

COMPASSION FOR THE MULTITUDE

NO. 453

A SERMON
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.
 He said, Bring them hither to me.”
 Matthew 14:17-18*

AS was Christ, my brethren, when in this world, so are we also. Such indeed is our calling of God. As Jesus was “the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” so He says to His disciples, “Ye are the light of the world.” How memorable are those words of our Lord—“As thou, Father, have sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world!” And how weighty are those expressions of the apostle—“We pray you *in Christ’s stead!*”—“We then, as *workers together with him!*” There is something more than an interesting parallel that I want you to observe. A rich allegory appears to be couched in the simple record of the evangelists.

The history of Christ is in type a history of His church. A skillful reader would soon think this matter out. You will remember how Christ’s church was wrapped in swaddling bands at the first, how she was laid in the manger of obscurity, how her life was conspired against by heathen kings. You will remember her baptism of the Holy Ghost, her trials and her temptations in the wilderness.

The life of Christ afterwards will soon be thought out by you as shadowing forth a picture of the career of the church. There is scarcely any point in the entire history of Jesus, from the manger at Bethlehem to the garden of Gethsemane, which is not besides its personal narrative, a typical and pictorial history of His church. Thus the Lord has been pleased to bequeath to His church a great example written in His own holy life.

As He raised the dead, so is she to do it through His Spirit that dwelleth in her. As He healed the sick, so is she to carry on a great healing ministry throughout the world. Or to come to our text, as Christ fed the hungry, so the church wherever she meets with those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, is to bless them in the name of Him who has said, “They shall be filled.”

Your business as a church today, and my business as a member of the church of Christ, is to feed hungry souls who are perishing for lack of knowledge with the bread of life. The case before us we think will furnish a noble picture of our duty, of our mission, and of what we expect the Master to do for us that we may work mightily for Him.

Let us endeavor first to glance at the whole scene, collecting into harmony the accounts given by the four evangelists, and afterwards we shall proceed to consider two practical lessons to be deduced from it.

This miracle is recorded by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. There is some little divergence in each, as there naturally would be, for no four spectators could give the same description of any one scene, but what one omits another supplies, a point that will be most interesting to one, had failed to strike another, while a third has been interested in something which the fourth had altogether omitted.

It appears that Christ had sought out a waste region near the town of Bethsaida. Bethsaida was a place which He had frequently visited. Earnestly, on another occasion, did He warn Bethsaida and Chorazin, reminding them that their privileges would rise up in judgment against them to condemn them for their unbelief. He had sought out this waste place for the purpose of retirement, or for the sake of both Himself and His disciples, that they might rest from their weary toils.

The people follow Him, they throng Him all day long. He preaches to them the Gospel, He heals their sick, and it was somewhere in the afternoon that the Master, ever patient and prescient of human wants, calls Philip to Himself. Now, Philip was of Bethsaida, and He said to Philip, “Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?” This He said to try him to see whether his faith was proof against misgiving.

Had Philip been a wise disciple, he would have replied, “Master, You can feed them.” But he was a weak follower of the mighty Lord. You know he afterwards proved his ignorance by saying, “Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth,” and he then received a mild rebuke—“Have I been so long a time with you, and yet thou hast not known me?” On this, Philip shows that he has not yet learned the lesson of faith. He cannot believe in anything he cannot see with the eyes of sense.

Puzzled and amazed, he betakes himself to his fellow disciples to talk over the matter. Now, Andrew suggests that there is a lad hard by that has five barley loaves and a few small fishes. Certainly, Andrew thinks though they will not be enough, *it is our duty to do our best*. So the loaves and fishes are purchased out of the scanty store that Judas handed out, not perhaps without some grief to his heart, that he should have to look so much after other people.

As the day wears on, and the sun begins to set, the disciples come to the Master. Though the proposal had been suggested by Him, they seem to think He has forgotten it. So they come to Him and say, “Master, send the multitude away.” They had thought over the problem of how to feed these people, and had come to the conclusion that they could not do it. As they could not feed them, the next best thing would be to send them away to provide for themselves.

