

## JESUS FEEDS THE FOUR THOUSAND

Matthew 15:29-39

Key Verse: 15:32

"Jesus called his disciples to him and said, I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way.'"

In the last passage we learned from Jesus that the traditional Jews' hypocrisy was wrong, and that rituals and ceremonies cannot make man clean. They used the words "clean" and "unclean" in order to distinguish between ceremonially clean people and ceremonially unclean people. Through this, the traditional old Jews made use of rituals and ceremonies, demanding people to keep them, so that they might be the [ruling class](#). And those who received ceremonial cleansing had to pay the cost of these rituals and ceremonies. Jesus defined them as "hypocrites." A hypocrite is one who has the form of godliness, but whose heart is evil in the sight of God. The traditional Jews cheated their consciences and became hypocrites whose hearts were evil. Jesus told his disciples that not washing their hands wouldn't make them unclean. Jesus also told them that if their hearts were right with God, they would be clean. Jesus had a hard time to defend his disciples who didn't [wash their hands](#) before eating.

Then Jesus met a Gentile woman whose daughter was suffering from demon-possession. Jesus tested her faith, speaking as if she were a Gentile dog who did not deserve Jesus' mercy. She did not retreat from Jesus' humiliation, but said, "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table" (27). Jesus was abundantly happy and praised the woman, saying, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted" (28). Jesus was bitterly criticized by the traditional Jews, who came from Jerusalem to Galilee to give him a hard time. So Jesus was greatly burdened. But through the Gentile woman's faith he was abundantly comforted. To Jesus, there were thousands of enemies against him, but one Gentile woman's faith was enough to restore his constrained soul. When we study [the Bible](#), we see that Jesus was always happy with one person's faith. In today's passage we learn Jesus' compassion again. Jesus also trains his disciples to have God's compassion. First, Jesus welcomes four thousand sick people (29-31). As we studied in chapter 14, Jesus fed five thousand people, not counting women and children. They were shameless people. In John's Gospel chapter 6, Jesus fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fish. Then they wanted to make Jesus their king of bread so that they might eat bread without working hard. Jesus fed these five thousand people in order to teach them the meaning of spiritual bread. Jesus taught them that he is the bread of life; whoever drinks his blood and eats his flesh will live (Jn 6:35,54). But they were not happy because Jesus did not give them delicious bread; instead, he talked only about spiritual bread. They began to run away ten by ten, one hundred by one hundred. Finally, only Peter and the other disciples were left. So Jesus asked Peter, "You do not want to leave too, do you?" (Jn 6:67) Jesus was greatly discouraged by people's rejection of the word of God concerning spiritual bread. So when the four thousand came, Jesus could have said, "You are no good. Go to the Salvation

Army. They supply food for the poor." But he did not. Jesus welcomed this crowd and healed their sick and fed them.

Jesus welcomed them and was ready to help them with whatever they needed. Look at verse 30. "Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them." Some were a group of lame. These people could not walk properly. There might have been around ten such persons. Jesus healed the lame and they could walk. Legs are the foundation of one's body. In boxing, hand motions and being beaten to some degree do not matter, but when one's legs wobble it is sure that he will lose. The lame can never go to the Olympics as track runners. What is worse, their list of marriage candidates is very short. Their employment opportunities are severely restricted. It is especially hard for men to be lame; they may be regarded not as men but as the crippled, because they are powerless. But Jesus healed all the lame who came to him and made them whole.

There were a group of blind people. Blind people are most pathetic as human beings. They cannot see their lovely mother, even though they feel their mothers' unlimited love. Their blind eyes are nothing but two holes for the purpose of crying endlessly. The blind are apt to misunderstand everything because they do not see and only hear sounds. They may think that everybody is laughing at them and pointing fingers at them, saying, "He is cursed by God, so he is blind." But Jesus opened their eyes. Then they could see the beautiful world God has made. They could see their mothers' faces and the beautiful colors of nature. If they married, they could see their wives' faces. How beautiful is Jesus' compassion!

There were also many mutes. These mutes are also human beings. If they went to Italy for sight-seeing, they would see Napolis. They would want to sing many beautiful Italian folk songs, such as "Santa Lucia." But they cannot sing and so lose all the joy of sight-seeing. A mute wants to say, "I love you" to a girl. But his voice is not heard by her. For human beings, romance is the beginning of one's personal history. So the mute can not have a personal history. He feels, but he cannot express. People criticize him, but he cannot defend himself. Our Lord Jesus Christ healed the mute people altogether, all at once. They began to sing, "Thank you Jesus. Now I can speak. I can express my feelings to a beautiful girl, I love you." Matthew said in verse 30, "...the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others...." The words "many others" may have included men with leprosy. The first sign of leprosy is that one's eyebrows are all gone. Next, one's fingers fall off and are buried in the dirt. Lepers cannot mingle with ordinary people because they are too ugly. There is a poem, "It is raining. I'm standing outside the bar. But I cannot go in. I want a mug of beer like the people inside. But because I am a man with leprosy, I have to stand outside in the heavy rain." Jesus cleansed their leprosy and sorrow all at once and made them whole. Jesus' healing hand was indeed amazing.

The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel (31). Here, the last words, "the God of Israel," have a historical meaning. In the Old Testament, the God of Israel, that is,

the Messiah of the world, is promised and prophesied. His coming was fulfilled by Jesus. In the New Testament time, after Jesus' ascension, the disciples of Jesus and the new Christians hoped to see Jesus' Second Coming to this world as the Messiah of the world. When they were severely persecuted by the Jewish leaders and the Roman Empire, they yearned for the Messiah's coming all the more. When they were eaten by lions and pierced to death in the arenas of the Roman Empire, they hoped the Messiah would come. Always, the Messiah's coming to rescue them was in the hearts of sincere Christians. But these days "Hallelujah Christians" commercialize the Second Coming of Jesus and make a lot of money from weak-minded people. Anyway, at the time when Jesus healed the crippled, ordinary people learned that Jesus was the God of Israel, the Messiah. Look at verse 31. It says, "The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel."

