Chasing Carrots

## (John 6:1-13)

I am glad that you are with us today because I believe this message has the potential to speak to many of you in a really powerful way. I imagine that many of you struggle just like I do, believing the lie that if I can just get that one thing, just a little bit of that, that’s what I need to really be happy. You know, to be fulfilled and satisfied with life. But then what happens is that I end up getting that and it doesn’t satisfy the needs that I had and so I think that maybe I just need a little bit more, a little better, a little bigger.

Unfortunately, what always happens is that when I get more, it always promises a lot, it promises to satisfy, but it doesn’t always deliver. Is it just me or do any of you know what I’m talking about? And so, what do you need to be happy, to feel rich, to be satisfied in life? Most people would say, “I’m not quite sure, but I know it’s always a little bit more.”

Well, the title of today’s message is “Chasing Carrots: The Continual Pursuit for More.” And so, if you could turn to the gospel of John, chapter 6, we are going to study this familiar text. My prayer is that God would speak to you from the familiarity of this text and that he would minister to you and strengthen your life in a supernatural way. I believe this is so important in this day and age because there are so many people who are finding strength in you and attaching themselves to you in every moment of your life.

I am reminded of the woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She came up behind Jesus in a crowd and touched his cloak. Immediately her bleeding stopped in the Bible says that Jesus asked,

"Who touched me?" (Luke 8:45).

Everyone denied it and Peter said, "Master, all the people are crowding and pressing against you." But Jesus insisted,

"Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me” (Luke 8:46).

In other words, he knew that somebody had tapped into the deep well of his divine resources, someone had taken something from him. And many of you know that feeling, because everybody is pulling on you, wanting something from you, and no matter how much you love them it can be draining because strength is going out.

I want to illustrate that for you from the gospel of John, chapter six, beginning at verse one.

“Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick” (John 6:1-2).

“Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples” (John 6:3).

“When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him. He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" (John 6:4-5).

“He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do” (John 6:6).

“Philip answered him, "Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" (John 6:7).

“Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" (John 6:8-9).

My subject today is, “The Continual Pursuit for More.”

Would you turn to your neighbor and tell them, “I don’t have enough.”

Now turn to your other neighbor, turn to the person behind you and tell them, “I need more.”

As I introduce this theme that I think is more relevant at this moment in history than ever before in the history of the world, we’re going to talk about the pursuit of more. It affects many areas of our lives, but in our narcissistic culture today, the desire to be known, to be admired, to be liked, to be followed, to be accepted, and be respected stand out as the most prevalent pursuit in our media saturated world. Now, you may resist that concept, but the truth is that in many ways we all are because as those created in the image of God we want to be known, we want to be loved, and we want to be accepted.

Now, on the other hand because of this innate desire we can unknowingly create this unhealthy dependence, enabling others. In fact, I would bet that the majority of you in this room have somebody in your life who is demanding, someone who complains that you were not there for them, you didn’t call enough, you didn’t text enough, you didn’t do this and you didn’t do that and they just want more and more and more. And so, we can find ourselves easily overwhelmed because we are surrounded by people who need us, who are constantly demanding, continually making withdrawals from us, never making a deposit, and after a while you find yourself operating in the red.

In the text today, Jesus had just come across the Sea of Galilee, he goes up on the mountain, and as he is talking to the disciples. The crowd is building because the people are wanting more and more because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed” (John 6:2). What I find to be interesting is that he didn’t tell them to go home. In other words, this wasn’t a crisis, nobody is bleeding to death, they are just looking for miracles, signs and wonders.

And so, now they are hungry, and all Jesus had to do was say, “I’ll see you tomorrow.” But Jesus was never one to waste an opportunity to teach his disciples a lesson. In this text he wants them to understand that there is always going to be more demand than there is supply. And so, taking advantage of the crowd and the lateness of the day he is going to teach them how to operate when you are working at a deficit.

I want to talk to those of you today who can’t escape this feeling of being responsible to check your phone and respond to people twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. In other words, they are just chatting, just making small talk, they are not in a crisis, they’re not going to die if you don’t answer them. But they make you feel guilty if you don’t reply in a timely fashion, and so you find yourself overcommitted, because you don’t want to let anybody down. Besides, you feel needed, and you want to be liked by everybody, but what do you do when they keep wanting more and more and more?

Now, for some people you love them enough to give it, but the truth of the matter is that you really don’t have enough. In other words, you want to be there for them, but the reality is that you don’t have enough. That is the dilemma that we find here in this text, the difference between ideals and reality. And so, Philip is telling Jesus, “Even if we tried to feed all of them…

“Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" (John 6:7).

But you want to be accepted, you want to be liked, and so you start giving people crumbs that need a loaf and you wonder why they faint, why their families can’t stay together, why their marriages can’t make it to the storm.

In other words, if Jesus felt power go out of him when that woman with the issue of blood touched him, don’t pretend you don’t feel power going out of you when people keep texting you, calling you, and asking you for more and more. You see, the demand can be endless and while we recognize that we really do love enough, we really do care, the reality is that we just don’t have enough and we are running out.

