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Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

“YES, HE CARES!”

Luke 9:10-17

? *Does Jesus care?*

It is easy to see that he cares about our *eternal salvation*.

○ {Php 2:6-7} He has verified it by his Incarnation. For though he is “**in very nature God... he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness,**” so that we might be with God.

○ {Php 2:8; Ro 5:9-10} He has verified it by the Sacrifice of his body. “**He humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross!**” so that we might be “**justified by his blood**” and “**reconciled to [his Father].**”

○ {Ro 5:10} He has verified it by his Resurrection from the dead. For since we have “**been reconciled**” to the Living God “**through [his] death,**” “**how much more... shall we be saved through his life!**”

○ {2 Pe 3:9} The evidence is overwhelming and irrefutable: Christ Jesus does “**not [want] anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.**” He cares about our eternal salvation.

But does he care about us in the here and now? Is the {Rev 19: 16} “**King of kings and Lord of Lords**” concerned with our need and abundance, our success and failure, our joy and grief?

Some of us can testify without a moment's hesitation that yes, Jesus cares. Praise God, he has met

our needs, healed our diseases, blessed our relationships, given us direction, and made us glad!

Others are less certain. Despite our prayers and our best efforts we are struggling with financial hardship, illness or disability, thorny relationships, a lack of direction, and depression or anxiety.

? *Does Jesus care about us in this life?*

□ Please turn with me to Luke 9:10-17.

● Shortly before this {Lk 9:1-6} the Lord gave his apostles “**power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick... So they...went from village to village, proclaim the good news and healing people.**”

■ In verse 10 they return and report “**to Jesus what they [have] done,**” and “**he [takes] them with him and they [withdraw] by themselves to a town called Bethsaida**” on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee.

{BAR, Jan./Feb. 2000} Later, in 363 A.D., a massive earthquake will “**sweep vast [quantities] of basalt boulders, rock, gravel, soil and artifacts across**” the beach, “**cutting Bethsaida off from the shore.**” The shoreline will continue to shift south, and eventually the ruins of the town will lie 1 and ½ miles north of the lake. But now, in the time of Jesus, Bethsaida is a tiny fishing village situated right next to the Sea of Galilee.

■ In verse 11 “**the crowds**” get wind of where Jesus is, “**and [follow] him**” to Bethsaida. “**He [welcomes] them**” and, leading them outside the town

to a hillside farther down the shore, he speaks to them **“about the kingdom of God, and [heals] those who [need] healing.”**

- Verses 12-14a:

Late in the afternoon the Twelve [come] to him and [say], “Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here.”

He [replies], “You give them something to eat.”

They [answer], “We have only five loaves of bread and two fish – unless we go and buy food for all this crowd.” (About five thousand men [are] there.)

 {Morris} No wonder the apostles are incredulous! This is a large gathering. The Greek word translated **“men”** here is *andres*. *Andres* is not a generic term for human beings. It specifically **“points to men in distinction from women and children.”** So this crowd consists of around five thousand adult males, plus an unreported number of women and children. **“Five loaves of bread and two fish”** is not going to fill that many hungry bellies.

- But Jesus is insistent. Verses 14b-16: **“He [says] to his disciples, ‘Have them sit down in groups of fifty each.’ The disciples [do] so, and everyone [sits] down. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he [gives] thanks and [breaks] them. Then he [gives] them to the disciples to set before the people.”**

- Here comes the miracle in verse 17: **“They all [eat] and [are] satisfied.”** The bread and the fish are multiplied hundreds, probably thousands of times over, so that all five thousand men and all the uncounted women and children freely eat their fill.

- Not only is there enough for everyone to fill up without holding back, there are plenty of leftovers. Verse 17b {NIV / NLT}: **“and the disciples [pick] up twelve baskets of leftovers!”**

¶ As the wonder of this miracle starts to sink in, the crowd begins to stir. John 6:14-15: Seeing **“the sign Jesus [has] performed”** the people begin **“to say, ‘Surely, this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.’”** And **“Jesus, knowing that they [intend] to make him king by force,”** withdraws from the scene to thwart their misguided scheme. Matthew {14:22} and Mark {6:45} underscore Christ’s urgency by adding the detail that **“Immediately Jesus [makes] his disciples get into the boat and go ahead... while he [dismisses] the crowd.”**

Many people do not believe this. They say there was no multiplication of food, the real miracle was the contagious spirit of generosity: when Jesus gave away the tiny bit of food he had, it inspired everyone else to bring out the picnic lunches they brought but hadn’t wanted to share.

