

Lesson 18 Matthew 14.17-21 Jesus teaches our debt to others

Others

Lord help me live from day to day
In such a self-forgetful way,
That even when I kneel to pray
My prayer shall be for others

"Others" LORD, yes, "Others!"
Let this my motto be.
Help me to live for others
That I may live for Thee.

We have only five loaves and two fish

The fact is it will seldom be any different. Faced with the colossal need of the world then and now our resources at any point of delivery within the local disciple group will be to scale-disproportionately low. Will Robertson, whom as pensioners can, we seek to support, feeds a quarter of a million mouths in Africa who depend on his support for survival. He is a lovely example of a man whose heart God touched and whose vision the LORD lifted to see the fields and have compassion on the multitudes.

Little is much when God is in it

Hudson Taylor spoke of "God plus two and sixpence". George Mueller started fresh by the day in faith trusting for the supply of his Bristol Orphanages bulging with hungry children. Both men of faith lived out their ministry and were never to resort to begging. Jesus said, "Bring the fish and bread to me!" This teaches that the LORD wants us to give what we can to meet the need we see. He was teaching compassion and selflessness and giving.

Looking to heaven

If we go just below the skin of the lives of Robertson today and Mueller or Hudson Taylor long ago we find exactly the same devotion. These good men may have had a wide net of support among God's saints but they knocked heaven's door not the doors of men before they made their undertakings and as they carried them out they rejoiced in the fellowship of others in meeting the needs.

More than enough

The desert crowd that our LORD fed was well over 5000 in all. There were little children there and it must have been a real treat for the Master to see them enjoying the fish and bread which was the equivalent to our "fish and chips" today. It was a favourite lunch treat. There was so much left over that 12 baskets (Greek *κοφινος*) -each would hold 3/4th of a gallon of water. In dry measure we are thinking about a basket as adequate as a lady's wicker shopping basket.

A quaint use of the kophinos (basket)

In Boetia on the lovely eastern coastal strip of Greece the *kophinos* was tied over the head of a debtor. He ran around with a basket over his head to show that he owed money. This would prevent others being duped into lending to such a man who would never come good for debt. In a sense the LORD brought out the *kophinos* to show us our debt to the needy



From paper to practice

Why not commit to memory a stanza of the poem above to stencil this lesson in your heart
What goes before meeting human need?
Is there one agency that helps mankind that I regularly support?
How well did the disciples remember this lesson?