

5 Loaves and 2 Fishes

A young preacher graduated from Bible College and was invited back to his home congregation to preach a sermon. He wanted to make a good impression. He did his best to prepare to preach to his home church. He wrote his sermon word for word and memorized it. He had a very dramatic beginning to the sermon. He started by hitting the pulpit real hard and said, "Jesus took 5,000 fishes and 2,000 loaves and he fed 5 people!" He paused very dramatically and pointed his finger at the congregation and said, "Could you do that?" Everyone roared with laughter and he couldn't imagine what was going on. At that point one man raised his hand. That set the young preacher off. He said, "Sir, you are guilty of blasphemy. How could you claim to do something that only our Lord could do?" This man stood up and began to explain to the young preacher about the big mistake that he had made. The preacher, when he realized what he had done, was so humiliated that he couldn't say another word. He sat down in utter confusion and disgrace.

The home church was very loving, very kind, very forgiving and they all came around and put their arms around him and they said, "Look, everyone makes mistakes. Forget about it. You work on this sermon and next Sunday try it again." They finally con-

vinced him. The next Sunday after working on that sermon another entire week, he stood up in front of the congregation. This time he got all of his fact and figures straight, but he started out the very same way. He hit the pulpit very dramatically and he said, "Jesus took 5 loaves and 2 fishes and he fed 5,000 people. Could you do that?" The same man raised his hand. The preacher was really upset and he said, "Sir, how can you claim to do something like that?" The man said, "With the leftovers from your sermon last Sunday."

I want to do my best to speak to you on the subject of 5 loaves and 2 fishes. I have chosen the text from John 6:1-14.

Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), and a great crowd of people followed Him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick. Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with His disciples. The Jewish Passover feast was near. When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward Him, He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test them, for He already had in mind what He was going to do. Philip answered him, "Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with 5 small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" Jesus said, "Have the men sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. When they had all had enough to eat, He said to His disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of 5 barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world."

Introduction

It is quite interesting to me that out of all the miracles that Jesus performed, all four gospel writers record this one. Matthew, Mark, and John had seen Jesus open the eyes of the blind, unstop the ears of the deaf, cleanse the lepers, free the demoniac, heal the palsied, the withered, the lunatic, and the epileptic, and they had seen Him raise the dead. Luke carefully examined the records of Jesus' ministry and then wrote it down. All four Gospel writers did not always record everything that Jesus did or said. But this miracle, the feeding of the five thousand, so impressed all four Gospel writers that they have each given us an account of it. Perhaps when we study it and note its effect upon those who witnessed it, we will understand why.

Jesus' Question

Let us recall the scene: Jesus had just crossed the Sea of Galilee, only to be met by a great crowd, who followed Him because of the great miracles of healing that He had performed. In this crowd there were men, women, and children. Many of them were on their way to Jerusalem to the Feast of the Passover and they had turned aside for a little while to hear Jesus and to see Him. They had been there for three days and three nights. They were tired and they were hungry, because they had nothing to eat. How were so many people to be fed in a deserted place like this? Our Lord knew what He was going to do, but He asked His disciples what they proposed to do about feeding this crowd. He asked them this question to test and develop their faith.

The Disciples' Answers

I want us to note the answers the disciples gave in response to

Jesus' question; "What are you going to do about feeding these people?" Matthew 14:15 tells us the first response, "Send them away that they may go to the villages to buy themselves food." In other words, the disciples said, "These people are not our guests. We're not the ones who invited them here. We are under no obligation to supply their needs. They came here, it's their own affair, not ours." A second response was this, "Well Lord, if we just had the money we would gladly feed these people. But, my lands, it would take a fortune to feed a crowd like this. We don't have that kind of money." A third response, "I have found a lad here with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fishes, but what is this among so many? So little for so much."

A Sad Situation

The real sadness of this situation arises not from the fact that there was so many people, not from the fact that these people were so hungry and weary, not from the fact that there was no food to feed them, but the real sadness arises from the fact that the disciples had no faith in their Lord as a source of supply. They looked at what they had, or in this case, what they did not have. They knew that it was inadequate, and so, their conclusion was that there was nothing that they could do.

Jesus' Attitude

Now I want us to note our Lord's attitude and action. Our Lord was moved with compassion because of the multitude's condition. To the suggestion "Let them go buy their own food," Jesus replied, "They need not depart. You give them something to eat." In response to this came the disciples reply of inadequacy. So, Jesus responded, "What do you have?" Their response was, "5 loaves and 2 fishes." Jesus said, "Bring them to me." He then had

the multitudes sit down in companies, so that nobody would be overlooked. He gave thanks and then gave this food to the disciples and they distributed it to the crowd. The divine fingers of Jesus divided the bread and the fishes so that nobody needed to eat sparingly. The Gospel records state that they ate as much as they wanted. Two of the Gospels state that they ate until they were gorged.

