

THE SECRET OF FEEDING OTHERS

(Bro. Bakht Singh, Balance of Truth, 1970, July, August)

“They need not depart, give ye them to eat’.

Our Lord revealed a great mystery in this simple statement from Matt. 14: 15–21. The disciples were feeling somewhat puzzled when the Lord said these words. They saw a great multitude which had been with the Lord Jesus for about three days. They had come to see His miracles and to hear Him speak but now they were feeling very sorry for them because they were so many and in a desert place (verse 15).

First of all it was evening time, and secondly it was a desert place and the disciples did not see any possibility of the multitude getting any food. Naturally they were feeling truly sorry for that hungry multitude so they went to the Lord Jesus Christ with suggestions and proposals. May be they first of all formed a committee or conference among themselves as to what they should suggest to Him. They may have been thinking that the Lord had no thought for the hungry multitude, so were hoping that He would send them away while it was still day. Now however they remembered that these people had come from home, and where could they get food in the desert? So feeling very sorry for the people they brought a suggestion or proposal to the Lord Jesus Christ. “Will You please stop preaching and talking, and stop performing miracles and ask these people to go home, or let them go to nearby villages to buy food and come tomorrow for further teaching and miracles. Let us see how that works”. They were saying this through sympathy and suggesting how the hungry multitude could be filled. But our Lord answered clearly: ‘They need not depart, give ye them to eat’.

Now the Lord was saying two difficult things. “They need not depart” and “Give them to eat”. The disciples were saying, “Look at the conditions, and let them go”, but our Lord said: “They need not depart”. Then He said: “Give ye them to eat”. They were still more greatly puzzled as to how they, who were few in number, could feed such a vast multitude, for there were about 5000 men, beside women and children.

We have to be born again if we can truthfully and honestly say that our Lord Jesus Christ has become our personal Saviour, then we are bound to give spiritual bread to the hungry people wherever we are. Wherever we may live whether in village or city, we will find in our neighbourhood or locality many hungry peoples and when we see them doing deeds of shame and living in darkness, a life of defeat we naturally feel sorry for them and like these disciples we also try to give them some suggestion to go somewhere to be fed. We feel so sorry for their hungry condition. It is human suggestion which we generally give to those who are in need but no mere advice will satisfy any man. It is a human tendency to send them somewhere else, but the Lord’s command to all of us is: “Give ye them to eat”. If we have received the bread of life from the Lord Jesus Christ, then we have with us plenty to offer to those who are hungry and thirsty. They may not accept our offer, but we have the privilege to offer what we have. That is a miracle which the Lord tells us we can use to satisfy the hunger of the people. Verse 17. The disciples confessed their poverty as they saw the multitude. It is only when we confess our poverty, that the hunger of others can be satisfied, and when we know exactly our true inward spiritual condition; yet think we have plenty to give, it is then we cannot satisfy the hungry and helpless and cannot be of use to the Lord.

In Matt 14: 18 we have the Lord's command: "Bring them hither to me". Now whatsoever they had, they brought before the Lord Jesus Christ. Even though there were only five loaves and two fishes, yet they were asked to bring whatever they had with them. Unless He blesses them these things cannot be multiplied. We have got to learn that lesson, and whatever we have and how little it may be, it must be brought to the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ with simple faith: Say to Him: "Lord, even though I am feeling weak and empty I bring everything to Thee. I do not know what to say, or how to say it. Lord, use me entirely for Thyself."

In the same way whatever money is in your possession do not hesitate to give unto the Lord. That is God's way of using us. But whenever we try to use what we have for ourselves, we find it does not matter how much we get, it will not satisfy us, and because we try to use our own wisdom and knowledge we fail. In faith rather, we must bring to the Lord all we have.

In verse 19 of Matthew 14 there is divine order. Whenever food is served to a multitude, it is not a simple job. They all flock to one person, and say: "Give me first". It was not a simple thing to control so vast a crowd. When the disciples began to distribute the loaves, they would all crowd round the disciples. So the Lord commanded that they had to sit down in order. We cannot do the work of God without order and people don't like divine order. They rebel against God's word, and the servants of God have got to see that divine order is maintained wherever they seek to serve God.

It was a large multitude, a hungry and mixed multitude, but the Lord commanded the people to sit down on the grass. We have to follow divine order, if we want hungry people to be fed, and to be satisfied through our labour. Let us not rebel against divine order. God is the God of all order, and we must learn to work in divine order and see that divine order is maintained.

I have seen in this country large crowds and how hard it is to control the crowd. However, we must learn this simple secret so as to maintain order in the house of God. Show reverence and respect for the house of God. I saw in many parts of Europe and America people going into the house of God without giving due reverence. If we have learned how to come into the house of God, how to kneel and show reverence, then we have learned divine order. I have seen how young people behave in large cities, and how often the pastors find it difficult to control the young people even in an ordinary Sunday gathering. Though men do not follow divine order, they seek to bring in man's order everywhere. But God's people must not rebel against divine order in the house of God. God's servants must learn how to bring in God's order and when divine order is maintained, those who love God will not rebel against it. It is only when the Lord's order is maintained that the Lord blesses.

