

## **GATHER THE FRAGMENTS.**

### **“Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost” (Jn. 6:12)**

You know the story! 5,000 men saw the miracles and followed Jesus up a mountain. It was the Spring of the year, the Passover was near, and the grass was green. As evening drew near Jesus said to Philip: “Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” Jesus said this to “prove” him for He knew what He was about to do. Philip correctly observed that eight months wages (200 denarii) would not be sufficient to provide even a little food everyone in such a large crowd.

Then Andrew brought a little boy to Jesus who had 5 barley loaves and 2 small fish. Jesus told His disciples to make the people sit down in groups of 50 (Lk. 9:14). Jesus then took this little boy’s lunch and miraculously multiplied it so that everyone had plenty to eat. Then Jesus commanded His disciples to “gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost”.

So why gather up the fragments? The disciples knew that Jesus could miraculously manufacture more food anytime He wanted to. So, why gather up the fragments that nothing be lost? Jesus was obviously teaching a lesson to His disciples.

The parable of the “prodical” son is one of the most famous stories in the Bible (Lk. 15:11-31). The word “prodical” means “wasteful” or “extravagant”. The young man started out with plenty, but because he was “wasteful” he became destitute. It seems that Jesus was teaching His disciples to not be wasteful and extravagant like the “prodical”.

But wait! When Noah got out of the ark he immediately built an altar and started sacrificing clean animals and birds to the Lord (Gen. 8:20). Was this wasteful? Since the only animals and birds in all the world were on the ark, should Noah have saved them all for seed? A careful reading of the text indicates that Noah was in the ark for one year and 17 days. Thus for over a year Noah had fed and cared for these very animals and birds he sacrificed. By killing these animals and birds did Noah waste a year of effort and food?

Obviously, sacrifices made to God are not wasted! In fact, they are like laying up treasure in heaven where moth and rust do not corrupt and thieves cannot break through and steal (Matt. 6:20). Take, for example, the story of Mary who poured ointment on Jesus valued at a year’s wages (300 denarii). This caused the disciples, led by Judas, to ask “Why all this waste?” (Matt. 26:8; Jn. 12:5). This ointment, they said, could have been sold for a year’s wages and given to the poor. Jesus told them to leave her alone for she had done a beautiful thing. In fact, wherever the Gospel is preached throughout the whole world the story of Mary’s generosity is being told (Matt. 26:8 - 13).

So, what’s the difference? Why are we to salvage fragments from the ground worth almost nothing, yet “waste” ointment worth thousands of dollars?

Perhaps Judas Iscariot can help us learn this lesson. He was the very man who led the cry “why all this waste”? The Greek word translated as “waste” in this passage is “apoleia”. This the very word Jesus used to describe Judas himself. Jesus called him the “son of perdition” (Jn. 17:12). The word translated as “perdition” is the very word used by Judas accusing Mary of “waste”.

John informs us that Judas criticized Mary, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief (Jn. 12:6). Do you see the difference? Mary was laying up treasure in heaven, and Judas was laying up treasure on earth. Mary will enjoy her treasure for all eternity, Judas never enjoyed his treasure at all. Just think of it. Judas was stealing but was unable to spend what he was stealing without drawing attention to his crimes. So Judas was hiding his stolen money to spend it later - but later never came. Like the rich fool who was saving money for the future on the very day he died (Lk. 12:13 - 21). When we die all our earthly wealth will be enjoyed by someone else!

So let’s gather the fragments for ourselves, but be extravagant in giving to Jesus!