

They Need Not Go Away

Matthew 14:13-21

The passage is about compassion:

Verse 14 tells us the motivation of Jesus.

3 Movements:

I. Movement #1 Verse 16: You Give Them Something to Eat

There is a massive crowd, 5000 men plus women and children. Conservatively, we estimate about 15,000 people. The day is getting late and they have 5 loaves and 2 fish.

This is not unusual for Jesus. On several occasions Jesus confronts a would-be follower or a disciple with an impossible command.

A. Consider the Occasion for the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

Jesus exposes the man's need for righteousness in revealing his inability to love the way God requires. In fact, you see that frequently Jesus will tell us the love required by God so that we may be ready to receive the love that only God can give.

B. Consider the Rich Young Ruler (Matthew 19:16-22)

Again, Jesus highlights the love God requires in order to expose the man's need. We must love God more than all and that love will then be manifest in mercy to others. Who can stand under such requirements?

C. Consider Peter asking Jesus about forgiveness (Matthew 18:21-35)

Matthew 18:21-22 ESV

21 Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?”

22 Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.”

D. Consider the Implications of Jesus words: “You give them something to eat.”

1. Jesus is calling us to humility to receive the gift of his love
2. Jesus is teaching us that compassion is not optional

Consider the command of Jesus and contrast it with the attitude of the disciples – send them away. I don’t want to make their problem my problem. I am beginning to feel a little responsibility here for their well being, but if they go now I can escape that dilemma.

II. Movement #2 Verse 18: “Bring them here to me”

Jesus takes the humble and totally inadequate offering of the group and uses it to meet the need. The Bible has much to say about the offering of our resources to God. How much is enough? At what point is a follower of Christ to say I have enough and I am not going to spend anymore on myself, but on others with less?

Guilt alone is an inadequate motivator. It is helpful to contextualize the giving of what we have to see God use it. In other words, we are motivated by the needs of others and make sacrifices to help them in their need.

Galatians 6:2 ESV

2 Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

James 2:15-16 ESV

15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food,
16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,”
without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?

1 John 3:17-18 ESV

17 But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?
18 Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

Of course, we do well to remember that the idea in sharing another's burden is that we are actually burdened. In other words, it cuts into our lifestyle in order to help. If we draw the line before that point, then really we are simply giving leftovers rather than sharing burdens.

Matthew 25 is a classic text on this topic, where we find the warning of the sheep and goat judgment. You may remember...

Robert Murray M'Cheyne commented,

I fear there are some Christians among you to whom Christ can say no such thing ["Come thou blessed... inherit the kingdom"]. Your haughty dwelling rises in the midst of thousands who have scarce a fire to warm themselves at, and have but little clothing to keep out the biting frost; and yet you never darkened their door. You heave a sigh, perhaps, at a distance; but you do not visit them. Ah! My dear friend! I am concerned for the poor but more for you. I know not what Christ will say to you in the great day.... I know [now] well that they are not Christians, because they do not love to give. To give largely and liberally, not grudging at all, requires a new heart; an old heart would rather part with its life-blood than its money. Oh my friends! Enjoy your money; make the most of it; give none away; enjoy it quickly for I can tell you, you will be beggars throughout eternity.

III. Movement #3 Verse 19-21: The Miracle Itself

Conclusion:

You won't give yourself in acts of compassion if:

- You view such acts as optional – extras in the Christian life
- You are unwilling to part with your own resources that God has so generously given you
- You lack faith to believe God to do more than you alone are able to do

How do you respond?

For Christians: Lord, help me not to be fearful, stingy, but generous and giving – fill my heart with the gospel so that I will abound in good works and share my brother's burden.

For others: Look at the love God requires so that you might be able to receive the love the God gives.