

# **DIVINE VIEWPOINT AND THE WORLD'S HUNGER PROGRAM**

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Divine Viewpoint

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"He gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude, and they did eat and were filled, and they took up the fragments that remained twelve baskets full," Matthew 14:19, 20.

The miracles of Scripture are not merely wonders, but signs. **Miracles were always designed to draw attention to the Word of God, its promises and principles and techniques and doctrines.** It is one of their most striking characteristics that they are not, like the pretended portents of false faiths, mere mighty deeds standing in no sort of intellectual relations to the message of which they claim to be the attestation, but that they have themselves a doctrinal significance.

Our Lord's miracles have been called "the great bell before the sermon," but they are even more than that. They are themselves no unimportant part of the message. In fact, it would not be difficult to construct from them a revelation of Christ's nature and His person and His work, scarcely less full and explicitly than that contained in His words, or even that that more systematic and developed one which we receive in the writings of His apostles.

This miracle for instance, of the feeding of the 5,000 with five barley loaves and the two small fishes is one of the few which John relates to his Gospel, and his reason for selecting it seems to be the commentary with which our Lord followed it, and which John alone has persevered. That commentary is the wonderful discourse about Christ as the "Bread of Life," and eating His flesh, as our means of receiving His life into ourselves.

WE ARE WARRANTED THEN IN REGARDING THIS MIRACLE AS A SYMBOLIC

REVELATION OF CHRIST AS SUPPLYING ALL THE WANT OF THIS HUNGRY WORLD. His agents are His disciples, or as would appear probably from the 12 baskets full of fragments, the 12 apostles, the nucleus and representatives of His church.

Thus we come to the point from which we wish to regard this narrative now. THERE ARE THREE STAGES IN THE WORD OF OUR TEXT:

1. The distribution of the bread.
2. The meal.
3. The gathering up of the abundance that was left.

These three stages may guide us to some thoughts regarding the Word to which the Lord Jesus Christ calls our church, Houston Bible Church, the success which attends it, and the results to the distributors themselves.

1. CHRIST FEEDS THE FAMISHING WORLD BY MEANS OF DIVINE VIEWPOINT.

"He gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude." One very striking feature of all of our Lord's miracles is economy of power. The miraculous element being admitted for some good and sufficient reason, it is kept down to the lowest possible point. Precisely so much of it as it needed is permitted, and not one hairsbreadth more. It does not begin to make its appearance at any point in the process where ordinary human agency can be used. It does not produce a result beyond the actual necessity, it does not last one instant longer than is required.

In inoculates closely with the natural order of things. Take an illustration from the beginning of the miracles where Jesus Christ manifested forth His glory, at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, that great miracle in which our Lord hallowed the ties of human affection, and consecrated the joy of united hearts. THE NECESSITY IS FELT BEFORE HE SUPPLIES IT.

The servants fill the waterpots. The water is used as the material on which the miraculous power operates. Only so much as it draws for present use becomes wine. The servants are used as the agents for the distribution, and all is done so unostentatiously, though it be the manifesting of God's glory, that no man knows but they.

Take another illustration from the other great contrasted miracle at the grave of Lazarus, where our Lord hallowed the breaking of earthly bonds by death and sanctified the sorrows of the parted love. He does not work His wonder from the other side of the Jordan, but comes. He does not avert the death which He will conquer, nor prevent the grief upon which He shares, He goes to the side of the grave. True human tears are wet upon His cheek. They have to roll away the stone. Then, there is flung into the darkness of the tomb the mighty Word, "Lazarus, come forth." The inconceivable miraculous act is done and life stirs in the sheeted dead. But there the miraculous ceases.

The man with his restored life has himself to come out of the grave, and human hands have tremblingly to lift the napkin from the veiled face. How they must have thrilled as they did it, wondering what nameless horror they might see in the eyes that had looked on the inner chamber of death, and human help has to unfold the grave clothes from the tightly swathed and stumbling limbs, "Loose him, and let him go."