Since they could not supply their necessities, they would endeavor to shut their eyes to their needs. “Master, send them away; let them go and buy for themselves.” The Master promptly replies, “‘They need not depart,’ there is no necessity for it, ‘give ye them to eat.’” Indeed, He spoke wisely. Why should hungry men depart from the householder, from Him who feeds all things, who opens His hand, and satisfies the desire of every living thing.

“Give ye them to eat,” said He, that He might bring out from them a fair acknowledgment of their poverty. “Master,” they said, “we have here but five barley loaves, and a few small fishes: what are they among so many?” Lifting up their eyes upon the vast assembled mass, they roughly calculate that there must be five thousand men, besides a fair complement of women and of children. The Master bids them bring those loaves and fishes. He takes them, but before He breaks them, being a God of order, He bids the people sit down in companies.

Mark, who is always such a keen observer, and paints like Hogarth all the little minutiae of the picture—says, they sat down on the green grass, as if it were exceedingly abundant and verdant just there. Then he adds, they sat down by companies, afterwards using a word, which is translated “in ranks” in our version, but the Greek is such as you would use if you spoke of a long range of beds in a flower garden—parterres. They sat down in green beds, as it were, with walks in between them.

Mark seems to have got the idea that they were like a number of flowers whom his Master went round to water. When they had all thus sat down, so that the strong might not struggle after the bread, and tread it under foot, and that the weak might not be neglected, all placed in their rows, then the Master lifted up His eyes before them all, asked a blessing, broke the bread, and gave it to the disciples, and also of the fishes.

The disciples went round and distributed to each man, to each woman and child, and they did eat. They had been fasting all day long, so I dare say we should not be very far wrong if, following the example of a countryman whom I once heard, we laid a marked emphasis on the word “did”—“They *did* eat!” They eat till their hunger was appeased, they eat till they were filled, they eat till they were abundantly satisfied.

Then, I could suppose, on the table, or on a spot of the green grass, where Christ had laid out the first bread and fishes, the fragments that lay there had in the meantime multiplied. One does not like the idea of the disciples going round to gather up the odds and ends and crumbs that had fallen from each man,

one would hardly think it would have been seemly. But here was bread that was not injured, that had not fallen in the dust or the mire—fragments, and they gathered up more than they had at first. Here too, we have a wonder. Things had been multiplied by division, and had been added to by subtraction. More was left than there had been at the first.

No doubt that was done to disarm doubt and to defeat skepticism. In after days, some of those men might say, “True, we did eat and were satisfied, or it seemed as if we did, but it might have been in a kind of dream.” That bread which was left, the twelve baskets full, furnished something solid for them to look at, so that they might not think it an illusion.

They gathered up the twelve baskets full. This seems to be the crowning part of the miracle. Our Lord Himself, in referring to the miracle in after days, constantly says, “When we fed five thousand with five barley loaves, how many baskets had ye? And when we fed four thousand, how many baskets full did ye take up?” as if the taking up of the baskets full at the end was the clenching of the nail to drive home the blessed argument that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God who gave His people bread to eat, even as Moses fed the Israelites with manna in the wilderness.

Having thus considered the facts, we shall take them as a basis upon which to build, God helping us, two practical lessons. The text and the miracle itself teach us, first, *our mission and our weakness*, secondly, *our line of duty and Christ’s strength*.

I. We are clearly taught here OUR MISSION AND OUR WEAKNESS.

Our mission! Behold before you, disciples of Christ, this very day, thousands of men, and women, and children, who are hungering for the bread of life. They hunger till they faint. They spend their money for that which is not bread, and their labor for that which satisfieth not. They fall down famished in your highways, perishing for lack of knowledge.

