

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Compassion for the Outsiders

Scripture: Matthew 15:29-39

Code: 2314

Well, it's a great joy; and I have had a wonderful week after a couple of weeks of rest just studying the 15th chapter of Matthew in preparation of sharing it with you today. So turn in your Bible, if you will, to Matthew 15. We'll look at verses 29 through 39. Matthew 15:29-39 in our ongoing insights into the marvelous presentation of the Lord Jesus Christ made by Matthew.

There's one line in this section of Scripture. It's found in verse 32, and I would draw your attention to it. It says there that, "Jesus called His disciples unto Him and said, 'I have compassion on the multitude.'" And as I studied this text, I was drawn to the fact that that seems to be the theme. That marks out the major lesson taught in this section. The compassion of Jesus Christ. Basically, the word coming from the Latin means to suffer with; but, really, in the English, it's even enriched beyond that, for the English dictionary describes compassion as this: A feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow... accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the pain and remove its cause. For the Latins, it meant to suffer with; but in English, it has come to mean not only to suffer with someone or to feel their pain and their hurt, but to have a strong desire to see its cause permanently eliminated; and I think that's a marvelous definition of what was in the heart of our Lord, who looking upon anyone in need, identified with that need, felt sympathy and sorrow for that need, and had a strong desire to see its cause removed. The Greek term itself is a most interesting term. It...it's basically a verb form added to a word that means bowels or visceral area or guts, stomach; and it means that Jesus actually felt physical pain in His stomach over the needs of people with which He identified and for whom He desired deliverance.

Now, if you learn anything at all about God, you learn in the Scriptures that He is a God of great compassion. He suffers with people. He feels their pain; and, more than that, He seeks to alleviate its cause. That's exactly why He moves in the world. That's exactly why He redeems man. That's exactly why He heals and comforts and extends grace and mercy and loving kindness, in order to reach men in their need and deliver them from it.

In Lamentations, there is a most marvelous statement about the compassion of God. I think it's my favorite one in all the Bible. It says this, "It is because of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not." In other words, if we got what we deserved, we would be consumed; but it is His compassion toward us that restricts that and extends mercy; and it says, "They are new every morning. Great is Thy faithfulness." God is faithful to be always all that He is. He is faithful to be just, faithful to be wise, faithful to be loving, faithful to be omnipotent, and faithful to

be compassionate. God is a God of great compassion.

Over and over again in God's dealings with Israel in the Old Testament, you can read it in...particularly I was thinking of 2 Kings 13 and then in 2 Chronicles 36, but many places where God says to His people, "I have compassion on you. I'm withholding My judgment. I'm withholding the trouble that could come upon you because of my compassion." In other words, "When I strike you, I, in a real sense, strike Myself." God even has gone so far as to say that His people are the...the pupil of His eye; and when His people are touched, it's as if He was poked in His own eye. God is a God of great compassion.

In Romans 9:15, it says that God said, "I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion; and I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." Now, if God is a God of compassion, a God who cares, a God who cares about every small hurt and every small need in every life, if that's the kind of God God is, then we would expect Jesus Christ to be compassionate, would we not? For He is God incarnate, in human flesh; and so when we come to chapter 15 of Matthew verse 32, we are not surprised to hear Jesus say, "I have compassion." We've heard Him say it before. Chapter 14 verse 14, "Jesus went forth, saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion." Chapter 9 verse 36, Jesus looked on the multitude, and it says, "He was moved with compassion, because they were scattered as a sheep without a shepherd."

So God, our God, is a compassionate God; and Christ, God in human flesh, is equally compassionate. Now we see that demonstrated in this wonderful passage, and I'd like you to follow as I read verses 29 to 39. "Then Jesus departed from there and came near unto the Sea of Galilee and went up into a mountain and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto Him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, mutilated, and many others, and put them down at His feet, and He healed them, insomuch that the multitude marveled when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed or mutilated to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see. And they glorified the God of Israel. Then Jesus called His disciples unto Him and said, 'I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with Me now three days and have nothing to eat; and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.' And His disciples say unto Him, 'From where should we have so much bread in the wilderness as to fill so great a multitude?' Jesus saith unto them, 'How many loaves have ye?' They said, 'Seven, and a few little fishes.' And He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and broke them was giving to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat and were filled. And they took up of the broken pieces that were left, seven baskets full. And they that did eat were four thousand men, besides women and children. And He sent away the multitude, and got into a boat, and came into the borders of Magdala."

Now, lemme give you the setting. Back to verse 29...For a year and a half, at least, Jesus had been ministering in Galilee. He had been serving in that northern area of Palestine among the Jewish

people. Miracles, signs, wonders, teaching of the Kingdom of God. But after a year and a half, it was very clear that there was a mounting resistance. There was a mounting rejection. The pressure was on. The one who ruled in that area was a man by the name of Herod Antipas. He was the petty king given the assignment of keeping political peace in Galilee; and Herod was paranoid, as are many petty kings, that someone might usurp his place; and in his pettiness, he had already executed John the Baptist; and now he was in fear of Jesus Christ and His tremendous power, and so would, no doubt, have done the same to Him if he were enabled.