This marked characteristic of all our Lord's miracles if full of instructions, which it would lead us too far from our present purpose to indicate at any length. But we may just observe in passing, that it brings these into striking parallel with the Divine creative

act, where there is ever the same precise adaptation of power employed to result contemplated, the same background of veiled omnipotence, the same emergence of proportioned, adequate, but not superfluous force, so that, in fact, economy of power may be said to be the very signature and broad arrow of divinity stamped on all His works.

Again, it presents a broad contrast on all the wild, reckless miracle-mongering of false faiths, and is at once a test of the genuineness of all, "lying signs and wonders," and an indication of the self-restraint of the Divine Worker, Christ, and of the fine sanity and truthfulness of the narrators, of these Gospel miracles.

And yet, again, it is one phase of the disciplinary character of the whole revelation of God in Christ, not obtrusive, though obvious, capable of being overlooked if men will. "There was the hiding of His power." If any man wills to be ignorant, let him be ignorant.

But coming more immediately to the narrative before us, we find this same characteristic in full prominence in it. The people are allowed to hunger. THE DISCIPLES ARE PERMITTED TO FEED THEMSELVES AT THEIR WIT'S END. THEY ARE BID TO BRING THEIR POOR RESOURCES TO CHRIST. The boy who had come with the little store, perhaps a fisherman's boy, from some of the lake villages who hoped to sell his loaves and fishes in the crowd, supplies the material on which Christ wills to exercise His miraculous power.

THE DISCIPLES' AGENCY IS PRESSED INTO SERVICE. Each man separately receives his portion, and when all are supplied, the fragments are carefully preserved for the use of those who had been fed by miracles and of Him who had fed them.

Besides the general lesson already referred to, as naturally arising from this feature of the miracle, there is that one which belongs to it especially, THAT CHRIST FEEDS THE FAMISHING WORLD BY MEANS OF DIVINE VIEWPOINT. Precisely as in the mir-

acles in general, so in the work of Christ as a whole, the field of supernatural intervention is rigidly confined, and fits in with the established order of things. **The incarnation and sacrifice of our Lord are the purely supernatural work of the Divine power and GRACE.**

He comes, enters into our human conditions, assumes our humanity, dies the death for us all. "I had trodden the wine press alone." There is no question of any human agency co-operating there, any more than there is in the words, "Lazarus, come forth," or in the multiplication of the loaves. There, by Christ alone, is brought to us and is finished for us an eternal redemption, WITH WHICH THE WHOLE RACE OF MEN HAVE NOTHING TO DO BUT TO RECEIVE IT, TO EAT AND BE FILLED.

But this having been done by the solitary work of Jesus Christ, THIS NEW POWER HAVING BEEN INTRODUCED INTO THE WORLD, HUMAN AGENCY IS HENCE-FORTH CALLED INTO OPERATION TO DIFFUSE IT. THAT IS DIVINE VIEWPOINT. Just as the servants of Canaan had to draw the wine which He had made, they took the wine and gave it to the guests at the wedding. JUST AS THE DISCIPLES AT THE SEA OF TIBERIAS HAVE TO GIVE TO THE MULTITUDE THE BREAD WHICH WAS BLESSED AND BROKEN BY HIS HANDS. The supernatural-given bread of life is to be carried over the world in accordance with the ordinary laws by which all other Truth is diffused, and all other gifts that belong to one man are held by him in stewardship for all his fellows.

True, there is even in and with that Word of life a Divine Spirit, which is the real cause of its progress, which guards it from destruction though all men were faithless, and keeps it alive though all Israel bowed to the knee of Baal.

But, however easy it may be for us to confuse ourselves with metaphysical puzzles about the relation between the natural and the supernatural elements, the human agency and the Divine energies in the suc-

cessful discharge of Divine Viewpoint's work, practically the matter is very plain. The Truth that it behooves us all to lay to heart is just this, that **Christian's are Christ's instruments for effecting the realization of the purposes of Christ's death.** Not without them shall "He see the travail of His soul." Not without them shall the preaching be fully known. Not without the people willing in the day of His power, and clothed in priestly beauty, shall the Priest-King set His feet upon His enemies. Not with the armies of Heaven following Him, shall the "Word of God ride forth to victory."

