



5 When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, *Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?* 6 And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. 7 Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, 9 There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? 10 And Jesus said, *Make the men sit down.* Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. 11 And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. 12 When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, *Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.* 13 Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. (John 6:4-13)

Nothing of God's provision, and no one of His Elect, shall perish from a lack of saving grace. I see a direct correlation between the account of the feeding of the five thousand (plus women and children) and the Syro-Phoenician Woman of Tyre. It is the Gospel text for Second Sunday in Lent according to the 1928 BoCP Lectionary: 21 *Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.* 22 *And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.* 23 *But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.* 24 *But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* 25 *Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.* 26 *But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.* 27 *And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.* 28 *Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.* And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. (Matt 15:21-28)

We all have crumbs and fragments of our lives that are most valuable, but are not treasured as gold and silver but strewn into the dustbin of our moments of struggles and strife. This is particularly true of the wasted opportunities of youth. In the leading text from the Gospel of John 6, great multitudes were fed. They were miraculously fed from

a meagre resource of five loaves of bread and two small fish. These, in themselves, were fragments and no measure of the needed provision for so many. But the Lord can do much with our smallest offering. The youth who provided these small fragments of bread and fish put the fragments of his young life to great purpose. Not very many youth would offer their only meal to so many, but it was more than enough in the hands of the Lord and, in the end, the boy received his fill of bread and fish.

It should be noted, too, that the Lord is pleased to give His disciples a role in serving His blessings of Bread to others. We have that opportunity today to share the Bread of Heaven to the multitudes who hunger and thirst. After the feeding on that day, there were twelve baskets taken up of the fragments alone. These were gathered since the Lord has untold multitudes more that must be fed from those fragments. Just remember that a fragment with the Lord is always an endless supply. *16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.* (John 10:16) Jesus was speaking to the 'fold' of Jerusalem; but He had other sheep that were not of that fold. It was the unnumbered millions from all over the world which would come to be fed with those fragments taken up on the mountain.

Now we will examine the Syro-Phoenician Woman and her desperate plight. She was not of the fold of the Jews – that is certain. *26 The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.* (Mark 7:26) That woman stands in the stead of each of us who are in desperate need of a Savior and who the Lord claims as *other sheep not of this fold*. The Lord, contrary to popular belief, spoke tenderly to the woman. *It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.* The term our Lord used for 'dogs' was puppies – the pets that lingered below the table for every fragment and crumb that came down to them. He did not ask out of rudeness, but out of a compassion that would try her faith as a profound demonstration to those around Him. It does not matter the size of the serving, whether a full plate, or only a fragment – it will ALWAYS be sufficient for those who hunger and thirst after God's Word.

Now, there are other fragments that do not measure up to the fragments that Jesus offers, but are valuable nonetheless. In the rage of youth, consider the hours, days, and longer fragments of time that are idled away on the poisoned crumbs of the world. These fragments of our youth are so valuable that they cannot be reconstituted even at the greatest efforts in the waning days of our lives. They are:

1. Time

What a rare and valuable resource, but pitifully uncherished by youth. It seems in the early days of youth that we shall live forever, and there is no end of time on our full plates of life. We spend those resources of time as if they were endless on matters that have no bearing whatsoever on the meaningful issues of life. Consider what a privilege to come to the Lord in our youth while there is an abundance of time remaining to serve and prosper in His Kingdom. Though He will accept us in our ancient days, see what little opportunity for meaningful service remain to the elderly person whose time is measured in days or weeks instead of the years and decades of youth. *"O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; 2 To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary."* Psalms 63:1-2) In all matters of life, early is always better than later.

2. Knowledge and Wisdom

True knowledge and learning results in wisdom – the ultimate in the knowledge of the Lord. We learn not only the ancient truths of God and His Creation, but learn wisdom in how to measure and apply that knowledge in our lives. The young have a plentiful supply of time to acquire the treasures of knowledge and wisdom that is not

available to those of advancing years and gathering shadows. The Bible verses and stories committed to memory in our youth become the golden treasures of our latter years. They provide us with hope, faith, and a glimpse at the opening Gates of Splendor that lie ahead for all who believe. *2 To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; 3 To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; 4 To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. 5 A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:* (Prov 1:1-5) Knowledge is cumulative as is wisdom – comprised of fragments here and there which results in the whole.

3. Money

My father used to tell me that I must have the first and last penny if I would own one million dollars. We see from this that wealth, too, is made up of fragments of pennies that add together to make a great treasure. It is important to teach youth to begin saving money at an early age – first the piggy bank; then the savings certificates; then banks and investments. All should be used for the purpose of doing service in charitable giving and furthering the work of the church and her missionaries on foreign fields. Donating money to satisfy the needs of others do them good, but it does the giver even better service. *35 I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, **It is more blessed to give than to receive.*** (Acts 20:35) Which would you prefer to be – the needy beggar, or the benevolent giver?

4. Usefulness

Life is based upon habits – either those motivated by greed, or those motivated by righteousness. We must feed one or the other of them. The righteous man knows the Word of the Lord and its necessity as a rule of life. When he first becomes aware of his election and calling in God, he may suffer from many old and sinful habits. These do not perish easily. It requires a conscious effort to always put God, and His Holy Word, first in all that he does. This is not a simple goal to achieve. It at first seems awkward and even impossible, but the Holy Spirit is hovering over the deep of our hearts to make the waters smooth. The old fragments of greed and carnality slowly disappear and are replaced with the fragmentary habits of righteousness and decency. This is called sanctification, and it draws us ever closer to the *Way, the Truth and the Life.*

Let us forever settle for the crumbs and fragments of righteousness rather than the whole cloth of evil and wicked desires. If we fail in our pursuit of righteousness, let us replace the desire for evil with a love of God and His Creation. It then will not be a sacrifice but a joy.