When A Little Becomes A Lot

John 6:5-9

5 When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?
6 And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.
7 Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.
8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, saith unto him,
9 There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?

When I was traveling each year to Taiwan for a missions trip,

• I invested myself in learning to speak Chinese.
  o One of my goals was to be able to get around on the street.
• I didn’t have to be fluent
  o but I did want to be able to get by
    • if I found myself stranded
    • on the streets in a city
    • where everyone spoke Mandarin Chinese.
• So I hired a tutor, a retired Air Force translator,
  o who was fluent in Chinese
    • and I met with him each week to study the language.
• That diligence paid off when,
  o on our very first trip to Taiwan,
    • we found ourselves stranded at the airport.
• The missionary was supposed to meet us at the airport
  o and give us a ride to our hotel
    • but he never showed up.
• There we were,
  o we had been traveling for over 30 hours,
    • we were exhausted,
      • and we were in the middle of a foreign country
        o surrounded by people
        o who only spoke Chinese.
• After a few minutes of wandering about aimlessly
  o trying to figure out what to do next
    • I realized that this was exactly
      • what I had been studying for.
• So, emboldened by the courage of youthful ignorance,
  o I changed some American money into Taiwan dollars
    • and hailed a taxi.
• It was the first true test of my language skills
  o and I am thankful to say that I passed.
• We made it to the hotel,
  o only to discover that the missionary,
    ▪ who had realized by this time
      • that he was late to pick us up,
    ▪ had been to the airport,
      • discovered us gone
        o and was frantically trying to locate us.
• In the end we were all relieved
  o that my language skills had been good enough
    ▪ to get my wife and I to where we needed to be.

When I returned home, I did so with an increased desire
• to become more proficient in the language.
  o My next goal was to be able to buy and sell,
    ▪ to go shopping on the streets around the hotel
      • and in the incredible night markets
        o without the need of a translator.
• So I set about the new task with urgency.
  o One of the key phrases I learned,
    ▪ during that time, was this:
      • Wǒ de qián bùgòu.
  o It literally means,
    ▪ “My money is not enough.”
• That was my escape hatch,
  o the way that I could back out of a deal
    ▪ that I wasn’t interested in
      • or couldn’t afford.
        o My money is not enough.
• Have you ever felt like that?
  o Have you ever been in the place
    ▪ where you wanted to throw your hands in the air
      • and say: Wǒ de qián bùgòu.
        o My money is not enough!
  o And its not always the money that is not enough.
    ▪ My time is not enough.
    ▪ My supplies are not enough.
    ▪ I just don’t have enough left in me.
      • Sometimes we simply don’t have enough
        o of whatever it is that we need.

We’ve all been in that place.
• The place where you size up the situation
  o and determine that even if we give it our best,
    ▪ our best isn’t going to be enough.
    • We are inadequate.
• Our resources are insufficient.
  ▪ Whatever we do it will not be enough.
  ▪ Whatever we have it will certainly fall far short.

• That was exactly how the disciples felt
  o when Jesus asked them
    ▪ a very pointed question in John 6:5:
      ▪ How are we going to buy bread so that this great company of people might eat?

• There they stand,
  o twelve men who have forsaken all
    ▪ and followed Jesus.

• Their resources are not all that much.
  o They don't have wealth and riches and worldly goods.

• They follow the one of whom it was said
  o that the foxes have dens
    ▪ and the birds have nests
      ▪ but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.

• They didn't even have a home,
  o a nice bed to sleep in at night,
    ▪ much less, the resources to feed
      ▪ 5,000 men plus women and children.

That day they looked across the vast crowd
• that had come to hear Jesus teach and preach
  o and the needs were greater than their resources.

• The vast sea of humanity before them
  o represented a problem that was bigger
    ▪ than their best solution.

• Nothing in the realm of their abilities or provisions
  o would ever be able to meet the needs
    ▪ of that great multitude.