But if that were so the apostles would not say in verse 12: **“Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food.”**

If that were so, the apostles would not tell Jesus in verse 13: **“We have only five loaves of bread and two fish – unless we go and buy food for all this crowd.”**

If that were so, the crowd would not say, **“Surely this is the prophet who is to come into the world”** (Jonn 6:14). Nor would they be so bold as to risk the combined wrath of Caesar and Herod by proclaiming Jesus king.

The feeding of the five thousand was a bona fide marvel. But how does it relate to our question: Does Jesus care?

Let’s look at the evidence.

✪ 1) Jesus adjusts his plans for the crowd.

■ In verse 10 Messiah takes the Twelve and goes to Bethsaida to get away from the crowd. He frequently withdraws like this to pray, to meditate on Scripture, and to be still. In this case he probably also intends to give the apostles a much needed, well-deserved time of retreat.

■ Then in verse 11 the crowd shows up, without an invitation, but with plenty of needs and demands and questions. The Lord has every right to send them away, and later he will. But for now he changes his plans and welcomes them without complaint. Jesus is graciously flexible because he cares.

✪ 2) Jesus nourishes the crowd spiritually.

■ {Mk 12:29-31; Lk 9:23; Lk 4:18-19} In verse 11 he teaches them about the kingdom of God. Surely, the Lord calls his listeners to repent of their sins, to receive his Father’s boundless mercy and kindness, to **“Love the Lord...with all”** their being and to **“Love [their] neighbor as**

[themselves],” to **“deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow”** him, and to help fulfill his kingdom mission.

His kingdom message is full of comfort and conviction, inspiration and challenge. It is the polar opposite of status quo religion that blinds the eye, closes the ear, dulls the mind, and sedates the soul. Jesus nourishes the crowd spiritually because he cares.

✪ 3) Jesus meets the crowd’s physical needs.

■ In verse 11 he “[heals] **those who need healing,**” then he satisfies their physical hunger with bread and fish.

He feeds the *whole* crowd. Not only the good listeners, not only the true believers, not only the minority who are really embracing his vision – he also feeds the tagalongs are only there because someone made them come, *and* the celebrity watchers who just want to get close to a famous person, *and* the thrill-seekers who are there just to see a miracle, *and* the self-centered takers who are only interested in what’s in it for them, *and* even the enemies who have come to spy on him. Jesus meets their physical needs because he cares.

Does the Lord Jesus care? Yes, he cares!

Take heart! The Savior cares as much about us as he did about the men, women and children in that crowd. Our *eternal salvation* matters to him, and so do our *daily experiences here and now*.

❓ Now, let's consider this: Jesus performs the miracle of multiplication, but ***who brings the food to the people in verse 16?*** The disciples do.

{Ex 16} The Lord could have made it rain down like the manna and the quail. {1 Ki 19:5-8} He could have commanded angels to deliver the food, as one did for Elijah. Instead, he has his followers distribute it.

This is no accident. It establishes a pattern for every Christ Follower in every time and place to follow.

✈ The First Application is this: We must act with compassion as Jesus did. He calls us to first-hand participation in his mission to the poor, the needy, and the hungry. The Lord of the Church still commands us, as he commanded the apostles in verse 13: **“You give them something to eat.”**

✈ The Second Application: We must offer physical and spiritual bread. We need actual bread, but that is not all we need. {Jn 6:35} Jesus is **“the bread of life. Whoever comes to [him] will never go hungry, and whoever believes in [him] will never be thirsty.”** When we feed the physically hungry we must not demand a spiritual response; but if we care for the whole person will be ready to share **“the bread of life”** with them.