You can imagine how the crowd gathered together. It appears as if men sat one the side and the women and children on the other, because the men were about 5000, besides women and children. God has an order for family life, for church life and for ordinary Sunday gatherings.

He blessed the bread.

When divine order is maintained there is opportunity for God to bless. Our Lord looked up to heaven and blessed the bread and brake it. Unless things are blessed by God, they cannot satisfy. God blesses whenever you claim that blessing. Almost all Christians have the habit of saying grace before they have food, but though they claim God's blessing, they often do not believe God has blessed the food, because they seem to get much more joy in mutton than in dhal. If you believe the Lord has blessed your food you will get equal joy in any kind of food. Instead, how often you scold your wife if there is no mutton or fish or anything else according to your taste. I believe all husbands scold their wives because they cannot get the food they want, yet they pray solemnly "God bless the food", but have no faith that God will do so. I believe from experience, from the time the Lord saved me, that I no longer worry about my food. I do not care what kind of food is given to me. I will never murmur or grumble. I believe from my heart the Lord blesses the food for me and it becomes good for me, and I can enjoy the food whatever it may be; and it is quite true that the Lord does bless the food when you ask Him.

Here were a few barley loaves and a few fishes and though perhaps they were not properly cooked, He blessed them and multiplied them and doubtless made them more tasty. In the same way whenever we claim God's blessing on our labours, we find it works. Sometimes we do not know what to say. We feel frightened to talk to people because we think they are highly educated and we are not. "I am illiterate", we think, "and they will not believe me. I cannot speak because I have no understanding or knowledge. I don't know any thing properly". Remember He will bless the broken words which you may utter. Broken words have power behind them. I have had that experience. How can these broken words convince so and so? But I discovered that every word was a blessing to somebody. If the Lord can bless the loaves, surely He can bless the words we speak. This is true in every case. If we want our neighbours and co-workers to be blessed through us, let us not be afraid to say to the Lord: "Touch my tongue and bless the word I speak in Thy name, for we know that men are in misery and sorrow and they want a message" God can use you if you are a willing co-worker and you can be used to satisfy the hunger of others.

Though the Lord Jesus Christ blessed the loaves and fishes, the disciples had the honour to go and distribute. He did not ask strong sturdy men to serve. There was a great crowd of 5000 men besides women and children. There would have been at least 10 000 people and the disciples could have said "Lord we are only 12 people, how can we distribute so much food, to so many. Can we select from this multitude strong men to serve?" But there is no mention of that here. Only the disciples are mentioned, verse 20. Others could not be co-workers of the Lord Jesus Christ. If they had wanted, they could have had volunteers that day. They could have said: "We all will distribute," but others could not be co-workers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Only the disciples had that privilege! Only those who are truly born again and follow the Lord, can be His co-workers. The disciples were carrying bread blessed by the Lord Jesus Christ, and only the Word which is blessed will satisfy. Many have much knowledge and can argue very effectively. They have got so many books that it will take 75- years to go through them, and when they speak they do not do good, but harm. Other people they say only a few words but you get strength and inspiration from their broken words, because every word which is being spoken is being blessed by the Lord Jesus Christ. It is quite true that through your faith, the sentence which you utter in His name will be blessed. But you must pray every morning "Lord, anoint my lips, my tongue, my throat today. I acknowledge my foolishness. But Lord, I would like to help so and so, so help me to give the right word for the

people". Then you will find throughout that day somebody is given the bread of life through you. Even a few words are sufficient to answer the questions of a seeker provided the Lord Jesus speaks it.

"And they did all eat and were filled" verse 20. There was no need for the people to be hungry. When we see a crowd, those who supervise the food will advise the servers to serve a little at first, and will say to them: "Be careful lest the food should run short". In fact they dilute the sambar with water to make it sufficient for the crowd. So the disciples must have said: "Five thousand people and how can we serve so many?,"—but we see that the 5000 ate and were full. They were given as much as they wanted. So whenever a hungry soul comes to you, try to satisfy their hunger with the Bread of life. There are some who come with a small problem and some with large and many problems, but we must be prepared to answer every question, and to satisfy everybody. Have patience to hear their story, it does not matter how long it may be. Do not be impatient, but listen very patiently because, though to you the trouble may not be serious, it is very important to them, and we have sufficient food to give for all their problems. By that faith the people were given to eat, and they ate, and were filled.

