

The WORD Became Flesh
(Week 16)
John 6:1-15
“The People God Uses”

Introduction

Have you ever had self doubt? I mean, it's so easy to do. You just take a look around and see so many people who seem to have more talent, more intelligence, more education, and quite honestly, more of EVERYTHING, and find yourself feeling inadequate. I've done that many times. I've often heard that voice inside my head that says, "Why are you even trying to do this? Don't you realize how unqualified you are?" If you have ever felt like this, then I have some awesome news for you... Jesus USES nobodies just like us! The Devil loves to make us feel insignificant, and in our own strength, we are. But fortunately for us, we have not been called to live within our own strength. Christ calls us to offer up all that we have to Him, and then, see the miraculous things that He can do with it. A person who truly belongs to Jesus can do anything! This is exactly what the Apostle Paul meant when he said, **"I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13)**. So the next time the Devil whispers in your ear that you are a nobody, just remember that, thanks to the cross of Calvary, you are a child of the Almighty God, and the sky is the limit for you. You CAN make a difference. In fact, you have been set apart by the gospel of Christ to do just that.

One of my favorite stories in *The Bible* is the feeding of the five thousand. It is the fourth "sign miracle" of John's gospel. It tells of how Jesus took one little boy's lunch and used it to feed a multitude! I'd say that was pretty amazing. How about you? The miracle so impressed the writers of the four gospels that each of them included it in their writings (**Matthew 14:13-21**; **Mark 6:30-44**; **Luke 9:10-17**; and **John 6:1-15**). We have all heard the story many times over, and every time we hear it again, we are reminded of the awesome power of Christ. He can take nothing and make it into something. We shouldn't be surprised by this. After all, He created the entire universe out of nothing. He just spoke, and it came into being! Think about that for a moment, and then ask yourself this question:

"WHAT COULD HE DO WITH ME?"

If we are to be truly effective in allowing Christ to do wondrous things through us, then we are going to have to give up a few things that stand in our way. Today, I would like to take a closer look at this awesome miracle that occurred near a little fishing village called "Bethsaida" located on the shore of The Sea of Galilee. Let us look to see how Jesus was able to make something out of nothing on that incredible evening that made such an impression upon all four of the gospel writers. If He can use a little boy's lunch to feed five thousand hungry people, then He can certainly use us to take His gospel to feed the souls of those who are hungry for spiritual truth! But if we are to be truly used of God, we must, like that little boy, be willing to surrender all we have in order to make a difference. We must be willing to *Surrender our ANXIETIES*, *Surrender our ALL*, and *Surrender our AGENDAS*, THEN we, through Christ, will truly be able to do ALL THINGS.

Surrender our ANXIETIES (Have Faith vs.1-7)

After this, Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias). A huge crowd was following Him because they saw the signs that he was performing by healing the sick. Jesus went up a mountain and sat down there with His disciples. Now the Passover, a Jewish festival, was near. So when Jesus

looked up and noticed a huge crowd coming toward Him. He asked Philip, 'Where will we buy bread so that these people can eat?' He asked this to test him, for He Himself knew what He was going to do. Philip answered Him, 'Two hundred denarii wouldn't be enough for each of them to have a little.' **John 6:1-7**

Bethsaida was just a little village located on the northeastern coast of the Sea of Galilee. Its name actually means "fishing house", and it was home to three of Jesus disciples, Philip, Peter, and his brother Andrew. Jesus went to the mountain there to get away from the crowds, upon hearing the news of John the Baptist's execution by Herod (**Matthew 14**). However, the crowds followed Him there. Jesus looked out upon the multitude and saw how distressed and burdened they were. He felt compassion for them and not only wanted to feed their souls with His teaching, but also He longed to feed their bodies by giving them something to eat. Jesus cares about people. This is why *The Bible* tells us to **cast our cares upon Him (1 Peter 5:7)**. Do you have a need this morning? Give it to Jesus. He already knows about it. So why not let Him take care of it (**Matthew 6:8**)? Worry won't fix the problem, but Christ CAN!

