

“THE CHALLENGE OF A CARING MINISTRY”

Recognizing Your Realities

Donnie W. Smith, D.Min.

*“After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain and there he sat with his disciples. And the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him; for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them that every one of them may take a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, saith unto him. There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes; but what are they among so many?” **John 6:1-9***

Introduction

As I have mused over these few passages of scripture, I have been somewhat awed by the challenges facing the disciples of Christ in this text and how similar in nature they are to those challenges we now face in our own life setting. Our world is a world of problems, pressures, the economically depressed, the hurting, those who suffer from AIDS, addictions, and a multiplicity of other critical care needs.

There is perhaps no other passage in scripture that requires us to reckon with our realities any more than this particular passage. Observe closely the disciple’s realities and notice their similarities to those of ours today:

- I. THERE WAS THE PRESENCE OF A MULTITUDE**
- II. THERE WAS AN OBVIOUS CLIMATE OF EXPECTATION AND SEARCH**
- III. THERE WAS THE PRESENCE OF A COMMUNITY THAT HAD BEEN CALLED TO PARTICIPATE IN CARING FOR THE MULTITUDE.**
- IV. THERE WAS A RECOGNITION OF THE VAST PROPORTIONAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHAT THEY HAD VERSUS WHAT THEY WOULD NEED.**
- V. THERE WAS THE PRESENCE OF GOD.**

In his book, The Suffering of God, Terrence Fretheim says, “It is not enough to say that one believes God, What is important finally is the KIND of God in whom one believes.” He goes on to say, “The images used to speak of God not only decisively

determine the way one thinks about God, they have a powerful impact on the shape of the life of the believer.”

The kind of God you believe in will determine the destiny of the many to whom you reach out and care for as well as determining your own future.

Today people are fragile. They are fragile more so than ever before. Today there is, as Henri Nouwen stated, “a painful search for a hospitable place.” We must recognize our realities.

The life of Joseph is an excellent example of how one individual recognized his reality and made possible the provision of many!