

Matthew 15:34

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes.

Analysis

And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? (καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Πόσους ἄρτους ἔχετε;)—Jesus's question focuses them on present resources, not absent provisions. He always begins with what we have, not what we lack. The interrogative πόσος ('how many') invites inventory—what's available for God to use? **And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes** (οἱ δὲ εἶπαν, Ἑπτὰ, καὶ ὀλίγα ἰχθύδια)—seven loaves and ὀλίγα ἰχθύδια ('a few small fishes,' diminutive of ἰχθῦς).

The number seven (ἑπτὰ) symbolizes completeness in Scripture. While the 5,000 were fed with five loaves (representing Torah's five books and Jewish ministry), the 4,000 receive seven loaves (representing complete gospel provision for all nations). The small fish emphasize the inadequacy of human resources for divine tasks—yet Christ multiplies whatever is offered to Him. Our insufficiency becomes the platform for His all-sufficiency.

Historical Context

Bread (ἄρτος) was the staple food of ancient Palestine, made from wheat or barley. Fish from the Sea of Galilee—typically dried or salted for preservation—provided protein. The disciples' inventory was perhaps their own provisions for the journey. Jesus's use of their personal food demonstrates that God uses what we surrender, not what we withhold. The feeding miracles validated Jesus's claim to be the Bread of Life (John 6:35).

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What insufficient resources in your life could Christ multiply if you offered them to Him?
2. How does focusing on what you have, rather than what you lack, change your perspective on ministry opportunities?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	λέγει	αὐτοῖς	ὁ	Ἰησοῦς	Πόσους	ἄρτους	ἔχετε	οἱ
And	saith	unto them	G3588	Jesus	How many	loaves	have ye	G3588
G2532	G3004	G846		G2424	G4214	G740	G2192	
δὲ	εἶπον,	Ἑπτὰ	καὶ	ὀλίγα	ἰχθύδια			
And	they said	Seven	And	a few	little fishes			
G1161	G2036	G2033	G2532	G3641	G2485			

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