Still worse, when they faint, there be some who pretend to feed them. Superstition goes about, and offers them stones instead of bread, and serpents instead of fish. The Papist and the ceremonialist offer to sell these hungry souls something to gratify them, they try to feed, but it will not satisfy, they do but eat the wind and swallow the whirlwind. The infidel tries to persuade them that they are not hungry, they are only a little nervous, thus he mocks their appetite.

As soon will the body be satisfied with bubbles, or the mouth be filled with shadows, as the soul is satisfied with delusions and inventions of man. They faint, they famish, they are ready to die. Those who pretend to supply them do but mock and tantalize their needs. Nor can they feed themselves, their wallets are empty.

When Adam fell, he beggared all his posterity, neither man, nor woman, nor child among them is able to satisfy his or her own hunger. The ten thousands of your race in this land—in Europe, in Asia, in Africa, in America, and Australia—not one among them, should they all subscribe together, could find so much as one loaf upon which a single soul might feed. Barrenness, leanness, and sterility have seized upon all the fields of man’s tillage. They yield him nothing. He sows, but he reaps not; he ploughs, but obtains no harvest. By the works of the flesh no man living can be justified, and in the devices of human tradition or human reason, no souls can possibly find substantial comfort.

See ye, disciples of Christ, see ye the great need which is before your eyes. Open the eyes of your understanding now, let your bowels move, let your hearts beat with sympathy, let your souls be alive to pity—do feel for those millions! I beseech you, if you cannot help them, weep over them, let there be now before your mind’s eye a clear and distinct recognition of the many hundreds and thousands who are crying to you, “Feed us, for we famish—give us bread to eat, or we die.”

I think I hear you reason in your hearts and whisper one to another, “Who are we that we should feed this multitude, look at their hosts, who can count them? As the stars of heaven for multitude, so are the seed of Adam. These hungry, craving mouths are almost as numerous as the sands on the seashore, whence should we have that we should feed them to eat?” Even so. Yet remember, this is your mission.

Neither do any of you well to take up and adopt a weakness of faith that was illustrated by Philip’s questioning. If ever the world is to be fed, it is with Christ through the church. Until the kingdoms of the

world become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ, we are the warriors who must carry the victorious arms of the cross to the uttermost parts of the earth. We are the almoners of God's free bounty, until the fullness of the Gentiles be gathered in. God commands all men everywhere to repent, and we are to utter His mandate.

Oh, my brethren, you know how Jesus worked the work of His Father, you know how He went about doing good, but do you know how He said, "Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go unto my Father"? Let the words sink down into your ears. Let the vision rise perpetually before your eyes. See your work. Great as it is, dispirited as you may be by the great multitude who crave your help, yet recognize the appeal to your faith. Let the magnitude of the mission drive you more earnestly to the work instead of deterring you from it.

Do I hear you murmur, "The multitudes are great, and scant the supply. We have but five loaves, and they are made of barley, we have but two fishes, and they are little ones. The bread hardly suffices for ourselves, the fishes are so small that they will be more bones than meat. What are these among so many?"

"So I hear you tell us, sir, that we as a church are to feed the world, how can we? How few are our talents! We are not rich in substance, we have no wealth with which to supply our missionaries, that we may send them out by hosts to lift up the banner of Christ. We have little talent, there are not many among us who are learned or wise, we have not much eloquence. We feel, though we do not feel enough—

*'Fain my pity would reclaim,
And snatch the firebrand from the flame;
But feeble my compassion proves,
And fain must weep where most it loves.'*

Besides," some of you add, "what can I do individually? of what use can I be? And what can the few friends who are in earnest do? Why, the world will laugh at such a feeble body of men. They will say, 'What do these feeble Jews?' We have a mountain before us, and we have to level it to a plain, how can we do it? Our strength is not sufficient, we are destitute of power.

