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Compassion x2

Andrea Luxton

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Compassion x2

Andrea Luxton, *president*

THE FEEDING OF THE 5,000 IS AN important enough story that it is the only miracle retold in all four gospels. There could be many reasons for the prominence of this story, but for me the critical lesson of this miracle is what I am going to call compassion x2.

Jesus had gone away to a quiet place. John the Baptist had recently been beheaded and, whether to escape the turmoil or for his personal rejuvenation, Jesus had left the crowds to find some personal space. However, as we know, he was soon discovered by both his disciples and by the multitudes. Jesus' compassion immediately took over, for he recognized the needs of the crowd as greater than his, and he preached and he healed. But of course his compassion does not stop there.

The day passes and the crowd gets hungry. The disciples, being practical, plan to send the crowd away to get their own food. But Jesus' compassion takes over once more, and he decides to feed them. Jesus, with the help of one small boy and the disciples as the waiters. A miracle is performed and Jesus' divinity shown, but this miracle is not one done just for the sake of showing the power of Jesus—it is firmly rooted in an act of compassion.

Was there enough to go around? The disciples ridiculed the idea, but there was. Jesus knew there would be, not just physical food but compassion and love.

As I look at the Andrews University campus, and even more its extended community, including you, our alumni and friends, that same question is often on my mind: is there enough to go around? In the midst of the University learning experience, the expectations that come with being part of a Seventh-day Adventist community, the demands of mission, in the midst of all that: is there enough love, compassion, gentleness, graciousness to go around? Are those core Christian qualities not just visible but core to all our dealings?

I am sure that the crowds went away that day marveling at seeing a miracle performed. But whether they could identify it or not, the fact that the miracle was performed in the context of compassion x2 sets it apart. If we do everything right but we do not have love, if we do not have compassion, then we may be nothing.



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