

GOD'S KINGDOM'S GOAL

Dr. Fred Fourie ~Sunday, March 26, 2006



John 1:16

"From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. [John 6:1-13](#) After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews,

was near. When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. [John 10:10](#) The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. "

There is a story about an elderly man who regularly went to a local saloon and always ordered a glass of milk with a shot of whiskey in it. One hot summers-day, while the bartender was fixing his drink, the old fellow wandered over to speak to some of his friends. Then another man came in, walked up to the bartender, and timidly said, "Sir, I'm a poor traveling preacher. I have just made it across the desert. I am bone dry. Could you let me have that foamy, glass of milk I see you've just poured?" "Take the milk," said the bartender with a twinkle in his eye. "We're glad to have you in our town. Take that glass of milk and drink it up." The thirsty preacher drank that milk real slow savoring every drop. Then he looked up towards the ceiling and with a smile on his face he declared, "Lord, what a cow!"

The story of the feeding of the five thousand tells about the bounteous goodness of God. While the disciples were picking up the twelve baskets of leftovers everyone present had reason to say, "Lord, what a bounteous God!" Today is the annual worldwide One Great Hour of Sharing Sunday! Our scripture readings tell a story about a Jesus who truly

cared about people in need. If ever there was ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING, this was it. Hungry people received more than they could eat. More than they ever expected!

The Gospel according to John begins with a statement reminding us how privileged we really are. He says, "From God's fullness we have all received, grace upon grace!" By feeding the hungry, Jesus gave a very clear example of God's ultimate grace. The focus in the story about the feeding of the multitude is on bread, but the lesson is about all of life.

Jesus asked his disciples, "How shall we buy bread for all these people?" You see, Jesus knew that though we cannot live by bread alone, we could not live without bread either. "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish," the disciple Andrew said, "but what are they among so many?" Jesus said, "Make the people sit down."

In order to experience God's bounty the people first had to sit down, watch and listen! Mother Theresa once said that the biggest problem facing the world today is not people dying in the streets of Calcutta. She said that the biggest problem is what she called "spiritual deprivation." She describes this as a feeling of emptiness associated with feeling separated from God and from all our brothers and sisters on planet Earth. There are people everywhere who experience this kind of emptiness.

There is the famous story of Jean Henri Fabre, the French naturalist and his processional caterpillars. He encountered some of these interesting creatures one day while walking the woods. They were marching in a long unbroken line front to back, front to back. Fabre was curious what would happen if he made a complete ring with these worms and let them march in a circle. Therefore, Fabre captured enough caterpillars to encircle the rim of a flowerpot. He linked them nose to posterior and started them walking in the closed circle. For days, they turned like a perpetual merry-go-round. Although food was, near at hand and accessible, the caterpillars starved to death on an endless march to nowhere.

That seems to be the story of far too many people in our world today. They are on a march that leads to nowhere. No thinking, no initiative, no care, no understanding, no stopping for a moment and no sitting down in the presence of God!

In God's presence, we become aware of abundant life that only God can give. Sometimes we are simply blind to God's wondrous bounty. Sometimes we only grab and hold on to for ourselves – our points of view – our prejudices – our possessions and fulfilling our personal preferences and needs. "One Great Hour of Sharing" reminds us that we are rich Christians in an age of hunger – that we have received in abundance and that we can and should share. To live and to let live, to reach into the treasure chest of our lives, and to place something of our own wealth, love, service, care, possessions and our privilege into the hands of a hungry, starving and dying world. You give but little when you only give of your possessions. Give from your heart – it is only then that you truly give!

Often we just forget or we are not very good at saying, "Thank you," Like the little boy who returned from a birthday party. His mother queried, "Bobby, did you thank the lady for the party?" Bobby said, "Well, I was going to, But Nancy was ahead of me. She said, "Thank you," and the lady told her not to mention it. So I did not!

Our God provides in abundance! God sets before us a table in the midst of our enemies and fills our cup to overflowing. It is our God, who, when there is no wine for the wedding feast, tells us to fill the water pots, and fill them to the brim. Our God, when the Prodigal returns home, kills the fatted calf and then throws a big party! Most of our worries would disappear in a moment if we could lean back and rest on the extravagance of God's provisions for us.

When we shut God out of our lives, we, too, shut out the very one who can meet our deepest needs. Then we miss his Kingdom's Goal! God is love. Love is always giving. If we are not receiving from God, the problem may be on our end, for our God is a giving God. God will never change. Through Jesus Christ, God's Kingdom came among us and invited us

to share in his Kingdom's goal.

As he was dying, Victor Daley, the Australian poet, **received tender care** in a Catholic Hospital. One of his last acts was to thank the nurses for all their kindness to him. **"Don't thank us"** one of the nurses said, **"Thank the grace of God."** Very perceptively, the poet asked, **"But aren't YOU the grace of God?"**

In every great deed of sharing, you and I become the GRACE OF GOD! Let us pray! O God, cure thy people's warring madness; Bend our pride to thy control Shame our wanton, selfish gladness; **rich in things and poor in soul.** Grant us wisdom; grant us courage; Lest we miss Thy Kingdom's Goal."

AMEN

**Let the children come to me;
do not stop them;
for it is to such as these that
the kingdom of God belongs.**

Mark 10:14b

