

## **Compassion for the Crowd** **by FB Meyer**

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*“Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude.”—Matt. 15:32.*

This feeding of the four thousand is quite distinct from the feeding of the five thousand which had taken place previously. There are many points of dissimilarity between these two banquets. We will not characterize them but simply notice that each of the great epochs of our Saviour’s ministry closed with a banquet.

In Matthew 14, He closed His ministry in Galilee, where His home had been, by feeding the people from the five barley loaves and two small fishes.

He closed His ministry amongst the heathen of Decapolis (which began with the Canaanitish woman who extorted deliverance for her child from hands that seemed unwilling to bless) by giving this banquet to the Gentiles, of which four thousand men, besides women and children, partook.

The last six months of His ministry closed with another banquet of bread and wine given to His own inner circle preparatory to His giving His flesh and blood for mankind.

The first was to the Galileans; the second, to the heathen; the third, to His own inner circle before He died.

These two feasts, following so quickly one after the other, accentuated the lesson which He desired to teach, that His disciples were to stand between Him and the great world.

When a man speaks to you for the first time, you are not always aware that he addresses you; but when he accosts you a second time, you give heed.

It was not sufficient for Christ to work one miracle, because the disciples might not have heeded. He wished to teach them that they were to stand between Him and the vast crowds of hungry men and that they were to distribute the bread received from His hands.

This is the position that the church occupies between Christ and the vast mass of dying men. It seems as though the very pity of Jesus, the infinite compassion of His divine heart, broken today as ever, will be futile unless His disciples are called to His bosom and infused with His own feelings, that they may go forth from His very heart to do for men what He cannot do.

His hands seem tied by some great restraint, and Christians are the only medium through which the love of God can directly touch and save men. If we will not come to His heart to be infused with His compassion, if we will not receive the loaves broken by His tender

touch, then the crowds will go unhelped and unhealed, or He must call unto His assistance some others than ourselves.

### **Christ and the Father**

“Jesus...went up into a mountain, and sat.” He waited in meditation and rest, in the divine communion which prepared Him for three successive days to pour out heavenly virtue.

He had always known that He must die and be lifted up, and the near approach of His death began to occupy Him. He was nearing the Mountain of Transfiguration, on which He would definitely turn His back on the glory and His face toward Calvary, and it was beginning to exert a powerful influence upon His soul.

He recognized that He had come down from Heaven, not to do His own will, but the will of the Father who sent Him (John 6:38). As man, He was conscious of the presence of His own will, but He was entirely subordinated to the overmastering movement of His Father’s will and desired nothing less than, as that will was done in Heaven, so it should be wrought out through Him on earth, even though it meant the cross and shame.

He realized that the Father had sealed Him with the Holy Spirit (John 6:27). Just as of old, the victims that were to be offered for sacrifice in the temple passed under the careful scrutiny of the priest, then were sealed as fit for offering on account of the sins of the people, so had He been searched and shown to be blameless and harmless, without spot or stain.

He knew that it was necessary for Him to be broken, as the bread which was crumbling in His hand, that His flesh was to be given for the life of the world and that men would be required to eat of that flesh and drink of that blood (John 6:53).

But amid all these conflicting thoughts, He was sustained by His absorbing passion for men. God’s love is for the world, and it is they who enter closest into fellowship with Him for men who are most willing to face obloquy, shame, scorn, spear and the thorn crown. The fountains of pity rise in the hills of communion with the eternal Father.

Think of all those who have been most eager for the salvation of others: Henry Martyn, James Gilmour, David Brainerd, W. C. Burns, D. L. Moody—each has left an enduring record as a man of prayer who walked with God and to whom the yearning pity of God was communicated.

If Christians would share in the compassion of Christ for the multitude, they must be willing to obey His call, to ascend into the mountain where Jesus summons His own into still more intimate fellowship, as He says, “I have compassion on the multitude.”

### **Christ and the Crowds**

There was an infinite attractiveness about Christ. There was no need to spend money on advertising the place where He was to be found. The crowds found Him out as bees

discover flowers and children detect the one person in the room who will give them welcome. Our incompleteness will be naturally attracted to Him who can alone complete us. Disease will always discover health; thirst, the fountain; hunger, food.

Our Lord kept His doors open day and night. When, therefore, the great crowds came to Him bringing so many lame, maimed, blind, dumb and others that it took three days before they were all healed, they found an open welcome. He left His heavenly reveries, welcomed them as a host and provided a rare banquet on the mountain grass. The more grievous their physical ailments, the readier His welcome, the more tender His pity.

What a marvelous contrast there is between Christ and Ahasuerus, of whom it is recorded that no man might come into the king's palace who had sackcloth on him (Esther 4:2).

That is the way with the world's magnates. If there is moaning on the sea bar which tells of tempests sweeping the ocean, they hang heavier curtains over their windows to keep out the sound. If there is some unusual distress filling the newspapers with stories of want and woe, they request that these passages may be blotted out.