And then there was also the hatred of the scribes and the Pharisees who were the religious leaders. Who, because they had been unmasked as empty traditionalists with only a ceremonial shell of a religion, had begun to consummately hate Jesus Christ and seek His death. They applied pressure to him, as well; and you add to that the fact that the crowds themselves and their popular frenzy was directed to making Jesus King, because they had seen His miracle power and thought that He could lead a revolution to overthrow the hated Herodians, as well as the hated Romans. And you add to that that there were many who appeared to believe on Him and wanted all He had to give; but when He asked from them something, those shallow disciples departed and left.

There's little reason for us to wonder why it says He departed in verse 21 from there into the area of Tyre and Sidon. The resistance of the people to the reality of His message, the shallowness of false disciples, the pressure of the scribes and the Pharisees, the bizarre personality of Herod; and then there was this tremendous need to spend time with the twelve; because, in less than a year from now, they would face the greatest trial of their life in the trial and death of Christ.

All of these things mounted together to cause Him to leave Galilee; and so in verse 21, as we noted last time, He left and went across the border. He left the land of Israel into the region of Tyre and Sidon. In our modern times, this would be leaving Palestine for the land of Lebanon to the north. He sought seclusion. He sought a release from the pressure, which would have, if allowed to, thwarted the ultimate design and plan of God; and so He moved away. But no sooner had He arrived in that Gentile land than He ran into a Gentile woman, verses 22 to 28, who came to Him desiring a healing and who, it says in verse 28, exercised great faith.

And here we see a marvelous contrast between the shallowness, the resistance, the rejection, the bitter hatred, the spiritual pride of Palestine, and the genuine hunger and humility of this Gentile woman. What He could not find among His own, He found among strangers. Only two times so far in Matthew have we heard Him say, "You have great faith," and both times He said that to a Gentile...

Now, this is a very important section of Matthew's Gospel. This woman -- and what also happens from verse 29 to 39 that I just read you -- all happens in a Gentile area. Jesus is reaching beyond the covenant people, beyond the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He's reaching to Gentiles, and He is giving us a prophetic picture of the extension of the Kingdom in the purpose of God to encompass the

lost of the world. The intention of Christ coming to Israel was never that that was the end, but that that was only the means to reaching the world. Always the intention was to reach the world.

In fact, if you think about it, when Jesus was on the earth in the three years of His ministry, He did many things that are a preview of the Kingdom. The transfiguration on the mount when He demonstrated His full blazing Second Coming glory was a small glimpse of the glory that would be His when He returned to set up His Kingdom. The fact that He uniquely came and ministered through twelve men from the nation Israel is indicative of the fact that, in His Kingdom, He will rule through those of Israel again. The fact that He came and healed is indicative of what will occur in the Kingdom when He will heal the nations, as it were. The fact that He came and taught of the Kingdom is, again, a preview of the Kingdom when the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth; and this very brief visit of a few weeks into Gentiles lands was but a preview of the intention of Jesus Christ that the Gospel should extend and the Kingdom should embrace those beyond Israel. So this is an extremely important passage.

Now, let's look at verse 29 and see how it flows. He had been in the area of Tyre and Sidon; and He departed from there. That is the area of Phoenicia. As I said, it's modern Lebanon, the southern Lebanon. It says He left there. Now, Mark, tells us, because Mark records the same incident, Mark tells us that, when He left there, He went through Tyre and Sidon, which meant that He must have gone north, first of all, to cover the Tyre and Sidon area; and then He went east in order to come south along the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee to a place called Decapolis. So we have the Lord, then, on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. He goes north to Sidon, north to Tyre. He goes east across the Hermann Range, across the River Jordan, south down the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee to the southeastern end, to an area known as Decapolis.

Now, it is interesting to note that there was a time gap. Look, for example, at chapter 14 verse...let's see, verse 19. "He commanded the multitude." This is the feeding of the 5,000, the prior feeding of the Jewish people in the land of Israel. "He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass." Now, if you'll notice chapter 15 verse 35. "He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground." Now, the question is what happened to the grass? The answer is summer.

In chapter 14, the feeding of the 5,000 men and women and children who were Jews, it was spring; and the grass in that land only lasts a little into the summer. It's late summer now, and so we know that between the feeding in chapter 14, and the feeding in chapter 15, there have been many weeks that have transpired. We don't know how many of those days He may have spent still in the Galilee area, but surely there were some weeks spent...in Gentile land. It would've taken Him some weeks to have gone through Tyre and Sidon, east over the Hermann Range, across the Jordan, south again on the eastern bank, and down to Decapolis; and so He's been ministering for some length of time among these who are Gentiles.

And may I mention, as well, because seems as though critics have a lot of problems with the two feedings. They think that Matthew sort of muffed the facts at this point, and he repeated the same story with the numbers a little different. The details are very, very different in all cases, but the monumental reality of this story is that Christ was saying that what He gave in provision for Israel is no less than He will also give in provision for those who are outside Israel. It is a...it is a profound lesson, not unlike the lesson of the Book of Acts that when the Day of Pentecost came among the Jews and the Spirit of God descended and the phenomena occurred, when the Gospel then in chapter 10 was taken to the Gentiles, the very same phenomena occurred again; and Peter went back to the Jews and said, "You're not going to believe this, but the same thing that happened to us happened to the Gentiles," and that was the whole point, so that there would be no sense of dichotomy or no sense of God treating men with respect of persons. And so if our Lord was to feed the Jew, He was also demonstrating that He would feed the Gentile.

