

## **Westside Kids' Adventures**

### **Prologue:**

In our last episode, the Westside Kids saw Jesus perform the miracle of calming the storm on the Sea of Galilee when Jesus' disciples feared they were going to perish. The Westside Kids were caught in the same storm and learned a great lesson about God's desire that we place our faith in him whenever we face our own storms in life. After returning to Eliab's shed and falling asleep, the kids again grabbed onto Papa Jim's journal and were taken to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. The first thing they saw was a great crowd of people walking directly towards them. We will rejoin the Westside Kids after we find out what Jesus' apostles have been up to.

### **Episode 3: Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand (Mark 6:31-44, John 6:1-15)**

Sometime before this, Jesus had sent out his apostles to go through the villages preaching the gospel. He also had empowered them to heal the sick much as Jesus himself had been doing. When the apostles returned from this journey, they told Jesus all that they had done in his name and by his authority.

And when the apostles had gathered together, Jesus said to them, **"Come away by yourselves to a quiet place and rest a while."** For many people were coming and going, which meant Jesus and his apostles had no time to rest or even to eat. So they went away in the boat to a quiet place by themselves. Now many people saw them going and recognized them, and the people went ahead on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of Jesus and his apostles.

Meanwhile, the Westside Kids, had also arrived on the other side of the lake just as the crowd of people began showing up. Abby tugged on the sleeve of a man passing by to get his attention. "Excuse me sir, we're new to this area. Can you tell us where all these people are going?"

"Don't you know? We're all going to see Jesus, of course," he said. "We have heard he is coming here today and I need to find him so I can ask him to heal my brother who is lame in one leg. As for me, I want to hear more of his teachings. No one else speaks like this man does, with such wisdom and authority."

Willow scanned the crowd, trying to estimate how large it was. "All the people from every village on this side of the Galilee must be here," she said. "There must be at least ten thousand people when you include men, women and children."

"Well, unless one of you has a better idea, I think we should open Papa Jim's journal, and

see if there is any clue as to what we're supposed to be doing here," said Fish.

They all agreed, and Willow began unpacking the book from the goatskin pouch. She opened it on the ground as the kids sat around it. Willow gently opened the book and turned to the third page. The kids stared at the drawing on the page, but were unsure what to make of it.

"As best I can tell," said Willow, "it appears to be a picture of a bearded man holding a piece of bread and reaching out to give it to another man who is on his knees with his head bowed."

"Well," said Joey, "the scripture he wrote under the picture says:

*I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger."*

"I think we'll probably understand it better once we see what happens today," said Fish.

"Look," Max pointed to Jesus. "He's starting to speak to the crowd. Let's get closer if we can."

When Jesus saw the great crowd that had followed him, he had compassion on them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things, and cured those who needed healing.

The kids had managed to weave their way through the throng of people to better hear Jesus teach and watch him heal the sick. The man Abby had spoken to earlier brought his brother forward, and Jesus laid his hand on the man's lame leg. The man immediately stood up straight as an arrow and walked away almost dancing and praising God for his mercy in healing him.

The Westside Kids saw this happen and were amazed. Willow said, "I heard the apostles talking about the Passover feast of the Jews beginning at dusk. But these people don't look like they've packed along anything to eat. What will they do?" asked Willow with concern.

"I sure don't see anything like supermarkets or fast food joints around here," said Max.

"Yeah, but I don't think Jesus would have kept them out here this late in the day if he didn't have a plan, especially since it is the beginning of Passover," said Abby.

"Maybe it's just me," said Joey, "but I'm not too clear on what Passover is. Is it some kind of Jewish festival?"

As usual, Willow had the answer. “I learned a little about it from a Jewish friend of mine at school. The Passover festival celebrates the Jewish people being freed from slavery in Egypt over a thousand years before the birth of Christ. My friend said it used to occur during the barley harvest, and that is why they have loaves of barley bread as part of the meal during Passover.”

“How come you’re so smart?” asked Joey, smiling.

When it grew late, Jesus’ apostles came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and the hour is now late.”

Jesus said to his apostle Philip, “**Where are we to buy bread so that these people may eat?**” He said this to test Philip, for he himself knew what he would do.

Philip answered Jesus, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for them to get a little.”

And Jesus said to them, “**How many loaves do you have? Go and see.**”

And his apostle, Andrew, said, “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?”

Then Jesus commanded all the people to sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the apostles to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all.

“This is incredible,” said Abby. “Right before our eyes, Jesus is producing enough bread from the five barley loaves to feed thousands of people. And he’s doing the same thing with the two fish! He keeps giving it out and his basket keeps filling up.”

“And everyone is getting as much as they want,” said Max. “How is that possible?”

“It’s not possible, Max, for anyone but Jesus,” said Fish. “That’s what makes it a miracle. I think Jesus wants everyone here to understand who he is – the Son of God.”

“It looks like almost everyone has finished eating,” said Willow.

And then Jesus said to his apostles, “**Gather up all the leftover pieces of bread so that nothing is wasted.**”

Joey stood up and said, “Did you hear that? We should ask the apostles if they need any help picking up the pieces. There are so many.”

