

Little is Much

Mark 6:30 – 44

...transformed by the message and miracles of the Son of God...

Proposition: In our service of compassion, the Lord Jesus will give His sufficiency in exchange for our inadequacy.

Application: The Lord is calling you to do the impossible. Give Him your meagre resources. Let Him use you to be a blessing to many.

One day, a mother was serving her family leftovers. She gave the one portion of spaghetti to her 6-year-old son. But her 8-year-old son also wanted some. The fussing started. After a number of failed attempts to end the dispute, the dad opted for a Biblical approach. Hoping to convince his 6-year-old son to share his portion, he said to his son, “*What would Jesus do in this situation?*” The boy promptly answered, “*Oh dad, He would just make more!*” Little can lead to much when God is in it. This morning, we are looking at Mark 6:30 – 44, the miracle of feeding over 5000 people. This miracle and the miracle of the resurrection are the only miracles recorded in all four Gospels.

The main thought from this passage is this: While on mission for the Lord Jesus He will give His sufficiency in exchange for our inadequacy. If we give Him the little we have, He will give more in return.

Some Background: The disciples had been sent on a mission’s trip. Before sending them off two-by-two, Jesus gave His disciples authority to proclaim the Gospel, heal the sick, and cast out demons. While the disciples were on mission, John the Baptist had been executed. We will talk about that tragic event next Sunday. The disciples returned from their mission and gathered to retreat with the Lord. It was a time of joy because of their success in mission but it was also a time of sorrow because of the death of John the Baptist. The disciples were weary and needed some rest. So, Jesus gathered them to Himself.

I. Our Inadequacy (6:30 – 40)

Inadequate Rest (6:30 – 34): Jesus said to His disciples, “*Come away with Me and get some rest.*” He did not say, “*come away with Me and 15 000 other people and rest.*” The time it took to cross the lake was the only alone time they could get (likely a 2- or 3-hour boat ride). When they got to the other side His disciples may have thought “*Look at all these people! Let’s turn back and spend more time on the lake?*” They saw the crowd as a burden. Jesus saw the same crowd and had compassion. This reminds me of a time when I was a high school Math/Science teacher. An hour before the day began, I would go to my classroom and spend time with the

Lord, pray through my day and for my students. Near the end of the hour, I could hear the crowd of students entering the hallways and think to myself “*I’m not ready for this!*” This thought was more frequent through the months of May and June. If it was a PD Day when I could just chill most of the day and listen to others speak that would be great. That would be restful. In a sense the disciples had a PD Day. For most of the day the disciples sat and listened. They rested from their labours while Jesus taught. Only at the end of the day did they have to do work.

To have the mental and physical strength to meet a vast number of needs we need to spend quality time with the Lord, seeking Him in prayer hearing from Him through His Word, if not we might burn out.

Inadequate Knowledge (6:35, 36): We can easily get bogged down by the vast needs of others and hope the problem goes away. This event shows a lack of resources to meet the needs of the crowd. If someone did a survey of the needs that were present in this crowd of about 15 000 people (5000 men, plus women and children), they would find some had health problems and most had hunger issues. If this were 2023, based on the survey results we would set up medical ministry and a food bank. But what does Jesus focus on? His compassion for the people moved Him in two directions: *His compassion moved Him to minister to their spiritual needs first.* Jesus saw the crowd as *sheep without a shepherd.* It does not say He began to feed them or even heal them. It says He began to teach them. The Word of God always stands first. The foremost need *sheep* have is to be taught the Word of God. A good shepherd takes care of His sheep by giving them the Scriptures (Deut 8:3b).

Teaching is an act of compassion because it deals with the problem of *sheep without a shepherd.* A ministry of compassion begins with teaching the Word of God, but it does not end there. A ministry of compassion also involves meeting physical needs.

His compassion moved Him to meet their physical needs. A ministry of compassion includes both. And the order is crucial. I believe our most pressing need is to be taught the Word of God.

When we think of compassion ministry, we think of a ministry that meets physical needs – feeding the poor, housing the homeless, clothing the needy, but Jesus began His ministry of compassion by teaching the Word of God. There were likely over 15 000 people to feed. That is the size of Stony Plain.

Inadequate Resources (6:37, 38): To spend eight months wages to feed these people would be the like giving a homeless man a twoonie to buy food. What can you buy for 2 dollars in this day and age?

