

Its not about how much  
or how little you have.  
Its about  
how much of what you have,  
you are willing  
to surrender to God  
for Him to accomplish His purpose  
through you!



**18 April, 2021**

**On the day after Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh was laid to rest,  
we awake to a fresh appreciation of the man  
whom the press lampooned  
all these years,  
is one  
whose accomplishments far exceed  
our knowledge about him!**

**So those who say,  
that the Christ has died and is dead,  
whose Father's existence they have cast into doubt,  
and  
the Holy Spirit whom they have caricatured,  
Father! Forgive them their ignorant claims.**

**We know You,  
Father, Your Son and the Holy Spirit  
because You have chosen us and  
revealed Yourself, Your Son and the Holy Spirit  
in and through Your eternal Word!**

**THANK YOU!**

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**LISTEN    Be still (Taize Chant)**

## **PRAYER**

O God, You are always doing new things! We confess that we sometimes close windows against the fresh air of new ideas, against the noise of other people's worries, against the winds of change.

God of every place and all time. We confess that we often draw the curtains against people who are different, against world news or community concerns.

Forgive us our insulation in our locked homes, the security systems on our hearts. Open up our lives, and let your Spirit blow through. **AMEN.**

**HYMN    The King of love my Shepherd is**

**READING    Psalm 146**

## **PRAYER for the WORLD**

Loving Father! As we gather to worship You, it is easy for me to go through the motions of spirituality. I want to say the "right" prayers, and think I have found the magical key to make holiness appear in my life. But Lord, emptiness surrounds me; I hunger and thirst for something that will sustain me through all the times of our lives. I focus on things that disappoint and hurt, and look past the very thing that will heal and cleanse my lives. Jesus is our Bread of Life, sent by You to feed and sustain me through the wildernesses in which I travel.

Lord, I remember when I have not shared the Bread of Life with those in need. Forgive me I pray.

Lord, I remember when I have been hurt by the words and actions of others. Help me to forgive them by name.

Lord, I remember when I have been distracted from seeking You. Father! Make yourself known to me and help me to see You in the midst of the noise and clamour of this world.

Father! Help me to see the fruit borne out of small actions, to live faithfully amidst uncertainty, and build and encourage the community of which I am a part.

Lord, you know the shape of my life at this time; You know the delights I enjoy and the pressures I endure. Lord, I pray your Holy Spirit would guide me into the ways of righteousness, granting me strength for my daily journey. In the Name and for the Honour of Jesus my Christ.

**AMEN.**

## **HYMN     Break Thou the Bread of Life**

### **READING     John 6:1-15**

### **PRAYER**

Gracious and Loving God! Let your message and preaching come to me through your Holy Spirit's power, so that my faith might not rest on the articulation of words by our pastor or the acumen of the human mind, but upon Your power and presence.

Help me never to depend upon my own wisdom or power, but always on Your Spirit. In You I place my trust and in whom I have hope. **AMEN.**

### **MESSAGE**

Continuing with John travelling around Galilee with Jesus, we read about Jesus "feeding the five thousand", reported by the other three gospel writers, each with varying detail<sup>1</sup>. I remember this as an early Sunday School "story", in awe

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17

of the little boy who was carrying home the family dinner of five loaves of barley bread and two fish, caught up with the crowd and lingered on, probably finding his way to the front where he would have been seen. As a child, I marvelled at the boy's willingness to give up the family dinner. As a teenager, I wondered how much persuasion it took the disciples to get the boy to surrender the food in his possession. Years later it dawned on me, the "story" is really about Jesus, not the boy and the Disciples, important as they might be. John says, Jesus tested Philip with the question, "*Where can we buy bread to feed these people?*", **because He knew what He was going to do!**

John says that Jesus' intention was to spend time with His chosen disciples (v.3), but the large crowd following Him (v.2) found where He was and came swarming up the hillside (v.5). As we shall see, Jesus achieved His goal!

The first thing we notice is that Jesus never turns down anyone who seeks Him. Our motives may be different, some seek Him for healing, some for teaching, some seek Jesus as a refuge from the storms of this world, whatever our situation in life, if we earnestly seek Jesus, He always has time for each of us.

As the narrative progresses, we also note how masterfully Jesus uses a single incident to teach and minister to people from all walks of life, from the boy who surrendered his family's dinner, whether willingly or through persuasion, the crowds who were fed, and the Disciples who were taught valuable lessons.

Jesus also speaks to us in every season of our lives. John says, "*It was nearly time for the Jewish Passover*" (v.4). To every Jew, celebrating the Passover was to remind themselves of God's faithfulness: God did not forget them during 400 very difficult years in Egypt, God rescued them out of slavery with a mighty hand, God provided for them through 40 years in the desert, before He led them into and settled them in the land promised to Abraham. The Passover celebration was a reminder that God always does what He promises<sup>2</sup> and He looks after those who know Him as "Father". In the wilderness of this hillside,

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<sup>2</sup> Genesis 15 (v. 12-16)

Jesus would be reminding them of God's faithfulness, by feeding them with an inexhaustible supply of bread from Heaven, both literally and spiritually.

