

Helping People

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon encourages believers to actively participate in ministry through compassion and service to others.

Duration: 35:15

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Mark 6:34-45

Topics: "Help"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story from the book of Mark where Jesus feeds the crowd of 5,000 people with only five loaves of bread and two fish. The preacher emphasizes the importance of compassion and helping others, using Jesus as an example. He also highlights the significance of taking time to rest and be alone with God, as Jesus instructed his disciples after their ministry. The preacher encourages the audience to recognize that God can use them, even if they feel inadequate, and to offer whatever they have to God for his glory.

Transcript

Let's talk about something we can pray for because it's obvious, isn't it, that professional ministry is not gonna do the work that needs to be done, nor did God ever intend it. The idea that the pastor or the associate pastor is gonna run around and do all the work and that the church will be successful, evangelize people, see them come to Christ, see them prayed in, see them helped and loved, with the rest of the people just being basically spectators and coming to church on Sunday or Tuesday and watching or asking God for more blessings, that is really beyond the realm of anything that you could come to if you read the Bible because the Bible tells us that the body of Christ is just that, it's a body, with each member of the body having a function. So there's certain things this right hand can do that my knee can't do, but I need my knee, I need my right hand.

And why pastors suffer a lot of burnout and discouragement is in our Western culture, especially here in America, it's become a spectator sport. I come, I watch what goes on, I hear the sermon, and then I go back home and I've done my duty, I'm certainly a good Christian, I went to church, and now I wait till next week so that I can listen again. And of course, this is foreign to any idea of God's mission for us all as we make up his church.

What's interesting in the New Testament is in the book of Acts, we find Stephen, who was a deacon and was helping in the disbursement of food to widows, suddenly God began to use him in powerful ways, and

he ended up being martyred, they stoned him to death, and he was praying for the people who were stoning him as he went down for the count. The Bible says that after that stoning, a great persecution broke out against the church, and for whatever reason, the apostles did not go out, they stayed in Jerusalem. Some commentators have questioned whether that was the right thing to do because Jesus had told them, go into all the world, Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, but for whatever reason, they stayed with the mother church there in Jerusalem, but everyone else was being persecuted, they fled, they lost their jobs, their families had to move, and the Bible tells us that everywhere they went, the lay people, the Christians, everywhere they went, they proclaimed the message of Jesus, and they multiplied themselves.

They began to help people by ministering to them the words of life as we find in the gospel of Christ, and they prayed for people, and they encouraged people, and they believed God for supernatural things because they didn't have that mentality of it's only for the ordained pastors, it's only for the Billy Grahams and the famous evangelists or pastors of mega churches. No, they were like, hey, God can use me. How many believe God can use everybody? Say amen.

Amen. Okay, so I wanna talk about helping people today because we have to see an army be raised up in Virginia, Mississippi, Springfield, Missouri, Detroit, Texas, Brooklyn, all around New York City. We have to see an army raised up of believers who won't fit into this American mold of just sit in the church and watch what's going on, and I hope it will bless me, and maybe I'll come back next week.

We gotta see an army of serious people, amen, raised up by God so that they can help people. Remember, love always wants to help. When you love someone, you want to help them.

Doesn't matter how good or bad they've been, love always reaches out to help. And the only thing that can break selfishness in our lives is this love so that we can show God's love to people and be able to help them towards salvation, help them through the storms of life, help them to be disciplined, whatever has to be done. Help them by praying with them and for them.

Well, there's a wonderful story that's repeated in all four gospels, and that's very rare. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the synoptic gospels. And they contain a lot of similar material.

They're called the synoptic gospels. And a story that you'll read in Matthew, you might very well see it in Mark, and maybe even in Luke, sometimes in two of them. Sometimes they have an original, an account of something we didn't know Jesus did.

John is different. John has much material that is not found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. For example, Nicodemus and Jesus telling him, you must be born again.

That's not recorded anyplace else. Jesus's last prayer to the Father that we find in John 17, we don't see that in the other gospels. But there's one story that's unusual because it's found in all four gospels, very rare.