• But John lets us know from the very beginning
  o that Jesus asked the question
    ▪ with an ulterior motive in mind.

• When he asked them how they were going to
  o buy bread to feed the multitude,
    ▪ he wasn't asking the question
      ▪ for his own benefit.
  o He already knew
    ▪ what he was going to do.
  o The question was never about a practical answer.
    ▪ The question was designed to amplify
      ▪ that sense of insufficiency,
      ▪ that feeling of inadequacy.
  o The disciples needed to learn a couple of lessons.
First of all they needed to learn
- that they wouldn’t always have all the answers.
  - Their resources would not always be enough.
- These men are about to turn the world upside down
  - but that great revival will not come
    - without opposition and heartache.
  - They are going to have to fight hell
    - every step of the way
      - and there will be moments
        - when their insufficiencies will tower over them,
    - moments when they will want
      - to throw their hands in the air and say:
        - Wǒ de qián bùgòu.
          - I don’t have enough!
          - I don’t have all of the answers.
          - I don’t know what to do next.
          - I don’t know how we get from here to there.
            - What I have is not enough!

Jesus understood something.
- That sense of human inadequacy
  - is often the beginning of Divine strength.
- I wish it wasn’t so,
  - I wish we had more faith,
    - but the truth is that, all too often,
      - it is not until we reach the end of our rope,
        - the limit of our abilities,
        - the point of our insufficiency,
          - that we look to God for divine help.
  - We are often like the lady with the issue of blood.
    - We wait until we have spent all of our living
      - and we have little or nothing left
        - before we ever turn to Jesus.
- It is our desperation,
  - our inadequacy
    - that drives us into the realm
      - of a Divine miracle.
- When our back is against the wall
  - and we’ve run out of all of our resources,
    - then the stage is set
      - for God to do the miraculous.

The second thing that the disciples needed to learn
Notes by Pastor Tony McCall

The Pentecostals of Lake City

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• was the Jesus would always be more than enough.
  o Once they sized up the problem
    ▪ and realized that they were insufficient to meet the need,
      • they needed to learn
      • that Jesus was always going to be
        o more than enough to meet the need.
    ▪ There is no problem too big for him.
      • There is no obstacle that he cannot overcome,
        o no need that he cannot meet.
    ▪ There is no impossibility
      • that is outside the realm of his miracle working power.
  • We may be insufficient,
    o our money may not be enough,
      ▪ our resources may fall short
        • but he is all-sufficient,
          o he is more than able.
    o That is a lesson that the disciples needed to learn.

The disciples, however, haven’t realized yet that this is an object lesson.

• They don’t know that the outcome was predetermined.
  o They don’t understand, yet,
    ▪ that Jesus is setting them up for a miracle.
• They only see the insurmountable problem
  o and the hauntingly huge deficit
    ▪ between their resources
      • and the great need that is set before them.
• Phillip immediately sets out to provide a real answer.
  o His mental computer begins to work like a cash register,
    ▪ and all he can think about
      • is the huge sum of money
        o that would be needed to provide
          ▪ even a meager morsel of bread
          ▪ to each person.
      o He even gets so far as to arrive at a figure:
        ▪ It will take 200 pennies worth of bread
          • just to get a small bite for each person.
        ▪ That answer identifies the enormity of the problem.

One denarius, or one penny, was a day’s pay for a common laborer.

