

A THREE-FOLD VIEW ... of the art of giving  
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(JOHN 4:7; MATTHEW 25:8; 14:16)

The entire theme of the Bible may be expressed as God giving to man. The story of Bethlehem tells how God gave His Son to the world. The Gospels describe how Christ gave His message to the world. The resurrection tells how God provided hope and salvation for the world. God always did the giving; sinners were the recipients. Yet, as we examine the Scriptures more closely, it becomes evident that sometimes the order was reversed.

"Give me" (John 4:7) ... a disturbing surprise

When the Lord made His special journey to Sychar's well, He knew He was about to meet one of the most infamous women in the city. Her moral virtues had disappeared, her presence was most undesirable, and even the normal chore of drawing water had to be done when other people were absent. To be caught in her presence invited gossip of the worst kind, and yet Jesus made a special effort to meet with her. His request for a drink occasioned surprise and led to one of the greatest of His accomplishments. She replied, "How is that thou, being a Jew, asketh drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?" He answered: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink: thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water" (John 4:9-10). It appears to be strange that Christ should ask for a drink! Had He so desired, He could have given a command, and every drop of water in the well would have risen to quench His thirst. Was Jesus truly dependent upon the Samaritan? He had neither bucket nor rope, but the Lord of heaven would hardly have been helpless. He was trying to teach her - and us - that when we give to Him, He rewards us immeasurably. She gave water to Jesus; He gave a well to her.

"Give us " (Matthew 25:8) ... a desperate situation

When the Savior spoke about the ten virgins, He enunciated truths of superlative worth. The disciples had asked about His return to earth, and consequently Jesus began to describe ten virgins who went forth to meet a bridegroom. Alas, five were wise and five were foolish. "They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. " The lamps used in those days were very small, and it was necessary to carry a flask or receptacle of some kind, which hung from a belt around the waist. When the bridegroom arrived unexpectedly, the ten young women arose hastily and, lighting their lamps, went forth to meet him. Within moments five lamps began to go out, and the virgins said to their companions, "Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out" (Matt. 25:3-8). Unfortunately, the wise virgins had no oil to spare, and the five foolish women lost their chance to attend the wedding. The picture that Christ presented revealed two things (1) The loss of the foolish virgins. (2) The bankruptcy of their companions. That they were able to enter with the bridegroom was a cause for rejoicing; but, had they remained awake, each one might have been a benefactor to her friend. It is necessary to remember that Jesus was describing conditions to precede His return. The need of the world would never be met unless the church - the wise ones - were in a position to respond when others asked for assistance.

"Give ... them " (Matthew 14:16) ... a difficult suggestion

The account that describes how Jesus fed five thousand men in addition to the women and children who accompanied them is probably one of the most exciting stories in the New Testament. It provides a reminder of the astonishing fact that the Savior was never anxious when an unexpected crisis arose. It was unbelievable

A THREE-FOLD VIEW ... of the art of giving that the Master should say, "Give ye them to eat." He was surely aware that the disciples had no spare supplies of food. They were speechless when He took five loaves and two fishes and performed a miracle. Did they understand that He was trying to teach them a great lesson? They could and would meet tremendous needs, but only after they had received supplies from His outstretched hand. Christ's words spoken to the Samaritan woman may be summarized as "How Unique. " His story of the ten virgins may be expressed as "How Urgent. " The lessons taught in the account of the feeding of the multitude may be described "How Unmistakable. " Together they emphasize that what is given to Jesus is returned a thousandfold. Neither minister nor church can effectively meet the need of a dying world unless the Bread of Life is first received from the hand of the Savior. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over" (Luke 6:38).

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