And it's not something that is supposed to be duplicated, it seems, because it never happened again. By any of the apostles in the book of Acts, it just happened. Jesus proved who he was through this, what he did.

And then there are spiritual lessons in it. So let's look at it. I picked it from Mark, so let's look at Mark.

When Jesus got out of the boat, he saw this large crowd, and his heart was filled with pity for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began to teach them many things. And when it was getting late, his disciples came to him and said, it is already very late and this is a lonely place.

Send the people away and let them go to the nearby farms and villages in order to buy themselves something to eat. You yourselves give them something to eat, Jesus answered. They asked, do you want us to go and spend 200 silver coins on bread in order to feed all of them, to feed them? So Jesus asked them, how much bread do you have? Go and see.

And when they found out, they told him, we have five loaves and also two fish. Jesus then told his disciples to make all the people divide into groups and sit down on the green grass. So he organized the crowd.

So the people sat down in rows, in groups of 100 and groups of 50. Then Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish. He looked up to heaven and he gave thanks to God.

And he broke the loaves and he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. Everyone ate and had enough.

Then the disciples took up 12 baskets full of what was left of the bread and the fish. And the number of men who were fed was 5,000. Now Jesus did two of these events where he fed multitudes with small amounts of food.

Then he never did it again. And nowhere in the book of Acts did the apostles ever say, all right, everybody sit down, give me a little matzah here or whatever you have and let me feed 120 people. We never see that happen again.

Not that it couldn't happen again. We never see that as a practice, as this is the way to go when you're short on food. In fact, a famine broke out in Judea and the church in Jerusalem suffered from that famine.

And we find later on in the book of Acts and the epistles, letters of Paul, that Paul raised money up from churches to be sent to the people in Jerusalem so they could get through the famine. They could have extra money to buy the food. But this story is there in all four gospels.

Obviously, when Jesus did this, people said, this is no ordinary preacher. This guy is from another world. We saw it, five loaves.

Someone says, yeah, they were big loaves. I don't care how big that loaf was. I don't care if it was on big hero rolls.

We're talking 5,000 people here, friends. So five loaves and two fishes, and he fed 5,000 people. And there were leftovers.

There's some lessons in it, obviously, that I would like to point out to you. If you want to be involved in helping people, if you want to minister to people, not just flap your mouth or go to church on Sunday or complain about life, but if you want to go to that other level of being a blessing. Most people want a blessing.

Very small percentage want to be a blessing. But God raised us up. He saved us so that we could be a blessing.

Pastor Park is leading these great mission trips, not in order to get a blessing, but we get a blessing by doing it, but to be a blessing. So what can we learn from this? To be a blessing, notice, in a supernatural way. Because what came out was more than what went in.

And whenever God uses a church or a person or a couple, you can't explain it in a human way. If you can explain it, then God is really not doing it. If two plus two equals four, that's not a miracle.

If two plus two or five loaves and two fishes feeds 5,000 people, then you know, wait a minute, God is doing something, amen? So what do we learn? Because I want to help people. My name, Jim, means helpful friend. I don't want to be a famous preacher or pastor.

I don't get any joy out of notoriety. I don't want to meet famous people. I don't want a fancy car.

I don't want any of that. I just want to help people. My joy at night when I go to sleep on a Sunday when I'm very tired is to just think of a face that I saw that met God or some counsel I could give.

I want to help people. Don't you want to help people? How many want to help people? I mean, and not just gimme, gimme, gimme, gimme, gimme. So what can we learn from this story that will help us so that we can pray tonight for our friends from Virginia and Mississippi and Springfield and Michigan and Texas and whatever? Number one, and this is where it has to begin, you notice that Jesus was moved with compassion.

The previous chapter tells us about the death of John the Baptist, who was beheaded. And previous to that, we find Jesus sending out the disciples two by two. He sends the disciples out, and at the beginning of this chapter, chapter six, the disciples come back, and listen to what Jesus said.

This is for some maybe pastor here or leader. Jesus said, as they came back from hard ministry, praying for people, declaring the message, he says, come away and be alone with me and rest for a while. See, there's a time for everything under the sun.

