

July 25, 2021

Ephesians 3:14-21; John 6:1-21

“More Than Enough”

Ephesians 3:14-21 Common English Bible

14 This is why I kneel before the Father. 15 Every ethnic group in heaven or on earth is recognized by him. 16 I ask that he will strengthen you in your inner selves from the riches of his glory through the Spirit. 17 I ask that Christ will live in your hearts through faith. As a result of having strong roots in love, 18 I ask that you'll have the power to grasp love's width and length, height and depth, together with all believers. 19 I ask that you'll know the love of Christ that is beyond knowledge so that you will be filled entirely with the fullness of God.

20 Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by his power at work within us; 21 glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus for all generations, forever and always. Amen.

John 6:1-21 Common English Bible

6 After this Jesus went across the Galilee Sea (that is, the Tiberias Sea). 2 A large crowd followed him, because they had seen the miraculous signs he had done among the sick. 3 Jesus went up a mountain and sat there with his disciples. 4 It was nearly time for Passover, the Jewish festival. 5 Jesus looked up and saw the large crowd coming toward him. He asked Philip, “Where will we buy food to feed these people?” 6 Jesus said this to test him, for he already knew what he was going to do.

7 Philip replied, “More than a half year's salary worth of food wouldn't be enough for each person to have even a little bit.”

8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said, 9 “A youth here has five barley loaves and two fish. But what good is that for a crowd like this?”

10 Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” There was plenty of grass there. They sat down, about five thousand of them. 11 Then Jesus took the bread. When he had given thanks, he distributed it to those who were

sitting there. He did the same with the fish, each getting as much as they wanted. 12 When they had plenty to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather up the leftover pieces, so that nothing will be wasted." 13 So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves that had been left over by those who had eaten.

14 When the people saw that he had done a miraculous sign, they said, "This is truly the prophet who is coming into the world." 15 Jesus understood that they were about to come and force him to be their king, so he took refuge again, alone on a mountain.

16 When evening came, Jesus' disciples went down to the lake. 17 They got into a boat and were crossing the lake to Capernaum. It was already getting dark and Jesus hadn't come to them yet. 18 The water was getting rough because a strong wind was blowing. 19 When the wind had driven them out for about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the water. He was approaching the boat and they were afraid. 20 He said to them, "I Am. Don't be afraid." 21 Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and just then the boat reached the land where they had been heading.

Farmer Joe responded, "Well. I'll tell you what happened. I had just loaded my favorite donkey Bessie into the... "I didn't ask for any details," the lawyer interrupted, "just answer the question. Did you not say, at the scene of the accident, 'I'm fine!'". Farmer Joe said, "Well, I had just got Bessie into the trailer and I was driving down the road..." The lawyer interrupted again and said, "Judge, I am trying to establish the fact that, at the scene of the accident, this man told the Police officer on the scene that he was fine. Now several weeks after the accident he is trying to sue my client. I believe he is a fraud. Please tell him to simply answer the question."

By this time the Judge was fairly interested in Farmer Joe's answer and said to the lawyer, "I'd like to hear what he has to say." Joe thanked the Judge and proceeded, "Well, as I was saying, I had just loaded Bessie into the trailer and was driving her down the motorway when this huge semi-truck and trailer ran the stop sign and smacked my truck right in the side.

I was thrown into one ditch and Bessie was thrown into the other. I was hurting real bad and didn't want to move. However, I could hear ol' Bessie moaning and groaning. I knew she was in terrible shape just by her groans. Shortly after the accident a Policeman came on the scene. He could hear Bessie moaning and groaning so he went over to her. After he looked at her he took out his gun and shot her between the eyes. Then the officer came across the road with his gun in his hand and looked at me."

He said, "Your donkey was in such bad shape I had to shoot her. How are you feeling?"

So...did you hear the joke about the statistician? Probably!!

Do you know why you should never talk to someone named Pi? Because he will just go on and on...

Do numbers mean much to you? For instance, does something costing \$1.99 seem significantly better than something that cost \$2.00? You ever wonder why gas stations always go with .99 cent prices...why not just go with even #'s?

