

**Christ Presbyterian Church**  
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**Block Party: Feeding of the 5,000 | Mark 6:30-37**

It was about 25 years ago, a crisp October night, our daughters were toddlers, little, and we had had an early dinner like you usually do when you have toddlers. Probably macaroni and cheese out of a box like you do when you have toddlers. We had cleared the dishes and were playing the game Candy Land around our kitchen table when the phone rang. I answered and it was an elder from the church who said, “Hi, I was just calling to check and make sure that the dinner at your house tonight is at 7:00?” “The dinner. At my house. Tonight. Right. 7:00! We’re looking forward to it. See you then!” Oh my gosh! We had totally blanked. We had invited three elders and their spouses over for dinner and then blanked on it. We did not have enough food in our refrigerator, we did not have enough time to clean. Apparently we didn’t have enough brains to remember that we were hosting an event. Now it wasn’t exactly the feeding of the 5,000, but God did take our not enough and did make it more than enough for the evening.

How many of you have been in a situation where you might not have been feeding 5,000, but you felt like you didn’t have enough? You weren’t prepared? You weren’t enough? It wasn’t going to add up. If you are a kid here today I’m thinking you can relate to this, right? You’ve probably had times when you felt like you weren’t tall enough, you weren’t big enough, you weren’t important enough to make a difference in a situation. If you are a young single you may relate to this. You may just be getting established in your career, you may be sharing an apartment with a roommate and feel like you don’t have it enough together to do this adulating stuff, you don’t have enough resources. I know that if you are a parent of any aged child you can relate to this, because what parent ever feels like they have enough wisdom or enough patience to deal with their kids?

All of us may have these feelings and our culture reinforces this “not enough” kind of feeling. We watch The Voice and it’s like if you don’t have enough talent, no one is going to turn their chair around. We watch Survivor and if you don’t have enough cunning or guile you’re going to be voted off the island. You may feel like your gifts aren’t enough, they don’t count, or your resources don’t add up to enough, but what I want to suggest to you this morning is that Jesus does a very different kind of math. You count because Jesus counts you. You’re enough because Jesus is enough and you have enough because Jesus has enough. Now, nobody in our family does math, but I like stuff to add up. This is how the equation would have looked that night about 25 years ago. Two toddlers + two forgetful parents + six elders showing up – food for dinner = chaos and desperation + Jesus = enough and a lot of laughter.

Now the story of the feeding of the 5,000 is so familiar, but Jesus’s math is crazy

beyond just the multiplication of food. Jesus is the all-powerful, miracle maker who can always do the math by Himself, but chooses to include us in the equation. Isn't that amazing?

So let's look at the context of this passage. Look at this picture of the Sea of Galilee. Looks pretty calm, right? If it looked like this and Jesus and the disciples were on the Sea of Galilee at the time, the situation would be very much in contrast to this peaceful look. We know that Jesus has sent the disciples out on their own for the first time to teach, and preach, and do some healing, and they've come back. It may be they've come back because they just heard about the beheading of John the Baptist. They may have been excited about what they're doing out in the countryside, they may have had some questions for Jesus, they may have been sad, discouraged, confused about John the Baptist, but they've returned and are reporting in. We know that it's super busy and super crowded – there are a lot of people around.

<sup>31</sup> Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." <sup>32</sup> So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. <sup>33</sup> But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. [Mark 6:30-31]

Now the disciples haven't even had a chance to catch their breath. They are deluged with crowds of people again. Look at this map. We know that Jesus and the disciples took off in a boat up to Bethesda. That would be about four miles if you were going by boat. It was about 8 miles for the guys running along the shore, but somehow they got there before Jesus and the disciples. It may be that the sea was calm, or it may be they had a headwind against them, but somehow they got there ahead of them. Here's Jesus trying to have this quiet time with the disciples and all these people are interrupting. Now parents with toddlers, I know you can relate because you've tried to go to the bathroom and have been interrupted, but I believe that we all, from time to time, feel like we can't escape all the people that want something from us.