And sometimes the best thing you can do in life is just to get away and be with Jesus, not be talking, not be doing anything. So the Bible tells us that they reported to him. That's a good word for all of us that are in the ministry.

I have pastors here, so I wanna say that. Don't go by how the people react to you. Go back and tell Jesus what you said and did.

And then he'll affirm it, and he'll bless it, and he'll correct it if it needs correction. You can never go by the crowd. You gotta go by Jesus.

So they got alone, and they were with him, and then he wanted to go and said, come on, let's really get away to rest. But he was so famous that wherever he went, crowds gathered. So now he sees this huge crowd, and here's the first thing we learn.

It says he had compassion on them. The Good News Bible says he had pity on them. And we know there are thousands because that's how many he fed.

There are thousands of people milling around, and he took time and had compassion and pity on them. You can't help people if you don't have compassion and pity on them. I don't care what truth you have.

I don't care how many Bible verses you know. You can't help people if you don't have the spirit of Jesus, and Jesus had pity on them. And guess what? There's thousands of them.

Do you think they were all spiritual giants? Christ hadn't died yet. Nobody could believe in his death and resurrection. They weren't Christians as we know it.

We know some of them were just looking for a free meal. Others just said, I hope he touches me so I can get healed. They were in all different kind of spiritual conditions, and some of them were probably obnoxious.

You get 5,000 people together, you're gonna have some obnoxious people, won't you? Well, maybe if you come to New York, we'll show you some obnoxious people, and you don't have to have 5,000 of them. We'll just give us 50, and we'll show you something. But he had compassion anyway.

See, we're like, if we like them and they really love the Lord and they're suffering, we have pity, but that's not the pity of Jesus. Jesus has pity on everyone. You know, if you're here tonight and you're not serving the Lord, did you know that he has pity on you? He doesn't wanna hurt you.

Why would he wanna hurt you? He didn't come to condemn the world. He came to save the world. We don't fight culture wars as Christians.

We're not against anyone. Our enemies are not flesh and blood. What are they? Principalities and powers.

We're fighting against Satan and his forces. We don't, our enemies are not Muslims or people who live counter to biblical principles. That's who Christ died for.

And where were you before you became a Christian? Were you so lovely? Was I so wonderful? No. So it all begins, if you wanna help people and be used by God, you gotta let God baptize you with his love so you see people the way he sees them. If you're ornery and got an edge and you only like people of your race and your color and your blackness and your whiteness and your West Indian-ish, whatever that word is, your Caribbean thing and whatever, I mean, that gets so old.

There are people who Christ died for who are hurting. Can we say amen from every nation, every tribe? But, well, I believe in the power of God. I've seen all kinds of pastors not be fruitful who believe in the power of God because they don't love people.

I know all kinds of people who know Bible verses and they wouldn't go around the block for a person. But Jesus, the son of the living God, the purest human ever to walk on the earth, he had pity on people no matter how they were living because he saw they were like sheep without a shepherd. You know what sheep do without a shepherd? They get into trouble.

They wander where the wolves are. They go where predators are. They go away from where the food is because they're just, they're sheep.

And that's what he saw. He didn't judge them, he had pity on them. You can't be used by God if you judge people.

You have to pity people. If something's wrong, it's wrong. And we have to speak the truth in love.

I'm not for sloppy agape where everything everyone does, well, I don't want to offend you so I won't tell you the truth. That's wrong, too. But we ought to have pity on people.

And some of us have grown up in churches where there wasn't a dime's worth of pity and compassion. Everything was duro, hard, mean, judgmental, and then covered up by I'm holy, I don't mix with people like that. Well, that's funny, you're holier than Jesus because he was a friend of sinners.

Come on, can we say amen to that? He was a friend of sinners and he had compassion on people. So that's the first thing. And some of us need it bad.

We need to come to God in prayer and in repentance tonight and say, God, I'm too harsh. I think I know better than everyone. I think I'm better than other, who is better than anyone? Show me the worst sinner in this city and there it goes you or me except for the grace of God.