Alfred Edersheim, the great scholar, Jewish scholar, says, "The Lord ended each phase of His ministry with a feeding. He ended the ministry in Galilee with the feeding of the 5,000. He ended the ministry in the Gentile area with the feeding of the 4,000; and He ended the Judean ministry before His death on the cross with the feeding of His own in the upper room; and the Lord always leaves people fed.

And so we come then to Decapolis. Decapolis is on the southeast edge of the Sea of Galilee. It's not far from the area known as Gadara where Jesus, you remember, delivered two demoniacs and sent the demons into the herd of swine. It's the southern end of the modern Golan Heights. It's not far, frankly, from a little kibbutz where you may have eaten St. Peter's fish if you've been there, just after you've crossed the Sea of Galilee in a little boat, a very familiar spot.

Decapolis means ten cities. Deca is ten, polis is city. There were ten little cities there, small ones. They were wedged in between two territories, really, under Jewish domination. One controlled by Philip the tetrarch, and the other controlled by Herod Antipas, and in the middle was this wedge called Decapolis. And these ten cities were each free Greek cities. The Greeks were big into free city states; and these, each of them, were free; and they were under sort of an overall sovereignty by the governor of Syria. They were not under the rule of Israel or any of its monarchs. And so they were Greeks or Gentiles, sort of wedged in the middle of that Jewish part of the world.

Archeologists who have searched the area have found statues and monuments to Zeus and Athena and Artemis, and Hercules, and Dionysius, and Demeter, and many other Greek gods. So they were into Greek paganism full-blown...and Jesus came there. Now, they were not unacquainted with Jesus. If you look back in Matthew's Gospel to chapter 4, you will note that very early in His ministry, as He began teaching and preaching and healing, it says His fame went throughout all Syria, which was to the east of Israel; and they brought in people who were sick and it names the various

diseases. Then verse 25 says multitudes came, and it lists all the regions around. "From Galilee, from Decapolis, from Jerusalem...the only city mentioned there, because of its import...from Judea, and then from those countries beyond the Jordan," which would be Syria, so forth.

So Decapolis had heard, and you know how it is when people start talking about how they've been healed, you can be sure the word spread very rapidly. So they had known of Jesus, and when He arrived again in that region, verse 30 says, "Great multitudes came unto Him," and we don't wonder at that. It was a wilderness area. He came on unannounced. It may have taken some time for all of them to gather, but gather they did, as they always did; and because they knew His reputation as One who could heal anything, they brought with them, it says, "those that were lame and blind and dumb and mutilated and many others, and put them down at His feet...and He healed them."

Now, I wanna take a moment here, if I might, to look at the word maimed or mutilated or crippled. I don't know what it says in your Bible, but it's the last of those words, and it's kuloss. It's used later on in Matthew's Gospel in chapter 18 where our Lord says, "It's better for you to pluck out your eye and to go through life klussthan to offend God." It, therefore, has as its unique meaning, to have something severed or removed and would speak of someone who's lost a limb or whose limb is withered to utter uselessness; but He healed those people. If they didn't have an arm, He gave 'em one. If they didn't have a leg; He gave them one. If they were missing an ear, He gave them one. If they had lost a finger, He gave them one.

It says at the end of verse 30, "He healed them," and that statement is so profound; and it almost passes by unnoticed. "He healed them." And you feel like you ought stop and scream or something to get everyone's attention. It says also in this text that...it says, "They put them down at His feet." Some manuscripts say Jesus' feet, some say His feet. The verb there is to fling in haste. You can see that 4,000 men -- it tells us how many were there later on -- plus women, and you can imagine another, I don't know, anywhere from 4 to 5 to 10,000 women and who knows how many thousand children -- 20,000 would not be a small estimate. And they're all coming, and it says, "They're all throwing these people at His feet." Can you imagine the chaos of this? I mean they were not orderly. They were not in line. They were just getting there in a frantic, knowing He could heal, hoping they would be one that He would heal; and this pile of humanity is being pitched at His feet; and it just says, "He healed them."

I mean people with no arm are going away with an arm. People who had lost their eyes were going away with eyes. People who had never spoken were speaking, and people who had never been able to walk were walking. And this was going on en masse, you see. I mean they couldn't even look fast enough to catch them all; and the result of it was verse 31 -- "The multitude thalmodzoo, marveled." I mean they were struck with absolute awe at this scene, because, you see the word thalmodzoor marveling or wonder is a word that says we have no human explanation. There is nothing in our little computers that tells us this can happen. This is not possible. This is beyond imagination. This is

incredible.

