You give them something to eat

Luke 9:10-17

Key verse 13a “You give them something to eat.”

Today’s passage is very interesting story. As I remember this story was written in my text book of “Introduction of philosophy” class when I was a freshman in college. There was section that introduces religion. And I was curious about the Christianity, and I opened the section and read it. And today’s passage was there. In that section there was not many explanation about Christianity but only today’s story. Obviously according to the author of the textbook Jesus’ feeding 5,000 represents Christianity the most. In fact, today’s story is recorded in all 4 gospels.

When I think about today’s miracle I had several thoughts. The first thing is Jesus only performed to feed the crowds twice alone. He fed 5,000 and 4,000. Jesus did not perform miracles of feeding a large crowd other than the twice. According to John’s gospel people wanted to make Jesus king by force after experiencing such miracle but Jesus refused. Jesus himself did not perform such a miracle for himself even when Satan tempted him to make a stone into bread when he was hungry. But Jesus said, ‘Man does not live on bread but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.’ Jesus himself went through hunger while he served God here on earth. Jesus’ disciples such as apostle Paul went through hunger a lot too. So obviously it is not Jesus’ will to feed the crowd physically whenever we meet them. What then does he want to teach us through today’s miracle? What does he want us to learn from today’s passage? That is the question we want to think about today.

Part I. Jesus’ five loaves and the two fish (v.10-11)

Part II. Disciples’ five loaves and the two fish (v.12-17)

**Part I. Jesus’ five loaves and the two fish (v.10-11)**

Look at verses 10-11.

“**10When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida, 11but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.”**

In the previous message Jesus sent out the twelve with his authority and power to proclaim the kingdom of God and heal the sick. Their influence was great because Herod the tetrarch thought them as resurrected John the Baptist.

Now when they returned they reported to Jesus what they had done. They must have been very happy and excited because they experienced Jesus’ power and authority in their lives personally.

Then Jesus wanted to take them and give them rest because they worked so hard and they were tired. So he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida, but the crowds learned about it and followed him. The crowds did not want to lose Jesus.

When Jesus saw them how did he respond? He could say, “well, my twelve disciples are very tired. So I will help you later. So can you come to me later?” But verse 11b reads, “**He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.”**

Jesus welcomed them. Other gospels shows that he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without shepherd. Jesus helped them physically and spiritually. He not only proclaimed the kingdom of God but also healed the sick. Basically he did what he asked his disciples to do when he sent them out.

Compared to the huge crowds, what Jesus did was little. Jesus was one man, and he had the huge crowd. His voice was limited, and his healing was limited too. I don’t think he healed all of them at once by shouting, “All who are sick here be healed!”. I don’t think he spoke to them about the kingdom of God through one teaching. He must have proclaimed the kingdom of God one by one through many teachings, and he must have healed the sick very personally one by one. Indeed what Jesus did was Jesus’ 5 loaves and the 2 fish.

One day I was preparing a Sunday message based on John chapter 1 where Andrew spent time with Jesus and said to his brother, Simon Peter, “We have found the Messiah” and brought him to Jesus. At Saturday night my message was so poor that I laid down in deep despair. While I was half sleep in deep despair, Jesus whispered to me, “Do you know why I am the Messiah? I am the Messiah because I pay attention to small things.” With the revelation he reminded me that I had something in my message although it was very little. At least it was better than nothing because at least I wrote the title and the key verse. So I could overcome my depression, and delivered the messages. And arguably it was the most powerful message among all my messages.

Today’s message shows Jesus brought his own 5 loaves and the 2 fish before huge crowd. He did not try to change them all at once. He just did what he could do although it was little compared to the huge crowd.

I believe Jesus’ 5 loaves and 2 fish was also revealed when he healed a born blind man.

**John 9:1-7 “As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” 3“Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. 4As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. 5While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” 6After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes. 7“Go,” he told him, “wash in the Pool of Siloam” (this word means “Sent”). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.**

In order to heal the born blind man, Jesus did not have medical equipment. Of course he could heal him by his word. But he did not do so. Rather he used ground and saliva and opened the eyes of the born blind man. Why did he so? I believe the ground and the saliva was Jesus’ 5 loaves and the 2 fish. I believe Jesus wants to teach that everyone has the 5 loaves and the 2 fish because everyone has ground and saliva.

Jesus wants to reveal that everyone can do the work of God in a given situation because everyone has ground and saliva. Indeed in today’s passage, Jesus helped the crowds with his own 5 loaves and the 2 fish which is to speak to them about the kingdom of God and healed those who needed healing.

