

“Gather Up The Fragments”
John 6:1-13

For the past several days I have been watching T.V. news reports about the terrible destruction caused by severe storms in central Florida. At least 20 people were killed, many were injured and at least 1,500 houses and buildings were damaged or destroyed. News reports showed helpers moving into the areas to assist residents as they searched for loved ones and possessions. Fragments from the damage were moved around, stacked up or loaded on vehicles to be hauled away. The stories of death and destruction evoked compassionate concern for all the people involved as they gathered up the pieces of their lives and possessions that remained.

As I watched these news reports, my mind suddenly flashed to an event in the life of Jesus as recorded in John 6:1-13.

As Jesus fulfilled his ministry, great crowds followed Him. On this occasion Jesus asked Philip where they could buy food to feed the people. Philip answered that they really did not have the money to buy food for the multitudes. Andrew spoke up and said that a boy was present in the crowd who had a lunch of five barley loaves and two small fishes. Jesus took that small lunch, worked a miracle, and fed the multitudes. After the meal Jesus noticed that food was left over so He said to the disciples: “Gather up the fragments that remain that nothing be lost.” To me, that is an interesting and challenging sentence spoken by Jesus. Although Jesus was speaking of food on this occasion, I have the strong conviction that what he said applies equally to every area of man’s life. One of the great glories of the Gospel is that a person can start over again. Man often sinks down into sin but he need never to be defeated by sin. Life can be redeemed. Jesus can pick up the pieces of a person’s life and put that person’s life together. Any person’s life can be redeemed. When we give up on winning a lost person to Christ, we are doubting the power of Almighty God.

According to the Gospel records, Jesus spent a major part of His earthly ministry trying to get people to start over gain in life. His message was always one of hope to the shipwrecked and courage to the fallen. He was forever telling people that they need not despair, for God always offers a new chance and a new lease on life. Let us turn to the New Testament and examine the lives of some of those persons whose lives were redeemed by the power of God.

Here is Zacchaeus whose life had been degraded by dirty business practices. He was a tax collector who had taken more money than the people were supposed to pay. As a result the people despised him. His life had reached bottom and was broken to pieces by sin. But just then Jesus Christ passed his way and his broken life was restored. After his despair had been replaced by hope and faith, Zacchaeus picked up the broken pieces of his life and with Jesus’ help put them back together. He offered to make restitution to the people from whom he had taken unjustly and promised to follow Jesus. Then Jesus said to Zacchaeus: “This day is salvation come to this house.” Zacchaeus’ life had been redeemed. The broken pieces of his life had been put together. He was saved.

Here is the woman of Capernaum who was known for her loose living. She had no respect for herself or for the lives of others. Was there any hope for her salvation? Not until Jesus Christ came into her life. Her path crossed the path of Jesus and her life was transformed. She manifested her faith and Jesus forgave her sins. Then Jesus said to her: "Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace." The fragments of her life were gathered up and Jesus put her on the road to Heaven.

Here is Saul who was one of the most notorious persecutors of the Christians in the early Church. His love of the law had caused him to hate Christians. As a result he tried to arrest and imprison every Christian he could find. This was his sinful condition until he suddenly and dramatically met Jesus Christ on the Damascus road. After meeting the risen Lord, he became one of the most dynamic missionaries in the history of Christianity. The transformation of his life was so radical that his name was changed from SAUL to PAUL. His life had been broken by sin but Jesus Christ picked up the broken pieces. His life was redeemed. He was saved, and after being saved, he was used of God in saving others.

The inspiring part of God's message is this: Your life can also be redeemed. Perhaps sin has broken your life but what sin has left can be restored. Thank God for that! "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." AMEN – may it be so.

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