And they are left with wonder and astonishment at this flurry of spontaneously occurring miracles. This pile of humanity being dumped at His feet, getting up and walking away whole, and may I submit to you that their wonder was greater than the wonder of the Jews, because the wonder of the Jews was always limited by their skepticism. It was always limited by their gross case of spiritual pride. It was always limited by the bondage of their ceremony and tradition; and the blindness that exists on Israel today was there then. But these Gentiles didn't have that; and so when Mark writes of this in Mark 7:37, he says, "They were beyond measure astonished." And he says that, I think, to differentiate between the astonishment of the Gentiles and the astonishment of the Jews who...who were astonished, but not to this degree, because they were so encumbered by the...the attachment to their false religion and their spiritual pride.

And the Gentiles who were beyond measure astonished said, "He hath done all things well." In other words, He did it all perfectly. Everybody was totally whole. Nobody was missed, and nobody was less than complete...They marveled...and the greatness of the result comes at the end of verse 31. "They gave glory to the God of Israel." You see, it wasn't their God. In chapter 9, it says that they...the Jews marveled and glorified God, verse 8. But when the Gentiles glorified this God, it had to be the God of Israel, 'cause it wasn't their God; and so, again, we reinforce the fact that these were Gentiles. They knew God was in their presence. There was no other explanation. There was no human explanation for this.

Now, what does it mean to glorify God? I think it's bound up with two concepts, two things. Luke, I think, gives us insight. Listen to this. Chapter 5 verse 25, Jesus heals a paralyzed person, "And immediately the man rose up, took up his bed on which he was laying, departed to his own house, glorifying God." Now, we'll find more about that as we look at verse 26. "The people were amazed...and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, 'We've seen strange things today.'"

Now, may I submit to you that glorifying God in this context is a combination of praise and fear. It is the...it is the positive element that says, "This is wondrous. This is inexplicable. This is astonishing. This is miraculous," and it is the other one that says, "This is fearful," because a God who has that power, a God who has that dynamic is a God who knows the sin of my heart; and there was a sense of fear in His presence, and rightly so. And so they glorified the God of Israel with a positive praise, and no doubt a certain trembling at the presence of such a God...as they had seen...

Now...this goes on for three days; and the crowd never leaves. All day long, the Lord heals and surely teaches them the things pertaining to the Kingdom, invites them to embrace Him. At night, they don't go anywhere. They lay down on the ground, and they sleep; and when the Lord awakens in the morning with the disciples, they're all there; and it goes on the second day and the second night they do the same thing; and the third day, they just don't ever leave...and that brings us to verse 32.

"Then Jesus called His disciples unto Him and said, 'I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with Me now three days...and have nothing to eat.' Now, stop there for a moment. This is just amazing. I mean somebody is bound to say to Him, 'Look, Lord, I mean we usually do all right. We get enough to eat. Three days isn't gonna kill anybody.' Right? I mean for some of us, we're saying, 'I'd give anything if I could just go three days without eating.'..."And don't we all say fasting is good for you? I mean why are You getting so upset about the fact they haven't eaten for three days? Nobody dies not eating in three days. You, Yourself, Lord, have fasted how long? Forty days and forty nights." I mean nobody's gonna perish after three days...

But, you see, that's because you wouldn't understand the compassion of God. So I can understand Him giving an arm to a man who doesn't have an arm. I can understand Him giving a leg to a man without a leg. I can understand Him giving eyes to one who doesn't see. I can understand Him giving a tongue and a voice to one who can't speak; but I can't see Him getting too uptight about a guy who hasn't eaten for three days. But, see, that's because you don't understand the infinite and all-encompassing compassion of God.

You see, He has compassion for peoples' spiritual needs that are eternal in their consequence. He has compassion for peoples' physical needs that are lifelong in their impact; but He also has compassion for a person's daily food. Now that's a deep insight into the heart of God, isn't it? The tender compassion of God extends even to the fact of daily food. That's why David said, "I've never seen the Lord's people begging...bread." That's why Jesus said, "Look, if I...if My Father takes care of the grass and the lilies, don't you think He'll take care of you?" And that's why the Lord said, "When you pray, say this -- Give us this day our...what?...daily bread," 'cause God cares about that.

And at the end of verse 32, He says, "I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way." Now, it's a very vivid word, the word faint. It...it...it means, basically, collapse; but its root is interesting, because it has to do with a bowstring; and the word means to unstring a bowstring. If you take a bow, and you anchor it by your foot and pull it down and string it, and then if you pull it to unstring it and let it go, it just...collapses, very vivid; and the Lord says, "I'm not gonna let them collapse on the way home."

Now that is amazing compassion. You say, "God's got bigger things than that, surely," but that's the extent of the infinite heart of God. I would add another note at this point. He didn't have to bring the disciples in on the deal, either; because He didn't need them. He could've fed the folks. Somebody might say, "Well, He needed the disciples to deliver the goods." Well, not really, He had delivered fairly well for the children of Israel wandering in the wilderness, hadn't He? I mean He know how to get 'em the manna, whatever else. But, you see, He is bringing them, and He's bringing us into His heart. That's the point. He is saying, "Look at Me and learn from Me, that I have compassion, not only on lifetime problems like illnesses. Not only on eternal promises like redemption, but on daily

needs."

And, beloved, you see, that's where, in order for the church to be Christ in the world, we have to demonstrate the compassion at that level, because God is as infinite in His compassion as He is in the other attribute. Therefore His compassion will embrace every dimension of need. It's a beautiful truth.