"Oh, had we the great and noble on our side! Had we kings to be the nursing fathers, and queens the nursing mothers of our church! Had we the rich to give their lavish treasure, and the learned to give their wit, and the eloquent to give their golden speech, then we *might* succeed! But alas! alas! silver and gold have we none, and at the Master's feet we can lay but little, so little that it is utterly insignificant when compared with the world's pining wants, the whole creation's piteous laboring groans."

Then I think I hear you heave a sigh and say again, "There is no more that we know of, no more bread that is procurable, we cannot buy for all this multitude." If we have little gifts ourselves, we cannot buy the eloquence of others. Indeed, it were no use if it were bought, for *oratory* purchased is of no use to any cause. We need for Christ's cause the free utterance of willing men who "speak through their throats," and feel from their hearts what they propound with their lips.

Such speak because they cannot help speaking. "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel." If we have little ability of our own, we cannot buy more of others. The offices of love can never be deputed to the hireling.

But I think I hear your disheartened spirits crying, "If we could add mercenary troops to the hosts of God, we might succeed—if we could procure by our donations more help, more strength for the Lord God of hosts, then might there be bread in His house, and then might the multitudes be fed."

But two hundred pennyworth would not suffice for the five thousand, and millions would not suffice for the thousand millions of poor ignorant men and women. Master, what *can* we do? There are so many, we have not the bread ourselves, and we cannot buy it on their behalf.

And then, I hear the groan of one who is growing grey in years, "Oh! I feel it, but it is getting late with me, and the world's necessities are getting stern, the hunger has continued until men are famished,

they have been without bread till they are ready to perish and faint by the way, and the night comes on, a long and dreary night—who shall work then? We are ready to go down into our graves, our shadows are lengthened and our frame is shrunken, we are weak, and hang our heads like bulrushes, as men who seek the grave that has long been seeking them.”

Let me tell you, brethren and fathers, we who are in our opening youth, we feel that too. Good God! our days spin round us now, and our weeks seem to be hissing through the air, leaving a track like that of a burning brand. Work as we may, and some of us can say that we lose no time in Christ’s cause, yet we can do nothing.

We seem to be like one man alone against an innumerable host, or like a child seeking to remove a mountain with its own puny hand. Night is getting spent, we are growing sear, our years are flying by, our deaths are coming on. Souls are dying, hell is filling. Adown the cataract of destruction men are being plunged incessantly beyond our sight, beyond our hope. We cannot do it.

The more we feel our responsibility, the more our infirmity oppresses us. You have called us to a work that is too hard. We cannot do it,

Master. We come to Your feet, and we say we cannot give these multitudes to eat. Mock us not. Command us not to impossibilities. You have bidden us preach the Gospel to every creature under heaven. We cannot reach them. We are too few, we are too feeble, we are too weak, we are too devoid of talent. Master, we cannot do it. At Your feet we are ready to fall in sheer despair.

But hark! I hear the cries of the multitude as they come up in our ears. They say to us, “We are perishing, will you let us perish? We are famishing, will you let us famish? Our fathers have gone down to hell, and our fathers’ fathers have perished for lack of the bread that came down from heaven, and will you let *us* die?”

Across from Africa the multitudes look over the sea to us, and they beckon with their fingers—“Will you let *us* perish? Shall we forever be hunting ground for those who delight in chains and bloodshed?” From Asia they lift up the cry—“Will you always leave us? Shall we always be the bond slaves of Juggernaut, Brahma, Servia, and Vishnu?”

From Australia they cry to us, such as have not already perished, the Aborigines cry, “Shall we never see the light? Shall we never hear the Gospel?” And worse than the Aborigines, the wail of not a few who remember in night-dreams the services of our sanctuaries, but have forgotten in their day-labors the observance of our Sabbaths, their cry is piercing indeed.

Oh! how terrible is the wail—the combined wail that comes up from all the nations under heaven! *One* man in Paul’s dream, who said, “Come over and help us!” was enough to constrain him, and here are millions not in a dream, but in open vision, who all at once say, “Come and help us.”