Neither the Divine decree, nor the expansive power of the Truth, nor the crowned expectancy of the waiting Lord, nor the mighty working of the Comforter, are the complete means for the accomplishment of the Divine promise that all nations shall be blessed in Christ. Could all of this be conceived of as existing without the service and energies of God's Church proclaiming the Name of Christ? They were not enough.

He has willed that to us, "less than the least of all saints," should this GRACE be given, that we should make known the unsearchable riches of Christ. **God reveals His Truth, that men who believe it may impart it.** God gives the Word, that, caught up by those who receive it into an honest and good mind, it may be poured forth, in mighty chorus from the lips of the "great company of them that publish it." HE GAVE THE LOAVES TO THE DISCIPLES AND THE DISCIPLES TO THE MULTITUDE. **Christians, learn your high vocation, and your solemn responsibilities.**

"WHAT CAME THE WORD OF GOD OUT FROM YOU? OR CAME IT UNTO YOU ONLY?" For what did you receive it? FOR THE SAME REASON FOR WHICH YOU HAVE RECEIVED EVERYTHING ELSE WHICH YOU POSSESS, THAT YOU MIGHT SHARE IT WITH OTHERS. How did you receive it? FROM CHRIST WHO IS THE VERY ACT OF GIVING BINDS YOU TO GIVE FOR HIM AND NOT FOR YOUR-

SELVES, AND TO MOLD YOUR LIVES AFTER THE PATTERN OF HIS.

What a multitude of motives converge on the solemn duty of work for Christ, if we read in the light of this deeper meaning the simple words of our text. "He gave the loaves to the disciples." What manner of servant is he who can bear to have no part in the blessed work that follows, "and the disciples distributed to the multitude." IT IS FURTHER NOTICE-ABLE HOW THESE APOSTLES WERE PREPARED FOR THE WORK WHICH THEY HAD TO DO.

The first lesson which they had to learn was the almost ludicrous disproportion between the resources at their command and the necessities of the crowd. "How many loaves have ye?" "Go and see." This is the first lesson that we have to learn in all our work for Christ and for our brethren, THAT IN OURSELVES WE HAVE NOTHING FIT FOR THE TASK BEFORE US. Think of what the task is as measured by the necessities and sorrows of men. Think of all the sighs that go up every moment from burdened hearts, of the tears that run down so many blanched and anxious cheeks. Think of all the misery that is done under the sun.

If it could be made visible, what a dark pall would swathe the world, an atmosphere of sorrow rolling ever with it through space. The sight is too sad to be seen by any but the Lord who cures it all, and it wrung from His heart the sigh with which ere He cured one poor sufferer, a drop in the ocean. He looked up to Heaven, as in mute appeal against all these heaped miseries of suffering men.

And we, what can we do in ourselves? On what comparison of our resources do we not feel utterly inadequate to the work? If we think of the proportion in numbers, we have to say, like the narrator of the wars in Israel, "The children of Israel pitched before them like two little flocks of kids, but the Syrians filled the country."

If we think of the strength that we ourselves possess and look at our own tremu-

lous faith, at our own feeble love, at the uncertain hold which we ourselves have on the Gospel that we profess, at the mists and darkness which cover so much of God's revelation from our own understandings, at the sins and faults of our own lives, must we not cry out, "Send whom thou wilt send, O Lord, but take no time. So sinful, so little influenced by Thy GRACE, to be the messenger of Thy GRACE? Who is sufficient for these things?"

**And such contemplations, when they drive home to our souls the wholesome lesson of our own weakness, are the beginning, and the only possible beginning, of Divine strength.**

The only temper in which we can serve the Lord and be a blessing to mankind is that of the lowliest self-abasement. God always works with "bruised reeds." And out of them makes "polished shafts," "pillars in His house," only when we are low on our faces before the Lord, crying out, "unclean, unclean." does the purifying coal touch our lips and the prophets' strength flow into our souls.

Be humble and self-distrustful, and then learn the further lesson of this narrative, and carry your poor inadequate resources to Jesus Christ. "Bring them thither to Me." Five loaves and two fishes. And in Christ's hands they become sufficient. He multiplies them in GRACE. He gives wisdom, strength, and all that fits for the task to which He calls us.