"And the disciples...verse 33...say to Him, 'From where should we have so much bread in the wilderness as to fill so great a multitude?'" Now, the poor disciples really get it in the neck from the commentators at this point who say to them, "Look, guys, I mean you just came out of chapter 14 where He fed the 5,000 plus. Now, you're asking the same question again? What does it take? You blockheads." But I really think you might be missing the point if you think that. I mean let's give 'em a little credit. They aren't total ignoramuses. They have some memory; and they do, in fact, know that Jesus just fed that massive crowd on the eastern shore of Galilee. I mean they know that. They were there. There's little doubt in their mind about that. They have not forgotten it.

You say, "Then what is the point of verse 33?" The point is from where should we have so much bread in the wilderness as to fill...and, by the way, they add fill here. Before when they said, "What are we gonna do? We don't even have enough to give everybody a little tiny morsel." Now, from that experience, they know that when the Lord feeds, He fills everybody; so they say, "If you're looking at us again, we're in the same boat we were in last time You asked us that. We don't have anything to fill this crowd." The point being, in a wilderness area, and this is a desert area, away from these towns, there was no resource. This crowd could only have been serviced in proximity to a large city where the food could've gathered. There was no such proximity, and so I think the emphasis is not here on their unbelief, but on their recognition of their lack of resources. And they're simply saying, "Here we go again, Lord. We have nothing to offer You."...

They knew Jesus could do it. They hadn't forgotten that. They knew He could fill 'em up. In fact, they used the verb kortadzo, to fodder up and fill up, the very one used in chapter 14 verse 20 to describe the crowd that was filled; and it's also spoken of here in verse 37, when they were filled. They knew the Lord could fill 'em up. They also knew they couldn't; and so they said, "We don't have the resource." And I really think in my heart what they're saying was, "Lord, if You're dependent on us, we can't help You. You gotta do it Yourself." And I don't know. There may have been, and this is pro-- this may be completely on my own thinking; but there may have been a couple of other sort of contributing elements. One would've been that the results of the feeding of the first crowd were negative. You remember that? The first crowd was fed, and all they wanted the next day was more what? Food, and they wanted to force Jesus to be a King; and He had to escape and all that. So maybe they thought that that whole kind of approach really wasn't very effective; and they also may have been a little hung up on the fact that these folks were what? Were Gentiles.

Now, that's a possibility; but I...I kind of lean to the fact they're saying, "Look, Lord, if it's gonna be done, You gotta do it. You've gotta do it." "And so Jesus says to them...verse 34...'How many loaves do you have?' And they said, 'Seven.'" And He didn't ask 'em how many fish they had, but they remembered the last time, and they knew that His favorite lunch to provide was bread and fish, so they threw in the deal about the fish. They hadn't forgotten.

Says here, "We've got seven loaves and a few little fish." And that the point is the...that's useless. By the way, there was no Andrew at this point to come in skeptically and say, "What are these among so many?" Nobody was dumb enough to say that now. They knew He could handle it. So in verse 35, "He commanded the multitude to sit on the ground." And then He offered the common prayer of blessing before a meal. "Took the seven loaves and fish, gave thanks, broken them...and then it says...He kept giving to the disciples...in the Greek...He kept on giving to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude."

This is just thrilling. They come with these baskets, and He keeps filling the baskets, and they keep delivering. And they come back, and He keeps filling 'em again, and they deliver it; and He's just creating it right out of His own hands. And again and again He continues to fill the baskets, and they continue to pass among the people who are no doubt seated in groups of 50 or 100 or whatever....and then verse 37 says, "They did all eat, and they were filled." Again, the Lord never leaves them half full. "Took up the broken pieces, remnants left, seven baskets full. And they that did eat were 4,000 men, besides women and children." Satisfied everybody, and they got seven baskets full.

This is kind of important. The first feeding had how many baskets? Twelve, one for each disciple, right? Here you have seven...Why the difference? Very, very interesting. The word in chapter 14 verse 20 is kofanass. That's a little basket. And, by the way, that was a Jewish basket. That was a basket used by the Jews. It normally was a little round thing. It had a little sort of a spout on one end you could stick things in; and the Jew carried this around with him when he traveled for several reasons. It was easy, because there was sometimes no way to get access to a place to provide food, and so you carried it with yourself. And, also, the Jew is really fearful of getting any food that had been touched by Gentile hands; and so they tended to take their own, which had been, you know, treated and...and done their own way.

And so the Jews carried the little kofanass, this little basket with one meal in it. But the word used here is not kofanass. It's spurdiss, and that is a Gentile basket. It's a hamper. It's a big basket; and the interesting thing is that every time the New Testament talks about the feeding of the 5,000, whatever Gospel account it's in, it always uses kofanass, and every time it refers to the 4,000, it always uses spurdiss.

When He was feeding the Jews, the Jews had Jewish baskets. When He was feeding the Gentiles, the Gentiles had Gentile baskets; and the Gentile basket was big. You say, "How big was it?" I'll tell you how big it was. Acts 9 tells us it was the same basket, spurdiss, with which the Apostle Paul was lowered over the wall in Damascus. It was big enough to put a whole person in. So it's a big basket.