“Good idea,” said Fish. “I’ll ask them.” Fish ran over to one of the apostles, and a moment later came running back. “He said they would appreciate our help and he gave me these baskets to put the pieces in. Each of you grab one and let’s go.”

The Westside Kids started busily picking up leftover pieces of bread from the grass and tossing them into their baskets. Once all the pieces had been gathered they returned their baskets to the apostles who also had baskets full of bread. In all twelve baskets had been filled with fragments of bread left from the two barley loaves they had started with, and there were also pieces of fish that had been leftover.

When the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!”

There were a group of men standing together and excitedly talking among themselves. Fish wandered over to see if he could hear what they were saying.

After a minute, Fish came running back. “I just heard those men talking about all the miracles Jesus has been performing. They were talking about taking Jesus by force to make him king. They seem to think if they can make him their king, then they can get him to use his powers to conquer the Romans and give control of Israel back to the Jews.”

“After what they’ve seen Jesus do, how could they think they could force him to do anything?” said Abby.

“Also, I don’t think the way Jesus solves problems is by going to war. He talks about compassion and loving your enemies,” said Willow.

“I know what these men are saying sounds crazy, but they are really stirring up the crowd.” said Fish.

What the Westside Kids didn’t know is that Jesus had already sensed the plan these men had in mind. So perceiving then that the crowd was about to come and take him by force and make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself to pray.

The kids were relieved when they saw Jesus leaving quickly. At least for now, the men’s misguided plan could not proceed.

Just then, Shammash emerged from the crowd wearing a broad smile. He walked up to

the kids and asked, “So how was dinner? Did everyone get what they ordered?”

“Very funny, Shammash,” said Max. “I didn’t know you had a sense of humour.”

“I’m full to the brim,” said Abby. “I think everybody is. I’ve never been a big fan of eating fish or barley bread, but this bread and fish was absolutely delicious.”

“Well children, what have you learned from what you experienced today?” asked Shammash.

“I was just thinking,” said Fish, “it was another miracle where Jesus showed the people who he is and how much he cares about them. They were hungry and he gave them food.”

“Yeah, and if they trust in Jesus and follow his teachings, I think it means he will provide all they need,” said Abby.

“I heard some of the people saying something like, ‘Jesus is the Prophet who has come into the world.’ What do they mean by that?” asked Joey.

Shammash replied, “To start with, a prophet is a person who is inspired by God to tell people about something that will happen in the future. For example, Moses was a prophet in the Old Testament. But he spoke of a greater prophet to come. In Deuteronomy 18:15, Moses prophesied this about Jesus:

*The Lord your God will raise up for you a **prophet** like me from among you, from your brothers – it is to him you shall listen.*”

“So are you saying that more than a thousand years before Christ was born, Moses pointed ahead to Jesus being that Prophet, and that’s who the people in the crowd today were referring to?” asked Max.

“Yes,” replied Shammash. “Moses had led the Israelites out of slavery under the Egyptians, but many of those who witnessed Jesus’ miracle today may be thinking that, like Moses, Jesus will free his people from bondage under the Romans. What they still don’t understand is that Jesus came to free people from the bondage of sin, not from the Romans.”

“And I think I see another connection,” said Fish. “God gave the Israelites bread, that they called manna, to eat each day when they were starving in the desert, while Jesus gave bread to the thousands of people today on this hillside because they had nothing to eat.”

“That’s true,” said Shammash, “After what you have seen today, I will leave you with this to consider: *Jesus is the bread of life, and whoever comes to him will never hunger, and whoever believes in him will never thirst.*”

Shammash stood up and looked lovingly at the five kids in front of him. “Now it’s getting late, my dear children. You must use the book to take you to where you are meant to go.” And again, the old man suddenly vanished into the crowd and was gone.

“I wonder when Jesus will come back down the hill,” said Abby. “His apostles left a while ago. I heard them saying they are going to go down to their boat and cross the lake to the town of Capernaum on the north shore of the lake.”

“Should we be following the apostles or waiting for Jesus?” asked Joey. But just as he posed the question he noticed someone was missing. “Wait a minute. Where did Fish go again? I wish he’d stop doing that. It’s hard enough to plan what we’re doing without someone wandering off all the time.”

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It was late evening when the apostles pushed their boat into the lake. They were about to jump on board to begin their trip across the Sea of Galilee and then on to Capernaum. But a boy interrupted them and asked if he could please travel with them because he had to get across the lake by morning. They reluctantly agreed, but told him to hurry aboard so they could get underway.

When Fish was still together with the other kids, it had occurred to him that during this trip across the lake it just might be the time when one of the other great miracles Jesus performed would take place. But if he was wrong, he did not want to subject his friends to the potential dangers of crossing the Sea of Galilee at night, and the apostles probably wouldn’t have been able to take them all on board anyway. With the blackened end of a burnt stick, he had scrawled a note in the journal for the kids to find, which explained where he was and that he would meet up with them again the next day.

And with that, he was gone.

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*What kind of danger might be awaiting the apostles and Fish as they again cross the Sea of Galilee at night. Will there be another great miracle? How can that happen if Jesus is not with them in the boat? Join us next time, when we see what excitement is in store in the next episode of the Westside*

*Kids Adventures.*