

A little boy once was asked what his favorite Bible story was. He said, "Oh, I don't know, but I guess it is the one about the crowd that loafs and fishes".

This is one of the best known stories of Jesus. The crowd had followed Jesus into the wilderness, evening was approaching, the crowd was getting hungry. The disciples said, "send them away" "Let them go into the villages and get their own food. But Jesus said "That won't be necessary, we can supply the food". But they probably thought "That's absurd, all there is is two ~~loaves~~ 5 loaves and 2 fish".

But as the story indicates; that was enough. Indeed then they were finished there were twelve baskets left over.

This is important for us today...the message of this story; for God can multiply the loaves and fish in our hands today.

Note three suggestions:

1. Christ's concern for people. One of the most impressive things about Jesus is his compassion for people. Thruout the gospels he calls to the tired and hangry: "Come, come". Of Parents he says: "Bring your children to me". He says to the afflicted: "Bring blind Bartemaeus to me"... As it is written: "And Jesus went forth, and

saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion for them"

Jesus came to serve and to save the lost. When he gazed over Jerusalem, he wept. He knew the heartaches, the headaches and the hungers that go with being human.

There is a school in England which offers a course on compassion. During the course each student spends one blind day, a lame day, and mute day, and a deaf day. The students then do not need to ask: "What is it like to be blind, to be lame, to be deaf?" They have experienced it. for themselves.

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Jesus knows what it is to be human. He has compassion because he has been where we are - denied, betrayed, and disappointed. When we hurt, he understands because he hurt too.

Bring, then, the masses to him. The compassionate Christ is their hope. William Booth knew that when he took the Salvation Army out to the unwashed throngs; John Wesley knew that when he began preaching in the open fields to those to whom the established church had closed its doors.

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A poet writes:

Who'll go and help this shepherd king,
Help him the wandering ones to find?
Who'll bring the lost ones to the fold
Where they'll be sheltered from the cold?
Bring them in, bring them in . . .
Bring the wandering ones to Jesus.

Why, because he cares. He cares about their needs; and
cut he cares about yours and mine, too. Jesus had ⁽³⁾compassion
on the crowd, and he looks with compassion on us today.

2. But there is another element in this story. Jesus
not only has compassion, he is able to help, as well.

Some have tried to give a rationalistic explanation of
this miracle of Jesus. Earlier in this century that was a
fashionable thing to do..what, with the scientific emphasis
of the time, particularly on educated minds. No less a
great Christian disciple than Albert Schweitzer said that
each of the 5000 were so completely impressed in the pre-
sence of Jesus that they felt satisfied even though they
were not actually filled. A common theory early in the
century was that the crowd brought food with them but kept
it concealed until this small boy offered to share his lunch
and thereby shamed the others into offering theirs. And,
as you know, there nearly always is food left over at a
church pot-luck.

George Lamsa suggested that the real miracle was one of
timing for a camel train arrived at that moment, sent out
by a thoughtful merchant of a nearby village. He poses the
question: "It says that there were twelve basketfuls left
over,.. where did the baskets come from?"

Yes, many have sought to xp̄ain the miracle, but any explanation misses the point. The important point of the story is that Christ is able to supply our needs. Our needs may be physical, emotional, or spiritual. Christ is sufficient.

This may be the point at which a lot of us miss the joy of our faith. We believe that God cares about us and our need; but we have doubts that he is able to help. And so we lead joyless, powerkess lives. What good is compassion without capability? He is able.

3. Let us suggest one more thang. Each of us has a part in the muliplication of the loaves and fishes. What if that young man had not been willing to share his five loaves and 2 fish? Oh, surely Christ would have found a way to feed the crowd. But it does seem a clear principle of the faith that God works best when he has something with which to work.

It may be loaves and fishes.... but God needs something to work with.

A small boy called on a man at his home one time, and offered to sell an item for 10¢. "What are you going to do with all that money" the man asked. ~~The boy replied,~~ "I'm raising a million dallors to help feed the hungry", said the boy gravely. He was so tiny and the sum he named

so large that it made the man smile. "A million dollars",
the man exclaimed, "Do you expect to raise it all by your-
self". "Oh, No", said the boy, "I have another little boy]
helping me".

We may appreciate this little fellows spirit, even tho we
have questions about his arithmetic. But who knows, God may
multiply those few coins of his. Maybe someone whom he ap-
proaches will be so impressed by his unselfish spirit that
he will give a gift large enough to make a real difference.
God often works that way in our world.

Now what about you. Do you have some loaves and fishes
that God can use in some miraculous way? Think about what
you have for a moment. It might be material possession. It
might be some talent. Is there something you have - however
small - that God might use to meet someone elses need?

Can't you imagine the feeling this young man must have
had when he went home that evening? Jesus had used his
small gift in strange and wonderful ways; thousands had ✓
been fed because of his willingness to share his meager
possessions with others. Surely, you have some loaves and
fishes in your life/

cut One night a man took a little candle out of a drawer,
lit it and began a long ascent up the stairs. "Where are
we going" asked the candle. The man answered "Higher than

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top of the house where we sleep. Said the candle, "What are we going to do there?" "I am going to show the ships at sea where the harbor is" said the man. For we stand here at the entrance to the harbor, and some ships far out on the sea may be looking for our light even now". But the candle objected, "No ship will ever see my light, I am so small". "If your light is small, keep it burning, and leave the rest to me" replied the man.

Then he climbed the steps to the top of the lighthouse and took the small candle and lighted the great lights which stood ready there with their polished reflectors. The little light gave, and in giving made a greater light possible.

Christ has compassion on our needs. He is able to meet our needs. He is able to use ~~us~~ us in marvelous ways if we are willing to take the little we have and let him use it as he will.

In an earlier generation, Jean Webster wrote a fascination story called Daddy Long legs. It is a story of a young girl in an orphanage who was befriended by someone she did not know. He took a fancy to her when she was a small child, but he did not reveal his identity. Year after year he helped to provide for her, he sent to college and provided other opportunities for her.

One day she happens by chance to meet him but did not
recognize him...he doesn't look as she imagined him to
look. Finally she learns who he is and joyously responds
to his longtime friendship..... she learns to love this
longtime unknown friend. 7

Can't you think of times when Jesus has blest the fishes
and loaves in our lives and we were not even aware of it.
He has been our unknown benefactor since the day we were
born. And he is always there, whatever our need. What a
shame if we never recognixe him, if we never lovehim. What
a greater shame if we neverbecome channels for his blessing
to flow to other,

He has compassion, he is able to act. If we offer what
little we have, we shall bless the world in unimagnable
ways... and we will glorify him as we never have before.

Why don't you, in these moment turn t you unknown
friend Jesus Christ, say to him..."help me to love you...
more".