Bring your little faith to Him and He will increase it. **Bring your feeble love to Him and ask Him to kindle it from the pure flame of His own, and He will make your soul burn within you. Bring your partial understanding of His will and way to Him, and He will be to you wisdom. Bring all your poverty of your natures, all the insufficiency of your spiritual character, all the inadequacy of your poor work, to your Lord. Let the conviction of your nothingness sink into your soul.** Then wait for Him in simple faith, in lowly obedience, and power will come to your equal, to your desire, and to your duties, and He will put His Spirit upon

you, and will anoint you to proclaim liberty to the captives and to give bread to all the hungry.

“Who is sufficient for these things?” must never precede, and will ever be followed by “our sufficiency is of God.” Notice that the disciples themselves seem to have partaken of the bread before they parted it among the multitudes. That is one true preparation for the work of feeding the hungry.

Divine Viewpoint, which feeds the world, is able to do so only because, and in proportion as, it has found in Christ its own sustenance and life. It is only they who say, “we have tasted and felt and handled the Word of life,” who can declare it to others. **You have to taste it yourself to be able to tell others how good it tastes.**

Personal participation in the Bread of Life makes any man able to offer it to some fainting spirit. Nothing else makes him able. **Ability involves responsibility.** “Power to its last particle is duty.” You believers who have “tasted that the Lord is gracious” have thereby come under weighty obligations. Your own personal experience of that precious Bread has fitted you to do something in offering it to others. The manner in which you do so must be determined by your character and circumstances. Every one has proper walk, but there is something you can do. To some lips you can command the food for all the world. Somewhere your word is a power. See that you do what you can do. **Remember that Jesus Christ feeds the world by Divine Viewpoint, and that every man who has himself eaten of the Bread of Life is thereby consecrated to carry it to those who yet are perishing in the far off hunger-ridden land, and trying to fill their bellies with the husks that the swine eat.**

THE SECOND PRINCIPLE IN THIS MIRACLE IS THAT THE BREAD IS ENOUGH FOR ALL THE WORLD.

“They did eat and were filled.”

One can fancy how doubtfully and grudgingly the apostles doled out the supplies at first, and how the portion of each was

increased, as group after group was provided and no diminution appeared in Christ's full hands, until, at last, all the 5,000, of all ages, of both sexes, of every sort, were fed, and the fragments lying uncared for proved how sufficient had been the share of each.

**May we not see in that scene a picture of the full supply for all the wants of the whole world which there is in THE “BREAD OF LIFE” WHICH CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN?**

The Gospel proclaims a full feast, which is enough for all mankind, which is intended for all mankind, which shall one day satisfy all mankind. This universal adaptation of the message of the Gospel to the whole world arises from the obvious fact that it addresses itself to universal wants, to the great rudimentary, universally diffused characteristics of human nature, and that it provides for all these, in the grand simplicity of its good tidings, the one sufficing Word.

It entangles itself with no local or historical peculiarities of the time and place of its earthly origin, which can hinder it in its universal diffusion. It commits itself to no transient human opinions. It addresses itself to no sectional characteristics or classes of men. It brushes aside all the surface distinctions, which separate us from one another, and goes right down to the depths of the central identities in which we are all alike, lost!

However we may differ from one another, in training, in habits, in cast of thought, in idiosyncrasies of character, in circumstances, in age, all these are but the upper strain which vary locally. Beneath all these there lie everywhere the solid foundations of the primeval rocks, and beneath these, again, the glowing central mass, the flaming soul of the world.

**Christianity sends its shaft right down through all these upper and local beds, till it reaches the deepest depths which are the same in every man, the obstinate willfulness of a nature adverse from God, and the yet deeper lying longings of a soul**

**that flames with the consciousness of God, and yearns for the rest and peace.**

To the sense of sin, to the sense of sorrow, to the conscience never wholly stifled, to the desires after good never utterly eradicated and never slaked by aught besides itself, does this mighty Word come. Not to this or that sort of a man, not to men in this or that phase of progress, age of the world, or stage of civilization, does it address itself, but to the common humanity which belongs to all, to the wants and sorrows and inward consciousness which belong to man as man, be he philosopher or fool, king or slave, eastern or western, "pagan suckled in a creed outworn" or American with the new lights and material science of the twentieth century. HENCE ITS UNIVERSAL ADAPTATION TO MANKIND.