This is really personal to me because I have always been used to pastoring a small church, but there came a point when I realized I didn’t have enough. I couldn’t do anymore, and it was frustrating, because I love serving, helping, and ministering to people, but I realized I just couldn’t do everything myself. And so, God allowed me to get in a situation where I didn’t have enough, where I couldn’t be enough, to remind me that he was enough. And sometimes God will intentionally put you in a situation that is too demanding, overwhelming, so that you discover how much you really need him.

Now, that was years ago that I realized you just need to let the church be the church, just let the body of Christ function as it was intended, because the Bible says in first Corinthians, chapter 12,

“God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body” (1 Corinthians 12:18-20).

At that time, God put me in a situation where I couldn’t be enough, so that I would understand that I was a limited resource.

If you are here today and you feel like you are being pulled in different directions, you are overwhelmed because people are pulling and tugging at you, calling you and asking you for more and more and more would you be honest enough to admit, “I am not enough.” Just go ahead and tell yourself, “I am not enough,” because you have a God who is more than enough. And the Bible says,

“God is able to make it up to you by giving you everything you need and more so that there will not only be enough for your own needs but plenty left over to give joyfully to others” (2 Corinthians 9:8, TLB).

For some of you right now, the Holy Spirit just relieved you of the stress of feeling like you needed to be everything to everybody all the time.

If you receive that today, I want you to start shaking yourself loose right now. I want you to break free from the demands, the accusations, and the burden of their problems and their pain. Be free in the mighty name of Jesus, get your joy back today, get your peace back today, get your praise back today.

When David broke free from the guilt and shame of an unhealthy relationship he declared to the Lord,

“Let me hear joy and gladness, let the bones you have crushed rejoice… renew a steadfast spirit within me... (Psalms 51:8, 10).

You see, God knows the things that you whisper to him in the night. He knows the guilt and pain that you carry for the people who walked away, the children who stuck their finger in your face and said you weren’t there for me. God knows that you are a limited resource, you are doing everything you can, and yet every night when you lay down you feel that guilt. But this is your moment, today is your breakthrough, when you declare like John the Baptist said of Jesus,

“He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less” (John 3:30, NLT).

Would you receive that? Would you declare that over yourself this morning? I want to see more and more and more of him and less and less and less of me, because it’s never been about me. It’s never been about my name; it’s always been about him.

The disciples were about to discover their limitations, they recognized,

"Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" (John 6:7).

And so, even though that was a lot, it wasn’t enough for the demands that were on them. So, Jesus set them up, he says, “What do you have?” The disciples looked at one another, but they didn’t have anything. And so, now they’re getting desperate, they looked around and counted what they could find. They took a family’s dinner from a little boy, the basket his mother had packed for them.

“Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish" (John 6:8-9).

It doesn’t sound like much, just five and two, it seems insufficient, unlikely at best and the disciples said,

“But how far will they go among so many?” (John 6:9)

Just five and two, there is something about that. It doesn’t look like much, it’s just five loaves and two fish in the basket. But when you’ve got five and two, you’ve got the number seven, and the number seven is the number of completeness. And so, Jesus was about to release a miracle of creative energy, seven is the number of creation, and some of you need to be complete. Five and two is the minimum requirement, you’ve got to be whole on the inside, you can’t help other people while you are on empty.

Some of you today are saying the same thing as the disciples. “What am I against so many?” But Jesus is going to take your not enough and make it more than enough. He said to his disciples,

“Have the people sit down" (John 6:10).

And since there was plenty of room in that place all of the men sat down, about five thousand of them. Then he said to them, “Let me see what little you have, give it to me, put it in my hands.”

“Jesus took the loaves and he gave thanks” (John 6:11).

Did you notice what he did? Jesus gave thanks for your little bit. He gave thanks for your not enough. And he is going to take what little you have and the Bible says he is going to make it more than enough. Because he is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us” (Ephesians 3:20).

And so, he’s going to give you everything you need and more so that there will not only be enough for your own needs but plenty left over to give joyfully to others” (2 Corinthians 9:8, TLB).

Now, some of you don’t know what is available, you don’t know what you’ve got, what is at your fingertips, and the devil doesn’t want you to know because he wants you to feel incomplete, inferior, and insufficient. But I rebuke every lie of the enemy right now in the name of Jesus. I rebuke every demon that ever made you feel bad because you didn’t have enough, because you didn’t measure up to somebody else. The devil is a liar!

You see, there is a pattern in Scripture when it comes to miraculous provision of God and almost every miracle happened with something small, something that wasn’t enough. God never did ask for much, just a handful of flour, just a little oil in a jug, just a mustard seed of faith. He’s not looking for those that have it all together, he’s not looking for the wealthy people, the important people, but instead the Bible says,

“Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth” (1 Corinthians 1:26).

And so, when they gave Jesus five small barley loaves and two small fish it wasn’t anything big. In fact, it wasn’t even close to enough, but the power of the miracle was in it being so small.

Jesus ignored the impossibility, ignoring their question, and taking the loaves he gave thanks and distributed it to those who were seated. He gave them as much as they wanted and he did the same with the fish” (John 6:11).

