

Mark 6:30-44 (Christopher Wolston) 155077

Christian Treasury: Volume 5, Give Ye Them to Eat

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Mark 6

They little thought that the One they thus addressed, whose lowly grace made such intrusion possible, was He who long before, in His own divine fullness, had said, "I will satisfy her poor with bread." Psa. 132:15. "Give ye them to eat," was His gracious rejoinder.

Uncongenial servants as they were, He could associate them with Himself in the service of His love. Certainly they were not up to the privilege conferred on them. They had little heart for the weary, hungry multitude around them, and they had less knowledge of the heart of the One who gave them this command. Completely taken aback, they looked at the hungry crowd; they scanned the desert; they thought of themselves, and the difficulties appeared insurmountable. They did not see His glory, and their faith fell entirely short of the task imposed upon them. The old evil heart of unbelief that long before had questioned, "Can the Lord provide a table in the wilderness" was still there, and to the "Give ye them to eat," they opposed, "Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?"

It is very wonderful to see the Lord thus communicating to His disciples His own power, all unwilling and unworthy as they were to share it. It is more touching still to watch the grace that, rising above their ignorance and unbelief, presses them into a service they were so slow to enter upon. But "the poor" must be fed, and they should feed them.

"How many loaves have ye? go and see," He said. Quickly returning, they replied, "Five, and two fishes," adding, as we learn elsewhere, "but what are they among so many?" The helplessness of unbelief could go no further, nor did the Lord parley longer with it, so, without reply, "He commanded" them to make the multitude sit down, on the green grass "in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties." Then blessing the loaves and fishes, He broke them and gave them to the disciples to distribute.

One can imagine the feelings of wonder and doubt with which the disciples began their distribution of those recently despised "five loaves and two fishes." What must the eager, impulsive Peter have felt as, in silent awe, he took from the Savior's hands that small portion of bread that was to feed those five thousand hungry people, "besides women and children." How doubt must have given place to amazement, and awe to adoration, as he broke and gave a piece to this one and that one, here to the strong man, now to a timid woman, then to a lighthearted child, till every mouth was satisfied. Yet the store was undiminished, and more remained after all had eaten and were filled, than there had been at the beginning!

What an acquaintance with Himself, and what an education for a future ministry was the Lord here giving to His disciples! True the impression then was not deep, and not long after, when again called upon to feed the multitude, they were as unequal to the occasion as before. But when the Holy Ghost had endued them with power from on high, with what force and encouragement these scenes recurred to their memories as they went forth to minister for Him, who "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever," assured them that not only was "all power given unto Him in heaven and on earth," but that He would be with them "always, even unto the end of the world." Matt. 28:20.

And surely they are left on record for our encouragement and instruction too. As servants we have to draw upon the resources of that same Jesus now at the right hand of God, "head over all things to the church, which is His body," who, having led captivity captive, has given "gifts to men" for the blessing of souls and the edifying of the body.

Only nearness to Christ in His present place of exaltation can make the lessons good in our souls, so as to enable us practically to meet the need of sinners and to feed the Church of God. Only as those who have tasted mercy for ourselves, shall we "faint not" under the ministry committed to us. Above all we must look away from ourselves entirely to Him who still says, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." All grace and power are in Him, and the greater the need, and the more difficult the circumstances, only so much the more is the opportunity His to meet the wants of His own in spite of everything. As servants, simply subject to Him, we require to be in living and abiding association with that heart ever "moved with compassion" towards the needy, and that hand whose power and resource know no limit.

Enlarged and deep acquaintance with truth alone will not suffice, valuable as that is in its place. Knowledge, of itself, "puffeth up," but "love edifieth." It alone never fails. Our apparent resources may be small, and our knowledge of the Scriptures relatively slight, not even equal to "five loaves and two fishes." Yet even a small portion of them with the love that simply seeks to edify, and the faith that counts on Christ alone, will meet any and every need that comes in our way, while acting under the guidance of Him whose command still is, "Give ye them to eat."

Oh! to be more alive to the marvelous grace of such a command, to the wondrous privilege of serving His people, and of magnifying His blessed name by drawing manifestly on His strength in such a way, that it shall be seen that He, and He alone, is the spring and power of our ministry.

The scene we have been considering simply makes Him manifest. Christ Himself fills the vision of the soul as we contemplate it. The desert place, the absence of resource, the slowness and hardness of heart of the disciples as it were, form the background that throws Him into relief. It "manifested forth His glory," and so should all our service while waiting for Himself.

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