It alone of all so-called faiths overleaps all geographical limits and lives in all centuries. It alone wins its trophies and bestows its gifts on all sorts and conditions of men.

Other planets which the heavenly Father hath not planted have their zones of vegetation and die outside certain degrees of latitude, but the seed of the Kingdom is like corn, an exotic now here, for wherever man lives, it will grow, and yet an exotic everywhere, for it came down from Heaven.

Other food requires an educated palate for its appreciation, but any hungry man in any land will relish bread. For every soul on Earth, this living, dying love of the Lord Jesus Christ addresses itself to, and satisfies his deepest wants. It is the bread which gives life to the world. That is what Divine Viewpoint has to offer for the hungry world.

Now one of the constituents of that company by the Galilean lake was children. It is one great glory of Christianity that its merciful mysteries can find their way to the hearts of the little children. Its mysteries, for the Gospel has mysteries, no less than these old systems of heathenism which fenced round their deepest truths with solemn barriers, only to be passed by the initiated. But the difference lies here, that its mysteries are taught

at first to the neophytes, and that the sum of them lies in the words which we learned at our mother's knee so long ago that we have forgotten that they were ever new to us, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The little child who has learned his earliest lessons of what father and son, and loving and giving, trust and life mean, by the sweet experience of his own father's home and his own mother's love, can grasp these blessed words. They carry the deepest mysteries which will still gleam before us unfathomed in all their profundity, unappropriated in all their blessedness, when millenniums have passed since we stood in the inner shrine of Heaven. WONDERFUL IS THE WORD WHICH BLESSES THE CHILD, WHICH TRANSCENDS THE ANGEL BEFORE THE THRONE. This is the bread for the world, meant for it, and one day to be partaken of by it.

For these ordered fifties at their Christ-provided meal are for us as prophecy of the day that shall surely dawn, when all the hunger of wandering prodigals is over, and the deceived soul of the idol worshipper no longer drawing him aside to feed on ashes, they shall come from the east and from the west and from the north and from the south, and sit at the feast which the Lord hath prepared for all nations, and when all the Earth shall be satisfied with the GRACE of His house even of His holy temple.

THIRDLY, THE BREAD WHICH IS GIVEN TO THE FAMISHING IS MULTIPLIED FOR THE FUTURE OF THE DISTRIBUTORS.

"They took the fragments that remained twelve baskets full."

MORE WAS GATHERED THAN THEY POSSESSED AT FIRST. **They preserved over, for their own sustenance and refreshment in days to come a far larger store that the five loaves and two small fishes with which they had begun.** The fact contains a principle which is true about al-

most all except material possessions, which is often in God's providence made true about them, and which is emphatically true about spiritual blessings, about our spiritual emotions, our Christian beliefs, the joys and powers which Christ comes to give.

**For all these, the condition of increase is diffusion. To impart to others is to gain for oneself.** Every honest effort to bring some other human soul into conscious possession of Christ's love and GRACE deepens one's own sense of its preciousness.

**Every attempt to lead some other understanding to the perception of the Truth, as it is in Jesus Christ, helps me to understand it better myself.** If you would learn, teach. That will clear your mind, will open hidden harmonies, will reveal unsuspected deficiencies and contradictions in your own conceptions, will help you to feel more the truths that come from your own lips. **It will perhaps shame your cold appreciation of them, when you see how others grasp at them from your teaching, or give you more confidence in the Gospel "as the power of God unto salvation,"** when you behold it, even as ministered through you, mighty to the pulling down of strongholds.

At the lowest, it will keep your own mind in healthy contact with what you are but apt to forget, **if you would learn to love Jesus Christ more, try to lead someone else to love Him. You will catch new gleams from His gracious mind in the very act of commending Him to others.** If you would have your own spiritual life strengthened and deepened, remember that not by solitary meditation or raptures of silent communion alone can that be accomplished, but by these and by honest manful work for God in the world.

