingly gives up his own lunch, knowing that it wouldn’t be enough to feed the crowds, let alone the disciples and their Rabbi. But he shows us incredible faith when he offers up all that he does have. What we should glean from this act is that Jesus doesn’t need anything from us. He was going to perform a miracle of creating food regardless, and he could have done so without the loaves and fish provided to him. But that wasn’t the point. Jesus wanted to show that he doesn’t need anything from us but that he wants our hearts. He wants us to be willing to offer him all that we have and to trust that he’ll do something amazing with it.

**We may not feel li**ke we have much to offer God, but in quoting Hosea, Jesus reminds us that God desires mercy over sacrifice. His point is that God is more focused on the place in our hearts from which we give more than he’s concerned with what we give. Some have been given much and will be able to give much. Others have been given little and will be able to give little. But to each one, the heart of the offering can be the same, and both are pleasing to God.

This is the lesson Jesus teaches the disciples in *Mark 12:41 Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. 42 But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents. 43 Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. 44 They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”*

Whatever we have to give, we should give it with gladness. When we recognize that all good things come from God, it makes it easier to see it as simply giving back to him what is rightfully his. And if we’re willing to do this for him, we can trust that he’ll take care of us as his children.

Similar to the miracle performed in Cana when he turned the water into wine, Jesus allows the disciples to have a hand in this miracle. Rather than having bread and fish miraculously fill the bags of the people who made up the crowds, Jesus sends out the disciples to pass out the food. In doing so, he allowed them to be a part of the miracle and witness the work of God unfold in real time.

If we take a step back, we see that everyone had a part to play in this miracle. The young boy was used to show how God calls us to generosity. The disciples were used to demonstrate the faith we must take when God sends us out to care for others. And of course, Jesus stands as a reminder that none of it would have been possible apart from God.

Remember that God has a purpose for you. There’s a part he wants you to play in his plan. Give him your heart, trust in his guidance, and watch as he feeds this world with the bread of life.