

YOU GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO EAT

Mark 6:30-44

Key Verse: 6:37a

"But he answered, 'You give them something to eat.'"

Today's passage is a story about Jesus' feeding the five thousand people with five loaves and two fish. In this event, we learn that we should have a sense of responsibility. We also learn that we must have the shepherd's heart of Jesus. Through Jesus who fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fish we learn what it means to have faith in God. May God help us to learn the faith that feeds five thousand people with five loaves and two fish.

I. He had compassion on them (30-34)

First, get some rest (30-33). The disciples had just come back from field-work training. Now, "The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught" (30). What they had achieved is not recorded here. Anyway, they felt a sense of achievement. After fieldwork training they were promoted from disciples, the learners, to apostles, the ambassadors of Christ, for apostle means "to be sent out." Now they needed to eat and rest for a while. But they could not do so. Verse 31 says, "Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.'" Jesus was mindful of his disciples who had had no proper eating and resting time. So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place (32). This was the third attempt for Jesus to give his disciples a vacation (4:35; 5:1; 6:31). But many who watched their movement carefully saw them leaving and ran on foot from all the towns to get to the other side of the lake ahead of them (33). What a surprise! The crowd of people got there first, before Jesus' company. They were waiting for them. The crowd of people came to Jesus for help, as individuals, and each with personal problems. They were desperate, so desperate that they came to the other side of the lake before Jesus' company. Anyway, they frustrated the disciples' vacation.

Second, Jesus had compassion on them (34). What did Jesus think when he saw the crowd of people? Verse 34a says, "When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd." They were not two or three people. They were very many people. They were over 5,000 people. To Jesus' eyes, they were like 5,000 orphans who were sick and hungry, without their parents. To Jesus' eyes, they were like young people whose hearts were broken when their families were broken up. To Jesus' eyes, they were angry people against the Roman rule. They say that, traditionally, Galilee was a hotbed of revolution. To Jesus' eyes, they were tragic because they had no shepherd who would lead them to God or teach them the truth of God. They were a large crowd of people who were sick and demon possessed. They were helpless people. They were like sheep without a shepherd.

Third, Jesus taught them the word of God. If we were supposed to help these people, what would we do? Of all possibilities, we might think, at best, to give them something to eat and disperse them. Historically, the humanistic approach never worked as people had expected. The U.S. government gave needy people welfare money, shampoo, toothpaste and soap, and so on. But this welfare policy did not help them. It has largely damaged the independent spirit in people, especially unwed mothers who have many children.

See what Jesus did! The last part of verse 34 says, "So he began teaching them many things." He taught them the word of God. Jesus taught them the word of God because the word of God tells them that they are the children of God. Jesus taught them the word of God because the word of God gives them the knowledge of God. Jesus taught them the word of God because the word of God gives them the Spirit of Jesus with which they can do great things for themselves as well as for others. Jesus taught them the word of God because the word of God helps them realize true freedom. John 8:31,32 says, "To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'" Jesus did his best to plant the word of life in their hearts. Jesus taught them the word of God because the word of God gives them new and abundant life in Jesus.

Sometimes we want to help needy people with money. But money

cannot help people from the root. Money is good, but money cannot substitute for the life-giving word of God. Sometimes we teach the word of God to others. But sheep never seem to accept it. Still, we must remember that teaching the word of God is the best way to help people, because Jesus taught all kinds of people the word of God.

II. You give them something to eat (35-44)

First, Jesus teaches them a sense of responsibility (35-37). Quite a long time had elapsed since Jesus began teaching the crowd. The disciples were waiting for Jesus to finish speaking to the crowd, but every time he seemed to be coming to the conclusion, he would get fresh wind and start again. It looked as if he would never stop. The sun had almost gone down, but the voice of Jesus was getting bigger and bigger. On the other hand, the disciples felt hungrier and hungrier. Their patience ran out. So they came to him and said in verses 35b-36: "This is a remote place, and it's already very late. Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." They thought the best way to handle the situation was to dismiss the crowd so that everybody could take responsibility for his own food and lodging. Their suggestion sounded quite reasonable. But behind their reasonableness is their hidden motive to escape the responsibility of feeding the crowd and providing their lodging. They thought that the crowd of people were too many to handle, and they had no money. The disciples were very reasonable. But they were irresponsible. Irresponsibility is the worst sin.

When God made man, he made man for his own glory. After making man, God gave man a great responsibility. Genesis 1:28 says, "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'" God asked Adam to take care of God's world and make it fruitful. In short, God gave Adam responsibility. In light of this, when we think about modern people, there are many irresponsible people. For example, many husbands and wives break their families, ignoring the fact that their children are under their care, otherwise they are helpless. They divorce in order to commit adultery (Mk 10:11,12).

