

THE LAD'S LOAVES IN THE LORD'S HANDS

"Jesus took the loaves."

John 6:11

The problem is a very difficult one. The contrast between the supply and the demand would have struck us much more vividly if we had been there, in that crowd at Bethsaida, than it does sitting here, nearly 1,900 years later, and merely hearing about it. But the Lord Jesus was equal to the emergency! None of the people went away without sharing in His bounty—they were all filled. Our blessed Master, now that He has ascended into the heavens, has more rather than less power! He is not baffled because of our need, but can even now use paltry means to accomplish His own glorious purposes. Therefore let no man's heart fail him. Do not despair of the evangelization of London, nor think it hopeless that the Gospel should be preached in all nations for a testimony unto them. Have faith in God, who is in Christ Jesus! Have faith in the compassion of the Great Mediator—He will not desert the people in their spiritual needs any more than He failed that hungry throng in their temporal need, long ago.

We will now look at these biscuits and sardines, which seem to be truly an insufficient stock-in-trade to begin with—a very small capital, indeed, on which to conduct the business of feeding 5,000 persons. I shall say of these loaves and fishes, first, that they had a previous history before being mentioned in our text. Secondly, when we get to our text, we shall find these little things in a very grand position—"Jesus took the loaves" and, therefore, thirdly, they will have an after-history which is well worthy of being noted. When things get into Christ's hands, they are in the very focus of miracles!

1. We will begin by saying that THESE LOAVES AND FISHES HAD A PREVIOUS HISTORY. Andrew said to Jesus, "There is a lad here, which has five barley loaves, and two small fishes."

Notice, first, then, the Providence of God in bringing the lad there. We do not know his name. We are not told anything concerning his parentage. Was he a little peddler who thought that he could make some money by selling a few loaves and fishes and had he nearly sold out? Or was he a boy that the Apostles had employed to carry this slender provision for the use of Jesus and His friends? We do not know much about him, but he was the right boy in the right place that day! Be his name what it might, it did not matter—he had the barley loaves and fishes upon which the people were to be fed! Christ never is in need but He has somebody at hand to supply that need. Have faith in the Providence of God! What made the boy bring the loaves and fishes, I do not know. Boys often do unaccountable things, but bring the loaves and fishes he did. And God, who understands the ideas and motives of lads and takes account, even, of barley loaves and fishes, had appointed that boy to be there!

Again I say, believe in the Providence of God! Mr. Stanley tells us that when he came out of that long journey of his through the forest, I think after 160 days of walking in darkness, and found himself at last where he could see the sun, he felt that there was a special Providence of God that had taken care of him. I am very glad that Mr. Stanley felt that it was the hand of God that had brought him out of the noisome shade, but I do not need to go to Africa to learn that we are beset behind and before by His goodness. Many of us have felt a special Providence of God in our own homes—we have met with His hands in connection with our own children. Yes, every day we are surrounded by tokens of His care. "Whoever is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord." "I am sure God took care of me," said one, "for as I was going along a certain street, I slipped on a piece of orange peel and had what might have been

a serious fall—yet I was not hurt in the least.” To which his friend replied, “I am sure God has taken care of me, for I have walked along that street hundreds of times and have never slipped on a piece of orange peel, or on anything else.” Full often God draws near to us in common life—

*“He comes to us all unaware,
And makes us own His loving care.”*

Let us also believe in His Providence with regard to the Church of Christ—He will never desert His people—He will find men when He needs them. Thus it has always been in the history of the saints and thus it shall always be! Before the Reformation there were many learned men who knew something of Christ’s Gospel, but they said that it was a pity to make noise and so they communed with one another and with Christ very quietly. What was needed was some rough bullheaded fellow who would blurt the Gospel out and upset the old state of things. Where could he be found? There was a monk named Luther who, while he was reading his Bible, suddenly stumbled on the doctrine of Justification by Faith—he was the man! Yet when he went to a dear Brother in the Lord and told him how he felt, his friend said to him, “Go back to your cell and pray and commune with God, and hold your tongue.”