**Part II. Disciples’ five loaves and the two fish (v.12-17)**

Look at verses 12-14a.

**12Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to him and said, “Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here.” 13He replied, “You give them something to eat.” They answered, “We have only five loaves of bread and two fish—unless we go and buy food for all this crowd.” 14(About five thousand men were there.)**

When it was late the twelve disciples came and advised Jesus. They were very responsible people because they thought about food and lodging of the crowd in advance.

But Jesus surprised them by saying “You give them something to eat.” Why did he say so? It is because he wanted them to participate in his work. So far, Jesus’ work was to speak about the kingdom of God and heal the sick. Now Jesus’ work would be feeding the crowd physically. These 3 works, feeding the crowd with the word of God and bread, and healing the sick is Jesus’ work for the people. And Jesus wanted his disciples to participate in it by giving what they had.

In the world there are tons of problems. And there are some people who recognize the problems before others. Problems will not be solved but remain as they are if those people who have a sense of problem do not participate in solving the problem.

As I see our culture, one of great points of our culture from God’s point of view is this: People who had troubles try to do something for others so that others may not suffer from the same problems. In another words those who had suffered in the past give what they have for others. Indeed what they give is their 5 loaves and the 2 fish.

Nancy Reagon, the wife of the past president Ronald Reagan started to do something to cure Alzheimer’s disease when she saw her husband suffered from Alzheimer. Another is AMBER alert system. It was enacted when [Amber Hagerman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AMBER_Alert#Amber_Hagerman), a 9-year-old was abducted and [murdered](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murder) in [Arlington, Texas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arlington,_Texas), in 1996. Amber system can send text messages for vehicle information which is used for kidnapping children. I just recently read one man’s story that he was a gambler and by God’s grace he overcame it. Then he started to help those who are suffering from addiction of gambling. What they do is very biblical because Jesus told his disciples ‘You give them something to eat’ when they had a sense of problem for the food and lodging of the crowds. What they do in fact is to bring their 5 loaves and 2 fish.

When Jesus replied, ‘you give them something to eat’ the disciples thought they could not because they had only 5 loaves and the 2 fish and there were 5,000 men.

But the important thing is that they had something although it was very small compared to the huge crowd. The truth is ‘everyone has something to give.’ But since what he has is so small that he may not even think about bringing it to Jesus.

One day I read **Matthew 14:16-18 “Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.” “We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,” they answered. “Bring them here to me,” he said.”**

When I read the word, ‘bring’ it was vibrated in my heart. When I was born again, my born again key verse was vibrating in my heart. And immediately I realized that our problem comes from not bringing our loaves and fish. Why do we not bring them? It is too small to our eyes, and we cannot see that it will change the situation or solve the problem. But there is one important thing we need to learn here. Jesus did not say, ‘You take the five loaves of bread and two fish and take care of the crowd.” But he said, ‘Bring them here to me”. The emphasis is ‘bring’ and ‘to me.’ It is the Lord Jesus who would feed the crowd or perform miracles. We will not. All he asks us to do is ‘’just bring our 5 loaves and 2 fish to him.”

There was one young man in Italy. His mother was a devote believer, and his father worked in railroad station. And they were very poor. One day his father invited several friends to his house without notice to his mother. As the young man saw his mother, her face became pale when she saw the friends of her husband. But it was too late because they already came. And all they had in their house was a handful of spaghetti noodles. Then he saw his mother who suddenly sang hymn loudly and boil the water. As the young man watched, his mother put the handful of spaghetti noodles in the boiling water in a big pot, and it disappeared as if nothing happened. Then she began to take the noodles from the pot. At that night they all ate and there was left over. This is one of actual story happened in Italy. The young man could learn his mother’s faith and he was amazed. By faith his mother brought her 5 loaves and 2 fish to Jesus and praised the Lord believing he would answer her prayer.

And the bible, the word of God, reveals that everyone has his or her own five loaves and the two fish. Do you believe this? “Everyone” because everyone is created in the image of Jesus, and Jesus asks us ‘you give them something to eat.’ If we do not have anything to give he would not ask.

For example, we can give one second of prayer for others when they may hear the message of the kingdom of God. We can offer one second of prayer for those who are sick. We can pray for one second for those who need bread.