Some of you need to recognize that you will never be enough in your own strength. You will never be enough for yourself, for your spouse, for your children, for your parents, for your friends, you will never be enough. But when you give yourself to Jesus, offering your body as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; when you give him what you’ve got, when you give him your gift, it is always enough. If you give him what you’ve got, he will take it and bless it. He will break it down; he will divide it and multiply it because at your very core you are more than a conqueror.

And so, not only will you succeed, but you’re going to have leftovers. Verse twelve says,

“When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted" (John 6:12).

I love that, because so often we look back over our lives and all we see is a lot of broken pieces, fragments and leftovers, but Jesus said,

“Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20, NKJV).

And some of you come in so quietly, you serve, you pour out, and you minister to us. Only a few notice, but nothing is wasted, I see you with your head down and tears rolling down your face just thanking God that he would take your five loaves of bread and two fish and bless it.

Jesus told the disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted."

“So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten” (John 6:13).

I want to recognize those of you who silently serve, gathering the pieces that were left over, working behind-the-scenes. You have the smallest demands and yet you serve in silence, pouring out yourself to everybody all the time. You never come in pushing your way to the front, trying to be important, and you have showed us a glimpse of the kingdom. Jesus said to his disciples,

“The greatest among you will be your servant” (Matthew 23:11).

In other words, if you are big enough to be the smallest, strong enough to be the weakest, secure enough not to be intimidated, that is greatness in the kingdom of God.

And so, maybe we should stop praying to be so big if the miracle was in something so small. If God used a handful of meal and a little jar of oil maybe we should ask God to make us small. Small enough to help someone, to open the door, to carry the load, and to serve somebody. In other words, maybe we should recognize that we are just a lump of clay in the hands of our mighty God who has the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? (Romans 9:21).

Because our purpose is to please God and not people, God alone examines the motives of the heart, and so my prayer is that you would say, “Less of me and more of him. Less attention to me and more glory to him. Less about my name and more about his name. Less about follow me and more about follow him.” In Romans chapter 12, the apostle Paul said,

“By the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you” (Romans 12:3).

For those of you this morning who feel stretched, pulled in multiple directions, just overwhelmed by the demands being placed on you, if you will take your pieces to God, he will make you more than enough. If you will give them to God he will get in your fragments, in your five loaves of bread and two fish, and he is going to show you the way. You are not going to have to figure it out, because God is going to break it down for you.

You see, we are called to something higher than ourselves, called to something better than ourselves. We are not called to be famous, but we are called to be faithful to the one who was faithful to us. And when you live a life worthy of the One who gave it all for you, when you stand before him in heaven one day, Jesus will say to you,

“Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21).

When you serve every single week, working behind the scenes, maybe serving in children’s ministry, and not many people know your name. Jesus knows your name and he honors your service. When you give and you give and you give and no one really knows the sacrifices you make, he knows the sacrifices you make, and he will say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

“Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine you did for me” (Matthew 25:40).

I notice, I saw it, your sacrifices mattered. Your faithfulness makes a difference. When you tithe year after year after year and you wonder if it’s making a difference. It is honoring God and it is making a difference.

Today, if you will give the pieces and fragments of your little self over to God, he is going to bless you, and stretch you, and multiply you like you have never been blessed before. And so, would you trust him who richly provides with your not enough? Only then will we have more, will we do more, and will we give more, and in that we will honor God as we find the life that is truly life.

The temptation is to try to find satisfaction in things of the world because we are prideful, we are sinners, and we love our idols. But I declare to you today that Jesus is the answer, he was a solution before the problem ever came, the answer before the question was asked. And so, you didn’t understand it, it didn’t make sense, it didn’t fit into your plan, and you may be broken, bruised, and confused, but if you’re listening and don’t personally know Jesus, he wants you to give your life to him.

And he’s not asking you for anything more than he has already done for you, because he gave his life for you. The Bible tells us that God sent his son Jesus who was perfect in every way to become sin for us on the cross. In other words, he died in our place, as our substitute, and on the third day God raised him from the dead, defeating death, hell, and the grave.

Now, because of Jesus we have access to the blessings of God, and the forgiveness of God, all because of the mercy and grace of Jesus, by calling on the name of Jesus. You see, in the mighty name of Jesus, God will hear your prayers, he will forgive your sins, and you will be made completely brand-new by the grace of Jesus. If you’re listening to me today, would you turn from your sins and call on the name of Jesus?

Right now, make that decision to give your life to Jesus, offering yourself as a gift, wanting less of what doesn’t matter and more of what does. Those of you who say, “Yes, Jesus, I surrender, I give you my life.” If that is your prayer, would you lift up your hand right now, lift your hand to heaven as an act of faith. And say, “Yes, Jesus, I turn from my sins and I give you my life. I give you my struggles, my weaknesses, my vulnerability, I give it all to you. You are my King and I worship you with these gifts.”

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January 14, 2024

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*Graphics, notes, and commentary from LifeChurch, Ministry Pass, PC Study Bible, Preaching Library, and Sermon Central. Scripture from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.*