But then, you see, he had a tongue that he could not hold and that nobody else could, either! And he began to speak with it, the Truth of God that had made a new man of him! The God that made Luther knew what He was doing when He made him! He put within Luther a great burning fire that could not be restrained! And it burst forth and set the nations on a blaze. Never despair about Providence! There sits, tonight, somewhere in a chimney corner in the country, a man that will turn the current of unbelief and win back the churches to the old Gospel! God did never yet come to a point of distress as to His Truth but that suddenly one came forward—a David with a sling and a stone, or a Samson with a jawbone, or a Shamgar with an ox-goad—who put to rout the adversaries of the Lord! “There is a lad here.” The Providence of God had sent him.

Next, this lad with his loaves was brought into notice. When they were searching for all the provisions in the company, this obscure boy who never would have been heard of otherwise, was brought to the front because he had his little basket of biscuits. Andrew found him and he came and said to Jesus, “There is a lad here, which has five barley loaves, and two small fishes.” So, rest assured, that if you have the Bread of Life about you and you are willing to serve God, you need not be afraid that obscurity will ever prevent your doing it. “Nobody knows me,” says one. Well, it is not a very desirable thing that anybody should know you—those of us who are known to everybody would be very glad if we were not—there is no very great comfort in it. He that can work away for his Master, with nobody to see him but his Master, is the happiest of men. “I have only 100 people to preach to,” said a country pastor to me. And I replied, “If you give a good account of those 100, you have quite enough to do.” If all you have is very little—just that pennyworth of loaves and fishes—use that properly and you will do your Master service! And in due time, when God wants you, He knows where to find you!

You need not put an advertisement in the paper—He knows the street you live on and the number on the door. You need not go and push yourself to the front—the Lord will bring you to the front when He wants you and I hope that you do not want to get there if He does not want you. Depend upon it, should you push forward when you are not required, He will put you back again! Oh, for Grace to work on unobserved, to have your one talent, your five loaves and two fishes and only to be noticed when the hour suggests the need, and the need makes a loud call for you! We have thus seen, first of all, the loaves and fishes in the desert, quite unnoticed, but put there by Providence—and we now behold them by that same Providence, thrust into prominence.

When brought into notice, the loaves and fishes did not fare very well—they were judged insufficient for the purpose, for Andrew said, “What are they among so many?” The boy’s candle seemed to be quite snuffed out! So small a stock—what could be the use of that? Now, I dare say, that some of you have had Satan saying to you, “What is the use of your trying to do anything?” To you, dear mother, with a family of children, he has whispered, “You cannot serve God.” He knows very well that, by sustaining Grace, you can, and he is afraid of how well you can serve God if you

bring up those dear children in His fear. He says to the religious book salesman over yonder, "You have not much ability; what can you do?" Ah, dear Friend, he is afraid of what you can do and if you will only do what you can do, God will, by-and-by, help you to do what now you cannot do! But the devil is afraid of even the little that you can do now and many a child of God seems to side with Satan in despising the day of small things! "What are they among so many?" So few, so poor, so devoid of talent—what can any of us hope to do? Disdained, even by the disciples, it is small wonder if we are held in contempt by the world! The things that God will honor, man must first despise! You run the gauntlet of the derision of men and afterwards you come out to be used of God.

Though seemingly inadequate to feed the multitude, these loaves and fishes would have been quite enough for the boy's supper, yet he appears to have been quite willing to part with them. The disciples would not have taken them from him by force—the Master would not have allowed it—the lad willingly gave them up to be the commencement of the great feast. Somebody might have said, "John, you know that you will soon be able to eat those five cakes and those two little fishes. Keep them—get away into a corner—every man for himself." Is it not a good rule, "Take care of number one"? Yes, but the boy whom God uses will not be selfish! Am I speaking to some young Christian to whom Satan says, "Make money, first, and serve God, by-and-by. Stick to business and get on! Then, after that, you can act like a Christian and give some money away," and so on?

