“YOU GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO EAT”

Matthew 13:53-14:21

Key verse 14:16

**“Jesus replied, ‘they do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.’”**

Today’s passage includes 3 events. The first one is Jesus’ visiting his hometown to teach the Bible. The second is the martyrdom of a faithful man of God, John the Baptist. The last one is Jesus’ feeding 5,000 people with 5 loaves and 2 fish. The spiritual climate that Jesus served his ministry was dark. In that dark time, Jesus called his disciples to himself and trained them to be shepherds of God’s flock. May we learn of Jesus’ faithful bible teaching and the secret of feeding the multitudes.

1.Jesus taught the Bible to his hometown people.(13:53-58)

Look at verses 53-54. **“When Jesus had finished these parables, he moved on from there. Coming to his hometown, he began teaching his people in their synagogue, and they were amazed.”** How beautiful it was that Jesus visited his hometown, Nazareth where he had grown up. We also all love to visit our hometown because there is no place like home. We are excited to see our beloved family members and old friends.

Surely, Jesus wanted to impart rich heavenly blessings upon his hometown people. Jesus began teaching them in their synagogue with wonderful words of life. The gracious words came out of Jesus’ lips and spiritual blessings were distributed to his hometown people. At first, the hometown people were amazed at Jesus’ teaching saying, **“Isn’t this the carpenter’s son?”** **“Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous power? Where then did this man get all these things?”** They repeated the same questions twice. The answer to both questions was obvious. All these wisdom and power came from God.

However, they quickly began questioning, “**And aren’t his brother James, Joseph, Simon and Judas?”** **Aren’t all his sisters with us?”** They began to see Jesus with human perspective regarding him as one of ordinary people of Nazareth. Jesus said to them, **“A prophet is not without honor except in his own town and in his own home.”** Jesus reminded them that this had always been the pattern of Israel to look at prophets humanly. They rejected the message that God was giving through them. For instance, the prophet Jeremiah also experienced rejection in his hometown even by the members of his own family and relatives.

And Jesus did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith. Jesus could not work in an atmosphere of unbelief and human thinking. When we look at God’s servant and God’s work from a human point of view, we become spiritually blind. Then Jesus cannot work in and through us. May we see our church members as God’s people and God’s children prior to their human background. May we see our church as a spiritual community where Jesus dwells among us. May we build up the atmosphere of faith that Jesus may work mightily among us.

2.John the Baptist completed his glorious mission (14:1-12)

Chapter 14 opens with a story of King Herod and John the Baptist. Here, Herod Antipas was a tetrarch over Galilee and Berea. When Herod heard reports about Jesus, he told his attendants, **“This is John the Baptist. He has risen from the dead!** **That is why miraculous powers are at work in him.”** The reports about Jesus disturbed Herod, and then drove him into mental disorder. Herod was a king living in a palace. But when he did an evil thing, he was tormented by evil spirits. Herod was like Cain who was a slave of a guilty conscience and sense of punishment.

In verses 3-12, we see that Herod and Herodias tried hard to silence the voice of truth through John the Baptist. Herod and Herodias divorced their spouses to marry each other. Then John the Baptist challenged the sin of a king Herod and strongly rebuked the immoral act of the king, **“It is not lawful for you have her.”** Then Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison at the fortress of Marchaerus because of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife. Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the people because they considered John a prophet. However, the opportunity came on Herod’s birthday. Herodias who had harbored a grudge against John made her daughter dance for the royal guests and subjects. Herod was so fascinated by her dance that he made an oath to give her whatever she asked in his drunken state.

Maybe Herod thought that the girl might ask for a nice dress or a cute pet. But prompted by her mother, Herodias, she said, **“Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist.”** It was unthinkable for a young teenage girl asking for somebody’s head on a platter as a present. How gruesome request it was! Herod should have rebuked the girl saying, “How terrible you are asking for such a cruel thing, repent your wicked heart!” But Herod was distressed because of his promise in front of the guests, he gave in and ordered John beheaded in the prison. John’s head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl who carried it to her mother. A happy birthday party was suddenly turned to bloody tragedy. John’s disciples came and took his body and buried him. Then they went and told Jesus.

Let us think about the life of John the Baptist. He was called by God as the forerunner of the Messiah, Jesus. He was a voice of one calling in the desert who prepared the way for the Lord based on Isaiah 40:3. He introduced Jesus as the Messiah and the Lamb of God. As his ministry was diminishing, he said, **“He must become greater, I must become less.”** After paving the way for the Messiah, he disappeared behind the stage. Humanly speaking, John the Baptist became a victim of Herod’s immorality and violence. But Jesus said, **“among those born of women, there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist.”** John lived a most glorious life because he gave his life to complete his mission.

Indeed, John was great in the sight of God. Jesus said in John 5:35, **“John was a lamp that burned and gave light and you chose for a time to enjoy his light.”** John was a burning lamp until death.Our life is like a lamp. For what would you burn your lamp? For enjoying comfortable selfish life or striving to achieve God given mission with a martyrdom spirit? God gives each person for a certain life span together with a specific mission. One who carries out the mission that God has given him is the great man. Let us burn our lamp brightly for God! May we all run the life of faith to fulfill God given mission as John burned his lamp faithfully to the end of his life.

3.You give them something to eat (13-21)

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.”** Jesus was deeply grieved by the news. In the death of John, Jesus could see the growing darkness and foreshadow of his own death by the wicked people of his time. The reason to withdrew to a solitary place was to pray. Jesus wanted quiet time alone with God that he might gain new strength and God’s perspective.