Did we say, just now, we could not? Surely we must recall our words and say, “We must.” Good Master, we must! If we cannot, we must. We feel our weakness, but there is an impulse within us that says we must do it, and we cannot stop, we dare not—we were accursed if we did. The blasts of hell and the wrath of heaven would fall upon us if we renounced the task.

The world’s only hope—shall we put that out? The lone star that gilds the darkness—shall we quench that? The saviors of men, and shall we fold our arms and let them die? No! by the love we bear Your name, by the bonds that unite us to You, by everything that is holy before God and humane in the sight of our fellow mortals, by everything that is tender and gentle in the throbbing of our hearts and the yearning of our bowels, we say we must, though we feel we cannot.

Yet there is a strong tendency in our hearts to shift personal responsibility. “Let us send them away into the villages to buy meat.” We look towards some Bethsaida in the distance and say, “Let them go there and get good.” This is a strong temptation with many churches.

Perhaps you say, “We have not got all this work to do, there are other churches, let them do their part. In all the suburbs of London there are chapels. There is the parish church, cannot they hear the Gospel there? There is the City missionary going about after them, what need that we should visit them?”

No doubt there are some good men preaching in the street, what necessity that I should do it? Let them go into the villages and get meat.”

Ah, but not so, the Master said to you, “Give ye them to eat.” “Ye.” Let this church feel that it should look upon the world as if it were the only church, and do its utmost as if it had no helper under heaven, but had all the work to do of itself. And let the entire body of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ—instead of looking to societies for evangelization, or to commerce, or to governments—remember that she is the sole savior of the world.

Christ never was incarnate in kings and in princes. His incarnation today is in the sacramental host of His elect. If you ask me where was God on earth, I point to the man Christ Jesus. If you ask me where is Christ on earth, I point you to His faithful church, called by His Spirit. As Christ was the world’s hope, so is the church the world’s hope, and she must take up the charge as if there were not another. Instead of sending some to this town and some to that, she must hear her Master say, “Give ye them to eat.”

I do fear, dear friends, that we are many of us getting into a very easy state about perishing men, because we stay out of their way. To stop your ears to the cries of the hungry, or shut your eyes to the wants of the widow and the fatherless, is not the way to relieve famine. Nor is it the way of doing good in the world, to avoid the haunts of the poor, and to leave the dens of desolation and sin. It is ours to touch the leper with our healing finger, not to shrink from his presence, it is ours to go and find out the stripped, and wounded, and helpless of the sons of men, and then to pour in the oil and the wine. Leave the priest and the Levite, if they will, to pass by on the other side.

Your Master asks of you, Christian, practical, personal service, and your Christianity is worth nothing unless it makes you heed His word—“Give ye them to eat”—unless it makes you as individual members, and as a united body do God’s work for the world’s sake and for Jesus Christ’s sake.

I will tell *you*, the people of my charge, that the world’s salvation is given instrumentally into your hands. As far as your power lies, you are to consider yourselves as the world’s hope, and you are to act as such. And what shall I say of you if, instead of accepting this charge from Christ, you shall sit still and do nothing?

If, after having built this ceiled house in which you meet, you should disregard others who hear not the Word of Christ—if, being fed with heaven’s food yourselves, you shall be satisfied to let others perish, I tell you that, as a church, Ichabod shall be written upon your brow. The garments of this church shall be rent, and her veil shall be torn away from her. She shall be set as a hissing, she shall be made a pillar of salt like Lot’s wife, throughout all generations, if she dare to look back now that the Master has called her to a great and solemn work. He that putteth his hand to the plough, and looketh back, is not worthy of the kingdom.

I have faith in you, dear friends, but I have more faith in my God, I have faith in you that you will not turn back, but accept the awful charge which devolves upon you of giving light to the world. But if you reject it, I will be a swift witness against you at the last great day, that you knew your Master’s will and that you did it not—that you were called to the Master’s service and you slunk back again to indolence and sloth.

