

**"Redeem and Learn."  
Psalm 14.  
John 6: 1-21.**

King David became a very sinful man. He committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah The Hittite, his best soldier. David had also impregnated her yet hoped he could deceive Uriah to think the child was his own. But Uriah knew better. Uriah therefore did not visit Bathsheba when he returned from battle. He knew of her sin with King David. The king invited Uriah to feast with him. Uriah refused. It was Uriah's way of telling David that he knew of David's sinful life especially with Bathsheba. He would not indulge with his king.

Outraged, David sent Uriah back into battle to be killed. Uriah was indeed slaughtered. King David rided himself and Bathsheba of Uriah for a very wrong yet human nature reason. Uriah's presence as well as his refusal to sinfully feast with as well as be deceived by David reminded Israel's King of a holy truth: David was sinning. Yet the king did not want to be reminded of his sin. Nonetheless, David needed to repent, be redeemed, and learn. And the Lord would soon see to this with Nathan, the Temple prophet's near future visit.

Philip, one of Jesus' first disciples, was also in need of redemption. The Saviour asked Philip if he knew the amount of money needed to feed the Five Thousand plus people. They had assembled for Jesus to heal and feed them. This question was to test Philip's faith. Surely, Philip should have known that money was not a matter. He as well as the multitudes were in Christ's presence. All things could therefore be done through Jesus, the Son of God and World's Saviour. All Philip and the people needed was strong faith.

Nonetheless, Philip responded to Jesus that even eight months of wages would be insufficient to feed only half of the crowds. Philip's answer clearly signified his lack of faith. Jesus knew this, already. But Christ planned for this day to be a Redemption-Self Reflection experience. It was up to the disciples, however, to understand Jesus' messages and thus be redeemed.

A little boy with only five bread loaves as well as two fish came forward. He quietly offered the small supply to the disciples to share with the people

as best they could. The disciples accepted the food and brought it in a basket to Jesus as instructed. Christ Blessed the Bread and Fish which became miraculous baskets full! Jesus fed the Five Thousand and with dozens of food baskets left over.

The disciples later became frightened during a Sea of Galilee rainstorm whilst in a boat. They were afraid that Jesus, Their Saviour, was not near. They would thus perish. Yet Jesus appeared to them-walking on the stormy water, assuring them they were fine. He Was There! Christ then boarded the boat and brought them safely ashore in calm waters. The Saviour was no doubt disappointed, however, in their weak faith.

Neither Philip nor the disciples as a whole understood Jesus' message. A little, silent boy who donated his bread and fish to feed the hungry-likely the only food he and his parents possessed-had the faith Philip and the disciples lacked. The boy knew that putting God and others first was all that was necessary. The Lord would provide! God would return an even greater blessing in response to the boy's desire to help bless those more needy. And God did through Christ's miracle. If a small, humbled child had such strong faith to know God and Saviour were ever near and would satisfy all needs, why could the adult disciples not possess the same faith even during a physical storm? They needed to be redeemed and learn.

A 1700's British Navy seaman and later slave trader fortunately answered God's Redemption Call. Life had been a struggle. He had been a slave to a tribal queen in Africa but was rescued. Later, the Englishman accepted Christ after prayer for his life to be spared during Newfoundland coast sea storm. He gave up alcohol and cursing. Yet the Englishman continued selling African slaves. Nonetheless, God saved his life again. This time it was from a fever that had killed many of his fellow slave merchant friends. The Englishman then questioned the reasons he was still alive.

A Scots sea captain colleague told the Englishman it was possible the Lord was asking him to re-examine his soul. The Englishman did. He concluded that he needed to both quit the African slave trade, become an Anglican priest, and work to abolish the slave trade in Great Britain. He knew at heart that God and Christ wanted this for his soul's redemption. The Human Need for God's Grace and Redemption is magnified in a hymn he wrote in 1779 and revered globally: "Amazing Grace." The Englishman was the Rev. John Newton.

Indeed, we need God's Grace everyday. As John Newton's hymn reminds us, the Lord's Grace heals our spiritual blindness and delivers us from being lost in sin. But there is a duty we must honour for God's Grace to Redeem us. We must self examine our hearts and souls. This requires watching for the Holy Spirit's messages. They may come in the form of a friend, neighbour, colleague, relative or child displaying more godly character traits than ourselves. It might also arrive when observing the damaged feelings of a friend or loved one. Perhaps we have hurt them as per selfishly devoting time to our own ambitious needs instead of providing the same love and companionship they have given us. We certainly learn about ourselves by looking at others. And the results should not always please us.

Neil Diamond, the American vocalist and composer, once sang a song that encouraged turning on one's "Heartlight." It would "show the beautiful glow" of one's loving heart. Our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ want our hearts to glow as well-with Their Loving Presence For "The World To See" to further quote "Heartlight." And others will notice our Godly Hearts not only by our Good Deeds but more importantly our faithfulness in soul improvement to be more Christlike, everyday. But we first must look with our eyes and listen with our hearts to the messages God sends us to improve through people and various events. Then we must Redeem in Christ and Learn. God is not finished with us yet.

Amen.