But what happened to his plan? The crowds heard of this and followed him on foot from the towns. This crowds pointed the boat squinting into the morning sun measuring which direction the boat turned. They began to run along the shore even carrying sick people on mats and carts. Men, women and children all desperately followed Jesus in the boat. This group of crowd became bigger and bigger up to thousands. This was a remarkable scene. Suddenly, Galilee beach marathon race took place circling around the sea of Galilee. As a result, the crowds arrived at the destination early waiting for Jesus when he landed in what was supposed to be a solitary place. How did Jesus respond? Verse 14 says, **“When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.”**

To Jesus, this crowd could have been burdensome. However, Jesus had compassion on them. Compassion means “suffer together.” Matthew 9:36 says, **“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.”** At that time, people suffered a lot under the ruthless and irresponsible ruler Herod and the legalistic religious leaders. They also suffered most under the power of sin and Satan. Jesus was the God of compassion. He healed the sick. Even as he was healing their physical sickness, his compassion must have healed their emotional and spiritual wounds. Jesus’ compassion was poured out so much that he stayed with the people all day long. While Jesus was healing with great zeal, the sun began to set and the sky was turning purplish pink. Jesus was going on and on showing no sign of stopping. For a while, Jesus’ disciples watched Jesus’ healing ministry patiently.

They came to Jesus and said, **“This is a remote place, and its already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.”** The disciples’ word sounded mindful of the people’s situation. In a sense, the disciples were concerned about the hungry crowd as much as they could.

But their compassion for the crowd was very limited. Look at verse 16. **Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.”** This was really an unexpected command. Jesus’ compassion was boundless. He wanted to feed the crowd. Jesus wanted his disciples to have that same compassion. When Jesus said, **“You give them something to eat,”** Jesus laid responsibility for the crowd on his disciples. It was like the parent’s responsibility toward their hungry children.

Then the disciples answered, **“We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish.”** They used the word, “only.” What they had was only five loaves of bread and two fish which were not enough even to feed themselves. Indeed, it was very small amount. Then Jesus said, **“Bring them here to me.”** When the five loaves of bread and two fish were in the disciples’ hands, they were not enough even to feed one. But when they were put in Jesus’ hands, they were totally different. Whether something is in our hands or in Jesus’ hands makes a total difference. My time, money, knowledge and ability in my hand is always too little even to satisfy my own need. But when they are brought to Jesus and put in Jesus’ hand, the difference will be immeasurable. This is the secret of faith.

When we bring what little we have, Jesus can do a miracle. Jesus 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. Jesus doesn’t expect us to feed 5,000 people by ourselves. What Jesus is asking us is to bring something that we have or do something that we can do. Feeding the multitudes is Jesus’ part, and bringing something to Him is our part. Jesus said, **“Bring them here to me.”** We are amazed by Jesus’ humble acceptance of five loaves and two fish from his disciples. The phrase, **“looking up to heaven”** teaches us where we should we look at in an impossible situation. When there seems no way out surrounded by every wall, it is the time to look up to heaven as Jesus did and seek God’s help.

At the early stage of UBF pioneering ministry in Korea, Dr.Samuel Lee visited Daejun UBF center and found out what they needed. Then he took out a door of the Kwangju UBF center and loaded it to a truck and gave it to the pioneering chapter. He also gave his organ that was his No 1 property house treasure. At that time, an organ was very rare and expensive. Missionary Grace A Lee who liked music used to play the organ singing hymns for her favorite pastime. Dr. Lee gave this precious organ to support new chapter. Although missionary Grace A Lee felt so sorry for losing her organ, she accepted it later.

The door and organ are well preserved at Daejun UBF. Through these legendary events of giving something for God’s work, God blessed UBF pioneering work abundantly.

How about the apostle Paul in Roman prison? He was still under house arrest. He was physically confined. His health was not good. He had a bad eyesight that he needed a scribe to write for him. In these circumstances, he could have easily given up saying, "I am bound in prison, what can I do? I just have to wait for an opportune time.” But instead of sitting down, he tried to find something that he could do in prison. As he carefully observed, he saw rotating soldiers coming in turn to guard him regularly. Then he decided to have bible study with one soldier at a time. It was his five loaves of bread and two fish ministry for two whole years in prison. The gospel spread throughout the whole palace guard and to many who belonged to Caesar's household.

What are our five loaves and two fish? We are all busy with daily life issues. In spite of hectic schedules, spending a few hours for preparing bible notes and serving one on one bible study is something that we can offer. Serving newly formed HBF members with time and effort is something that we can give. Serving CBF worship service and activity is something to give though it always requires creative ideas to prepare each week. Then God would accept the heart of these humble servants and bless our bible students and children to grow as shepherds, bible teachers and coworkers in the church. Something that we can offer are also our talents to serve music and praise and worship with instruments. And preparing environment for worship service such as checking technical settings for zoom worship service, preparing food and cleaning the church are these. It could be our personal prayer time and bible reading, our offering to ministry which can serve the needs of others and future ministry.

When we offer what we have, Jesus does His work and we only participate. We only faithfully go and invite people then God draws them to Jesus. We only share the words of God then it is the Holy Spirit convicts their heart. This principle is one of 8 UBF spiritual legacies. May God bless our church members to offer what they have diligently to Jesus and experience the work of God in each individual, family, campus ministry and church community.