

Jesus the miracle maker – powerful purpose.

Matthew 14:13-36

Introduction

I love a harvest service, the smell of fruit, veg and freshly baked bread. Times have changed, and with the need for foodbanks, we tend to bring tins, dried and long-life produce, not quite the same aroma. but very practical.

As we approached the service today, we have remembered and prayed for the Ukraine, reflecting on the terrible time that they have endured, since the invasion in February. We have also, taken up a monetary offering, which will be given to BMS world mission to help Churches on the ground, both in Ukraine and its neighbouring countries.

He had compassion

To pray, act and give when another needs help, is an act of compassion, as Christians it's one of the characteristics of Jesus; he was compassionate.

'When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them' (Matthew 14:14)

Jesus' compassion was powerful, the Greek word, translated as compassion in the NIV, is an ugly sounding word, which literally means 'moved in the guts'. Something moves deep inside us that causes us to act. The English word compassion has a long history, you can trace it back to middle English, old French and Latin, its literal meaning is to 'suffer-with'. Jesus embodies the word. Even after a long day, and with his own grief, the death of his cousin John the Baptist at the beginning of the chapter. Jesus still has compassion, John Calvin rightly states,

So strongly was Christ moved by this feeling of compassion, that though, in common with his disciples, he was fatigued and almost worn out by uninterrupted toil, he did not spare himself. (Calvin)

Jesus acted in compassion, it was a characteristic of his heavenly father, so, like father, like son. Speaking about God, Isaiah says

And so he saved them from all their suffering. It was not an angel, but the LORD himself who saved them. In his love and compassion he rescued them. He had always taken care of them in the past. (Isaiah 63:8b-9)

Jewish Old Testament scholar Sommer, comment on this verse from Isaiah, saying '**God participates in the suffering of the nation'** (Benjamin D. Sommer) The compassion of God wasn't new, but Jesus embodied that compassion in a powerful, visible, and immediate way.

You give them

God tends to demonstrate his compassion in one way or another, it's rarely left abstract. Though God is spirit, unseen, he wants people to experience his love and sense his compassion.

¹⁵ As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, 'This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so that they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.' **¹⁶ Jesus replied, 'They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.'**

Jesus didn't simply feel compassion, he acted on it. At this time of harvest, we thank God for all we have, and all that we must share. How can we make this world a better place, Jesus did, and we are called to be his disciples. There isn't one answer to this, but by being part of this church we are responding to the world around, locally, and internationally. Yet just as Jesus challenged his disciples **'you give them something to eat'**, he challenges each of us to do our bit, and play our part.

As Jesus has risen and ascended into heaven, he needs us to be his miracle. Jesus isn't bodily here to give thanks for bread and fish and cure the cost-of-living crisis. Yet maybe if each of us, moved by compassion, give from what God has given us, then maybe he'll still be able to feed 5000 people and more, with our lunch box that we are willing to share with others and offer to God. Jesus is the miracle maker in and through our lives.

Conclusion

God is compassionate, his son Jesus demonstrates it clearly, not only in his miracles but also in his death and resurrection. God doesn't want the world to be without compassion so he has encouraged the church to live compassionate lives, so that the world might know that God loves it.

At this time of harvest what miracle of compassion might God create in and through our lives. All you need be is open, God will lead the way.

Connect group questions

1. When have you felt compassion, can you describe it?
2. What do you think of Jesus' compassion, what was special about it?
3. How might God challenge you to be more compassionate?
4. How might we practice compassion via the new hub space?