Jesus turned to Philip and asked, **"Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" (vs. 5)**. It was a perfectly legitimate question to ask Philip, for he was from the area, but it was much more than that. It was a test of Philip's faith (**vs. 6**), for The Lord already knew what was about to happen. He just wanted Philip to learn a valuable lesson. That NOTHING is impossible for God! After this day's events, I'm quite certain that Philip would like to have had a do-over, for he gave a practical answer and not a faith-based one. The proper response would have been more like the answer Ezekiel gave to The Lord in the valley of the dry bones (**Ezekiel 37:1-4**). Looking out over a valley filled with the skeletons of a dead multitude, The Lord asked Ezekiel, **"Son of man, can these bones live?"**. To which Ezekiel replied, **"Sovereign Lord, you alone know"**. That would have been the PERFECT answer for Philip to give to Jesus, but instead he decided to think like a restaurant manager and give The Lord a food cost analysis.

Philip's response, in my humble opinion, seems both panicky, as well as, condescending. **"It would take more than eight months wages (200 denarion in the Greek) just to give these people a single bite!"** It was as if Philip was saying, "Lord, don't you understand that we can't possibly begin to feed these people?" Wow, can you imagine telling God that He CAN'T do something? Well, the sad reality is, that is exactly what we ARE doing, when we convince ourselves that God can't use US to make a difference. You see, our lack of faith is an insult to God. If I went around the room and asked everyone here today if they truly believe that God can do anything, the overwhelming response no doubt would be a resounding "YES". But, when someone is called upon to spread the gospel and "feed the multitude" (spiritually speaking), the response is quite often one of making excuses, rather than of faith. **Without faith, it is IMPOSSIBLE to please God (Hebrews 11:6)**. When we claim that we cannot make a difference in this world, we are not putting ourselves down. No. Rather, we are insulting God. That's why Christ finds our faithlessness so very offensive (**Matthew 17:17**). So let's cut loose all of our useless anxieties about serving Christ and start living by faith. It's time to stop doubting and get out there and start feeding the multitude! We CAN do all things through Christ, even the things that seem humanly impossible.

Surrender our ALL (Holding Nothing Back vs. 8-13)

One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, "There's a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish — but what are they for so many?" Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place; so they sat down. The men numbered about five

thousand. Then Jesus took the loaves, and after giving thanks He distributed them to those who were seated — so also with the fish, as much as they wanted. When they were full, He told His disciples, “Collect the leftovers so that nothing is wasted.” So they collected them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces from the five barley loaves that were left over by those who had eaten.” **John 6:8-13**

Thank goodness for Andrew. At least he had found something to offer The Lord, rather than excuses. Oh, he had some doubt as well, but He did bring something to the table as it were. **“Here is a small boy with five small barley loaves and two fish, but how far will they go among so many?” (vs. 9).** Do you want to know why Jesus had such compassion for this group of people? The answer is staring you right in the face with this verse: Barley Loaves. In those days, barley loaves were the bread of poor people. There were two major crops that were grown in the holy land in those days: wheat and barley. The barley crop was the first crop to ripen and was harvested in the spring. Whereas, the wheat crop takes longer to mature and is harvested in early fall. Barley was considered an inferior food source, and therefore, was cheaper to buy than wheat. The grain was made into flour and baked into small cakes very similar to a piece of pita bread. This young boy had five small loaves in his pouch along with two small fish.

Being a fishing village, there were three major types of fish that were harvested in Bethsaida for food consumption. By this verse, we know exactly what kind of fish the little boy had to go with his barley crackers. The only fish that would be referred to in that time as "small fish" were the sardines that are abundant in the Sea of Galilee. Ok, now do you get the idea of what was about to happen. Jesus, The Creator God of the Universe, was about to feed five thousand people with two sardines and some crackers! If you are one of those people who believes that you are too insignificant for God to use you, just let the reality of this story sink in for a moment.

I refuse to believe that Jesus commanded His disciple to seize this young child's meager lunch to serve "the greater good". No, that's not at all who Jesus is. I believe that the little boy heard them discussing where to get bread, and he simply came forward and surrendered his lunch to the cause. He didn't offer "a portion" of his little snack, he offered it ALL. I cannot help but think of two old hymns I sang as a child, as I am writing this; "I Surrender All" and "Little is Much When God is in it". I mean, here is this young man who is living in poverty and This Mighty Awesome Savior, Who takes the boy's small offering and forever changes the course of human history. Even pagans have heard of feeding the multitudes with five loaves and two fishes. Still think you don't have anything to offer? Why not let God decide on that. Surrender your ALL to Him and just watch what He can do with it!

