



Take a
Moment to
Pray for
Peace!

Loaves and Fishes

Matthew records that Jesus withdrew to a lonely place after hearing of John the Baptist's death by Herod's order. However, the crowds found out where he went and followed him. Even in his own need for solitude, Jesus had compassion for them. He taught them and healed the sick. When

evening came, the disciples wanted to send the crowd away to get food, but Jesus said, "you feed them". By blessing the 5 loaves and 2 fish John says they found in a boy's lunch, there was enough to feed the crowd of more than 5,000 (only the men were counted; there would have been women and children there too) with plenty to spare (Matthew 14:13-21; John 6:1-14).

The Church of the Brethren *Newsline* reports, from the Church of the Brethren Global Mission and Service, another "loaves and fishes" story, this time from Venezuela. People there were already suffering great hardship – hunger, lack of healthcare, loss of jobs, disruption of most public services, and political unrest due to political corruption and mismanagement when COVID-19 hit. Using funds provided through a Brethren Emergency Disaster Fund COVID-19 grant, Venezuelan church leaders went to buy a months' worth of food for distribution to families in need. The food seller asked them what they were going to do with the food. When they told him, he gave them three times as much as they requested for the same price. This will support the families for three months instead of just one! (Church of the Brethren *Newsline* June 26, 2020)

This story reminded me of another. I was in Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) unit 150. We did our training project in Caro, Illinois. The town, at the southern tip of Illinois where the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers merge, was a thriving city when river transport was king, but when trains, then trucks, took over most shipping, Caro went into decline. Only a few of the very rich who wanted to stay and the very poor who had no way to leave, remained. We worked with a mission group that was providing assistance to the poor – household goods and clothing to fire victims (house fires were common due to unsafe housing), adult literacy education (many adults could not read) help planting gardens to supplement nutrition (they had been able to purchase a rototiller just before we arrived), advocacy and other support. BVSers live on a subsistence stipend and during training, pool funds to provide meals for the group. Our cooking group went to the fish market to get a common local fish (buffalo fish) for one of our meals and when asked who we were, shared about BVS and what we were doing in Caro. When we started cooking the fish, we discovered that the fish seller had doubled our order. Checking revealed he had done so in appreciation for the mission and our work there. We were able to share extra fish with local people who worked with the mission.

In these times, remember God is good! He does look out for his people, and there are people serving as his hands and feed even in unexpected ways and places.

This week, in your prayer time:

Pray for those we see doing your work during this time. Do not forget those who serve behind the scenes and those who serve in unexpected ways!

- Remember those suffering under the load of injustice & racism & everyone trying to address these issues.
- Remember those whose voices are not heard because they are not allowed even to speak.
- Remember those grieving COVID-19 losses & those put at risk of the virus by location, lack of protective measures, attitudes, or complacency
- Remember those living with violence & those grieving for loved ones lost to violence, especially those who are not even allowed to remember those they have lost & express their grief. . .
- Remember those facing hunger & those facing homelessness



Take a
Moment to
Pray for
Peace!

Loaves and Fishes

Matthew records that Jesus withdrew to a lonely place after hearing of John the Baptist's death by Herod's order. However, the crowds found out where he went and followed him. Even in his own need for solitude, Jesus had compassion for them. He taught them and healed the sick. When

evening came, the disciples wanted to send the crowd away to get food, but Jesus said, "you feed them". By blessing the 5 loaves and 2 fish John says they found in a boy's lunch, there was enough to feed the crowd of more than 5,000 (only the men were counted; there would have been women and children there too) with plenty to spare (Matthew 14:13-21; John 6:1-14).

The Church of the Brethren *Newsline* reports, from the Church of the Brethren Global Mission and Service, another "loaves and fishes" story, this time from Venezuela. People there were already suffering great hardship – hunger, lack of healthcare, loss of jobs, disruption of most public services, and political unrest due to political corruption and mismanagement when COVID-19 hit. Using funds provided through a Brethren Emergency Disaster Fund COVID-19 grant, Venezuelan church leaders went to buy a months' worth of food for distribution to families in need. The food seller asked them what they were going to do with the food. When they told him, he gave them three times as much as they requested for the same price. This will support the families for three months instead of just one! (Church of the Brethren *Newsline* June 26, 2020)

This story reminded me of another. I was in Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) unit 150. We did our training project in Caro, Illinois. The town, at the southern tip of Illinois where the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers merge, was a thriving city when river transport was king, but when trains, then trucks, took over most shipping, Caro went into decline. Only a few of the very rich who wanted to stay and the very poor who had no way to leave, remained. We worked with a mission group that was providing assistance to the poor – household goods and clothing to fire victims (house fires were common due to unsafe housing), adult literacy education (many adults could not read) help planting gardens to supplement nutrition (they had been able to purchase a rototiller just before we arrived), advocacy and other support. BVSers live on a subsistence stipend and during training, pool funds to provide meals for the group. Our cooking group went to the fish market to get a common local fish (buffalo fish) for one of our meals and when asked who we were, shared about BVS and what we were doing in Caro. When we started cooking the fish, we discovered that the fish seller had doubled our order. Checking revealed he had done so in appreciation for the mission and our work there. We were able to share extra fish with local people who worked with the mission.

In these times, remember God is good! He does look out for his people, and there are people serving as his hands and feed even in unexpected ways and places.

This week, in your prayer time:

Pray for those we see doing your work during this time. Do not forget those who serve behind the scenes and those who serve in unexpected ways!

- Remember those suffering under the load of injustice & racism & everyone trying to address these issues.
- Remember those whose voices are not heard because they are not allowed even to speak.
- Remember those grieving COVID-19 losses & those put at risk of the virus by location, lack of protective measures, attitudes, or complacency
- Remember those living with violence & those grieving for loved ones lost to violence, especially those who are not even allowed to remember those they have lost & express their grief. . .
- Remember those facing hunger & those facing homelessness