• Two hundred denarii represents eight months’ wages.
  o That’s a substantial amount of money.
• But the crowd was so large
  o that even such a large sum of money
    ▪ would not buy enough bread to feed the multitude!
• Two hundred denarii
would buy roughly 4,800 loaves of barley.
  ▪ And loaf is a generous term
  ▪ because what we are really talking about here
    ○ is a small biscuit.
• There were 5,000 men plus women and children
  ○ and in Phillip’s wildest imagination,
    ▪ two hundred denarii is all he can come up with
    ▪ and those two hundred denarii still fall woefully short.
• The task was impossible.
  ○ Jesus has asked them to do something
    ▪ that they simply cannot do.
• I can just see the scene unfolding.
  ○ Peter and James and John,
    ▪ in their loud, brash, manner
    ▪ are all right in the middle of the scrum
      ○ trying to figure out how they can do
        ▪ what Jesus has asked them to do.
• While Phillip,
  ○ maybe with Matthew, the former tax collector,
    ▪ to back him up
    ▪ is dealing out the cold hard facts:
      ○ The task is impossible.
      ○ We simply don’t have the resources.
      ○ Wǒmen de qián bùgòu.
        ▪ Our money is not enough!

What I want you to realize, tonight,
• is that in the middle of all of that excitement,
  ○ one of the twelve disciples
    ▪ slipped away from the rest.
• Andrew is not prominent among the twelve.
  ○ He is just Peter’s little brother
    ▪ and while he and John were the first disciples of Jesus,
      ▪ Andrew’s role in the group is very understated in
        scripture.
• We just don’t see a whole lot out of him.
  ○ He doesn’t preach earth-moving sermons.
    ▪ He doesn’t write eloquent books.
      ▪ His name is only recorded
        ○ a bare handful of times in scripture
          ▪ and most of those are instances
            ▪ where all of the disciples are mentioned.
• He’s really not a big deal.
  ○ He’s just, Andrew,
    ▪ a humble ex-fisherman,
• a follower of Jesus Christ.
  o He's just the silent guy in the background,
    ▪ just one of the twelve.
  • He’s not a standout in any way.

And Andrew doesn't have any unique insight into the mind of Christ,
• he doesn’t know, any more than the others,
  o what is about to happen.
• But Andrew's perspective is a little different than the others.
  o While they are busy trying to figure it out,
    ▪ Andrew slips into the midst of that vast multitude
      • to see if he can find just a little something
        o that Jesus might can use.
• What sets Andrew apart
  o is not that he knew that Jesus was going to work a miracle,
    ▪ because he didn’t know that.
• What sets him apart
  o is that he knew that if he could just find
    ▪ a little something to work with
      • Jesus could do a whole lot
        o with just a little bit.
• So Andrew goes searching
  o for a little something that he can bring to Jesus.

While everyone was fretting about how
• they would ever be able to feed the hungry multitude
  o out of their inadequate resources.
• **Andrew was out in the crowd**
  o looking for something that God
    ▪ might be able to use for a miracle.
• When human reasoning failed.
  o When all of their resources came up short,
    ▪ when their money was not enough,
      • Andrew went looking
        o for just a little something
          ▪ that he could bring to Jesus.
• Somehow Andrew had the faith to tell himself
  o that if he could just find a little something,
    ▪ if he could just find a little food,
    • if he could just pull together a little offering,
      o Jesus could do a whole lot with just a little bit.
• I can just imagine Andrew,
  o beyond the point when a reasonable man would have given up.
    ▪ Beyond the point when any other man
      • would have thrown his hands in the air
and said, “What I have is not enough!”

- Andrew keeps pressing on.
  - He keeps telling himself
    - that he needs to find just a little offering,
      - just a little bit,
        - just in case Jesus is planning to work a miracle.
  - Let me find something for Jesus to work with.
    - Just in case this story isn’t going to be defined
      - by my inadequacies.
    - Just in case Jesus is planning
      - to work in spite of my insufficiencies.
    - Just in case a little offering
      - is all that he needs,
        - let me see if I can find just a little.