The other thing we learn is that when Jesus wanted to act on this love and said, come on, let's get some food for them, the disciples reacted like we do when the Lord will give you a chance tomorrow to minister to someone. Let somebody else do it. Let somebody go in, let them go into town, let somebody else feed them.

We can't feed them. Isn't that a lot like us? You know, we even love the word and we love to be in church and we love to sing and swing and sway and all of that. But when it comes to helping people, let somebody else do that.

That's the pastor's job. Let Pastor Hammond do that. He's a great man of God.

I don't have time for that. That has to stop. I said, that has to stop in the name of the Lord.

We have to make ourselves available to the Lord so he can use us. Well, why did they want someone else to do it? Because they thought they were insufficient and that's a battle we all fight. I know that battle better than anything you could imagine.

I battled with that the first X number of years in the ministry. Not trained, not a great speaker, et cetera, et cetera. But Jesus said, no one else is gonna do it.

You're gonna do it. And then they went, how are we gonna do it? We don't have what it takes. We don't have the equipment.

We don't have the merchandise. We don't have the storehouse that we need to meet the needs of these people. There's a spiritual lesson in this for us.

Because when God gives you a chance to help someone and to minister to someone, the tendency of us is to look inside and say, can I do this? Anne's gonna think, can I do this? Her mind is very quick, Anne's, and she's gonna think very quick, can I do this? Am I able to do this? And the Lord says, no, you will do it. You will feed them. No, but we only have five loaves and two fishes.

We don't have what it takes. And this is the whole lesson of this story. God doesn't use people who have what it takes.

He uses people who don't have what it takes. And that way, he can get the glory. So he said to the disciples, so what do you have? And that's what I wanna, as I close with you tonight, I just wanna say a

couple more things, but I wanna focus in on this.

This is what Jesus is saying to all of us tonight. You raised your hand before. You said you wanna help people.

You said you wanna be a blessing and not just give me, give me, give me. So here's what I wanna say to you. What do you have? Don't say it's not enough.

Jesus is saying to you, what do you have? I only have five loaves, two fishes. That'll do. Give it to me.

Whatever you have is enough if you give it to him. If you don't give it to him and you hold onto it, now it doesn't matter what you have. Nothing supernatural is gonna happen.

You can't, you and I gotta get done with insufficiency and I'm not worthy and I don't have what it takes. I don't know enough Bible verses. You gotta stop.

When God gives you an opportunity and says, you feed them, you bless them, you pray for them, you open your mouth, I'll put the words in it. You can't pass it on to someone else and you can't say, I don't have what it takes. God says, just give me what you have.

What do you have? Whatever your IQ is, give it to Jesus. Whatever your voice is, whatever your eyes are, whatever you have, whatever your life experience is. If you know two verses or 200, whatever you have, just give it to Jesus.

Because when you give it to Jesus is where everything turns and some of us don't give it to Jesus because we're embarrassed that we don't have enough to give to Jesus and he's not impressed by little or a lot. He's just saying, give me what you have. You got five loaves and two fishes? It'll do, just give it to me.

And I challenge all of you tonight as we pray, just give what you have to Jesus. Give him your past with all his sins. It's under the blood, it's gone.

Oh, how many say praise God to that? Our past is gone. Give. Give your job, give what you have, your education.

Don't say you don't have enough. Just what, who are you? What do you have? And give it to him. And don't be ashamed of it.

He's God. Nobody's gonna impress him by anything we give him. You think when some super intellectual comes or some talented person, you think God in heaven looks like angels.

Would you look at, this is an amazing guy. No, we're all nothing compared to God. His strength is made perfect in our weakness, not in what we have.

That's really a subtle form of pride. I found it in myself. I don't have what it takes.

Well, is it about you or is it about me, the Lord is saying? Is it about you? Are you gonna do it or is he gonna do it? He's gonna do it. Just give him what you have. So they gave him the five loaves and the two fishes.

So we've already learned some good lessons, haven't we? You can't help anyone that you don't have compassion for. So God's gotta change us on that. You can't use the old story, let somebody else do it.

