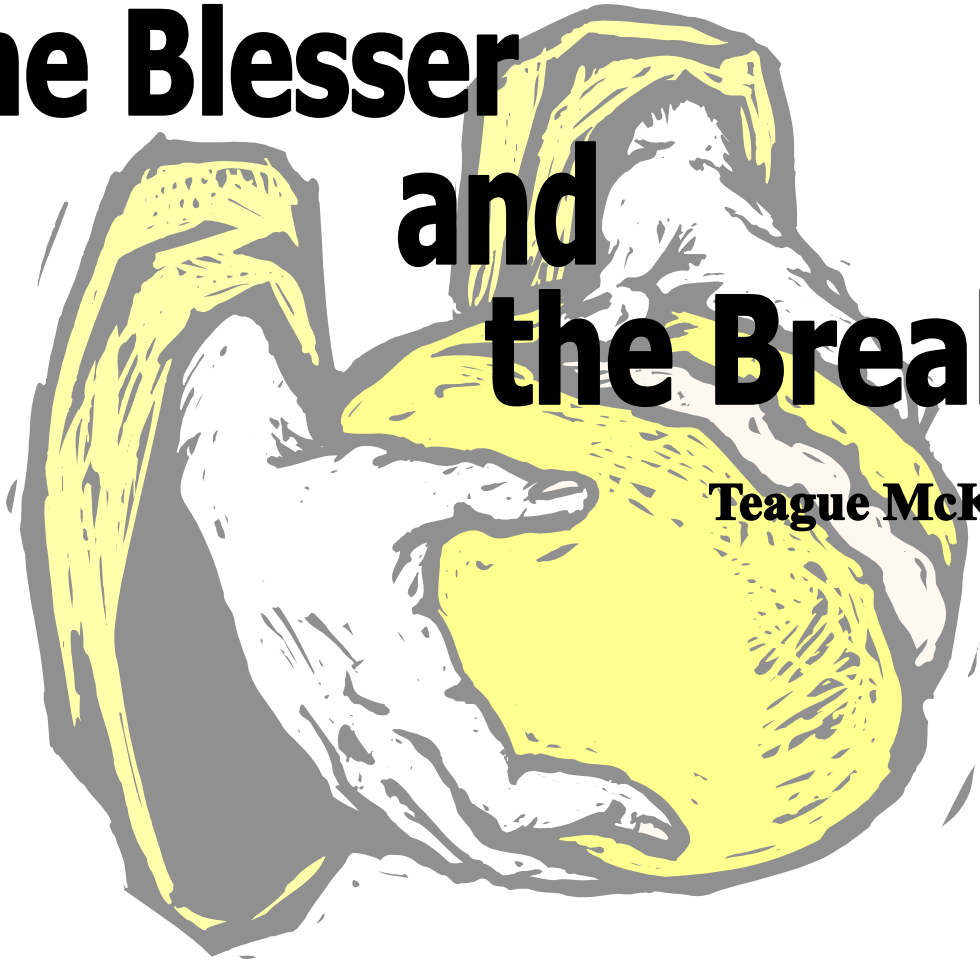


The Blesser and the Breaker

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The Blessor and the Breaker

I.

“There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what are they among so many?” Jesus said, “Make the people sit down.” Now there was much grass in the place; so the men sat down, in number about five thousand. Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted (John 6:9-11).

Many times, in ourselves, we feel completely inadequate, especially when there is a monumental task before us. When circumstances seem to unite against us, when what is required of us seems to be waxing larger and larger like a wave gaining strength to crash, when challenges and the like outnumber us 5,000 to one, do not fear—come to Jesus. When we look at ourselves, especially in the face of fears, we may look small, we may look to ourselves as “a lad.” Or, as when the first Israelites spied out the land of Canaan and saw its inhabitants, we may say, “We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them” (Numbers 13:33). We may, in this state, ask of ourselves and our strengths, “What are they when my needs are so great?”