What is their answer? *Send them away.* Their reasoning may have gone as follow: “*We can’t do this! We only have five 5 loaves and two fish (the size of sardines). They are better off solving their own hunger problem.*” Can we blame the disciples? We would likely say the same thing. Our tendency is to look at what we have and if it’s not enough to meet the challenge we decide there is no way we can help. But here is the problem. By sending them away we are sending them away from Jesus. It’s OK if we don’t have enough resources to meet the challenge. It is not OK to walk away from the challenge without first bringing the matter before the Lord.

When faced with vast amount of needs our response might be to wish the needs go away. Jesus’ response is to meet the need.

II. His Sufficiency (6:39 – 44)

You give them something to eat (6:37): Jesus might give us an impossible task to carry out. If we leave the Lord Jesus out of our plans, we will come up short every time (Ps 78:19). God can prepare a table in the desert. He can provide more than enough when supplies are scarce! When the Lord is going to do something big, He often begins with an impossibility. The Lord Jesus may be calling you to an impossible task. He wants you to face your inadequacy so you will recognize His sufficiency.

Bring your meagre resources to Him: The Lord is not troubled by our meagre resources! God’s way of provision begins with what we already have. The need is met by giving our meagre resources to Him.

He multiplies the meagre resources (6:39 – 41): Without the Lord’s blessing, our meagre resources remain meagre. Through His blessing, the Lord multiplied the skimpy supply (Num 11:21 – 23). The Lord may ask you to do something for which you have no adequate resources. For every service of compassion, the Lord calls us to whether it be a ministry of teaching, or a ministry of meeting practical needs we must bring our meagre supply to the Lord. He will increase what we need to give. He will even prepare a table in the desert. The God of creation took nothing and made everything. This is the God whom we know, and this is the God Whom we serve.

He kept giving the bread He broke to the disciples: The increase of the skimpy supply occurred in the hands of the Lord, not in the hands of the disciples. The increase of our meagre resources takes place in the hands of the Lord Jesus not in our hands.

Distribute the multiplied resources to others: God’s method to meet needs is through people; through inadequate people like us. His method to meet needs is not only through inadequate people but also with inadequate resources. He is the source of blessing we are the merely the distributors of His blessing. We are instruments He is the source of blessing. Our ministry of

compassion is not to produce the blessing, but to distribute the blessing. When Jesus said, “*You give them something to eat.*” He did not mean they were to prepare the food as a chef. He meant they were to give the food as a waiter (Ps 67:7). May I provide a definition of blessing: *results in proportion to God’s abundance not in proportion to our efforts.*

His Abundance (6:42 – 44): Notice the Lord gave them far more than what they started with. He adds to our skimpy resources until every person we minister to has no more need for the resource we have to offer. After we have met the needs of others, we too will receive plenty (Matt 6:33). Jesus is the Bread of Life. The abundance of bread is a symbol of the abundant life He gives. Just as the crowd had to eat the bread for themselves, so we too must ingest the Bread of Life by ingesting the Word of Life. “*Man does not live by bread alone but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*” What impossible task is the Lord calling you to? What meagre resources do you have to offer Him? When placed in the hands of the Lord Jesus, God will make much out of your little.

Can the Lord furnish a table in the desert? Yes, He can! The God of Moses lives today. The Lord does His miracles with our cooperation. What does Parkland Baptist Church have to offer this community? We may think we have little to offer. The Lord is not hindered by our limitations! His way of meeting needs in this community begins by giving what we have to the Lord. You may be thinking, I have little compassion for people. Give the Lord the little compassion you have and He will increase it. You may be thinking I have no interest in getting involved in serving. Give the Lord the little interest you have, and He will increase it. You may be thinking I have no time to serve the Lord. Give Him the little time you have, and He will increase it. Maybe you lack energy. Give Him your energy. Maybe you feel you do not have enough experience; give Him the little experience you have. *He will multiply the meagre resources we have when we give them to Him!* Jesus calls us to do the impossible. With His call He supplies us with His authority to proclaim the Gospel and to meet the needs of others. He is calling us to be a blessing to those in our sphere of influence. In our service of compassion, we have His authority. And the Lord Jesus will also give us His sufficiency, in exchange for our inadequacy. Little is much when God is in it.