

To Tithe or NOT to Tithe: The Search for Truth, Part 8

Jesus As Priest Shows Us What To Do With An Offering

For a long time, I've had this gut feeling that there is so much more to feeding the 5,000 with 5 loaves and 2 fishes than I'd ever considered – specifically – I've felt there is a link between what Jesus did with the loaves and fishes and what a true son of God – a true Priest – would do with every offering: specifically, give thanks for it, bless it, and then give it back to the very people who gave it, to take what they needed and fill their bellies.

Let me digress a little – the modern mammon-loving theology of today goes something like this “I'm your priest, teacher, minister; this building is your storehouse; I'm the one feeding you; the worker deserves his wage so you owe me your tithes and offerings or you owe “this church” your tithes and offerings”.

OK, IF Jesus subscribed to that school of thought at all, here's what the feeding of the 5,000 would have looked like:

Jesus would have received the 5 loaves and 2 fishes and said to his disciples “thanks – now I've got my lunch – why don't you see if you can rustle up some grub for yourselves and these people here – good luck”.

If ever any priest deserved to receive the offering of the people He ministered to, it was Jesus. He could have said “the worker deserves his wage” or “those who announce the gospel are to make their living from the gospel” and He'd have been justified to keep the offering for Himself.

But Jesus didn't keep it. Not one crumb. He blessed and gave it back to the people – the Father multiplied it and everyone was fed. Knowing the nature of Jesus, who gave all, I'm certain He didn't eat until everyone else was fed. After all, He said “I didn't come to be served, but to serve, and to give my life as a ransom for many...” Jesus is a GIVER!

One of the things I have pondered a lot lately is the statement Jesus made that His Father was always working, and He was simply doing what He saw His Father doing. Jesus was a living example of God in Heaven – and He told us to “follow me”. Now, we often get hung up on scriptural interpretations, we try to follow Jesus' words verse by verse, and it seems like we are always tripping over ourselves when we do. Shouldn't we instead follow Jesus' example?

What did we see Jesus do with the feeding of the 5,000? He did exactly what the Father does again and again – Jesus gave it all – 100% – back to the people – giving generously – extravagantly – lavishly – beyond anyone's expectations.

And so, if we are to “Follow Him” – and that's the example Jesus set – then what can we deduce from the hirelings who take up offerings and keep it for themselves?

I anxiously wait for the day when a priest, pastor, or minister receives an offering, lifts it up to the Father, gives thanks, and then gives it back to the people to take what they need. Not just once in a blue moon – but every single time they take up an offering.

But as long as they keep it for themselves – they’re falling short of doing what Jesus did – and they’re NOT providing the Father with an opportunity to bless and multiply the offering(s).

Notice, too – that what was brought to Jesus was FOOD. That’s all any priest is ever entitled to – food – and a place to sleep for the night.

How Does That Relate To What I Said About 1 Corinthians 9:14 in Part 4?

We’re to live the gospel and practice what we preach. Those who announce the good news are to live the good news ... the good news provides for serving all – sharing all – and so the one who goes out and announces the gospel needs to lead by example – by sharing what he has and always serving, and giving, where in turn, the people will also learn to share thereby meeting the needs of God’s servants.

Previously Jesus instructed the 12 and the 72 to take nothing extra with them; simply find a place to stay where the worker deserves his wage of food. Paul reiterated the food payment in 1 Corinthians 9... and in the feeding of the 5000, we see Jesus as priest receiving his wage of food, but then turning right around like the gospel teaches, He serves the people first, thereby humbling Himself and becoming least of all by taking care of His own needs last – and the Father blesses His selflessness by multiplying the 5 loaves and 2 fishes to feed 5000, with a basket of leftovers for each apostle! God’s servants were fed from the miraculous abundance of God.

Certainly my suggestion to “practice what you preach” is consistent with the Greek word Paul used in that passage; the word is *katagellō* (G2605, *kat-ang-gel'-lo*), which means “to show”. In western Christianity preaching is often seen as giving a sermon. Realistically however, Christ said “If you love me, you will keep my commands”. He intends for those who preach the gospel to follow His example.

A personal note: About practicing what we preach, I’d like to share how this podcast and the blog before it came to be. My first Sunday at a small country church near our home, the new pastor preached around the passage where Jesus said “The Sons are Free”. His sermon came on the heels of promoting a men’s conference that he attended for free while the rest of us had to pay admission. After the service, I pointed out his hypocrisy and he responded by throwing his head back and laughing like a horse’s ass. In deference to the people there, we stayed several months but ultimately left because I couldn’t abide with someone who doesn’t practice what he preaches, but only pays lip service to the Gospel. Could you?

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