More than 5,000

We talk about the feeding of the five thousand, but actually it was ten thousand or more. There were five thousand men, but most of these men were married, their wives were there and many of the children were there. So, they fed at least ten thousand or more. Then Jesus said, "Gather up the broken pieces, so that nothing will be lost." They gathered up the leftovers and the leftovers filled 12 baskets full. They had over a hundred times more than what they had in the beginning.

What Will You Do?

I want us to apply this lesson of the feeding of the five thousand. I want to ask you as a Christian, what are you going to do about the lost and the hungry multitudes in our world of today? I'm using both words in the spiritual sense. I'm sure that you do not misunderstand what I mean when I speak about the lost multitudes of the world. You know by lost that I mean those who are lost in sin, those who have no Savior, Jesus Christ. They have never known the Gospel of Christ, have never been able to respond to the Gospel of Christ. I'm using hungry in the very same spiritual connotation. I'm not talking about the physical hunger that is in the world. All of us know that multitudes are hungry, that millions of people go to bed hungry every night. But, I am not talking about the world that is hungry for physical bread, I'm talking about the

world that is spiritually hungry for the bread of life. What are you going to do about the lost and the hungry of the world?

144 Unreached Nations

We members of the Christian church have sent missionaries into 94 different nations of the world. That's good, but what about the other 144 nations of the world, where we have sent no missionary? There are 238 countries of the world. Jesus said, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to everybody." We have gone into 94 nations only. What are you going to do about the other 144 nations of the world, where the Gospel is not being preached?

What about China for example? China has a population in excess of one billion souls. More than one fourth of all of the people in the entire world live in the one nation of China and we have not one missionary in China. What are you going to do about those one billion souls?

What about Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and many other Muslim nations where there is not one missionary?

What about India? India now has a population in excess of 900,000,000. There are so many Indians that one out of every seven people on the face of this planet is an Indian. The Indian government is against missionaries coming in. Thank God we do have a handful of missionaries in India. They were there before the government enforced this policy of not allowing new missionaries to come in. What are we going to do about all those souls in India that do not know the gospel, that don't even have the chance to hear the Gospel and respond to the Lord Jesus Christ?

There are two nations with nearly one half of the total population of the world, China and India with more than 2,000,000,000 of the 5 billion souls on this planet and they do not have the chance to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. How are these souls going to be fed the Word of God?

I. Send Them Away!

Some of you will, no doubt, give the same response that the disciples of our Lord gave when He first asked that question. I'm sure you are probably saying, "Send them away, forget about it, those people are not our responsibility. Their lost condition is of no concern to us, why should we worry about it? If they are hungry, let them go and find their own food." I want to ask you something, could a mariner sit idle if he heard the cry of a drowning person? Could a doctor sit in comfort and ease if one of his patients needed his help and was in a dying condition? Could a fireman sit idle and allow a building to burn and lives be destroyed and give no hand? Can you, my brothers and sisters in Christ, sit and take your ease in Zion while the world around you is condemned and headed straight for hell? I know it will be very easy for you to say, "But Reggie, those countries that you just named will not even allow Gospel preaching. We cannot send a missionary to China. The door is closed. We cannot send a missionary to India. So, why worry about those people. There's nothing we can do. Send them away." It's very easy to pass it off with an answer like that.

But, my friends, that is not true!! There are many things that we could do. For example: It is possible to go to India as a tourist. I've been there 21 times and as Art Morris always told us, "If you come to India as a tourist and do what the government want you to do, and that's to do a little touring, look at the Taj Mahal, view the Hindu temples a little bit, then the government will allow you to do what you want to do. And that's to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ." I've gone 21 times as a tourist and I've done my bit of touring, but I've also, thank God, had the privilege of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ to thousands and thousands of the people of India. One day I was in a small village in India holding a revival and there was an old, old man at the services, who came forward and accepted Jesus as his Savior. He was so old in appearance that I got up the courage to ask him his age. He told me that he was 120 years old! I believe he was! He was nothing but skin and bones. He

was all bent over. He had on the typical white garment that the Indian men wear. His name was Chellam. I said, "Mr. Chellam, why have you waited so long to give your life to Christ. You are 120 years old. Why didn't you do it a long time ago?" This is the answer Chellam gave me, "I have heard many preachers preach in this village. I've seen preachers come and go." You'll have to understand the situation in India to appreciate what Mr. Chellam was telling me. The people in India are very religious. The Hindus worship millions of gods. They have all kinds of idol gods. Of course, this is what Chellam was talking about. He had seen many preachers come to that village and preach about their idol gods. But he said, "I knew in my heart that there had to be one true and living God. I've been waiting all these years for somebody to come to my village and preach to us about the one, true and living God. When you came here today with that message, I knew that the time had come that I must give my life to the one true and living God and to His son, Jesus Christ, that you have taught us about today." I am so glad that I did not adopt the attitude that the disciples adopted when they said, "It is not our responsibility. We cannot do anything about it. Let them feed themselves." If we adopt that attitude toward India, toward China, toward these other 144 nations, where Christian Churches have never been heard of and where nobody has ever gone to preach the true gospel of Jesus Christ, how are those people going to know about God?