For me...when I look at my bike computer or my Apple Watch as I near home and realize it is 4.49 miles...you better believe I'll ride past my house to get it over the 4.5 mark and according to research published in the Journal of Economic Psychology, many of us are gas pump ninjas. Psychologists analyzed over a thousand self-pumped gas purchases at a convenience store in upstate New York. And they found that we love pumping gas to the nearest whole number.

Almost 60% of purchase values ended in .00 (zero cents). Another 7% ended in .01, which may be due to not being able to stop the pump in time to hit double zeroes.

Round numbers such as 50 offer more than precisely measured information. According to The Washington Post, such figures are often full

of emotion. Research has found that, “ We love round numbers so much that we often regulate our behavior to achieve them. Like those who wear fitness trackers, professional baseball players and high school SAT takers also exert more effort when their performance falls just short of a round number.”

A baseball player with a batting average of .298 is going to work extra hard so that he can hit .300, just like the high school student who is determined to get a 1200 on the SAT. Which by the way...I have absolutely NO idea what my SAT scores were anymore but I'm sure they were not high enough to get a lot of attention...but they did get me in college, so I was happy!

It turns out round numbers are appealing to most of us and they seem to say something about the quality of whatever it is that is being measured!

All of which brings us to Jesus and the feeding of the 5,000. Notice that Jesus did not feed 4,999 people on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. No, according to John, the crowd was “about five thousand in all” (6:10).

This is the only miracle that appears in all four gospels, so you know that it is critically important. But even so, the exact number of diners is a little fuzzy. Matthew says that, “ Those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children” (14:21). The total number of people could easily have been double or triple the number of men ... 10,000 or even 15,000. Both of which are also nice, round numbers.

But even though the exact number who ate the loaves and the fishes is uncertain, all of the gospels make clear that this miracle is the feeding of the 5,000. This round number signals quality, not a cut-rate discount. The feeding of the 5,000 shows the abundance of God's care for us, and God's desire to give us nothing less than the bread of life.¹

¹ <https://www.homileticsonline.com/members/dashboard>

One of the interesting facets of John's version of this story is how Jesus is testing Philip and the other disciples about how their faith is progressing. Jesus asks Philip, "Where will we buy food to feed these people?" And of course the answer is one of having faith in what Jesus can do but instead Philip answers kind of like I would and often do when put in a place of needing faith in something other than that which is tangible. Philip says, "More than a half year's salary worth of food wouldn't be enough for each person to have even a little bit."

If Jesus had been a teenager right then I think he would have rolled his eyes! At least that is the response I get when I am talking to teenagers with whom I am acquainted and I suggest something that seems ridiculous. To all of this, Andrew seems to be trying to calm things or at least to be offering an alternative possibility or maybe to show Jesus he is at least listening to him even if he doesn't think it will really work and he says, "A youth here has five barley loaves and two fish. But what good is that for a crowd like this?"

So, you can even hear in his reporting of the youth that it seems silly or preposterous to him that this would make even a dent in the need of those 5000 folks. I mean what on earth can you expect from a child's willingness to offer 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish when you have 5000 people to feed?

You know the rest of the story of course. There was more than enough! Those five loaves and two small fish...offered by a small boy are more than enough. They feed the 5000 till they are all full and in addition they have 12 baskets of leftovers! So, how on earth can 5 small loaves and 2 small fish offered by a small boy be enough to feed 5000 people and have 12 baskets of leftovers? The answer is...because it was Jesus! Jesus though he is just ONE is more than enough for all. The reason there were 12 baskets leftover is to symbolize that it was more than enough for all the tribes of Israel...you see...there were 12 tribes!

So...Jesus takes the 5 small loaves and the two small fish offered by the small boy and feeds over 5000 people and feeds them so well they are stuffed...and there are 12 baskets of leftovers! Jesus takes the small and makes it so it is more than enough. Jesus, it seems, does this all the time. He takes what we can offer and allows that it is more than enough.

