

Feeding of the 5000

Service: 2nd August 2020 All Around the Altar

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Introduction:

Good morning. I hope you are feeling really blessed by our generous God this morning.

You see our story today shows how whatever we give to God he gives us more....We just can't out give God.

Let me demonstrate....

I have a piece of paper with 4 corners – everyone happy – 4 corners?

Say if we give God just one of our corners...

We're left with 3 corners, right?!

Let's count the corners...1,2,3,4,5....we give God one of our 4 corners and we're left with...5 – that's more than we started with!

OK I'm going to give God one more of my little corners.... You may think if you give God 2 of your 4 corners you would only have 2 left....but no you're left with 1,2,3,4,5,6...6 corners.

You just cannot out give God.

I could keep going – if you give God all 4 of your corners – you should have nothing left....but hey how many corners have you got....that's right – 8 corners..

Ok, if you think that's pretty cool...let me show you another one.

I have just a little bit of powder in my hand...it's special powder – and maybe just a bit magic.

I'm going to put that powder in the water...I wonder what will happen?

Do you think it will dissolve and just disappear into the water? This amount of powder can't possibly make a lot of difference to that large glass of water can it?

Let's see....(experiment using sodium polyacrylate...makes a large amount of false snow!)

Wow...it only takes a really small amount of insignificant looking powder to do something amazing....

We're going to have our bible reading now – have you guessed what our story for today is?

Dramatized reading of John 6:1-13

Wow what a great story!

Do you know that story is found in every single gospel in the Bible?

Do you know how many Gospels there are?

4, that's right and their name are?

That's right, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

The fact that this story is in all of the gospels, means it is very important.

And this story is full of numbers...

5,000 hungry people, well actually that was 5000 hungry men there would have been maybe twice as many if you include the women and the children...

So say, 10,000 people

At least 6 months' wages,

5 loaves,

2 fish,

12 baskets

Lots of numbers. Are you good at maths? Can you do big sums in your head? Or maybe like me, you need to use pen and paper or a calculator.

Well in today's story, however good we are at maths or however well we can add up or use a calculator, Jesus is showing us how when we're thinking about God, our calculators are not much good. We need to put down our calculators and look at God's amazing calculator instead.

You would think that the people in the story would be good at maths – because you see the great mathematician Pythagoras had lived only a short boat ride away from Ephesus. And maybe they were good at maths, but I think they were just about to get a lesson in God's way of doing sums.

Let's see who fares the best in this story...do you remember our three characters...there was the disciple Philip, the disciple Andrew, both of whom had been followers of Jesus for a little while and then there was the young child.

In John's gospel, he remembers how Jesus asked Philip to suggest a plan to feed the five thousand Jesus already knew what he was going to do but he said this to test Philip to see if Philip would stop and think about all the other miracles he had seen Jesus do and believe in a different way of tackling seemingly impossible situations.

But no, Phillip was still thinking with his human calculator...And fails the test by protesting that the numbers just don't add up: it would cost 200 denarii, the equivalent of maybe up to eight months' wages, for each person to be given even just a mouthful.

I'm actually quite impressed with Phillips attempt at maths, aren't you? You can just see him working out how much an average meal would cost and multiplying it by the number of people...pretty impressive mathematical skills....but not what was needed for this moment.

Another disciple, Andrew fares a little better when he brings a boy to Jesus with a packed lunch of five loaves and two fish, but yet again he was using his own calculator rather than God's. He even emphasises that they are SMALL fish and that the bread was made of inferior barley instead of wheat. He then blows it completely by saying... "How far will they go among so many?" Jesus, you cannot be serious!

The one who did pass the test is, yes you've got it, was the boy himself. I can't believe that no one else – absolutely no one else had any food with them that day. Did everyone else set off that morning with nothing? We don't know, but what we do know is only the young child offered anything to Jesus.

Only the young boy, and he was the only one who didn't need a miracle – he had enough food for himselfand yet he chose to give it to the great multiplier.... he handed over his lunchbox to Jesus as an expression of his faith in God's calculator.

And as we know, Jesus multiplies the boy's five loaves and two fish to feed way over five thousand hungry mouths, not just a mouthful each but a hearty supper for all –

More than that there was loads left over.

God doesn't just give enough.... He gives abundantly.
You really cannot out give God!