All that is distasteful must be covered with whitewash, the roads must be graveled, the air filled with fragrant perfume and kept radiant with adulation and flattery. The maimed, halt, sick and blind are conscious that they can expect little help when their sackcloth is irksome to behold.

We are all tempted to go into our gardens, walk quietly among the flowers, sit in grottos sheltered from the heat, listen to the music of the fountains, or lie full stretched on the grass, gazing into the infinite blue above, and say, "What a beautiful world!" But we refuse to look beyond the high walls or heed the cry of little children being done to moral death, of boys and girls who are being sold into sin, and of the corruption in which the world lies.

It may be well that we have the power of evading these sights and sounds, else human life would be insupportable. But Jesus Christ did not shrink from what must have cost Him soul-travail when He said, "I have compassion on the multitude."

The compassion of Christ was so infinitely attractive to people because He never dealt with them in a mass but always with distinct individuals.

Nothing hurts our philanthropy so much as the habit of classing men together under certain great divisions and dealing with all members of a class on the same principle. In this way, our finer feelings become deadened.

We look at the forest; Christ knows every tree, nay, each branch and twig. We view the crowds as Xerxes did from the eminence of his throne; Christ is familiar with the bitter story of each human life, its tragedy and comedy, its hope and fear, its temptations and burdens, downittings and uprisings.

We read in the newspapers that thousands have fallen in a single battle, but Christ knows how each man fell, the havoc the news brought into the home circle, and the bitter tears for one whose step would never be heard returning along the garden path. The woman who was a sinner, Nicodemus, Zacchaeus—they were all distinct subjects of His thought.

The fountains of compassion would begin to rise in each heart if we would begin to individualize the need of men, thinking not of the lame but of the one lame man; not of the blind but of one sunless face; not of the dumb but of the man whose tongue was locked; not of the flock but of the one sheep which has wandered from the fold and is in danger.

Remember, the one lost sheep attracted the shepherd; the one lost coin incited the woman's search; the one lost child returning filled the father's home with mirth.

### **Christ and His Disciples**

“Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion.” Then He sent them to see how many loaves they had.

He is always bringing us face to face with our inadequate supplies. He cannot do without our contribution. He will not work a needless miracle; in some marvelous way He is dependent upon us for our cooperation. He must have our hands to fill them with fish, our water to turn into wine, our fishing tackle to catch the fish in whose mouth the money for the taxes will be found.

It would be as easy, apparently, for Him to feed the four thousand by turning stones into food, or by the direct creation of bread without any previous provision. But no, this will not do: He must have such loaves as we have. Small and poor though they be, they are a necessary link in the chain of His providence.

But we must not be allowed to think ourselves necessary for the execution of His great plans, lest we become dispirited. He sends us to see how many loaves we have that we may not become proud. Only seven loaves and a few small fishes! What are they in the presence of this great need?

Let us look at the crowds until we are filled with a deep compassion for them, then let us look at our slender supplies till we are driven to Him who alone can make them sufficient. Let us lay ourselves at His feet, confessing that He must touch us with that wonderful hand of His, or it is useless to think of meeting the clamant need of the perishing multitudes.

### **“He...Gave to His Disciples”**

We may be sure that the Master will never leave us to face the multitudes by ourselves. We have been brought in contact with them because of our association with Him, and He will supply us with a sufficiency for all their need if only we will abide in Him and draw on Him as we require.

Our mistake is that we so often endeavor to supply bread of our own making. By hard study, by severe mental discipline, by using the thoughts of others, we seek to minister to the souls committed to our charge; and we only pass muster with them because they are so drugged with the sedatives of pleasure, moneymaking and self-indulgence, so as to be dead to their true needs.

But let their souls awake, and they would sweep past us with the awful cry which has so often betokened a revolution: "Bread, bread! Give us bread!"

Our Lord is not only the Giver of the bread, but He is Bread, the living Bread which came down from Heaven. He brake the bread, as on the cross His heart was broken, and it is this aspect of Jesus that men need.

When we are conscious of acceptance with God and desire power for all the calls and opportunities of life, we must deal with the risen living One.

But when we are conscious of sin, needing forgiveness and peace, when the bread-hunger gnaws within, when we are broken by disappointment and failure, then we need Him of the crown and thorns, of the nail and spear. We cannot be grafted into Christ save in His wounds. "This," says He, "is my body which is given [broken] for you."

**"And the Disciples to the Multitude"**

Only thus can we keep fullhanded. Had the disciples ceased to give, the bread would have ceased to multiply and would have dwindled in their hands.

One condition of increase was diffusion; of multiplication, division. Is not this the reason why some, who are ever hearing the Word, fail to make increase in the life of God? Nothing is given us for ourselves only, but all to impart to others. Only when these are all supplied may we gather up the fragments which are left over and consider ourselves.

Every new glimpse of truth is given that you may hand it on to others, not only in the first row, but in the rear also, that all may be well satisfied.