However, we are not to esteem ourselves in this way, as if the resources we possess—whatever 5 loaves and 2 fishes we may have—are what define us. No, the Lord Jesus is near; He is so near, we need only turn, as I’m sure the lad in John only needed to turn and lift his meager offering. In the hands of Jesus, this kid’s lunch fed 5,000.

But there is a catch, a detail in the story that cannot be overlooked. Matthew’s gospel says, “taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds” (Matt. 14:19). If we turn to Jesus, we must understand that what we give to Him, He will bless and break. This is what stumbles us so often as we walk with Him. Where are the promised resources? Where is the abundant life He came to give us? Where is the blessing that being God’s child is supposed to bring? It is there, it is all there, in the place of breaking.

The blessing is in the breaking. The abundance is in the loss. “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it” (Malachi 3:10). The disciples tested the Lord in this and had 12 baskets of leftovers when they had finished feeding the crowds. “Unless a seed is falling into the ground and dying, it is remaining by itself, alone. But if it is dying, it is bringing forth a harvest” (John 12:24). What we are may not look like much, but if we give it to Jesus, and are not offended when He breaks us, then so much blessing—the blessing of His abundant Life—will pour out of us that we will not have room for it. Likewise, we may look like “a bare grain” to ourselves, but if we will be “planted with Him in the likeness of His death,” He will increase in us in a harvest of resurrection—newness of life (1 Cor. 15:37, Rom. 6:5). Like the woman in Mark 14 who broke open a costly jar of ointment and poured it out upon Jesus, the anointing and fragrance of Christ are there in prodigal amounts if we will place ourselves in the hands of Him who is Blessor and Breaker.

II.

Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God (Prov. 30:8, 9).

Sometimes, we find ourselves in a season where there is not enough of us to go around. God causes need to multiply around us, and though he continually multiplies us to meet the needs, we grow tired (in our flesh) of living at a place where provision exactly covers need. We begin, at this point, to desire something extra, something for ourselves. One can imagine that as the disciples (who were hungry themselves) passed out thousands of pieces of bread and fish, that they began to feel wearied, perhaps even slighted by the fact that the loaves blessed by Jesus's hands perfectly met every need but their own. This was the lesson, among many, that the disciples needed to learn from the loaves and fishes, the lesson of which Jesus asked, "Do you still not understand?" (Matt. 16:9).

What of the bread which Jesus broke, blessed, and distributed? Talk about there not being enough of you to go around. To the disciples—who thought that the bread's ability to meet need came from itself, from its relative size and volume—it probably appeared to be a parable about not getting spread too thin. But the bread knew that its sufficiency, its proportionate efficacy, came from the breaking and blessing of Christ. The disciples were focused on need. For the bread, only one thing was needful (Luke 10:41, 42). The disciples, caught up in outward appearances and fleshly minded judgments, complained to Jesus that five-thousand could not be fed. But the bread made no such complaints. It did not resist the Lord based on personal estimations of its resources or capacity. It merely laid itself in Jesus's hands, content to be there as He doled it out and doled it out, as 100 took from it, as 1,000 took from it, as 5,000 took from it and had as much of it as they wanted. The disciples told Jesus it was late and to send the people home. But the bread reserved nothing for itself; it prescribed no limits to the Lord. It waited instead for the word of Him who gave the ocean its boundary, who marked out the abyss, who gave borders to Israel. The disciples were concerned about what they had to give and how they would look if they were inadequate. The bread existed only for the Lord's concern that the people be fed.

Hear, then, you disciples of the Lord, the lesson of the bread: "This bread is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51). "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work" (John 4:34). Because the bread became food in the hands of the Lord, it did not need food. Because it did not seek to save itself, twelve baskets of it were saved as leftovers. If we will allow ourselves to be the flesh Jesus gives for the life of the world, if we will consent to the affliction of bread, then we will never be hungry, and we will nourish many who are in the wilderness, far from provisions.

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(John 17:3).

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