

Pass it On (a talk based on the Big Home Mission Service materials from the BU)

This service came to use from Home Mission to try to help us as a church understand what Home Mission is. In one sense we know already. I would not have been here for the last four years had it not been for a generous grant from Home Mission and that is true of over 400 churches in the UK at the moment. As we found out in the quiz, Home Mission isn't just a fund that subsidises, but is about how the baptist family passes on (shares) its knowledge and resources around the country to build one another up and be more effective in our mission to reach those who don't know Jesus yet.

"Home Mission is the Baptist Family sharing together to enable mission throughout Great Britain." At the heart of Home Mission is resources - providing for people and resources. Our God is a God who provides. Part of Jesus' ministry was providing help and resources - which brings us to today's story.

How did the people get fed? Jesus did a miracle. I guess that's no surprise to any of you Because Jesus is the God who provides. So as believers we trust in a God who provides.

Yes, but there's more to the miracle than just Jesus providing food for this miracle to have worked. Let's look more closely.

1. The boy gave up his lunch - MacDonalds carton

For this miracle to have happened, someone had to give his lunch up. It wasn't a large lunch - enough for one. But he was prepared to sacrificially give what he had to help Jesus. It's true that Jesus multiplied the lunch - but someone had to show their love for Jesus and his people by being prepared to give in the first place.

It wasn't much, but a little became a lot in the hands of Jesus. It's the basis of all Christian giving. Home Mission asks each person in a Baptist Church to give £33 a year to HM. That's less than £3 a month. It's the cost of a Big Mac per month. In a year it's the cost of a nice meal out.

Whether it is HM or the church, we might not think what we can give is much but it's not the giving, it's the spirit of love and gratitude to Christ behind it that counts. Jesus commended the widow for putting her small coin into the temple treasury not the pots of cash put in by the Pharisees: because it was all she had so it cost her more to put it there.

Behind every ministry like Home Mission, or for that matter a church like this one, if it is going to be effective before God, then there should be people there

who are prepared to give sacrificially, however much they think their little will make a difference. It's the act of devotion that causes us to give generously that Jesus responds to. When we are faithful in little, God becomes faithful in much.

2. The disciples needed to make an act of faith

What Jesus asked for was weird. I wonder what they thought as they saw Jesus and the boy standing there with the five loaves and two fishes as they got people seated in groups of 50. "He's mad?" "What's He up to?" "He can't do anything with what He's got - does he He have a cunning plan?" Whatever their thoughts, they then served as they could in what He asked them to do - to make up groups of 50.

Effective ministry doesn't just depend on being willing to sacrificially give, but to be willing to obey - and to make an act of faith in doing so. In every work of God, there is always a faith gap where the practical and vision don't quite meet.

For Home Mission this coming year, there is a faith gap. They have budgeted more than last year's £3.5m and committed to spend it. But they don't yet have it. By faith they expect to get it. They did last year.

As a result, some great projects came forward, like the church in Oswestry with so few people who sold their building because it hindered their mission but now are a growing and healthy church. Why? Because they took faith risks and Home Mission took faith risks with them. And God has given the increase.

We have some experience of it here with our ceiling, where we committed to starting the works before we had the money and trusted that it would come in. It did.

The day we remove the faith gap we will say with Philip "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not enough for each of them to get a little." "We can't do this. Let's give up because we don't have the money in the bank". What if they hadn't listened to Jesus? What if they hadn't got people organised? There would have been no miracle, no blessing. The church in Britain is dying at the moment because people are not willing to take faith risks. As a result, we don't see the power and presence of God, and the losers are the communities that never hear the Good News. What can we learn from this?

3. The disciples passed the blessing on - Luke's gospel

It wasn't just a case of Jesus multiplying food. It also involved the disciples passing it on. Those words are actually used in Luke's gospel. The people were fed because Jesus multiplied the bread and fish and the disciples passed it on.

Jesus offers the greatest miracle on Earth right now to every man and woman inhere, in Swaffham and in Britain. But if people are going to benefit from it, we need to pass it on.

Maybe you don't know Jesus this morning. Then we've got some great news to pass on to you - you can. Jesus has made a way that deals with all the things you've done (the Bible calls them sin) that keep you from God - your ignoring Him, the things you've said that have caused hurt, those thoughts you've had that you know you shouldn't, those things you've done that you're ashamed of - and so on. Jesus dealt with them on the cross and now He offers you a new relationship with God - a life-changing experience - and something which will last a whole eternity. And it can be yours today.

But people in Swaffham haven't heard that. Why haven't they heard it? Because we haven't told them. Home Mission gave us money for a Minister to encourage you to do that mission and in four years we have all been given numerous opportunities to pass the message on?

And if you're visiting this morning, it's the same message for you and your church. You have the spiritual equivalent of that bread and fish - pass it on. If it's a Baptist church, it is as much a Home Mission church as this one. You have words of life, pass them on.

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26/6/06