

Bring Them to Jesus

- † What you have.
- † Everyone you know.
- † Your feelings too.

In the Name of Jesus, the Lover of your soul, children, parents, and teachers listening to God’s Word:

If you came to church and our whole property was covered with people, wouldn’t you wonder, “What are they doing here?” If there were thousands of men, women and children looking at you, wouldn’t you ask, “What do you want?” What if they were all hungry and wanted something to eat? Or how would you feel if many of them were sick and wanted you to make them better?

It happened to Jesus and His disciples, only much worse. Jesus had just found out that His relative, the last prophet of the Old Testament who also announced Jesus’ coming as the Messiah – John the Baptist had been beheaded by one of the evil King Herods to settle a drunken promise to a dancing girl! Then His Twelve disciples came back all excited from their first mission trip, like teenagers with exciting stories to tell. About the same time crowds of people clamoring for healing came so thick and needy, Jesus had no time to eat. Vacation anyone? No one was concerned about Jesus, but He cared for His disciples. He said, **“Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while.”** (Mark 6:31 EHV)

Grieving Jesus, tired disciples, pressing crowds... imagine if you’re one of Jesus’ Twelve disciples piled into a boat, sailing across the north end of the lake near a little town called Bethsaida, but the crowds beat you there? How is that possible on the Sea of Galilee? It’s really a lake, 8 x 13 miles, just over half the size of Minnesota Lake Mille Lacs. Mille Lacs is about 207 square miles, the Sea of Galilee only 64. Eager crowds could run along the shoreline and beat the boat. Tired and hungry – “hangry,” right?

But that’s not how Jesus feels. Fully human, the Son of the virgin Mary, Jesus feels everything we do, suffers fatigue and hunger. But Jesus is also the Son of God, true God Himself. So Jesus never sinned by being selfish. He always cared more about others and most about His heavenly Father. Jesus shows us what God is like. **“When Jesus got out of the boat, he saw a large crowd. He had compassion on them and healed their sick.” “His heart went out to them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. He began to teach them many things.”** (Mark 6:34 EHV) **“He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God. He also healed those who needed healing.”** (Luke 9:11 EHV)

That’s why you can always bring everyone you know to Jesus. He welcomes one and all. Later that same day Jesus promised, **“Whoever comes to me, I will never cast out.”** (John 6:37) As one preacher put it, “There is no place so remote, no hour too late, no lunch too small, no crowd too great for God to make your cup overflow.”¹ Your heart and life are like a cup. God keeps pouring more than enough.

Feeding the 5,000 is the one miracle reported by all four Gospel accounts – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Inspired by God the Holy Spirit, John writes much later and supplies extra details. He asked Philip first when He saw the crowd coming toward him, **“Where can we buy bread for these people to eat?” He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.”** Philip was quick with the math. **“Eight months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite.”** (John 6:5-7 NIV84) That’s about \$10,000 - \$20,000! Who would spend that much?

¹ Schroeder, Jonathan E. *Commentary on the Propers – Year A*. Adapted. (NPH, 2022). Proper 13, page 249.

All day long Jesus' question was hanging out there as He taught the crowds and healed the people. Silence all day as the disciples wondered what to do. Your feelings are safe with Jesus, even if God seems silent while you wonder. A quote attributed to Keanu Reeves says it well, "If you're going through hard times and you wonder where God is, remember that the teacher is always silent during a test."

Did the disciples pass this test? Not really. *When evening came, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place and the hour is already late. Send the crowds away, so that they can go into the villages and buy food for themselves."* (Matthew 14:15 EHV) Really? Send them away? Isn't that so much like us Americans these days, Christians too falling into this trap? Afraid we don't have enough – get rid of the problem. People saying things you don't want to hear? Silence them? Send them away?

That is not Jesus' solution. Our resources are limited, His are not. *Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."* (Matthew 14:16 EHV) John reports the only one who thought ahead to bring lunch. *Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here's a boy with five small barely loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"* (John 6:8f NIV84) Jesus' simple solution with a little boy's lunch: *"Bring them here to me."* All our possession too!

Human intellect is so nearsighted. We see only problems; God sees opportunities. We're blind to possibilities, powerless to make them happen. Maybe have money to help, as it seems the disciples had in their treasury. But stingy, greedy hearts? That's our sin. Our math doesn't fail, but our faith does.

Sometimes our math isn't so good either. Ever notice how messed up media crowd reports can be? If they like the candidate, big numbers. If not? Tiny crowd, bad talk. Estimates are that 30,000 people can stand in one acre packed in tight. But to sit down in groups might take all three acres of open land we have here. 5,000 men plus women and children might be hard to estimate, but our Lord had that covered too. *Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass.* (Mark 6:39) *He said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each."* (Luke 9:14)

Bring Them to Jesus – Everyone you know. All the sick and suffering. All who thought they could rely on themselves, but finally "ran out of aces." Everyone who lost at love. Or loved being lost. Everyone who follows the crowd for political solutions, science solutions, education solutions – human solutions to everything – though none of them can help when we stand before the Almighty Judge.

Here's Jesus according to God's written Word, the Bible. Remember His compassion because you can bring **Your feelings too.** Sometimes Jesus will test you to see if you will trust Him. He already has a plan and He has the power to bring it about. His compassion will carry Him to the cross to suffer and die for all our sins and to take away our guilt! His holy blood shed on the cross washed away all our worry, pride, selfishness. He displayed invincible power by rising from the dead. You're guilt-free, God says so!

Here's the proof of God's love for you and His power to save: Jesus *"took the five loaves and the two fish. After looking up to heaven, he blessed them. He broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples. The disciples gave the food to the people. They all ate and were filled. They picked up twelve basketfuls of what was left over from the broken pieces. Those who ate were about five thousand men, not even counting women and children."* (Matthew 14:19–21 EHV)

Bring Them to Jesus – What you have. Give thanks and ask God's blessings on your food. Wouldn't that help us dramatically with food allergies and eating disorders for God to bless our food?

Bring Them to Jesus: possessions, people, feelings. He is rich in overflowing abundance. He not only satisfied all those hungry 5,000 men plus women and children. Jesus also gave each of His twelve disciples a whole basket full of leftovers as a present to remind them that their math may fail, but God's power and love never will. And God wants none of His abundance to be wasted. Needy souls like ours and everyone who hears God's invitation to come and be healed, to be fed and saved – all will be satisfied by Jesus in Word and sacraments. We never run out of resources in Christ. **What you have, Everyone you know, Your feelings too – Bring Them to Jesus.** Amen.