Second, Jesus said, "I have compassion for these people" (32). Look at verse 32a. "Jesus called his disciples to him and said, I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat." Jesus engaged in a three-day healing ministry, and probably in a preaching ministry, too. He must have been tired. But he did not say, "Scatter these people because they are healed." Rather, Jesus sternly told his disciples, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way." Jesus' compassion was like that of a mother toward her young kids. Jesus' feeling was that his young kids had been sick for several days and didn't eat; so he wanted to feed them as soon as possible. That was Jesus' feeling toward this crowd. Here we see Jesus' compassion. They were shameless people. They were crippled people, so they were not so pretty to look at. But Jesus had compassion on this crowd. Jesus healed them all; now he wants to feed them all. Jesus had been with them for three days, and they were not eating at all. It was indeed a glorious scene. All the crippled people were healed and became well. But they didn't leave. They watched Jesus' healing again and again. They were so amazed. So they forgot to eat for three days. Here we learn that messianic compassion makes us forget about hungry feelings. Rather, messianic compassion gives one deep amazement and awe. We are children of God. So what we have to do is learn the compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we do not learn the compassion of Jesus, we cannot say that we are children of God, sanctified by the truth. We must grow in the compassion of Jesus throughout our pilgrim journey in this world.

But some people do not know about the compassion of Jesus. There was one couple. The husband gave sufficient money to his wife and treated her like a queen at the dinner table before guests. But since her family background was poor, whenever they were alone together, he despised his wife. He beat her and gave her black eyes and a black jaw. At last, she died of "husband phobia." Finally the husband became a first-class mental patient and a violent man. So he was confined behind bars. If we don't grow in the holiness of God, and if we don't grow in the compassion of Jesus, we remain as children forever. So when immature men who are like grammar school students get married, they do not know how to love their wives. Rather, they want breast feeding from their wives. On the other hand, wives instinctively want to be loved by

their husbands. Women are women when they want to be loved. When women are loved by their husbands, they can be good mothers to their children. If the women of any nation are not loved by their husbands, that nation can decline to destruction. We can see the examples of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Roman Empire, and so on.

Third, Jesus' disciples' cooperation (33-39). When Jesus said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way," his disciples answered, "Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?" (33) After three days of hanging around Jesus among many crippled people, Jesus' disciples were extremely tired. But this time his disciples did not say, "Send them away, so that they may provide food for themselves." Instead, they showed a sign that they learned Jesus' compassion to some degree.

"How many loaves do you have?' Jesus asked. Seven,' they replied, and a few small fish'" (34). Then Jesus told the crowd to sit down on the ground. He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks. Jesus thanked God. Jesus also asked God's blessing upon the seven loaves and the few small fish in order to help out the crowd of four thousand people. The fish might have been dried up minnows, almost rotten because they were kept too long in a person's pocket. But Jesus prayed to bless this small amount of food, and with it, to feed four thousand people so that they could be strengthened and go back home.

What did Jesus do next? Look at verse 36. "Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and they in turn to the people." In this verse we learn that his disciples joined in the messianic ministry by distributing bread and fish to the people who were sitting there. Jesus might have said, "Peter, you distribute food to people on this side." Peter might have answered, "Aye, aye, sir! I will do my best to distribute food to the hungry people faster than anybody else." Jesus might have asked lazy Matthew to distribute food. Matthew might have said, "Aye, aye, sir! I will do my best to distribute food to the hungry people. But can I eat first, and next distribute food to the people?" Jesus didn't say anything. Jesus might have asked Andrew to distribute food to the crowd of people. Andrew might have said, "Sir, I have already distributed it and I am eating my portion." Andrew was usually slow, but in doing something in an urgent situation, he was very quick.

The disciples learned the compassion of Jesus. This is the reason they did not complain about doing such a demanding job, but responded to their master Jesus, saying, "Aye, aye, sir! I will do my best to feed the hungry crowd of people." The disciples were very ordinary people. They did not know the word "divine discipline." But living common life with Jesus, they learned the compassion of Jesus, and they were pretty much used to thinking about others, even a really shameless crowd of people.

We also must learn the compassion of Jesus. We have many kinds of meetings in UBF. Sometimes we feel we have too many meetings. To attend a meeting is better than mingling with those who drink a lot. But when

we meet in the name of Jesus, we must learn the compassion of Jesus and grow in the compassion of Jesus. We must also grow in our faith that we can feed first, five thousand people, and next, another four thousand people. Without this compassion, Christian life makes us miserable like the hypocritical orthodox Jews. It is good for them to know how to take care of their bushy beards, but without the compassion of Jesus, they did not know human happiness at all. Where does human happiness come from? It comes from Jesus' compassion. There is one young man who has the compassion of Jesus. So he loves his wife and obeys his wife absolutely. As a result, the family is always happy and the children are growing very happily. He is not recognized by his children as the head of the family; his wife is the head of the family. Still, he is very happy. When the compassion of Jesus rules and overrules this country, there will be no broken families or uncontested divorces, which break children's hearts. When we children of God learn the compassion of Jesus, we can see the kingdom of God and enter the kingdom of God when the appointed time comes. May God richly bless you to learn the compassion of Jesus like his disciples, by hanging around Jesus.