So Jesus, like a mom trying to get a little bit of time alone, tries to get away but the people chase Him. How does He respond? He welcomes them. He does try to put some boundaries in place, but He also recognizes the value of holy interruptions. It says there are 5,000 people, but that would be an underestimate because they only counted the men. That wouldn't have included the children and the women, so there could have been a crowd of between 10,000-15,000. Here's the great thing: Jesus counts everyone. Jesus counts the discounted. I love the way John Ortberg says it: "Everybody's welcome, nobody's perfect, anything can happen." I think this was the modus operandi for Jesus. Now, most of the people in this story would be the not counted. First of all the disciples. They were men, so they would be technically counted in the 5,000, but the Gospel of John says they were ordinary and unschooled guys. They would have been the left outs, the overlooked, the misfits, and they wouldn't have counted in the culture. Then there's the little boy who obviously was not counted, he was a kid, but Jesus counted him. He ends up being the hero who shows up with what

he has. Then there's somebody who's not even mentioned in the story—the little boy's mom. Have you ever thought about him? The little boy's mom who packed his lunch and sent him on. We don't know if she got to come with him, or if she is at home working. Maybe she's heard about Jesus, but she can't go and she can't wait for her little boy to get back and tell her all about Jesus. She wouldn't have been counted; she was a woman. And then there are the crowds, probably filled with a lot of people who were sick, or handicapped, or needy in some way. All of the people around Jesus were hungry for something that Jesus had to offer.

So what was it about Jesus that drew people to Him? What was it that made them feel welcomed and loved and safe? I think of Jesus kind of like my sister-in-law Betsy. Any time you would come into Betsy's presence, into her home, it's like *oh there you are! I was just waiting for you!* That's what she projects and I believe that's the attitude that Jesus projects. So I think we need to ask ourselves: Does anyone and everyone who comes into our home, into our presence, do they feel welcome? Do gays and singles? Do the handicapped? How about racial minorities, or Trump supporters or Hillary supporters? Do they all feel welcome? We may think, *Oh yeah. I'm open to everyone*, and give ourselves a pass. But if we really think about our day-to-day activities, are we turning toward those who are different than us, those who make us feel uncomfortable, or are we turning away from them? I love the idea that everyone wears an invisible sign that says, "Please love me." I think it's true. People are not our project. They're not on our "To do" list, they're on our "To love" list. There's a quote by Jack Jezreel that I like. He says, "We are either a people who love, embrace, and enter into a caring posture with our family, friends, neighbors, strangers, and even enemies—real or imagined—or we will spend our lives mercilessly trying to define who is lovable and who is not. Who is worthy and who is not. Who deserves my attention and who does not. Inevitably, we will end up loving people who look like us, think like us, and pledge allegiance to the same flag, and will exclude the rest."

The second thing I see in this is that Jesus loves as *is*, not *only if*. Jesus loves as is, not only if we have it all together, not only if we don't have a drinking problem, not only if we have the right words, or look the right way, or have the right education. He loves us as is. I am honestly very sad as I reflect on this because I think the person who probably felt the least loved as is in my home was my mother-in-law. She had some habits and some lifestyle choices that were different than ours, and I found it very difficult to love her as is, and that makes me really sad—she died years ago, but my hope and prayer is that if she were here today, I would do a better job of loving her as is.

Now, loving and welcoming people can be as simple as eye contact, looking people in the eye. Henry Cloud says that people who aren't open to meeting others usually avoid eye contact. Open people make a lot of eye contact. So it may be eye contact that will make a difference as we go through our days, but it also may be a change in our physical environment or an invitation. Let me share a couple of examples with you. There is a woman named Kristen Shell who started a movement called the Turquoise Table. She painted a picnic table bright turquoise, plopped it in her front yard, and just started inviting her family and friends and neighbors to hang out there. She put out ice

cream, or she would just have coffee there, and people were drawn to it like a magnet. It was in her front yard; it was very visible. It started a movement, and people have been painting picnic tables turquoise and putting them in their front yards across the nation. I think there are only three states now that don't have at least somebody now doing this. They've started this and they have a hashtag: #front yard people. Another friend of mine has started something called "Front Porch Fridays." I love this. She put an invitation out on Facebook and invited her neighbors, and said *You know what? We are going to be out on our front porch on these Fridays throughout the summer from four to six. We'll have some drinks and appetizers. Just stop by if you want.* It's simple, it's casual. It doesn't mean you have to buy a ton of stuff or clean your house or anything.

Now, the feeding of the 5000...we focus on the five loaves and the two fish miracle, but I'm wondering what might be the miracle that we miss? Could our miracle just be that someone who has felt left out feels welcomed in and experiences the love of Jesus? Jesus loves us as is, not only if.

The third thing I see is that Jesus takes our not enough and makes it more than enough. Not enough, plus Jesus, makes it more than enough, plus leftovers because the math Jesus does operates out of a mindset of abundance and not scarcity. Verse thirty-four says,

<sup>34</sup> When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things. <sup>35</sup> By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place..." [Mark 6:34-35]

Ok, Jesus would realize that. I mean, He created the universe. And then they say,

"and it's already very late."

