



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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Mark 6:43 *“And they picked up twelve full baskets of the broken pieces, and also of the fish.”*

Our verse today ends the story of the miraculous feeding of the five thousand. This is a powerful miracle. It is the only miracle, aside from the events at Calvary and the resurrection that is found in all four Gospels. They all tell this story. The birth of Jesus is not in all four Gospels. Walking on water isn't. Raising Lazarus isn't. But, the feeding of the five thousand is. There may well be many reasons this is in all the Gospels.

This miracle involved more people than any of the other miracles. In most situations, Jesus healed and people witnessed. Here a great multitude actually participated. Matthew tells us the five thousand was counting the men, not the women or children. So, easily, it could have been ten to twenty thousand people that participated in this. With that many people, when the Gospel were being copied, surely some would want to know if this miracle was recorded. They had been there.

The disciples recognize three immediate problems. It was late in the day. They were in a desolate place. And, there was nothing to eat. Their only solution was to send the people away. We can't deal with this. We have no solution. We can't fix this problem. They forgot the many, many times Jesus has healed, calmed storms and cast out demons. They had no food, but they had Jesus. Sometimes when we are faced with problems, we see the problem but we forget that we have Jesus.

Jesus didn't just give each person a taste or a small bite. The text tells us that they were satisfied. They all ate. And, they didn't eat every single bite. Our verse tells us that there were enough left over to fill twelve baskets. How convenient—twelve baskets and twelve apostles. They didn't toss the leftovers to the birds. They didn't find a dumpster and throw them away. They picked up the fragments and took them with us.

(OVER)

And, without realizing it, you and I do the same. Not with bread and fish, but with bits of teaching, encouragement and hope. Here are some lessons for us:

First, there is not one lesson that will give me all that I need spiritually. Even the Bible itself is more than just one page, one Gospel, one book. Our sermons and our classes are not multi-vitamins that gives us 100% of the daily requirements needed. Every day we must be walking and talking with our Savior and serving others. What I get in worship helps me but it's not everything that I need. It helps for the moment. It's a fragment, a piece. And, if I save it and keep it, and add it to other fragments that I have collected, soon, my basket of faith begins to fill up.

Second, as one journeys with the Lord and ages in life, things change, needs change and even temptation changes. The fragments that helped me as a youth got me through some tough times. They helped me make right choices. Simple as they were, it was just what I needed. But as I mature in Christ, I need other fragments, newer fragments, and pieces that fit where I am at today.

We understand this physically. Baby food serves a purpose, but don't invite me to your home and put a jar of Gerber's on the plate for me. I've moved on from that. Universities understand that. The freshman year a student signs up for biology 101. Next time, it's biology, but it's a deeper level, 201. And, on and on it deepens. One of the challenges of teaching a Bible class is that, borrowing from that university example, there are those that need level 101, but there are others that need something much more advanced. The teacher must recognize this as he teaches.

Third, we are not told what happened to those twelve baskets of fragments. Did they give those to others as they passed through villages? Did they save them and eat them later on? And, I wonder what we do with our fragments? Class material and articles and sermon notecards once we are finished with them, do we just toss them? Would it be better to file them for future reference and use? Would it be better to send them to someone who could use them?

The fragments were much more than bread and fish. They were the leftovers of one of Jesus' miracles. They illustrated the compassion of Jesus on a hungry crowd. They showed the power of God in doing what no one else could do. They reminded the disciples that Jesus cared and he took care of them. The disciples wanted to send the people away.

Fragments—bits and pieces. Leftovers. Still valuable. Still useful. Still necessary.

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