II. Having thus dwelt upon our mission, and enlarged upon our weakness, it is time to turn the topic, and come to OUR LINE OF DUTY AND THE MASTER’S STRENGTH.

Our line of duty begins, first of all, in immediate obedience to Christ’s first command—“Bring ye them to me.” “Five loaves, Master, it is all we have; two fishes.” “Bring ye them to me.” In Mark, the words are used—“Go and see.” They were to look in their wallets and be quite sure that they had not any more. They were to rummage among all their treasures, and bring every crust, every piece of flesh or bread, to Christ.

“Bring them to me.” “Master, they are barley loaves; only five.” “Bring them to me.” “There are two fishes, they are only two, they are not worth thinking of, let us keep them for ourselves.” “No, bring them to Me.” “But they are such little fishes.” “Bring them to me,” saith He, “Bring them to me.”

The church's first duty is, when she looks to her resources and feels them to be utterly insufficient for her work, still to bring all that she has to Christ. But how shall she bring them? Why, in many ways. She must bring them to Christ *in consecration*. There is a brother yonder who says, "Well, I have but little money to spare!" "Never mind," says Christ, "let what you have be brought to Me."

"Ah," says another, "I have very short time that I can spare in laboring to do good. "Bring it to me." "Ah," says another, "but I have small ability, my stock of knowledge is very slender, my speech is contemptible." "Bring it to me." "Oh," saith one, "I could only teach in the Sunday school." "Bring it to me." "Ah," says another, "and I do not know that I could do that, I could but distribute a tract." "Bring it to me." Every talent that the church has is to be brought to Christ, and consecrated.

And mark you this—I speak a strong thing which some will not be able to receive—anything which you have in this world, which you do not consecrate to Christ's cause, you do rob the Lord of. Every true Christian, when he gave himself to Christ, gave everything he had. Neither calls he anything that he has his own, but it is all the Master's. We are not true to the Master's cause unless it be so.

"What! not provide for our families?" Yea, verily, but that is given to God. "Not provide for ourselves?" Yea, verily, so long as you are not covetous. Remember, it is your Master's business to provide for you. If He provides for you through your own exertions, you are doing your Master's work and receiving of His bounty, for it is His work to provide for you.

But still there must always be a thorough consecration of everything you have to Christ. Where your consecration ends, your honesty with God ends. How often you have made the vow in your hymn! And will you not be true to your covenant with Him?—

*"All that I am, and all I have,
Shall be for ever thine;
Whate'er my duty bids me give,
My cheerful hands resign.*

*"And if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I would give Him all."*

Bring ye them to Me—not only in consecration, but also in prayer. I think our prayer meetings should be the seasons when the church brings up all her barley loaves and fishes to Christ. To get them blessed, here we come together, great Master, around the altar. We are weak and feeble, we come to be made strong, we have no power of ourselves, we come that we may receive power from on high, and we wait in the prayer meeting, as Your disciples did in the upper room at Jerusalem, till the Spirit be poured out.

It is marvelous how a man with one talent can sometimes do ten times more than a man with ten talents, for he has ten times the grace. A soldier, after all, is not always useful according to his weapon. Give a fool an Armstrong gun, and perhaps he will destroy himself with it. Give a wise man but the poorest piece of firearms, and you shall find, with good and steady aim, and bold advance, he shall do more service with his small weapons, than the other with far better arms.

So there are men, who seem as if they might be leaders in God's house, that are laggards, doing nothing, while there are others who are but little in Israel, whom God through His grace makes to be mighty. Bring ye hither, O ye servants of the Lord, all that ye have kept back, pour ye all the tithes into His storehouse, that His house may be full. "Prove me now, saith the LORD of hosts, if I do not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

Let us bring all we have to Christ, likewise in faith, laying it all at His feet, believing that His great power can make little means suffice for mighty ends. "Lord, there are only five loaves"—they were five

loaves only when we had them in our hands, but now they are in Your hands, they are food for five thousand men. “Lord, there are two fishes”—they were paltry to insignificance while they were ours, but Your touch has ennobled them, and those little fishes shall become food for that vast multitude.

