

"Jesus Needs You"

Matthew 14:13-21

There are few things more satisfying to us in life than to be needed. There is also nothing more frustrating and even depressing than to feel unneeded and unwanted. Knowing that should help us understand we have been created with purpose, in community and without all the abilities and resources to meet our own needs. God made us this way. Even a sinless Adam living in a perfect world needed a helper, so God created Eve.

Even though we all sin and prove our imperfectness, God still needs us to do His work of filling the world with His glory in our spheres of influence (home, work, relationships) and through the connections/partnerships we make with those around the world (friends, family, church planters, missionaries). He chose to do it that way. So it shouldn't surprise us that Satan does all he can to separate us from people, especially God's people, creating division and animosity so that we 'quit' working with people when things don't go right. Mind you, we don't always need Satan's help. Many times in our selfish sin natures we choose to not help, not volunteer, not to be with believers usually with lame excuses like I'm tired, busy, someone else can do it or I'm not really needed.

Jesus needs us to work together to send out the gospel and grow disciples. Here in Matt. 14:13-21 Jesus gives a training lesson for all disciples everywhere that 1) Jesus wants our help; 2) Jesus needs our help; and 3) Jesus will empower us to serve Him together in ministry. So as disciples, today, let's learn the lesson also intended for us as we seek to work together for the glory of God.

The miracle of the feeding of the 5000 (men, there could have been 15,000) is recorded by all four gospel writers; which is unique among Jesus' recorded miracles. Each gospel writer gives us a bit more info so we'll probably touch base on all of them while making Matthew's gospel our anchor point.

When we piece together the events prior to the feeding of the 5000, we understand that the disciples had just returned from their first short term missions' trip (Matt. 10; Mark 6:12-13) where we read in Mark's account that

They went out and preached that people should repent. ¹³ They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them

Then we have this interlude about Herod's beheading of John the Baptist because Herod (who was insanely paranoid) believed Jesus was John the Baptist risen from the dead. And he heard about Jesus' miracles and as we see later wanted to see some. Jesus has left his hometown of Nazareth where He was not well-received, and wanted to withdraw to a quiet place with the disciples to hear all about their ministry experience. But we read in Matt. 14:13

Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴ When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

They are there a long time, it's getting late and no one has anything to eat. In John's gospel, Jesus approached Philip and asked him 'Where shall we buy bread for all these people to eat?' Philip

was from Bethsaida which according to Luke was the closest town to this location. Philip crunches the numbers and probably remembers what shops are open and says '8 months wages' couldn't get enough food for all these people (possibly 20,000). A hockey game crowd. A boy has 5 small barley loaves (poor man's bread) and two fish (probably pickled sardines; his lunch) which Jesus will take and miraculously multiply. In all four gospel versions Jesus approaches His disciples to feed the crowd. Now, everyone is tired. The disciples just returned from their trip. They suggest Jesus send the crowds away so they can go home and eat. But Jesus says to His followers 'You feed them'. And here we understand as Jesus' disciples that

Serving with Jesus is Not Optional **(14:13-16)**

This is the lesson Jesus was teaching His disciples. You need to feed my sheep. Here it's physical food but His original call to them was to be fishers of men. Attract people to the gospel and then feed them spiritually. When you put both aspects of ministry together we find that there's always a practical side to ministry (food, cleaning, finances, sound, crowd control, paperwork, etc.) that prepares the setting for the learning, praying and growing aspect of ministry. Both are necessary and therefore everyone is needed. Most are more gifted in one aspect of ministry than the other. When Jesus saves us He calls us to join Him in ministry. If you reject being involved in ministry what is the evidence of your salvation? Because Jesus says He knows us by our fruit – the outward evidence of internal growth.

Why do we all need to serve with Jesus? Practically speaking,

People need a break (vv.12-13, 22-23)

The disciples have returned from their short term mission's trip. Jesus was hurting from John's death. They needed a break to debrief and pray and ask questions. Because when this miracle is over what does Jesus do?

²² Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. ²³ After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray.

Jesus needed a break. God and Jesus could do it all without us, but that's not how Jesus set up His church. Each one of us needs to be involved in ministry in some way so that no one is overworked and can enjoy breaks when necessary. But sometimes those breaks have to wait because there are people who have needs that must be met now. To be ready to serve with and like Jesus at those times especially,

We must develop hearts of compassion (v.14)

¹⁴ When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd,

He was disappointed and said to Himself 'Seriously! Can't I get a break? I just want to go home and watch Jeopardy!

No! "he had compassion on them and healed their sick."

Aside from the fact that He is God in the flesh, why when He saw the crowd was it so gut-wrenching (which is what compassion means)? Because they were spiritually lost and many were desperate for healing. They weren't hearing the truth from the Pharisees. They were not on the

narrow path to eternal life. We forget this don't we? Eternity is at stake for many. As well, many believers don't grow to the degree God wants us to grow. We are more interested in TV or sports or whatever good things we enjoy doing but sometimes use an excuse not to serve.

