

**GOD IS ABLE– Sunday April 21<sup>st</sup> 2012.**

***13 Now when Jesus heard about John, He withdrew from there in a boat to a secluded place by Himself; and when the people heard of this, they followed Him on foot from the cities. 14 When He went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and felt compassion for them and healed their sick.***

***15 When it was evening, the disciples came to Him and said, “This place is desolate and the hour is already late; so send the crowds away, that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.” 16 But Jesus said to them, “They do not need to go away; you give them something to eat!” 17 They \*said to Him, “We have here only five loaves and two fish.” 18 And He said, “Bring them here to Me.” 19 Ordering the people to sit down on the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed the food, and breaking the loaves He gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds, 20 and they all ate and were satisfied. They picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve full baskets. 21 There were about five thousand men who ate, besides women and children.***

***(Matthew 14:13-21)***

Beloved in the Lord,

One of the most powerful promises in God’s Word comes to us in Paul’s letter to the Philippians: ***“And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19)***

If and when we get a clear understanding of what this means, we are freed from worry and fear about anything. Not only does God promise to meet our needs, He is ABLE to do so. Over and over we find evidence of this fact in His Word.

Our text today is a good example. A great crowd of people have gathered around Jesus in the desert. Jesus has spent the day teaching and healing. Evening has come and the disciples are starting to worry about the people. What are they going to do about dinner? Out in the desert there are no options. They come to Jesus and say to Him that He should close the service and let them go to the nearby villages to buy food. Jesus reply is astonishing: ***“They do not need to go away; you give them something to eat!”*** The disciples are flabbergasted! They begin to scratch their heads and wonder how are they going to feed this massive crowd. We are told there were 5000 men, not counting the women and children. We can safely assume that there were in excess of 15,000 people. A quick inventory yields little hope. There is a young lad who is willing to share his lunch. He has five small bread rolls and a couple of dried fish. To the disciples this was nothing, but to Jesus it was sufficient. He took the lad’s lunch, gave thanks to the Father, blessed it and started to distribute it. All ate as much as they wanted and they filled twelve baskets with the left-overs!

This miracle shows us that God is able. He can do anything. Even then, when it seems that there is no hope, no way out, no solution, God is able. Last Sunday I taught you that God owns everything and that He can do whatever He likes.

God is able. Please understand this. Live in faith. Be certain that whatever your need may be; whether it is physical or spiritual, God is able to help. Please understand and believe that not only He is able, He is willing to help.

There is a phrase often associated with Jesus in the Gospels and we find it in today's passage and that is: "(Jesus) **felt compassion for them.** " Over and over again we read of Jesus' compassion for people. Jesus shows us that The Father is a God of mercy and grace. He is love. He loves us. He has pity on us. He wants to, He desires to help us.

At every funeral I conduct, I read these words of Jesus which contain such a beautiful invitation:

***"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."* (Matthew 11:28-30)**

Jesus is inviting us to come to Him and He promises to lighten our load, whatever it may be. It can be sin, it can be depression, it can be sickness, unforgiveness, pride, jealousy, any number of things.

We read over and over again that a large part of Jesus ministry was healing the sick. If we are sick, we should not be shy or hesitant to come to Jesus asking for healing. He wants us to come. He wants us to pray. Healing is a vital part of His ministry to us.

Will all get healed? No! Maybe God wants to glorify His name through your illness. Paul had some sort of an affliction that he called a thorn in the flesh. Many have speculated as to what it was. Paul prayed three times for the Lord to remove it. Paul knew that God was able too. He wrote the words I quoted earlier: ***"And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."*** Yet God did not heal him or remove the affliction. We read in 2 Corinthians 12:7-9: ***"<sup>7</sup> Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! <sup>8</sup> Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. <sup>9</sup> And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me."***

Three times Paul asked God to remove the thorn and three times God told him: "My grace is sufficient for you."

You see, sometimes our problems, our sicknesses, our afflictions are a vehicle of God's grace. That is how Paul came to see his problem. In the end it was a blessing because it kept him in a state of humility. Pride would have cut him off from God's blessings.

This so beautifully illustrates the truth that God supplies ALL of our needs. He doesn't meet our every desire, our every want, but He does meet our every need. God is always motivated by His love because He is love. He always shows grace and mercy to those who trust in Him and turn to Him in faith.

May I repeat what I said earlier? It is not wrong to ask for healing, in fact we should, but we must be ready that God may answer our prayer with the words "My grace is sufficient for you." God and God alone knows what is absolutely best for us, and so the place of blessing is to be where we have placed our trust fully in Him. When we fully trust in Him then we can be sure that in the end all will be well. God knows everything, He is all powerful and He is everywhere. He is motivated by love.

God created you; He gives you breath and He sustains you. He knows what He has fore-ordained for you, for your life, and if you will cease fighting against Him and trust in Him and lean not on your own understanding, then you will have peace in your heart at all time, no matter what!

When doubts assail you, as they do to all of us at one time or another, then the best medicine is God's Word. The first place I turn to when the circumstances of my life cause me to doubt is the Psalms. Especially Psalm 139: ***"O Lord, You have searched me and known me."*** This opening verse tells us so much. God has searched you and He knows you in all details. He knows you better than you know yourself. You are not a number in the crowd, you are the person He created and He knows your name.

David continues: ***"You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar."***

God knows where you are right now. He knows where you are all the time. He knows your thoughts, even before you have them. Can you grasp that? Can you imagine what that means..... ?

***You scrutinize my path and my lying down,  
And are intimately acquainted with all my ways.***

***<sup>4</sup> Even before there is a word on my tongue,  
Behold, O Lord, You know it all.***

***<sup>5</sup> You have enclosed me behind and before,  
And laid Your hand upon me.***

We have only read a handful of verses, but if we read them in faith, then fear and doubt fly out the window. Peace comes and reigns in your heart again, joy overwhelms you as you realise that this all – knowing; all-powerful – ever present God loves YOU!

Verse six is a great expression of praise:

***“Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
It is too high, I cannot attain to it.”***

and then verse 14: ***“I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well.”***

See, when you take your eyes off yourself and focus on God in thanksgiving, then everything changes. Praise and thanksgiving changes everything.

Back to our foundation text.

Having received the fives rolls and two fish Jesus did not look at the problem: namely, so little food, yet so many mouths to feed. Oh no, He looked to the Father. He gave thanks that God is able and began to dole out the food. He knew that God is able!

I challenge you to today to stop looking at yourself, your problems and look to the Father through His Son Jesus and say: “I thank you Father, that You are ABLE!.

Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.