Blessed is that man who, feeling that he has truly consecrated all to God, can say, “There is enough. I do not want more talent, I do not need more substance, I would not wish to have more, there is enough for my work. I know it is utterly insufficient in itself, but our sufficiency is of God.”

Oh! do not tell me, sirs, that we, as a denomination, are too feeble to do much good. Do not tell me that the Christianity of England is too weak for the evangelization of the whole world. No such thing, there is enough, there is plenty if the Master pleases it. If there were only six good men living, and these six were thoroughly consecrated to God, they would be enough for the world’s conversion.

It is not the multiplication of your means, it is not the complication of your machinery, it is not the organization of your societies, it is not the qualification of your secretaries that God cares for a whit—it is your consecrated men who are wholly His and only His. Let them believe that He can make them mighty, and they shall be mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

I hesitate not to say that there are some pulpits that would be better empty than occupied, that there are some congregations to whom it would be far better if they had no preacher at all, for having a minister who is not ordained of God, and not speaking by faith, they content themselves with things as they are, and grow listless.

Were the sham taken away, they might cry out for a real ministry. God would bestow on them one taught of the Holy Ghost, who would speak with a tongue of fire, with inward witness and with spiritual energy, resting his confidence in God’s promises and His Word. Oh! dear friends, we ought to believe that there is enough means if Christ does but bless them, enough to bring in God’s chosen ones.

“Bring ye them hither to me,” once more, in active service. That which is dedicated to Christ in solemn covenant, and in earnest prayer, and in humble faith, must be dedicated in active service. Are you *all* at work for Christ? Members of this church, I speak to you first, it is but incidentally that I address other believers here. Are you all doing something for Christ?

I think there should not be a single member of this church who is not somehow occupied for the Master. Shall I except any?—except the weak upon their beds, and they can speak a good word for Him when they are visited; except the dying upon their couches, and they can bear a blessed testimony to His faithfulness when they are going through the river; except the dumb, and they can act religion, when they cannot speak it; except the blind, and they can sing His praises; except the utterly incapacitated, and these can magnify the Lord by their patience.

Still we ought, every one of us, if we be Christ’s, to be serving Him. Am I a son, and have I no duty to my father? Am I a husband, and have I no duties of kindness to the wife? Am I a servant, and shall I be idle, careless, and disobedient? Is the Christian’s the only name that is merely nominal? Is this a barren title? Is this a medal to be worn? Is this a kind of cross which Christians shall take when they have done no deeds of arms, no valorous conflicts for Christ? Is the Christian only a thing, and not a living reality? The Lord have mercy upon such Christians!

Now, dear friends, if you want any inducements to lead you to bring all that you have to Christ, let me urge this. In bringing it to Him, you put your talent into *His* hand, whose hand was pierced for you. You give to Him who is your dearest friend, you give to Him who spared not the blood of His heart that He might redeem you. Do you not love Him? Is it not an honor to be permitted to show your love to so notable and noble a personage?

We have heard of women that have worked, and all but starved themselves, to bring food for their children, and as they put the precious morsels into the little ones’ mouths, they felt their toil to be nothing, because they were giving it to those they loved. And so with the believer—he should feel that he most blesses himself when he blesses Christ. And indeed, when the Christian doeth ought for Jesus, it more blesses him that gives than him that takes.

Besides, when you give to Him, you have another inducement, that you are thus giving to the multitude. I know people think, when they are doing something for the church, that they are pleasing the minister or pleasing the deacons. Oh! dear friends, it is not so. What interest have I in all the world but the love of poor souls—that God who reads the heart shall say, at the day of judgment, there lives not one who desires more unselfishly the salvation of this world, than the minister who addresses you now.

