

Loaves and Fishes

This world is a very broken and needy place. I don't have to tell you that; just look at the news. Of course, there's nothing "new" about war, crime, injustice, strife, poverty, disease, social unrest, homelessness, addiction, and hunger (or "food insecurity" as it's now being called). So many people are suffering. Add a pandemic and climate change to that long list, and you're sure to feel overwhelmed. And yet, in the midst of all this brokenness, the Bible repeatedly admonishes us that we are to help those in need.

Jesus replied, "Love the Lord our God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."
(Matthew 22:37-40)

Only Jesus loved like this. Only He kept these commandments perfectly, sacrificing His life in obedience to the Father's will so we could be saved. Only He fulfilled all the requirements of the Law and the Prophets. All we can do is be grateful and emulate Jesus as much as possible.

So yes, we want to help our "neighbors." But sometimes it seems hopeless. Considering the size and scope of the daunting social issues that confront us in the wider world – or even the problems in our own lives – it often seems unlikely that anything we can do will make much of a difference at all. The problems are just too big. So much so that it's tempting to close our eyes and stop our ears instead, in an effort to preserve our own sanity.

Have you ever felt like this, overwhelmed and defeated before you start? I have, plenty of times.

Now think of the disciples, when they were charged with the job of feeding the five thousand (Mark 6). They were overwhelmed also. The problem was simply too big and their resources too small. Impossible. In spite of that, though, they were obedient to Jesus' command to begin. By doing so, they gained an incalculable blessing and privilege, not only witnessing but participating in the miracle as God multiplied the loaves and fishes in their very hands.

When God calls us to do something – especially something that seems unachievable – let's first remember that with God all things are possible (Matthew 19:26). Then, instead of talking ourselves out of it or being overwhelmed by the size of the task, let us simply be obedient to God's call and begin. Let us offer what we have to God and invite him to multiply our loaves and fishes as he chooses.

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