When Jesus said ‘you give them something to eat’ it was invitation to participation. It was invitation to sharing. And it was invitation to giving. It was invitation to bringing. Love is to share. Love is to participate. Love is to give. Love is to bring.

It is so clear and it is the will of Jesus that he wants us to participate in his work when he wants to speak about the kingdom of God, heal the sick, and feed people with bread. He wants us to share what we have. In this way he wants us to love one another through him.

Through many years of my experience with my brothers and sisters in the Lord, I began to notice some of the 5 loaves and 2 fish of others.

I can see missionary Lydia Hopeman’s 5 loaves and 2 fish – something she shares when others need. Arguably, as much as I know, she is the most generous person in inviting guests to her house. Usually it is not easy to invite guests to our home. It is especially so to women coworkers because they have to take care of all the details and services. But somehow missionary Lydia is the most generous in inviting people to her house. Our whole family also stayed in her house for 2 weeks when we moved from Long Beach to Downey. At that time our house in Long Beach was sold, but we could not close the escrow of the new house in Downey. So we were wondering where we could stay for 2 weeks. We did not have money for hotels. Thanks to her generosity we could stay at her house, and our moving was smooth.

Missionary Mary Yoon is the most generous in inviting guests to eating fellowship. As much as I remember she never missed to serve guests who visit LA for the last 33 years. Praise God! I believe her generosity is more than her 5 loaves and the 2 fish.

During our Spring Bible Conference I was amazed to see missionary Noah Jang and he could dance. Wow! It was something. His role was not big, but it was amazing to my eyes because he participated. I feel that he offered his 5 loaves and 2 fish. Our drama and singspiration was fantastic because many people participated although their role might not be a major. When so many people gave what they had it was beautiful. The kingdom of Go was there with great joy and laughter and Jesus was revealed.

Indeed everyone has something to give. When Jesus said, “you give them something to eat” it is implied that they had something. Indeed we all have something. Jesus wants us to give what we have. He wants us to pay attention to what we have even if it is little and bring it to him. He does not want us to pay attention to what we do not have and complain.

So this is what Jesus wants us to learn through today’s passage. Jesus wants us to give something when he wants to feed people with the word of God, and heal the sick, and feed them with physical bread.

Now there is another teaching we can learn from Jesus. Jesus taught the importance of believing environment. Look at **14 “(About five thousand men were there.) But he said to his disciples, “Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each.”**

Men were only 5,000. So if we add women and children it would be more than 10,000 people. And all they had was the 5 loaves and two fish. So the word in verse 14 starts with ‘But’. Jesus asked his disciples to ‘have them sit down in groups of about fifty each.” What is the outcome of this? **Verse 15 “The disciples did so, and everyone sat down.”** What does this mean? It means believing environment was created through the obedience of Jesus’ disciples.

Jesus’ disciples never experienced such a thing of feeding 5,000 with the five loaves and the two fish. But they did not ask Jesus, “Why?” when he asked them to have the crowds sit down in groups of about fifty each. Indeed their faith and obedience created the believing environment where Jesus could perform miracles.

Today’s passage also teaches why Jesus wants us to involve us in his work. It is not because he wants to take advantage of our labor but he wants to share his compassion and power. Most of all he wants to share himself. He does not need our labor or participation being almighty God. He has enough power to do all things by himself if he wants. But he asked his disciples to bring the 5 loaves and the 2 fish. He asked them to have the crowd sit down in groups of about fifty each. Then after taking the loaves and the fish and breaking them he gave them to distribute to the crowds. Why did he want us to involve? It was to share himself and his love and compassion and power. It was to share his joy and thanks that comes from serving the Father.

Look at verses 16-17.

**16Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. 17They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.**

Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish.

After taking the loaves and the fish he looked up to heaven and prayed. His prayer was thanks prayer. He thanked for the 5 loaves and 2 fish. He thanked his father who would answer his prayer.

After thanks prayer he broke them and he gave them to his disciples to distribute them to the people. Then they could all ate and were satisfied and there was left over of 12 basketfuls of broken pieces. The key word here is ‘all’ and ‘satisfied’. They all ate and were satisfied.

In conclusion, what does Jesus wants to teach through today’s passage although he does not want us to perform miracles and provide physical bread for the crowd all the time? He wants us to participate when he wants to feed the people with the word of God, and heal the sick, and provide their physical bread. To bring what we have to Jesus, to share what we have, give what we have to Jesus although they may be small is the way for us to love one another just as Jesus loves us.

One word: you give them something to eat.