Let such a one remember the barley loaves and the fishes. If that lad had really wisely studied his own interests, instead of merely yielding with a generous impulse to the demand of Christ, he would have done exactly what he did, for if he had kept the loaves, he would have eaten them and that would have been the end of it. But now that he brings them to Christ, all those thousands of people are fed and he gets as much, himself, as he would have had if he had eaten his own stock. And then, in addition, he gets a share out of the 12 baskets full of fragments that remain. Anything that you take away from self and give to Christ is well invested—it will often bring in ten thousand per cent! The Lord knows how to give such a reward to an unselfish man, that he will feel that he that saves his life loses it, but he that is willing, even, to lose his life—and the bread that sustains it—is the man who, after all, gets truly saved!

This, then, is the history of these loaves. They were sent there, through God's Providence, by a lad who was sought out and brought into notice. His stock-in-trade was despised, but he was willing to give it, whether it was despised or not. He would yield it to his Lord. Now, do you see what I am driving at? I want to get a hold of some of the lads and some young men and young women—I will not trouble about your age, you shall be lads if you are under seventy! I want to get hold of you who think that you have very little ability, and say to you, "Come, and bring it to Jesus." We need you! Times are hard. The people are famishing. Though nobody seems to need you, yet make bold to come out and who knows but that, like Queen Esther, you may have come to the Kingdom of God for such a time as this? God may have brought you where you are to make use of you for the converting of thousands! But you must first be converted yourself! Christ will not use you unless you are, first, His own. You must yield yourself up to Him and be saved by His precious blood and then, after that, come and yield up to Him all the little talent that you may have, and pray Him to make as much use of you as He did of the lad with the five barley cakes.

II. But now I want to show you that THESE BARLEY CAKES GOT INTO A GRAND POSITION. The text says, "Jesus took the loaves." He took them into His own hands! From the trembling hands of the boy, or from his little basket, they were transferred to the blessed hands which one day would bear the nail-prints! This may teach us several lessons.

First, they were now associated with Jesus Christ. Henceforth those loaves do not so much suggest the thought of the lad's sacrifice as of the Savior's power. Is it not a wonderful thing that Christ, the living God, should associate Himself with our feebleness, with our need of talent, with our ignorance, with our little faith? And yet He does so. If we are not associated with Him, we can do nothing. But when we come into living contact with Him, we can do all things! Those barley loaves in Christ's hands become pregnant with food for all the throng! Out of His hands they are nothing but barley cakes, but in His hands, associated with Him, they are in contact with

Omnipotence! Have you that love the Lord Jesus Christ thought of this, of bringing all that you possess to Him, that it may be associated with Him?

There is that brain of yours—it can be associated with the teachings of His Spirit. There is that heart of yours—it can be warmed with the love of God. There is that tongue of yours—it can be touched with the live coal from off the altar. There is that manhood of yours—it can be perfectly consecrated by association with Christ. Hear the tender command of the Lord, “Bring them here to Me,” and your whole life will be transformed! I do not say that every man of common ability can rise to high ability by being associated with Christ through faith, but I do say this—that his ordinary ability, in association with Christ, will become sufficient for the occasion to which God, in Providence, has called Him. I know that you have been praying and saying, “I have not this, and I cannot do that.” Stay not to number your deficiencies—bring what you have and let all that you are, body, soul, and spirit—be associated with Christ. Although He will not bestow upon you new faculties, the faculties you have will have new power, for they will come into a new condition towards Him and what may not be hoped for by association with such wisdom and might?

But, further, they were transferred to Christ. A moment ago, they belonged to this lad, but now they belong to Christ. “Jesus took the loaves.” He has taken possession of them—they are His property. Oh, Christian people, do you mean what you say when you declare that you have given yourselves to Christ? If you have made a full transfer, therein will lie great power for usefulness. But do not people often say, “If I might make some reserve?” “What is the meaning, then, of this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?” What about that odd thousand that you put in the funds the other day? What about the money saved up for a new bonnet? You sometimes sing—

*“Yet if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I should give Him all.”*

Ah, well, when you have really yielded all, you may sing that again! But I am afraid that there are but few who can truly sing it. Oh, that we had more real putting of the loaves into Christ’s hands! The time that you have not used for self, but given to Christ! The knowledge that you have not stored, as in a reservoir, but given to Christ! The ability that you have not wielded for the world, but yielded to Christ—your influence and position, your money and home, all put into Christ’s hands and reckoned to be not your own, but to be His—this is the way in which London’s needs will be met and the world’s hunger will be satisfied! But we are staggered, at the very outset, by the lack of this complete dedication of everything to Christ.