I LOVE this story. The **gospel of Mark** tells us that after Jesus took the lunch basket from the child, He commanded the people to sit down on the grass in groups of hundreds and fifties (**Mark 6:39**). The original language there actually reads that He made them to set in "flower beds" side by side. Don't miss out on the image here. On the grassy slopes of this mountain above the sea, the people were arranged in groups with pathways in between so that the disciples could pass in their midst and serve them. In their brightly colored clothing, they must have appeared from heaven as multicolored flower gardens planted in the grass of the mountain side! What a beautiful picture of what our Heavenly Father looks down upon us and sees! We have been planted by Him as flowers in a garden, each one with his or her unique beauty and fragrance. How tragic it is for those of us who never surrender ourselves to His mighty hand so that we may truly bloom where we have been planted. When He comes back to gather His own, will you be counted among the flowers or the weeds?

Jesus took the small basket of food and blessed it. In those days it was customary to give thanks AFTER a meal, not before. But here, Christ wanted all to see the power of God. His prayers were answered, for with five small barley wafers and two sardines, Jesus fed the entire

crowd until they could hold no more, and afterward, the disciples gathered up twelve baskets full of leftovers! How did this mighty miracle take place? From one poor little child surrendering his ALL to an awesome God. Do you truly want to make a difference? Well, now you know how.

Surrender our AGENDAS (Holding Ourselves In Check vs.14-15)

When the people saw the sign He had done, they said, "This truly is the Prophet Who is to come into the world." Therefore, when Jesus realized that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He withdrew again to the mountain by Himself. John 6:14-15

Needless to say, after the crowd witnessed such a miracle first hand, they were more than ready to go to war against Rome to crown Jesus, The King of The Jews. Does that sound familiar? They were going to try and make Him King, without having to endure the suffering of the cross! It was the exact same thing that Satan himself had tried to tempt Christ with in the wilderness (**Matthew 4:8**). Jesus recognized the devil's thinly veiled attempt to offer Him a kingdom apart from the Father's plan. He immediately withdrew from the crowd and hid Himself. He knew that He could only save the world by obeying The Word of God and accepting The Father's plan for His kingdom. Simply put, Jesus didn't allow Himself to be tempted by selfish ambition. He will, in fact, one day be crowned King of Kings and Lord of Lords (**Philippians 2:10-11**), but it will only be according to His Father's will and timing, and therefore, no shortcut would have been acceptable. Christ purposefully surrendered any personal agenda that might have otherwise tempted Him, in order to submit to The Father's will. He did the exact same thing the night before He went to the cross (**Luke 22:42**).

So many times in the ministry I have seen God do a wonderful work, only to have His servants (church leaders) try and take credit for it. Let's be abundantly clear here. If any good thing comes from our ministries here in this church, ALL of the glory goes to God, and God alone! We need to learn to get ourselves out of God's way and just watch Him work. Just like Christ, we need to know when to step forward, and when to step back. God will by no means share His glory, and we are foolish to step into the spotlight and take a bow, when it is Him that is working the miracles.

I used to love going to church leadership conferences and listening to great preachers teach God's word. That is, until one year, I went to a such a conference and watched what could only be described as a group of "preachers" trying to outdo one another upon the platform. The whole affair completely sickened me, and I haven't been to another one since. We must always remember, that only God can work wonders, and He usually does them through the lowliest of people. As a matter of fact, I believe the reason that He DOES His best stuff through humble folk is because they never forget where the power comes from! Remember this, if you really want to make a difference, then you have to know how to hold yourself in check so that God gets the glory.

So with my final thought, I'd like to offer you a challenge today. Do you consider yourself to be nothing special, just plain average and ordinary? Then CONGRATULATIONS! You are exactly the kind of person that God is looking for to make a difference in this world. He doesn't use the "rock stars" or "supermen". No. He uses plain and ordinary people like the little guy with his barley loaves and fishes. Jesus takes the small and simple and works miracles with them. If that sounds like you, then all that you need to do for Him to use you is to **SURRENDER your ANXIETIES, SURRENDER your ALL, and SURRENDER your AGENDAS** and just wait and see how God will use you to do great things. So get out there and make a difference... IN JESUS NAME!

And ALL of God's people said... **TRUTH !!!**