

FROM THE SERVANT GENERAL

THE WAY FORWARD IN CHRIST (Part 27)

TAKING ON THE MIND OF JESUS

Today's gospel
Mark 6:34-44

People in the world are lost. They are like sheep without a shepherd (v.34a), seemingly with no one guiding them and caring for them. Into such a situation, Jesus comes together with his disciples. He intends to care for the people, and involve his disciples in doing so. So Jesus began to teach the vast crowd many things (v.34b).

In this gospel passage, Jesus is also teaching us some important basic mindsets that we need to have, if we are to participate in caring for the flock. We need to overcome our human way of thinking so that we can put on God's mind.

First, we see Jesus teaching the people. He was giving spiritual and pastoral care. But what were the disciples concerned about? Material food! Now yes it was already very late and they were in a deserted place with no food (v.35). So it was reasonable for the disciples to be concerned about the need of the people. Very commendable. Very thoughtful of them.

But that is not how Jesus thinks! Once when his disciples begged him to eat, he said, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work." (Jn 4:34). When the opportunity is there, nothing should stand in the way of proclaiming the gospel and teaching the people. Certainly not physical hunger. Satisfying the hunger of the soul is of far greater importance than satisfying the hunger of the body.

Jesus of course is compassionate. He in fact offered his very life for us. So there is no question about his concern for our needs, both physical and spiritual. But there are times when we think we know more than he does, as to what is appropriate in a particular time or situation. We might think it is lacking in compassion to allow people to go hungry (even just for a while), when it is precisely true compassion to want to feed the soul rather than just the body!

Second, Jesus gives instructions to his disciples, "Give them some food yourselves." (v.37a). As his instruments, we will hear these instructions many times. God works through us. Jesus formed his group of disciples precisely to be able to pass on the work to them. At some point, we simply need to be the ones out there working in the name of Jesus.

However, the disciples looked to what they had, and decided they did not have the resources to

accomplish what Jesus wanted done (v.37b). Isn't that so much like us?!

- We do not have enough workers.
- We do not have enough money.
- The challenges are too formidable.
- The work is beyond our capability.
- That is not possible.

We need to know that Jesus will not tell us to do something that we, under his anointing and the empowerment of the Spirit, cannot do! It may seem that we cannot do it, and that is very natural, because we who are weak human flesh are being tasked to do the very work of God. But that is what happens when we think with our human minds and look to our human resources. We balk, and we end up not doing what God wants.

This brings us to the third point. We do fall short, on our own we will fail, but if we truly do God's work according to the direction of Jesus, then the Holy Spirit will empower us. And we know God can work miracles. Nothing is impossible for Him. And Jesus already said that if we have faith the size of a mustard seed, then nothing will be impossible for us! (Mt 17:20). Why? Because we are doing God's work. Because we are mere instruments.

The problem is when the instruments think they know better than the Master.

What needs to happen is for us to just offer to God what we have, however small or inadequate this might be. The disciples brought five loaves and two fish to Jesus (v.38), and he performed a miracle. With this small resource, he fed five thousand men (v.44), and many more women and children with them.

How do we take on the very mind of Jesus? "And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples to set before the people" (v.41). Jesus did four things that we need to be mindful of.

First we need to look to heaven. We look to the One whose work we are doing, so we will have the proper perspective. When we look at ourselves we see all the reasons why we would fail. When we look to God in faith, knowing that He is the all-powerful Almighty, then we can just confidently present ourselves as willing instruments.

Second, as we are the instruments by which God feeds His people, we need to be blessed. Both offering (bread and fish) and offerors (disciples) need to be blessed. We do holy work. We need to be purified. We need to be growing in holiness. While God can make use of any willing instrument, even the sinner that we all are, He can make greater use of purer and nobler vessels (2 Tim 2:20-21).

Third, we need to be broken. We need to be humbled. Oftentimes this comes through affliction. Being laid low enables God to raise us up. This is the very way of Jesus (Phil 2:5-11). This is the way of the cross. This is the way of redemptive suffering.

Finally, we and what we have to offer are given out and set before the people. When we have been prepared, we go out to where the needy people are. God uses us to satisfy the hunger their hearts and souls.

And that indeed is what will happen. As we take on the very mind of Jesus. As we look to our Master in heaven. As we are blessed and broken and given away, people will all eat and be satisfied (v.42). And guess what? There will be so much more food left over (v.43). Our talents, gifts and resources will be multiplied! We will have more than enough. What used to be meager and lacking will become much and overflowing.

Jesus has many followers. There are many who are willing to become his disciples. And indeed they are very much needed, because God has already decided to work through human instruments. But God can only truly use them if they take on the mind of Jesus.

The book of Job teaches us that God the Almighty is someone way over us and beyond our capability to fully understand. This then is the challenge. Can we think like Christ? By God's grace, and our humble acceptance of Him in our lives, we can.

May we, like Paul, be able to say: "For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?' But we have the mind of Christ." (1 Cor 2:16).

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