What is better, still, as these loaves were given to Jesus, so they were accepted by Jesus. They were not only dedicated, they were also consecrated! Jesus took the five barley loaves. Jesus took the two little fishes and, in doing so, He seemed to say, “These will do for Me.” As the Revised Version has it, “Jesus therefore took the loaves.” Was there any reason why He should? Yes, because they were brought to Him! They were willingly presented to Him! There was a need for them and He could work with them—“therefore”—He took the loaves. Children of God, if Christ has ever made use of you, you have often stood and wondered why the Lord could accept you. But there was a, “therefore,” in it. He saw that you were willing to win souls—He saw the souls needed winning and He used you—even you! Am I not now speaking to some who might be of great service if they yielded themselves to Christ, and Christ accepted them, and they became accepted in the Beloved? Only five barley cakes, but Jesus accepted them! Only two small fishes, brought by a little lad, but the great Christ accepted them and they became His own! Let us join one now in Heaven who on earth brought her all, and pray—

*“Oh, use me, Lord, use even me!
Just as You will, and when, and where.”*

*Until Your blessed face I see,
Your rest, Your joy, Your glory share."*

But, what is better still, these loaves and fishes were blessed by Christ as He lifted up His eyes and gave thanks to the Father for them. Think of it! For five little cakes and two sprats, Christ gave thanks to the Father! Apparently a meager cause for praise, but Jesus knew what He could make of them and, therefore, gave thanks for what they would presently accomplish. "God loves us," says Augustine, "for what we are becoming." Christ gave thanks for these trifles because He saw into what they would grow! Do you not think that, having thanked the Father, He also thanked the boy? And in later years these words of gratitude would be ample recompense for such a tiny deed! Like the woman who cast in the two mites to the treasury, he gave his all, and doubtless was commended for the gift.

Though high in Glory, today, Christ is still grateful when such offerings are made to Him. He still thanks His Father when, with timid trembling hands, we offer to Him our best, our all, however small! His heart is still gladdened when we bring Him our scanty store that it may be touched by His dear hands and blessed by His gracious lips! He loves us, not for what we are, but for what He will yet make us! He blesses our offerings, not for their worth, but because His power will yet make them worthy of His praise! May the Lord thus bless every talent that you have! May He bless your memory. May He bless your understanding. May He bless your voices. May He bless your hearts. May He bless your heads. May He bless you all and forevermore! When He puts a blessing into the little gift and into the little Grace that we have, good work begins and goes on to perfection.

And when the loaves had been blessed, the next thing was, they were increased by Christ. Peter takes one, begins to break it, and as he breaks it, he has always as much in his hands as he started with! "Here, take a bit of fish, Friend," he says. He gives a whole fish to that man—he has a whole fish left! So he gives it to another, and another, and another, and goes on scattering the bread and scattering the fish everywhere, as quickly as he can! And when he is finished, he has his hands just as full of fish and as full of bread as ever! If you serve God, you will never run dry! He who gives you something to say one Sunday will give you something to say another Sunday! These 37 years and more, I have ministered to this same Church and congregation, and every time that I have preached, I have said all that I knew. Some very learned Brothers are like the great wine vats of Heidelberg—they can hold so much wine that there is enough to swim in—but they put in a tap somewhere up at the top, so you never get much out. Mine is a very small barrel, indeed, but the tap is down as low as it can be—and you can get more liquid out of a small tub, if you empty it, than you can out of a big vat if you are only permitted to draw a little from the top.