And I trust I can speak the same of my brethren in Christ, who long to see the world brought in. Look at that hungry world, and when you give the bread, let those eyes that stare upon you, let those who eat so abundantly thank you, and let that be a sufficient recompense for what you have done.

There is a man, I think, present now, who I remember some two or three winters ago, came to me to join the church, and when I sat down in the room to talk to him, I saw by the look of the poor man's face he wanted bread natural as well as bread spiritual. So I said, "Before I talk to you, I should like to see you a little refreshed," and we fetched him something to eat. I looked at him for a minute, for I saw his eyes glisten, and I left the room, for fear he should not eat so much when I were there.

This though I can tell you, when I saw the great pleasure with which he ate, it would have been sufficient compensation to me if that little had cost ten thousand pounds. And when you see the poor sinner lay hold of Christ so greedily, and yet so joyfully, when you see his gleaming eye, and the tear as it runs down his cheek, you will say, I am too well paid to have done good to such a poor heart as this. Lord, it is enough, I have fed these hungry souls.

Once again, bring your loaves and fishes to Christ instead of following Christ to get loaves and fishes. Is it no inducement that you should yourself be the distributor? When we were children, and our father cut off a small piece from the joint, and sent it to a sick woman over the road, do we not recollect how Thomas, Mary, and Ann used to quarrel for turns to take the basin over with the slice of meat? We always liked to knock at the good women's door and say, "Please, we have brought something for your dinner today."

Children are always glad if there is something to give away. If you put a penny into their hands, to give to a poor blind man, how cheerfully they run! Just such a feeling as that the Christian has, when out of his talent which he has consecrated to God, he does something for the world. He is going about among the ranks, and feeding them, and he has joy in the deed.

Then, to close this point. "Bring ye them to me, and ye shall have as much left as ye had when ye brought them." They took up of the fragments more than they gave. Christ will never let any man die in His debt. What you have done unto Him is abundantly repaid, if not in temporals, yet in spirituals. The fragments shall fill the baskets that are so liberally emptied. You shall find that while watering others you are yourself watered. The joy you impart shall be mutual. To do good is to get good, and to distribute to others for Christ is the surest way of enriching one's self.

The rest of the believer's duty I will briefly sum up. When you have brought your talents to Christ, and have a conscientiousness of your great mission, your next duty is to look up. Thank God for what you have got, look up! Say, "There is nothing in what I do, there is nothing in my prayers, my preaching, my goings, my doings, except Thou bless the whole. Lord, bless it!" Then, when you have blessed, break. Remember the multiplication never came till after the division, and the addition did not begin till the subtraction took place.

So then, begin to break, do good, and communicate. Go abroad, and actively serve the Master, and when you have thus broken and have thus distributed to others, mind that you only distribute from Christ's own hand. You are to put your talents and abilities into Christ's hand. He gives the blessing on it, then He gives it back to you, afterwards, you give it to the people.

If I give you bread from this pulpit to eat that is my own, it will be of no use to you. But if, having gotten it in my study, I put it in the hand of Christ, and come up here, and Christ hands it back to me, and I give it to you, you shall be fed to the full. This is Christ's way of blessing men, He does not give the blessing first to the world, it is to His disciples, and then the disciples to the multitude. We get in

private what we distribute in public. We have access to God as His chosen favorites. We come near to Him. He gives to us, we give to others.

Thus, dear friends, I began by setting before you a great and high mission, first, I made you say, "We cannot," then I tried to make you say, "We must." And now I want to end by making you say, "We can." Yes! Christ is with us, and we can. God is for us, and we can. The Holy Ghost is in us, and we can. God the Holy Spirit calls us, Jesus Christ the Son of God cheers us, God the Father smiles upon us, we can, we must, we will. The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

But have we believed in Christ ourselves? If not, we can do nothing. Come to Jesus first, then work for Jesus. Give Him your own heart first, then give Him all that you have. So shall He accept your offering, and bless your soul for His name's sake.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.