We must stop making excuses to avoid serving (vv.15)

The disciples were not immune to coming up with excuses. When Jesus said 'You give them something to eat!' the 'You' was emphatic!! Of course the disciples come up with the most repeated excuse in church history that we all use.

'I can't. I am not gifted. I don't have the resources.'

And Jesus responds back the same way He's always responded back to us:

'Show Me what you do have, stop telling Me what you don't have.'

We learn from John's gospel that Andrew found a boy who gave them his lunch. Which is a wonderful response. 'I don't have much, but Jesus, if you can use me or my resources I am willing to give it to You.' And we need to be reminded again and again that

Jesus Can Use our Limited Resources **(14:17-19)**

Here's something that you've probably never heard before and I know will stun many people when I say this: Jesus knows we have limited resources and have many limitations. He knows? Yes, He knows all of us perfectly. That should disqualify all of us from serving, right? Wrong!

He uses what we have (vv.17-18)

"We only have five loaves of bread [barley, so not even good stuff] and two fish [most likely salted sardines]".

We only have ... so many people. We only have ... this much money ... these limited resources ... seniors ... young people ... etc. Every church suffers from the 'We only's'. There should be a Gospel group out there that should call themselves the 'We Only's'! Every church has church prisoners too. Church prisoners? Yeah, those people who when asked to serve will say, 'I already did my time.'

I'm a firm believer that spiritual giftedness is not stagnant. That as we grow spiritually and physically our ministries should change because our giftedness can change as well. There will come a time when we are unable to do things we used to do. But that doesn't mean we're done. There are many ways we can serve Jesus. And if you're not sure I'd be glad to talk to you about it later.

The disciples think they are unable to feed the crowd. They were probably thinking, 'Does Jesus think we can do miracles?! Their missions' trip was short term but so was their memory! Because they just got back and here's what they did:

Mark 6:12 They went out and preached that people should repent. ¹³ They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

It never dawned on any of them that the miracles they did in Jesus' power to heal the sick could have been duplicated in Jesus' power to feed the crowd.

Jesus knows we are limited yet is willing to use what we have and add His power to our gifts and resources

Jesus blesses what we offer Him (v.19)

Jesus thanks God for what is available and then He can use it for meeting people's needs and glorifying God. He prayed probably a typical Jewish prayer of thanksgiving to God and then broke the bread to be divided. And somehow the bread multiplies. We're never told how exactly. They seat the hockey arena size crowd down in an organized fashion and split up and feed them like hot dog vendors at a game.

²⁰ They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

And here's the main lesson Jesus was teaching His disciples:

**Jesus Meets Other's Needs Through Us
(14:20-21)**

Like the disciples, many times when we're faced with a great need we don't believe we can meet. We can't, but Jesus can and He wants to partner with us. He wants to see that He can and still can do

Even the miraculous (v.20a, 21)

Can you imagine when the disciples first turned around, Each probably having a small piece of one of the loaves and some fish, that every time they reached down into the basket thinking there wasn't enough left that there continually was. And then after a while getting really excited because they knew that when they obeyed what Jesus said to do, He would provide the resources through His power.

What is it you're struggling to do that you know Jesus is asking you to do? Or what excuses or limitations have you given to Jesus that you've used to not do ministry because you want to keep your limited spare time for yourself? Let's be honest and confess that. We all struggle at times with that. Yet here's the thing; how many loaves of bread did the disciples themselves have coming into this situation? They didn't have a thing them-selves and no doubt they were hungry and looking for a sit down meal with Jesus. But how many baskets were left? 12. Why 12? One for each of the disciples who also had no food.

When you and I follow Jesus and serve with Him, the really cool thing that happens is when we serve others,

Our own needs are met (v.20b)

Serving with Jesus in meeting the physical or spiritual needs of those around us brings us great satisfaction. It's how the Spirit rewired us when we got saved. The things we used to look to be satisfied by no longer consume us. We find satisfaction in our relationship with God and being the hands and feet of Jesus. There are two things we need to see as Jesus sees here:

- 1) Jesus sees us as partners in His ministry. There is no such thing as 'your ministry'. All ministry is Jesus' ministry and He wants us to partner with Him to meet the physical and spiritual needs of others. While most of us have strengths in practical needs or spiritual needs, don't get caught up in only focusing on the one. Some believers who are extremely gifted in the practical aspect of ministry hardly grow spiritually, spending little time in studying God's Word with His people. However, you can also be so focused on becoming so spiritual that you ignore the needs of people right in front of you, which means you're gaining head knowledge but not heart knowledge.
- 2) The only way we will serve with Jesus is if we see people as Jesus does, with eyes of compassion. Even though He was tired and wanted to spend time alone with His disciples, He saw these lost people, many of whom had hobbled or were carried by others desperately looking for help from Jesus. While no doubt many of them were just along to get physically healed or just see a miracle and after this hoping for a free meal, Jesus still served them. Yes we need to be discerning, but lead with compassion and let God and Jesus sort it out with their hearts.

Jesus needs you. We need you. People need material and spiritual help. Jesus will empower us through the limited resources and gifts we offer. And when we partner with Him, there's more than enough blessing leftover.

* * * * *

If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us at oliviet@rideau.net