Jesus answered, "You give them something to eat" (37a). "You give them something to eat." Wow! Jesus was commanding what they could not imagine--not to mention obey. So they said, "That would take eight months of a man's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?" Their response was a kind of protest, for they didn't have such a large amount of money. But Jesus did not harass them with his command, "You give them something to eat." Jesus wanted his disciples to be responsible for the crowd whether they could feed the crowd or not.

Jesus knew that the disciples did not have money. But at least they should have a sense of responsibility for the hungry crowd. Yet the disciples did not feel responsibility for them. Rather, they attempted to escape the responsibility for the five thousand hungry mouths. They thought they could not feed them because they had no money. But Jesus thought that they should not be irresponsible in feeding them just because they had no money. Jesus wanted his disciples to feel responsible for the crowd, whether they could feed them or not. Human beings are noble because God has endowed them with a sense of responsibility. Therefore, irresponsible people are living against God's truth. A sense of responsibility is to feel responsible for feeding the five thousand people, whether they had the money or not. A sense of responsibility comes when we have God in our hearts. God loves those who have a deep sense of responsibility, and God uses them fruitfully.

Though shepherd boy David was a youngest son, he did not remain as a spoiled youngest son; he shepherded his father's sheep very responsibly, risking his young life. When a lion or bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock while David was standing watch, he would go after it. When the marauder turned on him, he seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Of course, shepherd boy David knew that by fighting with brutal beasts he was risking his life. But this ruddy boy was not afraid to risk his life because of his sense of responsibility to keep his father's sheep.

Second, Jesus teaches them a shepherd's heart (37). Jesus had taught the crowd of people quite a long time, from the early morning to sunset. Now, Jesus knew that they were so hungry that they would faint if they went back without eating. Jesus also knew that he and his disciples had no money to feed them. But Jesus wanted to feed them anyway. This is a shepherd's heart.

One woman came to know that her only son lost one of his contact lenses the night before he had to take final exams for graduation. But the son did not know where he lost it--in his dormitory or at home. That night his mother began to grope around all over the house for many hours. Finally she felt something like dried mucus in the washroom. It was her son's

lost lens. She found it after four hours of searching. Her shepherd's heart gave birth to a miracle.

We see in history there were many who imitated the shepherd heart of Jesus and saved their people. A Polish man, Henryk Sienkiewicz, had a great shepherd's heart for his people, who were suffering from the oppression of the former U.S.S.R. Out of his shepherd's heart he wrote "Quo Vadis?" This novel became an inspiration to the people of his country to fight bravely to the end. Gundervich had a great shepherd's heart for his people suffering under Danish rule. He raised a peasant army and ousted the Danes. It was a miracle.

It is amazing to know God's shepherd's heart. In order to save men from their sins, he gave his one and only Son. God's shepherd heart is fully manifested in Jesus' life. Mark 1:40,41 says, "A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, 'If you are willing, you can make me clean.' Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!'" At that time, lepers were untouchable. But Jesus touched him out of his shepherd's heart. When we study the Bible, we cannot but be amazed by Jesus' shepherd's heart. Once, Jesus was walking along the street with his disciples. There was a man born blind. As soon as the disciples saw the blind man, they became very fatalistic and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (Jn 9:2) What did Jesus think about him? Jesus had no time to be fatalistic about him; his heart went out to him and he was ready to heal him. But there was a problem for Jesus. At that time, Jesus had nothing in his hands to heal the blind man. So he spat on the ground, made some mud with the saliva and put it on the man's eyes (Jn 9:6). This sounds funny. But Jesus' shepherd's heart is well expressed.

Third, Jesus teaches them to have faith in God (37). "You give them something to eat." When Jesus said this, he knew, of course, that the disciples had no money to buy bread for them. But he gave them this command because he wanted to teach them to have faith in God. Jesus wanted his disciples to have faith that all things are possible if they believed. Jesus wanted them to know that they could not feed the crowd, but God could feed them if they had faith in God. Jesus wanted them to feed the crowd of five thousand people with faith. Here Jesus is teaching that we can raise

1,000 full-time staff shepherds and 10,000 Bible teachers when we have faith in God. Mark 11:22-24 teaches that we must have faith in God that God would establish America as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation when we have faith in God.

Fourth, Jesus blessed the five loaves and the two fish abundantly (38-44). Look at verse 38. "How many loaves do you have?" he asked. 'Go and see.' When they found out, they said, 'Five--and two fish.'" When the disciples brought what they had, what was the result? Look at verses 39-44. "Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand." Jesus blessed the five loaves and two fish so abundantly that they all ate and were satisfied. Here we learn that we should not be fatalistic because we have only five loaves and two fish. We must give our five loaves and two fish to God. Then God will bless us abundantly. We believe that God would accept our one-to-one Bible study as our five loaves and two fish. God will surely bless this nation abundantly.

In this passage, we learn that our Lord Jesus commands us, saying, "You give them something to eat." Through his command, "You give them something to eat," we must learn the sense of responsibility. Through his command, we must learn that we must bring our five loaves and two fish to God with faith so that he can bless us abundantly.