This boy gave all his loaves and all his fish—not much, truly—but Christ multiplied it. Be like he—give your all! Do not think of reserving some for another occasion. If you are a preacher, do not think of what you will preach about the next time—think of what you are going to preach about now. It is always quite enough to get one sermon at a time—you need not have a reserve, because if you get a lot piled away somewhere, there will be a stale odor about them! Even the manna that came down from Heaven bred worms and stank—so will your best sermons, even if the message is Godgiven. And if it does not come down from Heaven, but from your own brain, it will go bad still more quickly! Tell the people about Christ! Lead them to Jesus and do not trouble about what you will say next time, but wait till next time comes—and it shall be given you in the same hour what you shall speak.

But, mark once more—when Jesus took the loaves, it was not only to multiply, but also to dispose of them. They were distributed by Christ. He did not believe in multiplication unless it was attended by division. Christ's additions mean subtraction—and Christ's subtractions mean additions. He gives that we may give away. He multiplied as soon as ever the disciples began to distribute—and when the distribution ended, the multiplication ended. Oh, for Grace to go on distributing! If you have received the Truth from Christ, proclaim it! God will whisper it in your ear and tell it in—but if you stop the telling out, if you cease the endeavor to bless others—it may be that God will no more bless you, nor grant you, again, the communion of His face.

Putting all this together, if we all would bring our loaves and fishes to the Lord Jesus Christ, He would take them and make them wholly His own. Then, when He should have blessed them, He would multiply them and He would bid us distribute them—and we could yet meet the needs of London and the needs of the whole world even to the last man! A Christ who could feed 5,000 can feed five millions! There is no limit! When once you get a miracle, you may as well have a great one. Whenever I find the critics paring down miracles, it always seems to me to be very poor work, for if it is a miracle, it is a miracle—and if you are in for a penny, you may as well be in for a pound! If you can believe that Christ can feed fifty, then you can believe that He can feed five hundred, five thousand, five millions, five hundred millions, if so it pleases Him!

Thus have I tried to stir up God's people to believe in the Lord and consecrate themselves to Him. But some of you are saying, "He is not preaching to me." No, I am not preaching to you, but I am preaching for you, for if God's people begin to be awakened, they will soon look after you. You will have somebody asking you about your soul before you get out of the Tabernacle! And during the week, if you meet some of them, they will be troubling you, rousing up your conscience and making you feel what an awful thing it is to be an enemy to God and to live without Christ! I hope that it will be so. Oh, you that do not love my Lord, what will become of you? Paul said that you would be Anathema Maranatha—cursed at His coming! I pray you, do not rest easy while that may be your portion! You are the people that we want to feed, you are the people whom we want to bless! Oh, that God, in His mercy, would but bless you! We do not ask to have the honor of it. We would be willing to have it quite unknown who it was that brought you to the Savior, so long as you did but come to Him. May the Lord in mercy bring you!

III. But now, thirdly, and to conclude, THESE LOAVES AND FISHES HAD A LATER HISTORY. They got into Christ's hands. What was the result?

First, a great deal of misery was removed by the lad's basket of barley cakes. Those poor people were famished. They had been with Christ all day and had had nothing to eat. And had they been dispersed as they were, tired and hungry, many of them would have fainted by the way—perhaps some would even have died. Oh, what would we give if we might but alleviate the misery of this world! I remember the Earl of Shaftesbury saying, "I should like to live longer. I cannot bear to go out of the world while there is so much misery in it." And you know how that dear saint of God laid himself out to look after the poor, the helpless and the needy all his days! Perhaps I speak to some who never woke up yet to the idea that if they were to bring their little all to Christ, He could make use of it in alleviating the misery of many a wounded conscience and that awful misery which will come upon men if they die unforgiven—and stand before the judgment bar of God without a Savior.

Yes, young man, God can make you the spiritual father of many! As I look back upon my own history, little did I dream, when first I opened my mouth for Christ, in a very humble way, that I should have the honor of bringing thousands to Jesus. Blessed, blessed be His name! He has the Glory of it. But I cannot help thinking that there must be some other lad here, such a one as I was, whom He may call by His Grace to do service for Him. When I had a letter sent to me by the deacons of the church at New Park Street, to come up to London to preach, I sent it back by the next post, telling them that they had made a mistake, that I was a lad of 19 years of age, happy among a very poor and lowly people in Cambridgeshire who loved me, and that I did not imagine that they could mean that I was to preach in London! But they returned it to me and said that they knew all about it, and I must come. Ah, what a story it has been since then, of the goodness and loving kindness of the Lord!