I suppose one could postulate that it is also the attitude of the boy that is important here. Even though John doesn't state exactly what the boy said or how he said it, one can assume that the boy might not have been too excited to offer all he had to others. I mean he may have been thinking, "But if I offer all of this to Andrew, will I actually get to eat any of it?"

And yet...when the food is faithfully offered, and when it is blessed by Jesus, which he does in all four of the gospels, it is more than enough!

A few years ago I was serving a church that needed a new boiler and a new roof and some other things. When they got the estimates from the suppliers and contractors, they were about \$30,000.00 short on the funds they would need. Now that church had an amazing man, one of the finest gentlemen with whom I have ever had the pleasure of working. He and his wife were beyond generous and I think it is accurate to say that if they had left that church then that church would have been in dire shape. He was also the chair of the finance committee because he was one of the finest businessmen in that area. But he also was a very pragmatic fellow. He believed in the #'s. If you were \$30,000.00 short you were not able to do it, simple as that. (Any of you able to relate to such logic?) I bet you are!

Well, at the finance meeting or the Administrative Council meeting someone had the audacity to say, "Look, we need this done and if we have faith that God will provide we should get out of the boat and walk on the water...we should have faith that God will provide what we need...I move we go ahead and sign the contracts and hire the folks necessary to do the work." And the motion passed. The businessman did NOT vote in

favor of course. And at the next month's meeting we were running about, you guessed it, \$30,000.00 short of where we needed to be to pay for everything. And the businessman, not wanting to rub it in, still said, "I told you we should not have done this! From now on I will never allow us to do anything if we don't have the money!"

But the folks...at least some of them...who had voted to do the work were unmoved. And then just a few days later...in our church mail, was a letter from a lawyer who practiced law a long way away. He told us how he represented a recently deceased fellow who had once lived in our community and who had attended our church for a while. He was evidently confirmed in our church, accepted the Lord in our church, and then with his folks moved away before he graduated high school. He never returned and I don't think there was anyone who actually remembered him at all, because it had been so many years. Anyway, upon his death, he had his lawyer send our church a check. And in that letter the check was sitting, all signed and ready to be deposited. Anyone want to guess as to how much that check was written for? It was not \$30,000.00...it was \$35,000.00! We had \$5000.00 left over after we got that check. And I will always remember what the businessman said at our next meeting...and this just cemented my belief that he was truly a fine gentleman. He said, "I'll admit it...not only was I wrong...but I simply did not have enough faith!"

Our church has not done a stewardship drive for the entire time we have been here. So, for 15 years, we have simply trusted in the Lord to provide. There is absolutely NOTHING wrong with doing a stewardship drive...they can often be a method of increasing a person or a family's faith...so we may be doing them again. But the only way any of this works...any of our lives in faith work...***is if we actually believe that with Jesus WE HAVE MORE THAN ENOUGH!*** If all we ever believe is what we can see and touch...then we are poor indeed!

Jesus took what was offered in faith, blessed it, and when he was done it was more than enough to take care of all the needs and there were even leftovers. This story, this miracle shows that with Jesus...the entire nation of Israel...all 12 tribes, everyone...has what they need for their salvation through Jesus because you see...with Jesus there is MORE THAN ENOUGH...always!

Maybe tell my motorcycle story? Maybe tell of Adam Hamilton saying, "What we do with our money tells us something about the condition of our Heart!" Be GRATEFUL for what we have! CARS...WE ARE MADE FOR GENEROSITY...It is meant to be both the shape of our heart and the way that we live!!

One caution, however, is pointed out as well in John. Some of the folks decided that Jesus should be their king...not just their savior. And if you read the story or listened to it well enough you found out he was NOT interested in that duty at all. You see, Jesus wants us to know we have what we need...we have more than enough to handle our needs...if we remember exactly WHO he is and who he is NOT. When we face those uncertain times...when the sustenance seems scarce, when the wind and waves seem overwhelming...we need to listen to the ONE who says, I AM...and know that with our "I AM" we always have more than enough to see us through! Amen.