

I traveled to the area around Chorazin and Bethsaida, which were two towns on each side of the Jordan in Galilee. I remembered how the Teacher had fed a multitude there¹ and that later He had upbraided them for their lack of response to such miracles. He compared them to the Gentile cities of Tyre and Sidon², which was meant to make the people think about God's power. He gave us this message as He sent seventy-two of us out to proclaim the nearness of the Kingdom of God³.

I found an older man there who was known as a teacher in his small village. We walked among the oak and sycamore trees and discussed many things, but settled on the power of true love. He told me the story of his own experience in that area.

God's providence is usually difficult for us to understand. When I was young, I understood God's providence to mean that He would provide a suitable helpmeet for life. Then I went through a series of events that redefined my faith and made me re-interpret my understanding of God's plan for me. I wondered if this was a judgment from God, or perhaps I was simply being ignored by Him.

After a time of feeling abandoned, good things happened that had on them the mark of God and His providence. I developed a friendship with a woman that I had known who had been through similar experiences. We had both been broken by them, but God ultimately provided⁴ this relationship for us so that we could undergo His healing process and become blessed by it.

I remember deciding that I wanted to be with this person even if it did have the physical benefits that were normally associated with such a committed relationship. I would not demand a return on the investment of love that I would make, as long as that relationship would endure. I would embrace the relationship, even if the embracing I might wish for might not be a part of it. So we married, and my investment truly turned out to be fruitful beyond my expectations.

We discussed the idea that true love is making a commitment without the prospects of finding deep values in return. My new friend recalled the story of Mephibosheth, who was offered a place at the royal table by King David even though he could return no real service.

Mephibosheth was broken (crippled in both feet⁵), but David (rather than eliminating all those in the family of his rival, as was standard king's practice) invited Mephibosheth to his palace to feast at his table for life. He was given special grace because he was the son of David's best friend Jonathan. God's grace is similar, inviting us to come to the Table for the Feast of Christ, even though we are broken and have nothing substantial to offer.

This is indeed how God treats us in His grace. We really have nothing to offer Him⁶, except our love and commitment to Him. What we can bring is so small in comparison to that Grace⁷ as brought to us through the sacrifice of the Son. God has always wanted a people, not nourished by the sacrifice of bulls and goats⁸, but seeking a relationship with those who perceive and worship His greatness.

1. Luke 9:10-15.

2. Luke 10:13-15.

3. Luke 10:1-14.
4. Gen 22:14.
5. 2 Samuel 9:1-8.
6. “Nothing in my hands I bring, Simply to Thy cross I cling; Naked, come to Thee for dress, Helpless, look to Thee for grace...”, hymn Amazing Grace, vs 3 by Augustus Toplady.
7. 1 John 4:10.
8. “What can we bring to the LORD? What kind of offerings should we give him? Should we bow before God with offerings of yearling calves? Should we offer him thousands of rams and ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Should we sacrifice our firstborn children to pay for our sins? No, O people, the LORD has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:6-8.

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