

YOU GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO EAT

Matthew 14:13-21

Key Verse: 14:16

"Jesus replied, 'They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.'"

In the last passage we studied that Jesus was rejected and despised by his hometown people, even though he taught the word of God and through his teaching his hometown people were amazed. Through this we learned that after teaching the Bible we should not expect praise or admiration. Rather, we must expect contempt and rejection. But we must rejoice in the Lord that we taught the Bible and participated in the sufferings of Jesus Christ. One lady taught a sheep and gave all her heart. Her sheep received everything and ran away. Since then she doesn't teach sheep anymore, because she was greatly wounded by her sheep's rejection. This is not good. We must imitate our Lord Jesus Christ who taught the Bible from the beginning to the end in the midst of rejection and contempt and thus he fulfilled God's mission without any hint of discouragement. In the last passage we also learned that John the Baptist fulfilled his mission as the forerunner of our Lord Jesus Christ through his martyrdom. Jesus was not sorry at his martyrdom. Rather, he praised John as the greatest among those born of women (Mt 11:11). We must do everything with martyrdom spirit. We must do school homework with martyrdom spirit. We must teach the Bible to other students with martyrdom spirit. Then God will give us spiritual wisdom, and joy that spiritual power is circulating in our bodies and souls. Today we learn Jesus' compassion. Jesus is the Son of God because of his compassion. We also learn how Jesus trained his disciples in several respects to grow as fruitful disciples. May God bless you to learn the compassion of Jesus and Jesus' discipleship ministry.

First, Jesus withdrew to a solitary place to pray with his disciples (13). Look at verse 13. "When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns." Verse 13a says, "When Jesus heard what had happened...." It meant how his forerunner, John the Baptist, had been beheaded. Jesus was not surprised at how John the Baptist had suffered a cruel death in order to complete his mission. But he realized that he had to pray to God to take over John's ministry, and continue to work to proclaim the gospel in that situation. So he needed time to pray in order to talk to God and to be strengthened by God. Another reason he wanted to have a retreat was to give a vacation to his disciples, who had been completely exhausted just hanging around Jesus. So he got into the boat with his disciples and crossed to the other side of the lake. It was indeed a necessary retreat. Nobody should bother his retreat. Nobody should bother his time of prayer.

But a surprising and totally unexpected event happened. The people who were desperate and needed Jesus' help watched his movement carefully and found that he and his disciples were crossing the lake by boat. They did not have a telescope. Maybe they used their fingers as a telescope by curling them into circles and putting them to their eyes.

Then they saw that Jesus was in the boat far away from them. They began to run with bare feet, circling around the lake so desperately. As a result, they reached the spot where Jesus was supposed to land, and they were waiting for Jesus when he arrived. When Jesus landed with his disciples, probably the crowd said, "Good morning Jesus! Thank you Jesus. We are here for your help."

They bothered Jesus' [prayer in](#) a solitary place. They also bothered the disciples' short-term vacation. In a sense they were obnoxious people, and they were a large crowd.

Second, Jesus' compassion on them (14). Look at verse 14. "When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick." Generally, ordinary people are selfish, and if they are bothered, they say, "Don't bother me, and I won't bother you." There was a beautiful lady. She was a princess to her parents. But after she met Jesus, she spent most of her leisure time teaching the Bible. Her parents loved her. But she did not spend time with them. Then they were so unhappy that they firmly decided to brainwash her through deprogrammers. They failed to brainwash her because of her firm faith and wisdom. When they failed to brainwash her, they lost interest in her and didn't support her at all. They didn't give even one dollar for her happy wedding. I am not criticizing the parents. But when we see people, we find that they are all self-centered. They say they love their children. But if their children don't try to fulfill their dream or compensate their failure, the parents become self-centered and begin to keep a distance from their children. Most American parents quit supporting their children after high school. So their children have to work and study at the same time. As a result, there are so many young American students who are trying to support themselves and study. In the course of time, they find that they did not finish a two-year junior college in eight years. This is not one or two persons' problem. It is a nationwide problem of young American students. Parents think that their children are responsible for themselves after age eighteen. So they don't support them after age eighteen. These parents do for their children and their country only what they must do. Therefore American high school students' ranking in the international math and science contest is number 48. It is not their fault. It is due to their parents' selfishness. We cannot say that these kind of people are men and women of compassion.

Let's see how Jesus was compassionate for the people who needed his help. Let's look at verse 14 again. "When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick." The disciples could have said, "Wow! They hinder our vacation." Jesus could have thought, "Wow, too many people!" But Jesus did not think so. Jesus had compassion on them. Compassion comes from God's love. Here we see that Jesus is the Son of God who was filled with compassion. When he heard of John the Baptist's martyrdom, he must have been deeply depressed. Therefore he needed time to pray to God after his forerunner was killed. He was greatly burdened to fulfill the work of world salvation. So he had to pray. But Jesus was not selfish. Jesus was not self-centered. He saw these desperate people with God's compassion. What did Jesus do when he saw a large crowd of people? He canceled his plan for prayer time. He ignored his disciples' tiredness. He began to heal the sick people from mid-morning to the time of dusk. The western