Then you'll never be used. You gotta start with whatever God gives you, even going home on the subway today or tomorrow or on the job or at school, wherever you are. When the opportunity arises and you know, here's a chance to do something, pray something, say something, you can't say, oh, I hope somebody, I gotta call one of the deacons of the church to get him over here.

You gotta do it. But I don't have enough. That has to stop.

Whatever you have, give it to Jesus. As Freddie plays, in a second, I'm gonna ask you to come with what you have. I don't care if it's five loaves and two fishes.

Was that not ridiculous? Jesus said, give me five loaves and two fishes, and they're going, Lord, we said 5,000. Do you see these crowds? Why are you taking five loaves and two fishes in your hands? That's ridiculous. Just give me what you have.

Evelyn, whatever you have, just give it. My dear sister Sylvia, just give of what you have. Pastor Johnson, all of you up in the balcony, just give it, and the miracle happens when you give it.

The miracle happened in his hands after they gave him what they had. That's where God's used everyone in the history of the world. They surrendered themselves to him and they put themselves in his hands, and now, wow, look what happens.

It's not them. It's five loaves and two fishes. It's what happens in his hands when you give it to him.

Last thought. Lord's made this so real to me in the last, like, year and a half. Every time I read this story in one of the gospels, every gospel story mentions this next sentence.

And then he took what they gave him, and he looked up to heaven, and he thanked God for what he had. Can you imagine the disciples looking at that and saying, what in the world is he doing? We gotta feed 5,000 people, and he's thanking God for five loaves and two fishes. He should be complaining to God.

God, five loaves and two fishes. What am I supposed to do with this? No, he thanked God for the little he had. You know, that's what holds a lot of us back.

We're so into, I can't, I'm not sure, this and that, instead of saying, God, thank you for what I am. I'm only five loaves and two fishes. Some of us, like me, we're one loaf and a half a fish.

But guess what? Thank God for it. Thank God for everything. Thank God you're alive, as Pastor Park prayed.

Thank God that you're a Christian. Thank God for what you know about the Bible. Do you need to know more? That's fine, but thank God for what you do know.

Thank God you have a testimony. Thank God you slept in a bed last night. God only uses thankful people, not, wait, wait, wait, not people who are saying, I need this, I need that, I need this, I gotta go to this.

I need a degree, I need this. I met a minister in one of my last trips, a young guy who's got his master's and all of that, and I could see God's hand is on his life, and he's saying, but I'm not ready yet. I gotta get

my PhD.

I gotta get my PhD, and this is not anti-education, so don't anybody misread me, but this is what I discern with him. He said, Pastor Cimbala, your books have so blessed me. Don't you think I need that PhD? I said, my dear friend, let me tell you this.

I pastor a church in downtown Brooklyn, and if you walk out, you're on Smith Street. If you walk out the other door, you're on Fulton Street. No one on Smith Street or Fulton Street in downtown Brooklyn smoking weed all day long or destroying their life in one way or another is looking up to God and saying, oh God, send me someone with a PhD, please, God.

If God leads you to get a PhD, mazel tov, God bless you, but, but, but, but he doesn't use PhDs. He just uses who we are. If you just give it to Jesus, he will thank God that you gave him that, who you are, and we gotta be more thankful.

I have never seen God use an ungrateful person. I've never seen that. I read church history.

Every man or woman God ever uses, they have this happy, cheerful, grateful, praise God, and some of them are suffering and they're persecuted. The happiest Christians I've ever met probably are the ones underground church in China that I'm gonna see, God willing, in Hong Kong in November, and I was just there in February or March, and they're the happiest Christians and they're persecuted and they've been in prison and they're meeting me and they're going, praise God. So how's your church going through an interpreter? Oh, praise God, God is good.

I hear it sometimes hard in your province. Yes, but God is good, praise God. No, but I heard you were in jail.

Yes, but it was only a short time I was in jail. Praise God, I'm out of jail now. Come on, everybody put your hands together.

Open your mouth and praise God out loud right now. We praise you, God. We thank you, God.

Save us from an ungrateful, grouchy spirit. Just lift up your hands with me. God, we thank you for the little we have.