So the Lord then gave the food into these big baskets; and they took them and distributed them; and then in collecting they took all that they needed back in seven big baskets. And they may have needed more than they did the first time, because they hadn't eaten this time for three days, not just one day. So the Lord provided for the crowd. The record ends in verse 39. "He sent away the multitude...got into a boat, came to the borders of Magdala."

Now, that's the story, and I didn't take a lotta time with it, because it's so much like the other story; but lemme do this. I wanna give you a series of lessons learned from this story. These are the heart of what I want you to see. First, I believe in this tremendous account, we see the divine power of Jesus Christ. The Bible is meant to teach us. These things are written for our edification, to instruct us; and the first and overwhelming thing that confronts you in this text is that Jesus is God, because only God can create. You see, that was the mark of the faith of Abraham. He worshiped the God who raised the dead and brought to life something out of nothing, Romans 4 says.

It is God alone who can create, and here He is creating limbs, creating eyes, creating tongues, recreating bodies, creating fri...fish and bread. He is the Creator God. You cannot read that with any kind of thought and not be overwhelmed with the fact that this is God. Anything less has absolutely no ability to describe the situation. It is God acting, and would you notice, He doesn't do it in the name of anybody. When the apostles did something in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, they were saying, "It is not our power, but His. He does it in His own name, because it is His power. He is God."...

There's a second...profound lesson; and we might miss it. That's why I told you to file that little word kulosssomewhere in your mind. I not only see here a great lesson about the deity of Jesus Christ, but also about the truth about healing...You know, there are so many people today who claim healings, and so many who claim to have the power of healing; and they give these grandiose testimonies about how they can heal people. And their supposed healings do not square with the Scripture. They do not square with the healing done by our Lord Jesus Christ or His apostles.

If you study carefully the Word of God, that becomes abundantly clear; but just one little note here to reinforce that; and I put a lot of that in the book on the charismatics, which deals with healing, which I wrote. But notice in verse 30 again, that word maimed. There are many claims. There are many supposed testimonies of so-called healings. You will look your lifelong, and you will not find that healer who, at will, can put an arm where there is no arm or a leg where there is no leg or an eyeball

where there is nothing but an empty socket...

I mean they may be dealing with some people's psychosomatic illnesses, and they may be dealing with some people's low back pain and headaches and some other self-diagnosis. They may be dealing with some things which can be described or explained some other way; but they are not adding limbs that do not exist...And, thus, they discredit themselves, because they do not come up to the standard of divine healing laid down by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. You see, healing organic disease and adding limbs that aren't even there, that's creative power. That's the kind of healing that Jesus did; and those who can't come up to that standard can't authenticate themselves as His true healing representatives. This is not the age of healing in that sense. I believe God heals by His sovereign choice. I don't believe there are healers, because healing was for the authentication of a Messiah and then the authentication of the Word of God; and once this has been authenticated, it doesn't need to be authenticated all over again. Certainly not by people who can't come up to the standard.

A third lesson that I see in this text is that the goal of all ministry is worship. That the goal of all ministry is worship; and we've been learning that in our study on worship some months ago; but notice, at the end of verse 31, the...the right climax, the thing that so wonderfully qualifies the ministry of Christ in Decapolis and in the area of the Gentiles was, "They glorified the God of Israel." Praise is that for which all ministry seeks. You see, we don't minister to people, mark this, just to meet their need, but so that they, in having their need met, can do what? Glorify God. So that everything is to redound to the praise and the glory of God. That is the goal of all ministry -- that we should, as the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:15, "Carry the message and be thankful that the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God."

In other words, he says, "I preach because, when I preach, people respond; and their response is to thank God for the transformation of life." And when you learn what the heart of God is in John 4, you'll understand this. That the Father has sent the Son into the world, it says in John 4, really, to seek true worshipers. We know the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. For what reason? "For the Father seeketh such to do...what?...to worship Him." That's the goal and purpose of everything; and these people were in awe. They were filled with wonder. They were filled with praise.

The thing they had seen was utterly inexplicable. There was no human way to describe it, and they gave glory to the God of Israel, and it encompassed praise, a positive affirmation of the majesty and power of God, and fear, a sense of trembling in the presence of One so mighty. And I think that to be a very important lesson in our utterly self-centered, self-consumptive time. Even when our supposed evangelicalism has become self-centered. We seem to want to approach everybody on the level of this is what it'll do for you. And everybody comes running with their supposed demands on God, when the goal of ministry is that God should be glorified. I mean you better get used to it, folks.

You're gonna spend forever doing it...

You know, just as a footnote to that, I often think about the fact, and I read the Book of Revelation. I was reading a little of it this week, and John, you know, the angel came and gave John a message in chapter 19, another in chapter 22, and both times John fell down and worshiped the angel; and the angel says, "Get up. You're worshiping the wrong guy." And ever... ever I read that, I always think to myself, "When was the last time anybody fell down and worshiped me?" And I had to say, "Oh, no, no, get up. Is the wrong guy." I mean when the last time you were mistaken for Jesus Christ and had to ask somebody to get up? You can't remember, you say...

