

GIVING THANKS

“Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.” —JOHN 6:11

In the Christian life, there is a spiritual necessity and spiritual power that derives from giving thanks. Jesus demonstrates this in the feeding of the 5,000 men, plus their wives and children. They had gathered along the shores of Galilee to hear Jesus speak. As evening approached, it was evident they were not going anywhere and they were hungry.

The disciples suggested they send the people to surrounding villages to buy food. But Jesus asked Philip, “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?” This was only to test him as prior to this event, Jesus had told His disciples, “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing...” (John 5:19). Philip answered, “That would take eight months of a man’s wages. Are we going to spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?” Then Andrew comes along and says, “Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish,” and then is apologetic, remarking, “But what are they among so many?” (John 6:9)

Were Jesus to have asked an atheist what could be done to feed these people, his response would have been the same as the disciples. “It can’t be done. There’s not enough money; not enough food.” What does that tell us about the disciples? They were professing disciples,

but practising atheists. In our Christian faith, we can believe many things about Jesus, but live as though He were totally irrelevant.

John 6:11 says that Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks and had the food distributed, as much as they wanted. The secret to Jesus having adequately fed the crowd is what John points out when he writes, “Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks” (John 6:23). Most of us would have referred to it as the place where Jesus had performed a miracle, but it says where “the Lord had given thanks”. And that is the key; so simple, we can miss it. Jesus gave thanks in advance, transferring the responsibility to His Father.

When giving thanks to God, we are expressing two things: our complete dependency on God and His utter sufficiency in whatever situation we entrust to Him. Giving thanks is a key in activating God’s working in our lives, because it acknowledges His presence and His sovereignty in all things. We can be like the disciples, relating situations to our own capabilities and keep God as a sleeping partner, or we can be like the little boy with such little food that he entrusted to Jesus.

PRAYER: Dear Lord Jesus, I am at a loss without You, and thank You for your presence and working in my life every single day.

TO REFLECT UPON: Am I thanking God for His presence, especially in situations where I don’t know what to do?