The symbolism of supplying bread and the 12 baskets left over would not have been lost on the crowd... They would have remembered Moses in the desert and God supplying manna for them to eat and the 12 tribes of Israel going forward into the promised land... Yet there was one greater than Moses here multiplying loaves and fishes.

The crowd would have remembered Elijah and the widow of Zarephath. The widow used up her last flour and oil to make Elijah some bread, food that that was to be the last meal for herself and her son. But she trusted what Elijah said and God refilled her jars – indeed, kept refilling her jars which never ran out of flour or oil during the time of famine. Yet there was one greater than Elijah here multiplying the loaves and the fishes.

There was someone in front of them that was greater than the great names in the Old Testament, Names that symbolised both the law and the prophet's.

This is Jesus, this is God.

If we want to know who Jesus really is, then we need to look and see what he is able to do with even the tiny offerings we can bring to him...

Do you trust Jesus with whatever you offer him? Do you believe that even if we offer a tiny corner of our lives, he will give us more back? If we offer even just a tiny amount of ourselves, God can multiply it.

Do you believe he can use small fish and inferior barley bread for his glory?

Do you believe he can use what you may consider meagre talents and multiply them?

I thank God for all those who have offered their time, money and compassion during this time of the pandemic – believe that God will bless you back even more.

I thank God for all those who have contributed to our online services over the last 4 months – many have had to grapple with new and often tricky technology, and I thank God for our puppets – offering their talents to God.

Because of your contributions, many more people have been reached with the Gospel.

I thank God for those who took the risk of singing in The Blessing.

Know that God will multiply your offering.

The deadline was the 27th July but as long as you get it to me by Thursday 6th August – they can still be included. It's scary putting yourself out there.

Remember the little boy could have kept his lunch to himself – it wasn't the best lunch after all, and see the amazing result of his offering.

When we get back together in church, we will need more welcomers, more sides people, more stewards to keep us safe. We're going to need a few people to clean door handles and surfaces.

And to grow God's kingdom, we need more finances, times are hard, the stress of this pandemic has taken its toll and yet Jesus says it is more blessed to give than receive.

Can you trust in Jesus? Can we trust the Lord to defy numbers when we hit problems that in human terms just don't add up?

Jesus who is more powerful than death itself came to show us God's calculator.

God is the God of miracles...but there's one more thing....

At the beginning of this story, the disciples were tired and had tried to get away with Jesus for a bit of rest and relaxation, a bit of down time – they'd been really busy and they needed to stop. They were exhausted, and probably getting a bit tetchy...who here can get a bit tetchy, a bit irritable when you're tired? I certainly can, but Jesus, who after all, could have just arranged for a bread to come down from the sky...he'd done that before....Jesus wanted to involve the disciples. He involved Philip and Andrew and he wants us to be involved to.

You see, Jesus was teaching his disciples to make Kingdom ministry their daily lifestyle instead of treating it like an occasional adventure. He could see they were tired and hungry

and frustrated and increasingly impatient, yet he intentionally brings the disciples right into the heart of his miracle. He gets them to get the people to sit down in groups of 50, he gets them to hand round the food and then collect up the left overs and the disciples are astonished. Wouldn't it have been amazing to be a waiter in one of the most famous meals in history and all of a sudden, the disciples weren't tired anymore. They returned with 12 baskets of bread... they got more food for themselves by serving Jesus and others first.

If we grasp that the gospel is a command to step out of our own lives and into Jesus' story, then we will be truly satisfied.

Jesus stepped into our world in order to lay down his life for us and the Gospel invites us to step into his story and lay down our lives for him and other people.

So, actually, this story is not about giving just a little corner of our lives. It's absolutely not about just giving a few grains of ourselves. It's not about just giving Jesus our lunch.... It's about trusting Jesus with our whole lives.... That little boy was prepared to go hungry; he was prepared to give Jesus everything he had. Yes, it's about giving our whole selves to Jesus and that's an extremely radical way of living.

But we are called to act like that little boy and put our faith in Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine. And remember, we cannot out give God.

Let's pray.

Father, thank you that when I offer you a corner of my life you bless me abundantly. Help me give more, more of my time, my talents, my stuff, my money, my life, trusting that you will multiply it in your kingdom economy and that it will bring those around us blessing and bring glory to your name. In the name of Jesus. Amen