We thank you for the little that we are because it's not about how big or little we are, it's how big you are. That's who our hope is in, not in what we have or don't have, it's in you. We praise you, we thank you.

Come on, just thank him out loud, praise him. Praise him for the clothes on your back, the money in your pocket. Hallelujah, we bless your name.

I thank you for this building, Lord. I thank you for my congregation, this great group of people, Lord. I praise you.

Every, I close. Every, I close. I'm gonna ask the staff from the church in Virginia and the folks, pastor and his family from Mississippi come forward.

And I'd like Brother Salih and his wife to come and stand on either side of me up here, along with other pastors from our church. But the rest of you, I want you to just get out of your seat and come and stand in the front, from Virginia, from Mississippi. I want them to get up here because I promised I would pray for

them.

Can you imagine a whole pastoral staff coming, come on up, pastors, and stand with me here, but you stand right, yeah, Brother Salih, come up on the steps, you're gonna help me pray. Mary, you're gonna help me pray, please. The rest of you just come up here and face us, face us, yeah, just face us.

Imagine 11, 12 of them come up, men and women, come all the way up here to be in a prayer group. I mean, is God not gonna help them? I said, isn't God gonna help them? I mean, I told them that God's gonna help them. We're gonna sing that song, Holy, Holy, Again.

Holy is the Lord. Every eye closed, if you're here today, man or woman, and you want to go into another level now of being a blessing through the supernatural power of Jesus Christ, Sylvia, if you would come up and help me pray. If you want to be used by God, no more just give me, give me, bless me, bless me, but God, make me a blessing.

Give me that compassion that I see people the way you see them. I feel what you feel. No more excuses and let someone else do it.

I'm ready to do what you call me to do, God. Then get out of your seat and come on up here from the balcony downstairs. God, I'm not gonna now pass the bucket, I'm not gonna talk anymore, and I'm not gonna complain what little I have.

I'm gonna take what little I am and have, and I'm gonna give it to you. I'm gonna hand it over to you. Because miracles happen when we put it in the hands of Christ.

Father, we thank you for your word to us tonight. And as we spend time calling on you and waiting before you, we want to say some things from our heart. I think I'm speaking for the people, Lord.

Lord, number one, fill us with love. How can we present Jesus who is pure love, unless we love the people we're talking to, praying with? Some of us have been hurt by people and we put up a wall. Some of us might have unforgiveness or bitterness.

Would you just root it out of us, Lord, so that we're filled with compassion? And Jesus had pity on them because he saw they were like sheep without a shepherd. Raise us up to do your work and equip us first by filling us with love. Make us brave now so that when opportunities come, we won't say someone else will do it, I can't do it, but we're gonna be ready to say, Jesus is gonna work through me.

Jesus is gonna speak through me. Jesus is gonna anoint my prayer. God is gonna be with me.

Help us to stop being ashamed of our five loaves and two fishes. Help us to stop saying, I don't have what it takes. We don't have what's needed.

And help us to just take what we are and what we have and give it to you. Oh, Jesus, do a mighty work in this church in Virginia, Lord. Do a mighty work in that church.

That church in Mississippi, God, do an awesome work in that church. Come on, people of God, lift up a hand from Mississippi and lift up a hand for Virginia. And our sister from Texas, whatever you've called her to do, Lord, and our friends from Springfield, Missouri, Convoy of Hope, Lord, use them in ways that they've never been used before.

We lift them up in Jesus' name. Take away an ungrateful spirit. Take away a complaining spirit.

Take away fear and make us thankful. Help us to thank you even as Jesus thanked the Father for the five loaves and the two fishes and it looked ridiculous. We praise you for every little thing that you have given us, Lord.

Let's put our hands together and thank the Lord for every grace, every blessing. Everybody pray after me out loud. Dear God, I believe your word.

You can use my five loaves and two fishes. I give it to you. Everything I have, everything I am, take it in your hands and break it and multiply it so that I can be a blessing to people.

No more excuses and no more selfish living. I give myself to God and to the people he loves. In Jesus' name, in Jesus' name.

Let's clap and say amen together, hallelujah.

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