Are the Borders Closed?

We cannot excuse ourselves by saying the borders are closed. We can write letters to these people. Every one of us can freely travel as a tourist to Russia. We can freely travel as a tourist to China. We can freely travel as a tourist anywhere we want to go. We Americans are the luckiest people in the whole world, we can go anyplace we want to go, anytime we want to go. As you go as a tourist, why not write down the name and address of your taxi cab

driver, why not write down the name and address of the bellboy at the hotel where you stay, why not write down the name and address of the waitresses or waiters that serve you in the restaurants where you eat? When you get back home you can start writing those people and preach the Gospel to them by the means of mail. The postal system is open to anybody and we can mail Bibles and Gospel tracts, we can write personal letters of Christian witness anyplace that we want to write in the entire world. There are no closed borders when it comes to the postal system.

Balloons? Radio? Migration?

Another thing that we ought to be doing is sending the Gospel to these closed nations by means of balloons. Brother Gordon Patton, in Korea, has sent balloons across the border into North Korea with Bibles attached to the balloons. He would do this all the time if he had the funds to do it. We ought to be ingenious and do things like that. We ought to be sending the Gospel by means of radio. It's possible to reach many of these people by means of radio broadcasts. It's also possible that we can migrate to these countries and they would welcome us, not as a preacher, not as an evangelist, not as a missionary, but as a medical doctor, or a nurse, or a school-teacher, or a technician. Christian people have got to start considering those who have not the Word of God. We have to devise ways and means of getting the Gospel to them. So, I ask you once again, what are you going to do about all the multitudes that need to be fed?

II. If We Had the Money . . .

The second response of the disciples was "If we had the money, we would gladly do it. But, Lord, it would cost a fortune. We do not have that kind of money." I'm sure you are saying,

“Well, what do you expect us to do, preacher? It would cost a fortune to evangelize the 144 unreached nations. We don’t have that kind of money. We are already giving every penny that we can possibly afford.” Are you?

I Don’t Believe You!

I don’t believe you. I say that respectfully. But, I don’t believe you if you say that you are giving all you can and are doing your best. I can prove it with a simple illustration. How many of you go to a restaurant and eat out once a week? We know people that go to the restaurants for recreation. They don’t have anything else to do, so they go to the restaurants so they can see people and be with people and they eat, and they don’t even need to eat. None of us do, all of us are digging our own graves with our forks. Not a one of us has ever known what it is to be hungry in our entire lifetime. We are so fat and overfed, we don’t need to go to the restaurant to eat! All of us could fast lots of meals and it wouldn’t harm us. But we go and we eat and we spend this money. How much do we spend when we go to the restaurant? Let’s suppose you went out to a restaurant every Sunday at noon following church service and ate prime rib, that’s \$4.95. That’s you and your wife. You also have to tip the waitress. Depending on how generous you are, you probably leave \$2-\$3 tip each time you go out to eat at the restaurants. That means at the end of one month you have spent \$50 doing nothing but eating Sunday noon meals at the restaurant.

Support Your Own Missionary!

Do you know what \$50 could accomplish? Fifty dollars would pay the full time salary of a preacher in India. It would pay the full time salary of a preacher in the Philippine Islands or in Ghana, Africa, or in Nigeria, Africa, or in Zimbabwe, Africa, or Guyana,

South America, or Haiti, or the Cayman Islands, or Trinidad, or Jamaica. I could keep on naming countries of the world where \$50 a month would pay the full time salary of a preacher. You cannot tell me you are giving all you can give and that you couldn't give a penny more. Every single one of you could support your own personal missionary in some foreign country if you wanted to do it. I'm not talking about supporting American missionaries, I'm talking about supporting the natives. "If we only had the money," you say, "we could do something." You have the money and I'm challenging you do something with that money.