sky was getting darker. But Jesus was compassionately healing the sick. In this passage a specific healing story is not recorded. But we can see many examples of Jesus' healing ministry in the gospels. Once Jesus saw a man with leprosy. His body was almost rotten. His eyes were rotten and barely supported by the sockets. But Jesus had mercy on him and said in Mark 1:41, "I am willing. Be clean!" In the movie "Ben-Hur," when Ben-Hur's leprous mother and sister appeared on the street with him, people threw stones at them. But Jesus was willing. He cleansed this man with leprosy and made him whole. Once Jesus saw a man with a shriveled hand in the synagogue. Jesus restored his hand so that he might have a dream of marriage like other young people, so that he might be a basketball player like Michael Jordan, so that he might be a pianist like Clara Schuman (Mt 12:13). Once Jesus saw that a widow was weeping, following after her only son's coffin. Jesus said, "Don't cry" (Lk 7:13). Then he raised her son and restored the mother from her deep sorrow. Jesus' compassion finally demanded that he be crucified on the cross and die, shedding much blood. But he was raised on the third day and opened the way to the kingdom of God. Whoever believes in him can live in the kingdom of God, even though they must live in this hard world. And on the last day he will see Jesus face to face and bear the likeness of Jesus. Therefore we must learn the compassion of Jesus. If we claim to be a Christian without the compassion of Jesus, we are old wineskin Christians or hypocritical Pharisees. When we learn the compassion of Jesus, we can be happy and we can be a blessing to others. Finally the disciples learned Jesus' compassion. 2 Corinthians 1:3 says, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort...." Again, James 5:11b says, "The Lord is full of compassion and mercy."

Third, Jesus' discipleship ministry. Let's see how the disciples responded. Look at verse 15. "As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, 'This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.'" They liked Jesus' compassion. But they could not ignore the reality. It was getting dark. The number of people was huge. What really mattered to them was that they had no food. And their twelve stomachs began to make noises. It was not a good sound like the sound of the Chicago UBF Orchestra. It was a growling sound, because the disciples were hungry, too. So all the disciples came to Jesus and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food." They were reasonable and realistic, but they lacked several things as responsible shepherds and world leaders. So Jesus taught them several things.

First, Jesus taught his disciples to have faith in God (16). Look at verse 16. "Jesus replied, 'They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.'" "You give them something to eat." By saying this, Jesus teaches his disciples to have faith in God. Jesus knew that they had no money in their pockets. He knew that it was too late to prepare food for such a large crowd of people. But Jesus did not allow them to despair because of their impossible situation. Jesus wanted them to have faith in God, that by depending on God they could feed the crowd of people. Jesus wanted to teach them that they could do nothing, but God can do everything. By faith we must experience the power of faith to feed five thousand people with our own bare hands. Without faith no

one can help himself. But with faith anybody can feed even five thousand people.

Second, Jesus wanted to teach them a shepherd's responsibility (16-19a). "You give them something to eat." When Jesus said this, he wanted his disciples to find out what they could give to God when they had nothing in their hands. The starting point of faith is to have some possibility in an impossible situation by having faith in God. The disciples said, "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish" (17). This was too small an amount to distribute to such a large crowd of people. But to our surprise Jesus said in verse 18, "Bring them here to me." Jesus wanted to teach them a sense of responsibility for helpless sheep. When we see modern America, many things seem totally impossible. And campus evangelism seems to be too great to be done. So we deeply despair and become nominal Christians. This is not what Jesus taught. Actually, American young people are spiritually thirsty and hungry. Whether we can do it or not, we must have a sense of responsibility. Those who have a sense of responsibility can be used by God greatly. A sense of responsibility comes from God's compassion. Before conversion, Paul lived for his own selfish dream. At that time he was a disaster to the early Christians. He was irresponsible for his actions. But after his conversion, a sense of responsibility grew in his heart until he could have a sense of responsibility for the whole world. Like Paul, we must have Jesus' compassion and become men of responsibility for ourselves, our families, our communities, our nation and the whole world. Those who do not have a sense of responsibility may do many things but they will be unfruitful and unhappy, because they cannot recognize themselves as normal human beings.

Third, Jesus taught his disciples a coworking spirit (19b-21). Look at verse 19b. "Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people." There is a deep spiritual lesson in this verse. Generally, people are proud. So each one wants to be a one-man show. Each one wants to become the President of the United States. There are many Christians who love God so much. Yet coworking with others seems to be nonsense to them. But Jesus said in Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." Believing in God is easy. But coworking with others is very difficult. We know that the cross is the symbol of Christianity. The vertical line represents our relationship with God. The horizontal line represents coworking with others or loving one another. Many people love God, but they hate their brothers. Many people work hard for God, but they never cowork with others. They cannot be great servants of God. Here Jesus, even though he is the Son of God, cowed with his disciples by letting them distribute bread to the people. Therefore, in both small and large matters, we must learn how to cowork with others and how to love one another.

Today we studied Jesus feeding the five thousand. According to Matthew, the five thousand were only men. Matthew omitted women and children. Verse 21 says, "The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children." Matthew was formerly an orthodox Jew. So he didn't even count the women and children. In reality, the total number might have been more than ten thousand. Jesus' saying, "You give them something to eat," tells us to have faith in God that we can feed five thousand men, and women and children, by

faith. Jesus' saying, "You give them something to eat," tells us to have a sense of responsibility starting from oneself and extending to the whole world. Jesus also taught us a shepherd heart for large crowds. Spiritually, "large crowds" refers to all people of all nations. Therefore Jesus said to his disciples, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mk 16:15). May God bless you to accept his word, "You give them something to eat."