Despite the fact that the crowds kept getting in the way, Jesus was not distracted from His mission to teach His Disciples precious lessons on the magnificence of God's glory, and how they (and we) can be impediments to God's mission.

1. The first impediment to God's mission is taking a human view of what is achievable. Jesus asks Philip, *"Where can we buy food for all these people?"*, to which Philip replies, *"Even if we worked for six months on end, we would not have enough **money** to feed this crowd!"*

We have a tendency to equate what is achievable with money - that money can solve problems, big money can solve big problems and lots of money can solve lots of problems.

Philip typifies our human response to solving problems in our world. We examine a problem, size it up and decide we don't have the resources to deal with it. *I don't have what it takes to provide food for 5,000 men (v.10) plus women and children, and it is way beyond my capacity to earn!*

We limit God by looking to do His work in the smallest, cheapest way, claiming it to be an efficient and effective way of achieving the goal of "God's mission on earth".

But God is interested in **ALL** people - when **ALL** people are blessed by Him, then each individual is blessed, and so are we.

On this occasion, Jesus did not want to feed the youngest and the most vulnerable. His plan was to feed **EVERYONE**. He wanted to demonstrate God's generosity, using a completely different approach.

2. The second impediment is to belittle what God has given us. *A young lad has five small loaves of barley bread and two small fish, but what good is that with this huge crowd? (v.9)*. This attitude is common among those who have yet to discover the person of God. They know of Him, they think they know everything about Him, but they have only cast Him in their mindset and restrict Him from revealing Himself in the grand, majestic manner of His existence.

Had Andrew said, *Here's a young lad with five loaves and two fish, Jesus! Can you do something with it?*, he might have been expecting Jesus to do a miracle as He did turning water into wine at a wedding in Cana!

I cannot tell you how many times I have personally experienced, and heard the experience of others, submitting to God the little they have, only to be surprised how God used it to fulfil a significantly greater purpose.

*"Tell everyone to sit down"*, and what follows is a perfect picture of Psalm 23. The loving caring Shepherd, Jesus as a host, serving a meal to His servants as guests: *who makes me to lie down in green pastures, prepares a table for me... anoints my head with oil; my cup overflows...I dwell in the house of the LORD forever!*

We have the attitude that small things are contemptible but the history in the Bible and our experience with God tells us, it all depends in whose hands it is.

The secret of God blessing everyone with our meagre resources, is to do what Jesus did: He held it and gave thanks to God! Gratitude for what we have is the starting point. Without this, God cannot do what God wants to do. Jesus knew what God would make of them and gave thanks for what it would accomplish.

When Jesus took possession of the cakes of barley bread and small sprats of fish (as John describes them), there was no drum roll and trumpets to announce what was to happen.

Jesus broke the bread, wrapped it around a morsel of fish and the disciples handed these over to 5,000 men who ate and shared among women and children present, everyone more than full with what was given to them. As with the water in the hands of Jesus that turned into excellent quality wine at a wedding in Cana, no one "saw" this miracle as it happened. It seems to have happened as Jesus broke the bread and fish and distributed them to the disciples. It is worth noting, the little boy's family dinner had to be **broken** in order to become a blessing to many.

God uses a spirit of gratitude and the humility of brokenness to work His miracles to the world around us.

But the Disciples had a one major lesson to be learned. When everyone was fed, Jesus asked the Disciples, “*Now gather the leftovers, so that nothing is wasted.*” John was one of the Disciples who scoured the hillside for **leftovers**, not fishbones and crusts of bread, but leftovers of morsels of fish wrapped in barley bread the people could not eat, because they *ate as much as they wanted* and had no room for more! The Disciples collected 12 baskets full of leftovers.

To Philip who said there wasn’t enough time to earn the money needed to feed 5,000 plus people, to Andrew who said, what can anyone do with five small cakes of barely bread and two sprats of salted fish, and John who clearly remembers every detail in his old age when he wrote this Gospel, the sight of each disciple filling up and carrying 4 foot tall baskets, were an indelible reminder of the God can do with our seemingly meagre resources submitted to Him in a spirit of gratitude and humble brokenness.

Will you surrender to Him all that you have, and let Him make it a blessing to many? The choice is yours! God doesn’t need any help to accomplish His plans, but He often deliberately restrains His work until He has our full, unquestioning participation. It’s your life and its your choice!!

**AMEN.**

“One of the most cowardly things ordinary people do, is to shut their eyes to facts.”

*C.S. Lewis, The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*

## **PRAYER**

Heavenly Father: thank you for giving your Son Jesus Christ as our life-giving bread from heaven. Thank you for the uniqueness of his identity and his matchless work of salvation. Ground your church firmly in this wonderful truth, and preserve us from damaging error. Life-giving God, help us to feed on the bread of life from heaven, Jesus our Christ. **AMEN**

**HYMN**

**Just as I am without one plea**

18 April, 2021

## **BENEDICTION**

As God's Word was sent into the world to heal and redeem, so God sends you into the world this day to be light and love, healing and hope.

Surrender to Him who has given you the riches of His Kingdom. Let Him use it to bless everyone around you, and you and your family.

Go now to be Christ's light in His Father's world! And may the grace and peace of God the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Sustainer be your blessing, this day and remain with you always. **AMEN.**