The Mount of Transfiguration must be left, although there were there Moses and Elijah, and the cloud of the Divine glory and the words of approval from Heaven, because there were a demoniac boy and his weeping, despairing father needing Christ down below. **Work for the Lord if you would live with God. Give the bread to the hungry, if you**

**would have it for the food of your own souls.**

The refusal to engage in such service is one fruitful cause of the low estate of spiritual health in which so many Christians pass their days. They seem to think that they receive the Bread from Heaven only for their own use, and that they have done it all they have to do with it, when they eat it themselves. And so come all manner of spiritual diseases.

**A selfish, that is an inactive spirituality, is always more or less a morbid spirituality.** For health you need exercise. "In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread." And that law expresses not only the fact that work is needed to get it, but that toil must give the appetite and fit the frame to digest it. There is no such thing as a morbid Christianity brought on by want of healthy exercise.

"There is that scattereth and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty." Good husbandry does not grind up all the year's wheat for loaves for one's own eating, but keeps some of it for seed to be scattered in the furrows. And if Christians will deal with the great love of God, the great work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as if it were bestowed on them for their own sakes only, they will have only themselves to blame if holy desires die out in their souls, and the consciousness of Christ's love becomes faint, and all the blessed words of Truth come to sound far off and mystical in their ears.

The standing water gets green scum on it. The close shut barn breeds weevils and smut. **Let the water of the Word run. Fling the seed abroad.** "Thou shalt find in after many days," bread for their own soul even as these ministering apostles were enriched while they gave, and the full-handed liberality, with which they carried Christ's gifts among the crowd, had something to do in providing the large residue which filled their stores for days to come.

Thus, then, this scene on the sweet springing grass down by the side of Blue

Gennesaret is an emblem of the whole work of Divine Viewpoint in this starving world. The multitudes famish. **Tell Christ of their wants. Count your own small resources till you have completely learned your poverty, and His GRACE, and then take them to Jesus Christ. He will accept them, and in His hands they will become mighty, being transfigured from human thoughts and forces into Divine Words, into spiritual powers.**

**On that bread which He gives, do you yourself live?** Then carry it boldly to all the hungry. Rank after rank will eat. All races, all ages, from grey hairs to babbling childhood, will find there the food of their souls. **As you part the blessing, it will grow beneath His eye, and the longer you give, the fuller handed you will become.** Nor shall the bread fail, nor the Word become weak, till all the world has tasted of its sweetness and been refreshed by its potent life.

This miracle is the lesson for the workers. There is another wondrous meal recorded in Scripture, which is the prophecy for the workers when they rest. The little ship has been tossing all the night on the waters of that Galilean lake, fruitless has been the fishing. The morning breaks cold and grey, and lo, there stands on the shore One who first blesses the toiler's work and then bides them to His table.

There, mysteriously kindled, burns the fire with the welcome meal already laid upon it. They add to it the contribution of their night of toil, and then, hushed and blessed in His

still company, they sup with Him and He with them.

So when the weary work is over for the Divine Viewpoint on Earth, we shall be aware of His merciful presence on the shore, and, coming at the last safe to land, we shall "rest from our labors," in that we see the "fire of coals, and fish laid thereon and bread," and our "works shall follow us," in that we are bidden to bring of the fish that we have caught.

Then putting off the wet fisher's coat, and leaving behind the tossing of the unquiet sea and the toil of the weary fishing, we shall sit down with Him at that meal spread by His hands, who blesseth the works of His servants here below, and giveth to them a full fruition of immortal food at His table at the last.

"Man shall not live by bread alone but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." "Thy Words were found, and I did eat them, and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine hearts, for I am called by Thy Name, O Lord God of hosts." "For the bread of God is He which cometh down from Heaven and giveth His life unto this world." "Lord, evermore give us this bread."

**That is how Divine Viewpoint solves the world's hunger! We have the Bread of Life that cometh down from Heaven. Jesus Christ the Saviour of the world!!!**

Buddy Dano, Pastor

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