

“Bring Them to Jesus”—Matthew 14:16-18

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Bring Them to Jesus”, is Matthew 14:16-18 → *Jesus said, “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.” They said to Him, “We have only five loaves here and two fish.” And He said, “Bring them here to Me.”* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord (cf. 1Timothy 1:2). Amen.

The expectations for perfection which people place on others in life is rather interesting. For instance, when one buys a new product naturally one expects it to work perfectly. If it doesn't, there is the expectation for the provider to either make it work perfectly or replace it with a perfect one. That's only fair, right? However, even then it may function properly but not according to your expectations. The same could be said for expectations of services paid for and rendered.

There are many who place such expectations for perfection especially on the “professionals,” usually when it comes to suffering and struggles on physical, emotional and psychological levels. They may seek out a doctor, a psychologist, a teacher, a pastor or others “trained”

in a particular field of expertise to help or heal them—or at least tell them how to get rid of their suffering and struggle. Frustration quickly arises when diagnoses, treatments and advice do not bring the healing for which they were trained. Self-righteous judgments about incompetence, many times accompanied by the sins of contempt, slander and fits of rage, flow from the heart and mind into words and actions. “That doctor is just a quack and doesn’t know anything!” “I tried to follow the plan she gave me but it didn’t work. What does she know?” “It’s just so hard to find good help nowadays!” “Where’d that driver get his license? From a Cracker Jack box?” (Oops! That kinda slipped in there. That’s a different sermon.) However, it does show you how easily **all** such unfulfilled expectations for perfection become personified into one giant enemy.

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if you knew of just one person to whom you could bring anything and he’d remove your sufferings and struggles immediately? Many of the people in Jesus’ day considered Him just the guy. From the outset of His public ministry, Matthew says *His fame spread throughout all Syria* (cf. Matthew 4:24), from there through all the district of Capernaum (cf. Matthew 9:1) and even into Herod’s jurisdiction in Gallilee and Perea (cf. Matthew 14:1). And why was He so famous? Matthew 4:24 says *they brought Him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having*

seizures, and paralytics, and He healed them. Why seek out any others when you can bring your sufferings and struggles to Jesus and get perfect results?!

The constant pressure of the crowds simply desiring to *touch the fringe of Jesus' garment* (cf. Luke 8:44; Matthew 14:36) for help and healing was rather draining. Mark's account of the feeding of the five thousand reveals why Jesus and His disciples were in a desolate place with so many people. Mark 6:31 records Jesus telling His disciples, "*Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.*" *For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.* However, even as Jesus *withdrew . . . in a boat to a desolate place by Himself,* (recorded in our text) *the crowds . . . followed Him on foot from the towns* (cf. Matthew 14:1).

The dilemma came while Jesus was teaching God's Word and will to the people in words and deeds. His disciples asked Jesus to send the people into the villages for supper (cf. Matthew 14:15). Jesus responded in verse 16 of our text: *They need not go away; you give them something to eat.* What? How was this going to work with only *five loaves of bread and two fish?* (verse 17) The enormity of such a command was expressed by Philip when he said: *Two hundred denarii* (a denarius was a day's wage for a laborer) *worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little.* They knew Jesus was telling them to perform a miracle .

. . or was He?

Jesus' simple command in verse 18 of our text is precious: *Bring them here to Me*. I can picture His disciples give a sigh of relief, saying, "Phew! We're sure glad He's gonna take care of this and not make us try to do it!" Looked like their struggle with having to come up with some kind of a miracle was over.

It is actually a commentary of our human nature. We want the struggles and sufferings to be taken away by someone else so we can go on our merry way struggle and pain free, feeling like all is perfect in life again. But it's not perfect because it's all tainted by sin, from which all illnesses, suffering and struggles proceed. It's only natural that we'd desire perfection. After all, we were created for perfection. Unfortunately, every area of your life is filled with imperfection because of sin inherited from our first parents, Adam & Eve.