Now, perhaps, these words come to some Brother who has never yet laid hold of the idea that God can use him. You must not think that God picks out all the very choice and particularly fine persons. It is not so in the Bible—some of those who He took were very rough people. Even the first Apostles were mostly fishermen. Paul was an educated man, but he was like a lot out of the catalog—one bow out of due time—the rest of them were not so. But God used them and it still pleases God, by the base things and things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are! I do not want you to think highly of yourself—your cakes are only five and they are barley—and poor barley at that. And your fish are very small and there are only two of them. I do not want you to

think much of them, but think much of Christ! And believe that whoever you may be, if He thought it worth His while to buy you with His blood, and is willing to make some use of you, it is surely worth your while to come and bring yourself and all that you have to Him who is thus graciously ready to accept you! Put everything into His hands and let it be said of you, tonight, "And Jesus took the loaves." It is a part of the history of the loaves that they relieved a great mass of misery.

And next, Jesus was glorified, for the people said, "He is a Prophet!" The miracle of the loaves carried them back to the wilderness and to the miracle of the manna. They remembered that Moses had said, "The Lord your God will raise up unto you a Prophet from the midst of you, of your Brethren, like unto me." For this Deliverer they longed and as the bread increased, so grew their wonder, until in the swelling cakes they saw the finger of God and said, "This is, of a truth, that Prophet that should come into the world." That little lad became, by his loaves and fishes, the revealer of Christ to all the multitude! And who can tell, if you give your loaves to Christ, whether thousands may not recognize Him as the Savior because of it? Christ is still known in the breaking of bread.

But the people went further with reference to Christ, after they had been fed by the loaves and fishes—they concluded that He was a Prophet and they began whispering among themselves—"Let us make Him a king." Now, in a better sense than the text implies, I would to God that you and I, though humbly and feebly, might serve Christ till people said, "Christ is a Prophet. Let us make Him a King!" This sermon I offer my Master, if He will be pleased to accept it, though it is but a barley cake. And I pray that by it some may take Jesus Christ to be their King. Oh, that He had a throne in the hearts of many whom He shall feed at this time with the Bread of Heaven! Brothers and Sisters, I know that you wish to glorify Christ! Here is the way. Bring your loaves and fishes to Christ that He may use them in His Divine commissariat—and then He shall be magnified in the eyes of all the people!

When the feast was finished, there were fragments to be gathered. This is a part of the history of the loaves—they were not lost. They were eaten, but they were there—people were filled with them, but yet there was more of them left than when the feast began! Each disciple had a basketful to carry back to his Master's feet. Give yourself to Christ and when you have used yourself for His Glory, you will be more able to serve Him than you are now! You shall find your little stock grow as you spend it! Remember Bunyan's picture of the man who had a roll of cloth. He unrolled it and he cut off so much for the poor. Then he unrolled it and cut off some more—and the more he cut it, the longer it grew! Upon which Bunyan remarks—

*"There was a man, and some did count him mad!
The more he gave away, the more he had."*

It is certainly so with talent and ability and with Divine Grace in the heart. The more you use it, the more there is of it. It is often so with gold and silver—the store of the liberal man increases, while the miser grows poor. We have an old proverb, which is as true as it is suggestive—"Drawn wells have the sweetest waters." So, if you keep continually drawing on your mind, your thoughts will get sweeter. And if you continue to draw on His strength, your strength will get to be more mighty through God! The more you do, the more you may do, by the Grace of the Ever-Blessed One!

Last of all, it came to pass that these loaves had a record made about them. There is many a loaf that has gone to a king's table and yet never been chronicled, but this boy's five cakes and two little fishes have got into the Bible—and if you look, you will find the barley cakes in Matthew; you will find the barley cakes in Mark; you will find the barley cakes in Luke! And you will find the barley cakes where we have found our text, in John. To make quite sure that we should never forget how much God can do with little things, this story is told four times over—and it is the only one of Christ's miracles which has such an abundant record!

