

YOU GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO EAT
On the 30th anniversary of Bonn UBF ministry

Mark 6:37a "But he answered, 'You give them something to eat.'"

The title of today's passage is "You give them something to eat." While studying the Bible, we cannot avoid hearing Jesus' command "You give them something to eat" since the event of Jesus' feeding five thousands with five loaves and two fish is recorded in all four gospels (Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:31-44, Luke 9:10-17 and John 6:5-15). Jesus' command to his disciples is very challenging because they did not have any money in their pocket. But his command reveals God's great compassion for sinners. No one with beggar mentality can lead others. Those who obey Jesus' command can grow as spiritual leaders because of the spirit of giving.

I. Jesus taught them the word of God out of his compassion.

Jesus wanted to evangelize his hometown people. Jesus' teaching was powerful enough to amaze them all. But their deep rooted humanism made them reject Jesus and his words, along with the blessing of eternal life. And King Herod beheaded John the Baptist since his sin of adultery was rebuked. Jesus lamented over his generation, saying 'Oh unbelieving and adulterous generation!' What could Jesus do to carry out his mission in such difficult challenges of humanism, unbelief and immorality of his times? Jesus called his twelve disciples and sent them out two by two with his power and his message. Jesus' message has been always simple and remains the same throughout history. "The Kingdom of God is near! Repent and Believe." What happened when Jesus' disciples obeyed Jesus absolutely and delivered his message simply by faith? They experienced a great work of healing and repentance among people. In Jesus' message, the heart of God is well revealed. God Almighty wants to give His Kingdom to those who repent of their sins and believe in his message. Jesus' message has the power of healing all sinners and the power of driving out demons. In the Kingdom of God, there are no more disease, no more demons, and no more sorrows. When God's Kingdom is restored in our hearts, we can live happily forever in his Kingdom as his stewards, ruling over all. It was also the first time for his disciples to experience such mighty work of God through their absolute obedience to Jesus. It is important for the disciples of Jesus to experience the power of God through absolute obedience. These days, many young people are very sensitive to their own feelings and their own schedule, having great difficulty in understanding the importance of the absolute "obedience." But without the absolute obedience to the word of God, nobody can experience the power of God.

The most importance characteristic in Bonn UBF ministry is to build up the ministry in the absolute obedience to God's word. Dr. Peter Chang's first message was simple. It was "Habt Glauben An Gott!" His message was simple and short so that he did not struggle much to memorize the message, but struggle so hard to plant the gospel message, "Have Faith in God!" in the hearts of German students fully covered with humanism and unbelieving. But his message was miraculously planted in the rocky kind of hearts of many German campus students such as Sh. Peter Schweitzer, Joachim Dietzel, Jochen Schweitzer, Berthold Koesters, Danke Peter Pilawa, Xenofon Grigoriadis and many. There had been no deviation in applying the words of God to him and to his coworkers because he believed the word of God as the word of God.

When Jesus landed, he saw a large crowd coming toward him. Of course, his disciples felt so bad. But how did Jesus see them? Verse 34b says, "...he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things." This is the compassion of God in Jesus. Out of his compassion, Jesus taught them many things in the Bible. This scene reminds me of John 3:16. It says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." In order to take care of many shameless people, God sent his one and only son out of his compassion. In the year 2000, M. Petrus turned to 20 years old, waiting for his medical study as a freshman. M. Dr. Peter Chang prayed to establish a house church for his first son by holding on John 3:16. He prayed that his son may not fulfill his marriage dream by improving his human condition, but fulfill God's world mission in his generation by establishing a house church. At that time, M. Pauline was in the course of Ph. D program of Statistics at Rutgers. I asked her to pray about the marriage by faith, saying that God called you to be a mother of all nations for all 2nd generation. Amazingly, M. Pauline decided to marry him by faith. And I thank God that she did not ask "how old he was" or "what kind of job he has." But she said, "He is not tall." I asked her to ask Dr. Joe Schaffer "How tall he is." Then, Dr. Joe did not answer how tall he was. But he told her that the greatness of man does not depend on the height, but on the size of heart with God's compassion.

