

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Pity for the Helpless Fourth Week in Ordinary Time Saturday, February 7, 2015
8:15 AM Heb 13:15-17, 20-21; **Mk 6:30-34** (BVM) (Only commitment to God's will
and to God's kingdom will actually make the changes that are needed so that people can live
a better life.)

“When Jesus disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.”

In recent years there are people who say and have said that pity is not a very worthy emotion, but actually it is a pure emotion and one that Jesus himself felt very deeply. **What is pity? It's sensing someone's helplessness.** And if we are truthful and we see the world around us, observe things as they are, we realize that there are many helpless people in the world, helpless in regard to themselves. The **help** that they need of course is **available from God and that is our work**, to bring help, to bring **this truth that he began to teach them.**

How did he do it? We only have fragments. We have **parables.** What did these bedraggled people do with parables? I don't know. Usually people who are as these are described: “sheep without a shepherd,” usually they don't spend a lot of time reflecting on life and trying to figure things out. But nonetheless, they need to do that because no one's solution, or another way of putting this is **the solution to no one's problem, lies completely beyond them.** God has created a world that is full of goodness and blessings, and some have been deprived of them, sometimes through no fault of their own, sometimes through their own fault. Nonetheless, they are victims anyway. They are victims of their own poor choices, or they are victims of circumstances, or their parents' poor choices, or simply the situation of the world, the way they are born into it. **Many circumstances lead to these pitiful situations, and people who are to be pitied.**

What is Jesus' answer? To help them, to extend to them the love of the Father, to touch them with his healing compassion. And that's exactly what **he sent his disciples to do as well.** This is a situation where they had been out working, "Well, now you are pretty tired; you really need to rest a while," and there were so many people and so much need that they couldn't even eat, so he said, "Well, let's go somewhere else." But people got wind of it and got there first, so to speak.

The world hasn't changed much. People have a lot more information at their disposal, but they are the same people. People in the past—and there were some very, very intelligent people—and people today—there are some very intelligent people—have the same issues as well. **We have issues of moral character,** for better or for worse. **We had issues of self-centeredness and ethnocentricness and tribalism** that continue to create divisions in the world. **So things haven't changed too much since the days of Jesus.**

The Church's work therefore is to continue his work of compassion and teaching and gathering people together and trying to get them to commit to something, to a program he called the kingdom of God, to commit to the presence of God and the power of God and the goodness of God and the will of God, because only commitment to that will actually begin to change the course of history. **Only commitment to God's will and to God's kingdom will actually make the changes that are needed so that people can live a better life.** Now almost everyone wants the result, but very few people are willing to **choose the means. This is the situation we are in.**