

Bring Them Here to Me

A Reflection for the Week

Romans 9.1–5

I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience confirms it by the Holy Spirit— **2**I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. **3**For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh. **4**They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; **5**to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

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. **14** When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

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.”

16 Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.”

17 “We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,” they answered.

18 “Bring them here to me,” he said. **19** And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. 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 the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. **20** They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. **21** The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Something to Think About

Jesus has just heard of the death of John the Baptist. He withdraws because he needs space to grieve, yet when he sees the crowd, he is moved with compassion.

The Greek word used here suggests something deep and physical - a wrenching in the gut. Jesus does not simply feel sorry for the people. He sees their need and moves towards them.

The disciples see an impossible problem. There are too many people and too little food.

“We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish.”

But Jesus does not ask them for something they do not have. He simply says:

“Bring them here to me.”

Jesus begins with what is already there.

He takes it, blesses it, breaks it and gives it back to the disciples to share. What seemed painfully small becomes enough, with twelve baskets left over.

This is not simply a command to work harder or give until we are exhausted. We are not the saviours of our community - Jesus is.

Before Jesus asks us to feed others, he welcomes and feeds us.

Our compassion begins by receiving his compassion, his strength and his life.

Questions for Reflection

1. What do you notice most in this story?
2. Why do you think Jesus chose to involve the disciples rather than feeding the crowd without them?
3. Is there someone whose grief, loneliness or need you may not have noticed?
4. When have you been tempted to say, "I have nothing but..."?
5. What gifts, time, relationships or resources do you already have that Jesus may be asking you to bring to him?
6. Where might God be inviting you to move towards someone with compassion this week?

A Practice for the Week

Each day, take a few moments to pray:

Jesus, help me to see people as you see them.

Then ask yourself:

- Who might need a conversation?
- Who has not been seen for a while?
- Who might be carrying more than they are saying?
- What small thing can I offer?

Choose one simple response:

A phone call.

A visit.

A listening ear.

A meal.

A prayer.

An invitation.

A word of encouragement.

Do not despise the smallness of what you can offer.

Place it into the hands of Jesus.

A Prayer

Lord Jesus,

You see us when we are tired, grieving and hungry.

Thank you that you do not send us away.

Fill us again with your love, your mercy and your strength.

Give us eyes to notice those around us,
hearts that are moved with compassion,
and courage to move towards those in need.

Take the little that we have
and use it for your purposes.

Teach us to trust that what seems small in our hands
can become life-giving when it is placed in yours.

Amen.

A Verse to Remember

“Bring them here to me.”

Matthew 14.18