Somewhere in the back of that crowd,
- Andrew found a little boy with a little lunch.
- It was just 5 small barley loaves,
  - little more than biscuits,
    - and 2 small fish.
- The descriptive Greek word that John uses
  - leads us to believe that the fish
    - were small pickled fish, like sardines.
- It was the kind of thing that is used for a snack, not a meal.
- As matter of fact to say the 5 loaves and 2 fishes
  - were a lunch meal is really an overstatement.
    - It was more of a snack than a meal.
      - It was so little compared to the great need.
- But somewhere inside of Andrew,
  - his faith was stirred up.
    - It was just a little bit.
      - It was so little compared to the multitude.
        - It was so little among so many.
- But Andrew said, I’m going to take it to Jesus
  - and see what he can do with this little offering.
    - It is all that I have
      - and I know that its not much.
      - I know its not 200 pennies worth of bread.
      - I know that its not enough.
        - But it is all I have,
          - it is all that I can find,
            - it is all that I can scrape together,
              - and I’m going to give it all to Jesus.
- It is so little compared to so many,
  - but it is all that there is.
And faith compelled Andrew  
- to bring that little meager offering to Jesus.

- I’ve come to tell somebody in this place  
  - That Jesus can take a little and turn it into a lot!

We’ve all been in the place where our personal need was greater than our resources.  
- The place where the problem was greater  
  - than any solution we could come up with.
- We’ve each been to the end of our rope,  
  - in that desperate moment  
    - where everything that we do seems so inadequate,  
      - where all of our resources seem to be so little  
        - compared to the problems that we face  
        - and obstacles that we must overcome.
- I’ve come to this pulpit tonight with a simple question:  
  - What have you got that Jesus might could work with? I  
    - know it may seem inadequate.  
    - I know that you don’t have enough.  
    - I know that your resources are not equal to the task.
  - But that isn’t the question.  
    - The question is,  
      - can you find a little something  
        - that you can bring to the master?  
      - Can you find your equivalent of 5 loaves and 2 fishes  
        - that could be blessed by the master?
  - Do you have, within you, even the smallest of offerings?  
    - What can you bring to Jesus?
- What if God is getting ready to work a miracle?  
  - What if God is getting ready to do the impossible?  
    - What if your situation is about to be transformed by divine providence?  
      - What can you bring to Jesus for him to work with?

Sometimes we get fixated on the impossibility of our situation.  
- Sometimes we let our limitations  
  - and inadequacies define the situation.
- But I’ve come to this pulpit tonight to tell someone  
  - that the only thing that God is waiting for  
    - is for you to bring your offering to him.  
      - He doesn’t care how little it is.  
      - He doesn’t care how insignificant it is.  
      - He doesn’t care how inadequate it might be.
    - He only cares that you are willing to surrender it to him.  
      - All he is waiting for is for you to bring your offering to him.
Let me tell you when a little becomes a lot:

- When you give it to Jesus!
  - When you bring your insufficient supply to the master,
    - that’s when he multiplies it to meet the need.
    - That’s when a little becomes a lot!

God isn’t as concerned about what you don’t have as you might think.
- He isn’t as concerned about what you can’t do as you might think.
  - God is much more concerned with what you do have
    - and what you can do!
- You do have a little and you can bring it to Jesus.
  - And a little in His hands
    - becomes more than we could ever think or imagine.
- In Phillip’s wildest dreams,
  - there was never going to be enough food
    - to feed the multitude,
      - much less, twelve basketfuls left over!
- He couldn’t even conceive of a realistic scenario
  - where everyone there got even a single bite.
    - But when Jesus got done
      - with the meager little offering
      - that Andrew found for him,
        - there were 12 baskets filled
        - with just the leftovers!

I’ve really only got one question for you tonight:
- What little thing is it in your life
  - that the master could use to meet your need?
    - What is your offering?
- For some it’s going to be something as simple as your testimony.
  - You don’t think it’s much.
  - You don’t think you have a whole lot to offer.
    - Compared to the great need,
      - your feeble words fall far, far, short.
  - But God is saying that, if you will just bring him your little offering,
    - he can make it into more than enough.
  - If you will just open up your mouth,
    - he will fill it with the right words to say.
      - It doesn’t take a whole lot.
        - All he’s interested in is the little bit that you do have.