Again, pretty obvious right? He knows. And then what do they say? They say to Jesus,

<sup>36</sup> Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." [Mark 6:36]

Have you ever told Jesus what to do? That's what the disciples do. They say, "Hey Jesus, go do this." Have you ever prayed and said, "Hey Jesus, here's my solution. Are you on it?" Right? "Ok, here's my plan God." I like control. We don't mind God fixing our problems, but we really don't want the discomfort of actually having to be involved. I think that Jesus isn't as interested in my solutions to the problems as He is interested in my participation in His solution. So, He answers the disciples and says,

<sup>37</sup> "You give them something to eat." [Mark 6:37]

Now, it's not like He couldn't do this without them, right? He's the master of math. He could do it without them, but He chooses to use them. And it's kind of like a parent. If

you are sweeping the kitchen and your toddler wants to help, you let them help. If you are mowing the lawn and you have a toddler that wants to pretend they are mowing the lawn, you let them help. God doesn't need our help, but He allows us to be part of these God-size activities. Isn't that great?

It says this:

They said to him, "That would take more than half a year's wages. Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?" [Mark 6:37]

This response exposes their still limited view of Jesus' power, right? But He takes the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He gives thanks. He breaks it and gives it to everybody. They are satisfied, and there are leftovers.

Now, He takes the not enough, and so I want you to think about your not enough. What is your not enough? If we had this sentence: "I don't have enough \_\_\_\_\_" or "I'm not \_\_\_\_\_ enough," how would you fill that in? Maybe, *I'm not smart enough. I'm not brave enough for the situation I face. I don't have enough space in my house. I don't have enough money. I'm not outgoing enough. I don't have enough time.*

I talked to a friend between the services, and her daughter is making what she feels is a very, very bad life choice. And she feels that she doesn't have enough influence. But I think the question beyond that for her is, "Does God have enough power to redeem any situation?" For me, when I think of this...I'm not enough, I think: *I'm not good enough.* Now that sounds really broad, but what it feels like is: *I don't have enough value to add to the different situations that I'm in.* It's one thing to give God our strengths, but it's another to give God our weaknesses. If you bring your not enough, and put it in the hands of Jesus, he'll do the miracle. Paul explains why God delights to use us in this way, and we have talked a lot about this here at CPC. He says,

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. [2 Corinthians 4:7]

Some of you are familiar with Elizabeth Elliott. She and her husband were missionaries in South America, and the Indians there killed her husband. Afterwards she wrote this: "If the only thing you have to offer is a broken heart, you offer a broken heart. So, in a time of grief, the recognition that this is material for sacrifice has been a very great strength for me, realizing that nothing I have, nothing I am will be refused on the part of Christ. I simply give it to Him as the little boy gave Jesus his five loaves and two fishes." So, even with limited resources in the middle of nowhere, there is so much that there are leftovers. And I love it that Jesus tells the disciples to pick up the scraps, pick up the leftovers. And the reason I think He does that is that He wants them to remember the leftovers. The leftovers are the evidence of His power that they can take into tomorrow, into the darkness of a future that they are not sure of.

Many years ago I was 24 years old and I was traveling to Europe to study for the summer. Because of some huge thunderstorms, my flight was delayed in New York and I eventually landed in Frankfurt, Germany about 4:00AM. Now, I knew two people in Germany—a youth pastor and his wife. Everything was closed, I didn't have money, and I had missed my connections. But I knew this youth pastor and his wife, so I called them collect at 4:00 in the morning. They lived about an hour and a half away from Frankfurt, but Gary (my youth pastor friend) said, "Just stay put. I'm coming to get you." So he drives down to get me, takes me back to their tiny apartment...tiny apartment. They had no room, they had no money; they were a poor pastoral couple. They already had a guest staying with them, sleeping on their couch, but they invited me in and put me up for the next night. And the next morning, Gary is in the kitchen. His wife has made homemade bread, and he is making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. He is packing me a lunch, and he gives me this lunch in a paper bag and takes me to the train station, puts me on the train to my next destination, and I thought *I am his holy interruption and he is the little boy with the five loaves and two fish, just showing up with what he had, which was not enough.* He could have made all kinds of excuses but he didn't. He showed up.

We often give God excuses that we can't be a part of the miracle, even the miracle of welcoming others who may feel like they don't count. But this story from scripture reminds us that you count and I count and our five loaves and two fishes count. I'd invite you to just reflect on that.

So it's my prayer that we will walk out into the week with our five loaves and two fish, and with Jesus, and He will make it more than enough.

And now, to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than we could possibly ask or imagine, to Him be all glory now and forever more. And all God's people said, Amen! Go in peace.

*The nature of oral presentations makes them less precise than written materials; any lack of attribution is unintentional, and we wish to credit all those who have contributed to this sermon. Soli Deo Gloria.*