Even though you do not have the incarnate Christ to bring all of your struggles, pains, illnesses, emotional and mental issues, we are commanded in God's Word to bring them all to Him. Listen:

- Since Jesus lives as our great High Priest in heaven, Hebrews 4:16 commands us to *draw near to the throne of grace . . . with confidence*.
- Jesus promises in John 14:13 → *Whatever you ask in My name, this I will do*.

- Philippians 4:6 tells us to *not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*
- 1 Thessalonians 5:17 simply tells us to *pray without ceasing.*

The most common way Scripture describes bringing your struggles, sicknesses, conflicts, and so forth to Jesus is in prayer. Why? So that they will all be taken away and you'll be able to live "the dream" in hopes that this life will all run smoothly with no more struggles, problems, sufferings and so forth? I wonder how many of those people whom Jesus healed, cast out demons and dealt with their seizures had a perfect life as they walked away healed? None. They all experienced the grave imperfection of death and *the sting of death is sin* (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:56). There was a much greater help and healing Jesus was after—the healing of the sin-sick soul.

Look at the outcome of those commands to bring our suffering and struggles to Jesus in prayer:

- Hebrews 4:16 → *We draw near to the throne of grace . . . with confidence so that we may **receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*** You may pray for deliverance from the suffering and struggle but you will *find **grace*** (i.e. God's undeserved love and favor in the forgiveness of your sins) *to help in your time of need.* You may

continue in your suffering and struggle, or encounter more along your journey even if the present struggle/suffering is removed. Either way, you continue to move forward by grace expressed in Jesus' death and resurrection for you.

- Consider His promise in John 14:13 → *Whatever you ask in My name, this I will do, **that the Father may be glorified in the Son***. He acts because when you come to Jesus in faith, this is how the Father is glorified in your life—even in the midst of continual struggles and suffering.
- Philippians 4:7 tells you why *your requests* should be made known to God—so that *the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, **will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus***. The ultimate benefit in prayer is to *guard your hearts and your minds* to remain faithful to God by faith *in Christ Jesus*.
- This is why praying *without ceasing* is done while giving *thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you* (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:18). Bringing your struggles and sufferings to Jesus is about living by faith in Him *in all circumstances*, which makes you thankful for His forgiving grace no matter what the circumstances.

Not only did the people in our text experience a miracle of being fed with so little resources and a plethora of “leftovers” (i.e. *twelve baskets*

full of the broken pieces left over), but *they all ate **and were satisfied*** (cf. Matthew 14:20). By the way, the disciples were not “off the hook” either when Jesus took hold of their fish and bread. Just think the amount of faith it took for them to distribute the fives loaves of bread and two fish after Jesus *said a blessing . . . broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples* to distribute *to the crowds*. This miracle, as with all of Jesus’ miracles, served to reveal Him as the Christ, the Savior and Redeemer, sent by God to make us sinners forgiven, perfect, holy and righteous. It was intended not only to fill their stomachs and satisfy their physical hunger but to fill their spirits and satisfy what was required to make them righteous before Yahweh.

I have a practice of telling my doctors, “You should thank God that He created the body to heal itself. Otherwise, you might be out of a job. Who would cut into or treat a body which is not built to heal itself?” We seek help in the struggles and sufferings of our daily lives. But we do so knowing that those to whom we’re bringing them are not perfect and they certainly are not God. They’re simply making their best educated and experienced guesses as they work with you and your body, uniquely created by God. At the same time, we bring those sufferings and struggles to Jesus, the perfect Son of God, seeking His spiritual healing in the forgiveness of our sins and the Holy Spirit’s consolation. He even comes to you saying, *“Take, eat; this is My body . . . Drink of it, all of*

you, for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (cf. Matthew 26:26-28) Amen.

*Jesus says: Blessed are those
who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they shall be satisfied.*

(Matthew 5:6)

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