"And they did all eat and were filled and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets" verse 20. The first thing we learn from them that our Lord does not like wastage. That is why He commanded the disciples to go and gather the fragments that remained, and at His command they went on gathering those fragments of broken bread with their hands and put it all in baskets. Why? Because the Lord does not like wastage. There is a simple lesson here. If we as disciples of the Lord. Jesus have to satisfy the hungry, and especially the hunger of the multitude, then we must learn that lesson.. There should not be any wastage in our life. Yet we waste many things. We waste our time, our energy, our food, and many other things, and that is why our lives are not satisfying the hungry people. These fragments were not thrown away for a purpose. They were gathered with a deep eternal lesson to be taught to them and us.

God does not like wastage. Can we say sincerely that our time is being profitably spent, or do we waste the time in ordinary conversation or in things of low value. How do you spend your time? Supposing you have one or two hours to wait somewhere, for example, you have to wait at the station for a train, or you have to wait for a bus. In such ways we often have to spend much time. Do you spend it by reading magazines or books, or do you look at the walls or see people going by? Can you say you make the best use of your time anywhere? Whether in the bus station or railway platform, time should be spent profitably either in reading the Bible or in giving a testimony or in some other useful way. You must make the best use of every second because there are hungry and needy people to meet and satisfy.

The Lord performed a miracle, not for the sake of the miracle. He was teaching His disciples a lesson thereby. The disciples were the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Lord was saying in effect: 'If you are My disciples, then you are My co-workers. I have come into the world as the Bread of life to satisfy the hunger of the multitude, and you, My co-workers have a duty to fulfill. The world is like a desert, and the whole world is in darkness, and all the multitude are weary of many burdens, and have no place to go to be satisfied or to receive heavenly bread. You must know how to distribute the Living Bread.'" They were being taught by that lesson how the hunger of the people could be met. May we also learn by that simple lesson how we should not waste our time. Our money too should not be wasted or misspent. We have to give an account. I have had the privilege to spend about ten months in travelling other countries and in all those months, I bought only three

things, two tubes of tooth paste and a tooth-brush. That was all! The Lord did not give me liberty to buy anything else, because I knew there was a better use for the money, so the Lord kept on supplying all my needs from heaven, and there was no lack. The Lord gave many gifts also in the shape of money and He also gave me the privilege of spending that money for other people. I learnt this lesson at the beginning of my conversion.

Wastage of Money

In the beginning of my Christian life I used to gather very small copper coins because the Scripture says if anybody asks we should give. One day a beggar came to me and asked me for alms, I wanted to give him a copper, but the Lord spoke to me. "This is my money. You have no right to give away my money". I wanted to give but I could not. I said, "I never thought that way, Lord," but the Lord said; "It is my money", and the Lord told me "I bought you with a price and everything of yours belong to me, whether time or money. All belongs to Me." I asked the Lord's forgiveness, and He taught me that even though it might be a small amount I should not waste it unnecessarily. Even though you feel thirsty and hungry, be sure you spend your money in the will of God. Then you will find how you can help others, and also how you can get joy in helping others. Do not waste your money, howsoever small an amount it may be, for it is not your money. Pray before you spend it. Pray every time till the Lord gives the answer, because through you He wants to satisfy the hungry all around.

Wastage of Energy

It is the same about your energy also. You cannot say you can sleep as many times as you like. You say "Lord, I am feeling tired I want to sleep" But He says, "It is my body and not your body. I paid the price". Learn the lesson of how to sleep and when to sleep. In that way you will learn to help other people with your money and time, and energy.

Nothing Wasted

Nothing should be wasted in our life. When the disciples fed the multitude there were hungry people from many villages. They were with the Lord for more than three days and when they went back perhaps they had to face angry masters, servants, wives, children, husbands, etc., who would naturally ask; "Where did you go? You forgot your shop— home—children etc". Just imagine the multitude being away from business, or shop, wives, husbands and children for three days. Servants would have to face angry masters, and what do you think they might do when questioned? They may have put a crumb in the mouth of the master, out of the fragments that were left out in the baskets and they would have said, "Before you are angry eat this," and the master might ask: "Where did you get this?" We see from the story that the disciples went into the boat, and the baskets of fragments probably remained on the grass. They were gathered and put in baskets for a purpose. They were not left behind for the villagers or for selling, but the multitude could take them for their people at home, or business or shop etc. When the Lord blesses, even the fragments have the power to satisfy the hungry. Nothing was wasted.

You will find that wherever you go, the Lord will do something through you. That is His purpose for us. We have the words of life to give a message to others, and we have the power of God to help others. Even when we do not say anything, our presence can bring blessing. When you see some people it brings anger to your heart. Whenever you see certain other people you feel like weeping, they look so

miserable; wherever they go they cause tears; and wherever you meet them they are carrying burdens. Some people by their very presence give joy, and that should be our attitude. We have no right to ask anyone to go away from us. We have been given a message by God for every one, and we are also given a blessing for everyone. Do not think how you can send them away, but pray; "Lord! give me the privilege of satisfying these men who are hungry," and He will surely help you. Do not send them away. Matt. 14:20. "THEY NEED NOT DEPART; GIVE YE THEM TO EAT" The word "ye" means you.

May this be our daily experience.