I don't think...I'm not surprised. That's -- we're a far cry from it. But, listen, we in the world should be causing wonder and awe in people, right? I mean if God, the living God lives within us, He is just as awesome as He's ever been. He's just as wondrous as He has ever been. He is just as astonishing as He has ever been; and if it is not so seen by the world, it is not God who is at fault. It is...that vessel which clouds the picture. Our lives should cause people to glorify God. Well, the Apostle Paul went into a city, and the people all fell down and said, "He's a God. He's a God."...They could see God manifest in him, even though they didn't know what God...was manifest.

A fourth lesson, and this is a great lesson, and this is kind of smorgasbord of lessons; but this is the lesson of what I call dependence on divine resources. What do we learn here? We learn that, when we are really right on the edge of being used, is when we've just admitted we don't have what? We don't have the resources. The disciples said, "Lord, don't look at us. Let's not go through that deal we went through before. We can't help." Boy, that's so great. I mean we all feel that a little bit. You see, again, the Word of God saying, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." You say to yourself, "I...I...I can't do it. I...I feel so inadequate." You know? And that's right...that's right where you need to be; and all of us feel that way. We really do. We feel like we don't have the resources, and that's the right place.

When you feel you've got it all knocked, you've got the resource, God is so fortunate to have you with all your tools, you are utterly useless. You're a real pain. You're in the way. I mean we don't need you. See what we need is somebody who knows they don't have any resources, right? And...but I think we all suffer from that. We have to fall back on His divine supply.

James put it this way, "Every good perfect gift comes down...what?...from the Father of lights." So He was teaching them the uselessness of human items to accomplish divine ends. We don't have the resources so often; but we're willing to give the little that we do have, huh? And that gives us to the... takes us to the fifth lesson, which is the lesson of divine supply, where we don't have it. He does; and so the text says, "The Lord says, "Give Me what you got. It isn't enough, but I'll multiply it and make it enough." And then He stuffs everybody. It's so great. God gives us what we need out of His infinite store of riches. I feel inadequate.

Someone called and asked me to go visit a lady who was dying and didn't know Christ; and as I was driving over there, I was saying to myself, "What am I gonna say to this lady? I mean, how am I gonna get into the Gospel?" And I was becoming concerned, and I said, just praying to the Lord, "Lord, help me to know what to say. Help me to know how to say it," and I was...I was nervous; and I went into this apartment building; and I walked around trying to find this apartment; and I went up this long staircase and just seemed like I was getting more nervous about what to say, a dying person, and I wanted to be able to share. And I was...I got to the door. She says, "Wait...just a moment. We'll prepare her," and so I stood there, you know, and I was... just like you'd be, see. And I walked in, and I sat down, and I got my Bible out, and she said, "Oh, before you say anything, I just wanna tell you that yesterday my sister led me to Christ."...Oh, hallelujah, see...Now we can just...I don't have to do any work now. We can just rejoice together; and she ministered that, said, "That's the best day I've had this week."

But I had that same sense of no resources on my own; but God had resources and met her need and my need; and so we rejoiced and read some Psalms and talked about Heaven. And it was great, and she's ready, and I said, "You don't need to fear death." "Fear death," she said, "I don't fear death. I don't fear death at all." I said, "Well, that's great. That's the way it's supposed to be, and that's the preparation of your heart to meet Christ."

Always the divine supply when the human resource isn't there. That's just another note on that. I think of many things about this, but the thing that overwhelms me is when God gives, you see, having given everything He's got and filled up everybody, He has not at all diminished His supply. You understand that? You see, because He has infinite capacity to create, there's never a diminishing of His supply. So whatever He gives never diminishes anything that He has; and that's why He can give according to His riches, according to His riches, abundantly and constantly, and never, ever diminish His supply. And may I submit to you, and I'm learning this lesson myself, that I have to learn the same thing. Since I'm linked with Him, and His resources are mine, whenever I give to God, in all my sacrifice and in all my giving, I never diminish my supply, either. And that's why God says, "You give, and it shall...what? ...be given unto you," 6:38 of Luke.

Well, we don't know that. If we did, this church would have enough money to do the things we really wanna do. But, see, we don't really believe that. We say, "Well, if I give this, let's see, I'll only have this much left."...That's because you don't believe God's in the business of filling up...the empty jar, right? But when you learn that you can give everything you have prompted by the Spirit of God and never diminish the infinity of God's provision for you, you've learned a great lesson.

There's a sixth lesson here, and that's the usefulness of the servant. Although the Lord doesn't need waiters, He can deliver just as well as He can create. He uses them, because it gets us involved in the...in the program; and I'm so glad. I'm so glad that this whole thing involves us, that we can have

the great privilege of service. He could've delivered it, but He chose to use human instruments; and that gives us the perception. It's God who creates, and we deliver. That's...that's the basic principle on which we live in this life; and may I hasten to add, in the life to come, we're gonna spend all eternity serving Him just the same in greater dimensions than we can even conceive.

