

Where are Your Loaves and Fishes?

Matthew 14:13-21

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Today we are going to look at what it means to have a heart for compassion.

A thirteen-year-old boy once read about Dr. Albert Schweitzer's work in Africa. He wanted to help. He had enough money to buy one bottle of aspirin. He wrote to the Air Force and asked if they could fly over Dr. Schweitzer's hospital and drop the bottle down to him. A radio station broadcast the story about this young fellow's concern for helping others. Others responded as well. Eventually, he was flown by the government to Schweitzer's hospital along with four and one-half tons of medical supplies worth \$400,000 freely given by thousands of people. When Dr. Schweitzer heard the story, he said, "I never thought one child could do so much."

Compassion is at the heart of our faith. Compassion calls us to action and it leads us to do great things even with the smallest of resources.

In our Gospel lesson from Matthew's gospel we encounter one of Jesus' greatest miracles, the ***Feeding of the Multitude***. It's in this story we discover the depths of our Lord's compassion, a compassion born out of his own grief.

Jesus just heard of the execution of John the Baptist. The news broke and shattered Jesus. John wasn't only his cousin, but comrade for the sake of God's Kingdom. Do you remember how you felt and where you were when President Kennedy was assassinated? Do you recall the brokenness that permeated your heart when you saw the twin towers collapse? Maybe you've experienced the tragedy of someone saying to you; "we're sorry, we did all that we could".

It was in that context of deep sorrow and loss that Jesus went to a secluded place to grieve, but the crowds followed. When Jesus saw the people, his heart was filled with compassion for each of them. He too, saw their grief and brokenness and it was there that God's love was poured out in acts of healing.

Jesus' example becomes ours as we seek to claim the compassion that we need to exhibit in our Christian walk. Let's not forget that compassion leads us to that place of our own healing and redemption. Sometimes it takes just a few loaves and fishes to do great things through the work of the Holy Spirit.

What is it that God's wants us to do? Again, our time, talents, and treasures are limited? How can we make a difference in the lives of others with the meager resources at our disposal? A sure-fire way of closing off the power of the Holy Spirit is to say I don't have the means to redeem a situation.

Our walk with God demands more than coming to church each Sunday or placing a few dollars in the offering plate. It demands a commitment to change one's heart so that we exhibit

Christ's compassion to the world around us. The smallest gesture of mercy can make all the differences in the world.

A man named Al Wiener survived the Nazi concentration camps of World War II. He entered a labor camp when he was 15. Years in those camps took their toll. Over time his weight dropped to 80 pounds and he was weak and always hungry. He was slowly starving to death.

In one labor camp he worked in a textile factory. There were German women who worked in the textile factory. They were forbidden from speaking to prisoners like Al. They were not even allowed to look them in the eye. One day a German woman pointed, motioning for Al to go to another part of the room. Al waited until no one was looking and he went to the spot she had picked out. She pointed to a crate and walked away. Al lifted the crate and found a sandwich. A precious, precious sandwich. How we take such riches for granted. Al ate the sandwich quickly while no one was looking.

Every day for two months the woman left a sandwich under that crate for him. She risked her life for him. Al says her sandwiches probably saved his life.

Al believes that God used this woman's heroic and charitable acts to save him so that today he can tell others his story and the story of millions of unfortunate people who were executed by the Nazis.

What would the world be without compassionate people, people who are willing to feel the pain of those less fortunate than themselves? Compassion is a gift from God and like grace it is given freely, but we have the free will to accept or not.

Life may best be understood as a partnership between humanity and God. That is true in every part of life.

St. Paul spoke to this in 2 Corinthians 5:18 when he wrote, "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation . . ." This is what our purpose is in life. It is to work with God in building a better world, a world that is as God intended it to be. God provides the inspiration, we provide the perspiration. God provides the miraculous power, but someone needs to offer the loaves and fishes.

Christ has compassion for our needs. And he is able to meet our needs. But Christ needs something to work with. Look at your life right now. Do you have a need? Christ can meet that need.

Is there something, though, that you need to place in his hands first, something you can do to help the situation? Look at the needs of those around you. Does someone you know have a need?

God can meet that need. Is there something you can offer for God to work with. Christ cares, Christ is capable. All Christ needs is for us to give him something to work with. Then we will see the amazing things God can do. Where are your loaves and fishes today?