II. You give them something to eat. (37)

Out of the compassion, Jesus taught the word of God endlessly. Running out of their patience, the disciples of Jesus came to him, asking him to send the people away. How did Jesus answer? Look at verse 37a. "But he answered, 'You give them something to eat.'" This is not the advice from Jesus. This is his command that requires the obedience from whoever wants to follow Jesus and from whoever wants to grow as spiritual leaders. The disciples of Jesus should have understood that there should be the clear purpose when Jesus said this as his command. However, they said to Jesus, "That would take eight months of a man's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?" They complained toward Jesus who never paid them. Therefore, their pocket was empty. What could they do with their empty pocket for so many people? In addition, they were too tired physically. We complain after spending some money and some time to show ourselves up in the course of serving God's work, saying "No more please. I am burnt out." When Jesus said, "You give them something to eat," he meant, "You must be compassionate instead of thinking of them as annoying people." When Jesus said, "You give them something to eat," he meant, "You must have a shepherd heart for them. Therefore, even if you have no bread, you must feed them by any means." Where there is a shepherd heart, always a miracle happens. When Jesus said, "You give them something to eat," he meant, "You should live the life of giving and grow as spiritual leaders, not the life of begging from others and being degenerated into a beggar." What kind of life do you want to live? A life of stewardship with the spirit of giving or a life of begging and becoming a beggar! It is all depending on how you respond to Jesus' command, "You give them something to eat."

Back to 3 years ago, starting from the collapse of Lehman Brothers, the financial system in Wall Street of which America had been proud collapsed all at once. Her security believed to come from her pragmatism embedded in Wall Street. The idea of pragmatism is openly expressed in what people say in their daily lives; "What can I get something out of this?" Under the educational system based on her "pragmatism", the national leaders have been raised up in their ever growing greed, thinking all days of what I can get out of something, instead of being driven by the spirit of giving out of God's compassion for the whole world.

So it was inevitable to see the sudden collapse of what they had built up for their security. Such selfishness cannot guarantee their security. Recently Europe faced the possible collapse of Euro because several countries in Europe Union spent more than they should spend without discipline. Many wonder how the different countries with the different cultures and history can stay together when they meet serious economic problems. Many expected that Euro could not survive. To our surprise, it did not happen as many expect because there is the spirit of giving in Europe led by the political leaders in Germany. What motivates the people of Germany to practice the spirit of giving? The political leaders in Germany have practiced “the spirit of giving” beyond their calculations, in order to create the great history of being united in Europe.

In the course of planting the absolute gospel faith in the hearts of many German leaders, Bonn ministry was misunderstood and challenged by numerous persecutions. In such difficult time, it could have been easier to think of themselves and decided to withdraw. Instead, all Bonn Coworkers decided to pray based on Mark 6:37, “You give them something to eat.” Instead of focusing on their own disciple-making ministry, they all sacrificed themselves for the unity in German ministry and for the Europe mission. All European chapters became united in serving European Summer Bible conference. As a result, more than 1,200 coworkers attended in European Summer Bible Conference. Secondly, they focused on praying for 2nd generation missionaries to be made as the spiritual leaders for the next generation. As their five loaves and two fish, they found the Senfkorn Concert organized. All 2nd generation missionaries flew to Korea at their own cost, held a concert for the leprosy patients in Yeosu, who had never been in a concert in their life time. They always welcomed numerous 2nd generations who visited, stayed short-or long term in Bonn, and studied God’s words, daily bread early morning without showing any hint of being tired or weary in welcoming all. Many UBF chapters got spiritual supports through conferences, Bible studies, and spiritual fellowship. As a result, “the giving spirit” motivated many coworkers in Europe to serve the native campus students with new pioneering spirit through the Bible study and common life; they built a vessel through coworking with coworkers from other chapters.

In postmodern society, we try to identify us by feelings. Such a direction produces endless arguments that bring up the bitterness and sorrows. Our effort to make ourselves feel good will end up in seeking own greed and selfishness. But it is not possible for us to be united by how people feel about us since there are many ideas and feelings. But in Jesus’ command, “You give them something to eat” we find God’s compassion that motivates us to be united for advancing God’s kingdom on earth. As our UBF ministry is growing, we struggle to find out our identity for us and for our next generations. Who are the people belong to UBF? How can we identify us in this world along with our second generations? What kind of identity we can inherit proudly to our next generation? We can identify ourselves as people with the spirit of giving by putting Jesus’ command “You give them something to eat” into practice.

What, then, is our hope and prayer in obeying his command “You give them something to eat.”? We do practice the spirit of giving, not hoping to establish the earthly kingdom in this world, but hoping that Germany, Europe and America may grow as a Kingdom of Priests. Our obedience to “You give them something to eat” should be our never giving up prayer for thy Kingdom to come. Oh! Jesus may come again in our generation and may find us living a life of giving and bless us to live in the Kingdom of God with always giving spirit.