There's a seventh lesson, and that's the lesson that God gives liberally. They were always filled, always filled, always generous. In Luke 6:38, again, says, "Give, and it shall be given unto you. Pressed down, shaken together, and running over." Right? Not like the crackers you buy. When you...when you shake 'em, they're all in the bottom, right? God doesn't do that. When you've shaken and pressed and pushed and shoved, it's still full and out the top. It's like when you go to the ice cream store, see, and your son's packing...the ice cream into the containers, and he cheats, and he gives you a whole lot extra, and you can't get the top on...God gives super abundantly. We don't know that. I mean practically, because we don't believe that enough to live sacrificially and let Him prove it to us.

That takes us to an eighth lesson, which ties in with the last two; and that's what I call spiritual investment. As I was reading this, something hit me; and that was the fact that the disciples in this whole deal are sort of...in a very interesting position. They...they never get anything until they've given everything away; and then they get to collect what's left; and this is the spiritual...this is the principle of spiritual investment. You see, the...they...in order to get something for themselves, they had to do what? They had to give it away, right? They had to collect the fragments of what was left. A great truth, that we who serve God are called upon to give it all away, as it were, to commit it all to the need, to give it all to the hungering multitude, to pour our energy and our money and our resources into those who have the need, and in giving it all ways, watch how...the seven hampers are loaded when God gives it back. You believe that? I...I can easily tell if you believe that. Show me your checkbook. I can tell you if you believe that. Spiritual investment. It's just like it says in 2 Corinthians, "If you sow sparingly, you reap sparingly. You sow bountifully, you reap bountifully."

And then the final lesson. This is really the lesson that takes us full circle to where we started. It says in verse 32, "I have compassion." And the great sort of overarching thing you see here is the compassion of Christ; and it hits you, not only does He have compassion relative to spiritual needs and relative to lifelong physical needs, but even to daily needs; and He has compassion not only on Israel, but on the world; and it's just reminding us what the epistles say when it says, "Do good unto... what?...all men, especially the household of faith." That our compassion has to reach beyond the household of faith, beyond our own world, to those outside. And our compassion is measured by our giving, giving, giving. The Lord says, "I have compassion," and then He gave to meet the need...

When I was a little boy, for part of my life we lived in Philadelphia; and we lived with some dear people that I know as Uncle Charles and Aunt Boley who had housed my father when he was in seminary back there. And one of the things that they used to do with me when I was little was take

me down to downtown Philadelphia to visit John Wannamaker's Department Store. John Wannamaker was a wealthy industrialist and built this great department store in downtown Philadelphia; and there are many things that I remember about that store. They used to dress me up like Little Lord Fauntleroy, because you could never go downtown into Philadelphia in those days unless you were dressed to kill. The little suits and ties and all that stuff, and off we'd go on the elevated railroad down there, and we'd go to Wannamaker's. We always had to get to Wannamaker's by noon, because at noon there was an organ concert, and a man would get in this organ, which was...they had this great center of the store which ascended to the ceiling some five or six floors up; and on one of those floors was a guy playing the organ.

And every day at noon, he'd play the organ; and we would stand by this massive brass eagle. I think it's probably still there; and we would stand there and listen to this man play the organ, and then we would go to the...to the tea room at Wannamaker's and have lunch. And, as a little guy, I can remember that; and I can remember hearing that John Wannamaker was a wonderful Christian man; and I suppose through the years I just accepted that; but it was only when I was recently exposed to a story about him that I began to recognize something of his heart.

It was his custom to give away a tremendous amount of money to missions, to make spiritual investments; and God, of course, kept refilling his supply; because He knew he'd keep giving it away, you know. And on one visit to China, John Wannamaker had made the trip in order to look and see how his investment was being used; and he went into a little village in China where they had attempted to build a little church; and they had finished a certain amount of the church, but there was a certain part that was not finished...and he went to visit that village. And as he came into the village, he noticed a very strange thing in a field. There was a man with a plow, and the plow was being pulled by an oxen and a boy yoked together, dragging that heavy plow through the soil. John Wannamaker asked for an explanation; and the man who was his escort said, "Well, I'll explain that to you. You see, the church needed money to be completed. Not a lot of money, but just a little, but it's a lot to these folks; and so this son went to his father and said, 'Father, if you'll sell one of the oxen, give the money for the building of the church, I'll join the other one and pull your plow.' And so," he said, "that's why you see what you see."

And the biographer says that Wannamaker fell on his knees and said, "Lord, let me be hitched to a plow...that I may know the joy, sacrificial giving."...That's how the Lord gives -- with great compassion and sacrifice. And did you notice in the story, it never says a thing about whether he was fed...

Father, we thank You for the Word to us this morning. How refreshing, how instructive, convicting. Help us, Father, to reach out to those in need with compassion, whether their need be spiritual, whether it be a lifelong need, such as those who are disabled and handicapped, and they need our constant loving... care. Or whether it be a...a meal or place to stay or some money in the midst of difficulty. Father, help us to have the heart of Christ. Help us, as those disciples gathered around

Him that day, to have gathered this morning and learned well the lesson that He had compassion on all the needs of all the people. Help us to stop long enough to look at that good Samaritan and remember that he met the need of the man in his path though everything dictated that he should not. May we have the heart of Christ, the heart of compassion. We pray in His name. Amen.

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