Some of you may feel like there isn’t much left of your life.
- You may feel empty and broken and destitute.
o But listen to this preacher tonight.
  ▪ God doesn’t need much to work with.
    • If you will give him what you have,
      o he will make it into more than enough!

Some of you have labored for long months in need of a financial breakthrough.
  • I’m not going to preach on your money, but listen to me.
    o If you will give God something to work with,
      ▪ you will be amazed at what he can do
        • with the little that you give!
      ▪ Give, the scripture says,
        • and it shall be given unto you
          o pressed down, shaken together
            ▪ and running over.
    • But first you have to give.
      o First you have to bring your meager offering to God.

Close

I have always found it interesting
  • that, after the prophet Elijah, under the anointing of God,
    o prophesied to the wicked King Ahab
      ▪ that great drought and famine would come upon the land
        • as a judgment from God,
    o the Lord did not remove Elijah from the land
      ▪ but instead chose to provide for him,
        • in the midst of those trying times,
          o by divine miracles.
  • For a span of time,
    o ravens brought Elijah bread and meat to eat
      ▪ as he dwelt beside a brook.
  • However, over time,
    o the brook ran dry
      ▪ and God directed Elijah
        • to the home of a little widow lady
          o that God planned to use to sustain him.

When Elijah came to the widow woman’s town
  • he immediately asked her to give him a little water to drink
    o and a little bread to eat.
  • But the poor widow woman didn’t have enough bread
    o to feed herself and her son,
      ▪ much less, the prophet too.
  • So she told him, my resources are not enough.
I don’t even have enough meal for two cakes.
  • I have just a handful of meal
    • and just a little oil
      o and I’m about to bake my last cake
        • then the boy and I are going to starve to death.
  • I’m sorry preacher,
    o I’d love to help you out,
      • I believe in what you are doing and all,
        • but I just don’t have enough.
          o I only have a little
            • and I’m about to consume that.

Elijah wasn’t dismayed by her tragic report,
  • he knew that the same God who had been using ravens to feed him
    o was about to make a miraculous provision for this little lady
      • if she would only give her little bit of meal and oil to the Lord.
  • So he told her “Fear not.
    o Make me a little cake first and bring it to me.
      • Then go and make a cake for you and your son.
    o For thus saith the Lord God of Israel,
      • The barrel of meal shall not waste,
        • neither shall the cruse of oil fail,
          • until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.”

Do you know what happened next?
  • She gave her little offering to God.
    o And he turned a little into a whole lot!
      • It was never about how little meal she had,
        • it was about whether or not she would be willing
          o to let God be the Lord over her little.
  • Really and honestly, offerings are about lordship.
    o God doesn’t need your little offering
      • nearly as bad as you need to give it to him.
    o Because it’s really about establishing who the Lord is in your life.
  • That little widow lady decided real fast
    o that, though she may die in the effort,
      • he was going to let God be the Lord
        • over her little meal barrel.
  • I believe that every time she went to make a cake,
    o her cup scraped the bottom of the meal barrel.
  • I believe that every time she went to make a cake
    o Her cruse of oil seemed to be almost empty.
  • But God was more than able
    o to multiply her little bit
to make it a whole lot more
  • than she ever could have imagined.
    o The only thing that God required was that she give it to him first!

There is someone under the sound of my voice right now
  • that needs to abandon the sense of practicality
    o that is busy trying to add it all up
      ▪ and figure out how it will all work out
  • and instead allow the attitude of Andrew to come over you.
    o You need to go searching through your life
      ▪ and find the little thing that God wants you to give to him
        • so that he can make a little into a lot!

I truly believe that miracles of multiplication are going to happen in this place tonight.
  • I truly believe that someone is going to surrender their little to God
    o and he’s going to multiply it to meet your need!
      ▪ How about it?
      ▪ What do you have that you can bring to Jesus?
      ▪ What is your offering?