Haiti

One of our children is Tony. In 1975, Tony went with me to Haiti. Haiti is the poorest country in the western hemisphere with an annual average per capita income of \$100. Now that is so little that you cannot even imagine it. Your children waste more than a hundred dollars a year on Pepsi Colas, peanuts, popcorn, cracker Jacks, and bubble gum. Just think of what it would be like to try to raise your family on \$100 a year. Tony's wife, Christie, was with us on that trip to Haiti in 1975. The nation of Haiti, at that time, was experiencing a drastic famine. While we were there a quarter of a million people died of starvation. We established several new churches during that trip to Haiti and Christie, Tony's wife, kept looking at me saying, "Dad, what are you going to do about feeding these people after we are gone?" She wasn't talking about physical food either, she was talking about the Bread of Life. I had been, and was at that time, a full time evangelist. As a full time evangelist I would go somewhere and hold a revival meeting and then I would leave and someone else was in charge. I never worried about what happened after I left. I simply said to Christie, "That's not my responsibility. I am an evangelist, I'm here to preach the Gospel and win souls to Christ. It's up to them to feed themselves after I am gone." Christie kept saying, "Dad, I don't see

how you can do that. How can you just go off and leave them? They're not educated. They don't know the Bible. They're not going to be able to carry on by themselves. What are you going to do for them?" Finally I didn't know what to tell Christie. But, I decided that I could do something. So, I personally began to sponsor one preacher. That gave me the idea that I could tell other people about this. Since that time I have told other people about it everywhere that I have gone. Today there are 182 evangelists being supported around the world by friends of mine. I'm serving as the forwarding agent. Each month this money is sent out to these 182 people around the world. These 182 individuals that support them have a personal, living link relationship with the native they are supporting.

Mapou Christian Home and Orphanage

Something else happened on that trip to Haiti. The mother of a little girl, who was starving to death, came up and said, "I want to give you my child." Her name was Maria. Tony and Christie wanted to adopt little Maria, but they could not. That gave us the idea of starting an orphanage in Haiti. Since then the Mapou Christian Home and Orphanage has been developed. We now have 50 little children there that are being fed and clothed and educated. The thing that I'm trying to show you is this, I'm like you, I'm just one person, I cannot do everything, but I can do something! My attitude was, "My little bit is not going to amount to anything when the needs are so great." But I did the best that I could do and other people are doing the best that they can do and as a result something really significant is being accomplished. 'What I am trying to tell you is this; everyone of you can also do something. You could support a preacher. Everyone of you could. Everyone of you could support an orphan on the foreign field.

You Give Them Something

You see the real sadness is not that there are millions of people without the Gospel, the real sadness is not that the church is not made up of millionaires, the real sadness arises from our lack of faith in God. We forget that this is God's work and not ours. We forget that God is the chief partner in the concern and that God has pledged to see the enterprise through. We forget that all the treasures of the universe are in God's hands. He is abundantly able to finance His program of world missions.

We take stock of our little resources and we say, "It's impossible!" But, we need to rethink our Lord's attitude as we view today's cause of evangelism. Now, as then, our Lord has compassion on the multitudes. He died for every one of the five billion people in this world. He is not willing that any one of them should perish, but that all should have life everlasting. When we are tempted to say, "Send them away, they're not our responsibility," our Lord responds, "You give them something to eat."

Rhodesia

In 1972, our family had the great privilege of going to Rhodesia to preach the Gospel for three months. God granted a bountiful harvest during those three months. There were 3,781 souls baptized into Christ. You can imagine how thrilling that was. The last night of our campaign in Rhodesia was in Bulawayo. The old African preacher, Brother Sithole, had us to stand against the wall of this African church building and the big African choir stood up to sing to us a farewell song, which went something like this:

Goodbye, Brothers, goodbye, Sisters, if I don't see you anymore,
I'll meet you in heaven, in that blessed kingdom, if I don't see
you anymore. We'll part in the body, we'll meet in the spirit, if I
don't see you anymore. So now God bless you, now God bless
you, if I don't see you anymore.

I noticed that every member of the choir was shedding tears. By the time they had sung their song, all of us were weeping, too. It was really a heart touching moment. But, I want to tell you something, I was not crying because of having to say goodbye to those Christian folks in Rhodesia. Of course, we loved them and, of course, it was difficult to tell them goodbye, but I believed the words of the song if we never see them again in this world, we're going to meet them in heaven. So, my tears were for the others, those who were not Christians, those who had attended the services, but they had never accepted Jesus, they had never been baptized, they had not committed their lives to the Lord Jesus. It was thrilling that more than three thousand did, but it was heartbreaking that thousands and thousands of others did not.

Today, that is still my concern, those who are not saved. What about those of you who have not yet accepted Jesus as your Savior? You have not yet been buried with Him in Christian baptism. You have not experienced the joy of having Jesus wash away all of your sins. If you were to die right now, you would not be able to go to heaven. Oh, dear friend, won't you come and give your life to Christ and be saved today? Now is the time, today is the day of salvation. Would you do it while we stand together and sing the invitation?