And now, as a practical issue, let us put it to the test. You young people who have lately joined the Church—do not be long before you try to do something for Christ! You that have, for a long time, been trusting Christ and have never yet begun to work, awaken yourselves to attempt some service for His sake! Aged friends and sick friends can still find something to do! Perhaps, at the last, it will be found that the persons whom we might have excused on account of illness, or weakness, or poverty, are the people who have done the most! That, at least, is my observation. I find that if there is a really good work done, it is usually done by an invalid, or by somebody who might very properly have said, “I pray you, have me excused.” How is it that so many able-bodied and gifted Christians seem to be so slow in the Master’s service? If there is a political meeting, something about Liberals and Conservatives, how earnest you are! You are all there, every bit of you, over your politics, which are not worth a penny a year!

But when it comes to souls being saved, many of you are mute as fish! You go all the year round without caring even for the spiritual welfare of a little child! One of our friends gave a good answer to a Brother who said to him, “I have been a member of a Church, now, for 40 years. I am a father in Israel.” He asked him, “How many children have you? How many have you brought to Christ?” “Well,” the man said, “I do not know that I ever brought anybody to Christ.” Upon which our friend retorted, “Call yourself a father in Israel and yet you have no children?! I think you had better wait until you have earned the title.” So do I. It would be better that we had no professors of that sort, but that all our members, even were they much fewer, should be men and women constantly bringing forth fruit unto God in the conversion of others! The Lord set you all to work with this objective!

I am almost done, but again I cannot help reminding those who are not Christ’s, that while I have not directly preached to them, I have tried, by a side wind, to be preaching to them all the time! Either you are the Lord’s, or you are not. If you are Christ’s servant, take a sheet of paper and write down, “Lord, I bring my loaves and fishes to You.” And if you are not Christ’s, confess the awful truth to yourself and face it. I wish that you would make a record of it in black and white, putting down both name and date, “I am not Christ’s.” Take a good look at it! Try and grasp what it means, to withhold yourself from Him who loves you and waits to save you. Then ask yourself why you are not His. I remember a woman, not long ago, who said that at her work it came across her mind, “I am not saved.” She was sweeping the room and when she finished that, she said to herself, “I have to cook dinner, but I am not saved.”

She went into the kitchen and had her fire all ready, and her food—but all the while she was putting things in the pot she kept saying to herself, “I am not saved.” And so it was when she was busy all the afternoon and when her husband came home, she could not help blurting it out to him, “Oh, Husband, I am not saved!” But he was—and, by God’s Grace, he pointed her to Christ! They knelt together, and oh, how he prayed with her! She found that which she so earnestly sought and it was not very many days before she could say, “Oh, Husband, by His Grace I am saved!” May that be the case with you! The Lord bless every one of you, wherever you may be! We shall all meet in the Day of Judgment. May you and I meet there without fear, to sing of the Sovereign Grace of God, which saved us from the wrath to come and helped us while we were here to bring our little, and put it into Christ’s hands! The Lord be with you! Amen. PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 6. HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—504, 497, 888. MR. SPURGEON UPDATE: Another week has gone and still MR. SPURGEON remains in very much the same condition as was reported last week. The “abatement in certain serious symptoms,” then mentioned, has continued, and this has been a cause for devout thanksgiving. But so far as the actual malady is concerned, there has been little or no real progress towards recovery. The message to all who love MR. SPURGEON and desire his complete restoration, is, “Pray! Always pray!” Is not this also an opportunity of giving a wider circulation to the sermons, that while the preacher’s voice is, for a while, necessarily silent, he may continue to speak through the printed page, to an ever-increasing congregation? This sermon, like the lad’s loaves, has been given to the Lord—let the Master’s disciples distribute it among the multitude. [That message was written in 1891—I write to you in the year 2006, begging you to print this sermon and give it to as many people as you possibly can—saved or unsaved—and in so doing, glorify God! And who knows what His Holy Spirit may do with it?]