



How often in life does our needs and problems look greater than the resources available to us? At the end of the month you sit down to pay your bills but when you look at your bank account the reality is there is not enough money to pay all the bills. Your need is greater than your resources.

For any stay-at-home mom with small children the needs and problems that come with the territory of parenting is a daily issue. Your kids wake up early and the entire day is spent cleaning, feeding, taxiing, and meeting every need your children have. You're tired, often frustrated and praying that you'll have the energy and patience to make it through another day. By eight o'clock, you're wiped out. Your need is greater than your resources. For some of you with demanding jobs, juggling a work/life balance is a constant tension. Then you're hit with a deadline at work or a project that needs to be completed. You know full well that to meet the deadline or to finish the project you will pay the cost with your time, energy, sleep and your weekend. If you're single your friends won't see you and you'll be staying home Friday night. If you're married, you'll barely make it home during the week to help put the kids to bed and you hope to make it to their little league games on Saturday. Your need is greater than the resources available.

When it comes to our problems and needs, what if anything does Jesus have to say to us this morning? When our needs and our problems look greater than the resources available to us, and they often do, what can we do?

The disciples found themselves in two situations not unlike what we experience every week. The problem and the need seemed greater than the resources available to them, or so they thought. We are continuing our study of the biography of Jesus written by his best friend John and today we come to chapter 6. There are three scenes John sweeps us through like a masterful storyteller. In scene one, Jesus is on a mountainside teaching thousands of people. Folks are hungry and he does a miracle. In scene two, the disciples find themselves in a boat in the middle of a storm, panicking until Jesus comes to them walking on the water. Finally, in scene three, Jesus is in a synagogue explaining to the crowd the meaning of the miracle.

Scene 1: Jesus Feeds Thousands

I want you to imagine with me what it must have been like to be with Jesus that day. It was a warm spring afternoon, the grass was green with expectation, but it was getting late. By this point

in the ministry of Jesus thousands of people are following him throughout the rugged hillsides and plains of Palestine. John says:

“A great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick” (v. 2).

They've seen the miracles, they've heard his teaching and they want more, but not necessarily more of Jesus. The crowd was mostly poor peasants, both Jews and Gentiles. John estimates that there is at least 5,000 men in the crowd, so when you include women and children there could have been up to 20,000 people. You've been listening to the Master teach all day but your stomach hasn't stopped growling. It's hard to listen to Jesus teach when all you can think about is food. You were so excited to follow Jesus that you forgot to pack a lunch. And now you're out in the middle of nowhere, it's getting late, and everyone's hungry.

Jesus turns to Philip first to test his faith and says,

“Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?” (v. 5).

That is a great question, the disciples thought. Philip was the obvious person to ask because he was from the nearby town of Bethsaida. Surely he would know where to find food for everyone. God never tempts us but he does test us so we can see more of who he is. God tests the developing faith of Philip but Philip doesn't pass the test.

“It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite” (v. 7).

The problem is so big in Philip's mind that he forgets who he is with. I don't know if the larger obstacle for Philip was the lack of food or the cost involved in feeding a large crowd. Philip could only see this need from a human perspective. And who can blame him? Philip was a realist. “It's going to cost 8 months' wages and there is no Costco close enough to buy enough bread.” When Jesus saw the people, he saw an opportunity to love and care for them. When the disciples looked at the people, they saw 5,000 problems.

Finally Andrew reluctantly speaks.

“Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?” (v. 9).

Andrew was saying, "Here's something, but let's be honest, it's not very much." Barley loaves were the inexpensive bread of the poorer classes and the fish was most likely pickled fish to be eaten with the bread. A decent meal for a little boy. The intensity heightens as it becomes clear to the disciples that this little boy's lunch was not going to feed 20,000 people. Jesus thanked God for the food with a prayer something like this, "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth." Each of the disciples reluctantly take a basket and begin to pass out the bread and fish to the people. Imagine what that experience must have been like for them. Excitement and awe must have poured over the disciples as they continue to pass out the food realizing the miracle that has just taken place. Jesus lavishly provided for everyone there, they ate as much as they wanted and there was even leftovers! With Jesus, there is new math— $5+2=20,000$.

Jesus wanted his disciples and us to learn from this miracle that God provides our daily bread. Jesus is bigger than all our needs. When our needs look greater than the resources available we need to put them in the hands of Jesus. In the other three eye-witness accounts where this story is recorded, Jesus asked the disciples, "*How many loaves do you have?*" In other words, place what you **do** have in God's hands and he will provide for your needs. Not your wants, but your needs.

Let me give you an illustration of this I heard years ago at Promise Keepers. When I hold a basketball in my hand, I think I'm pretty good on the court. But when that same basketball is placed in the hands of Michael Jordan, it becomes the greatest basketball player of all time. It all depends in whose hand it's in. Put a golf club in my hand and I can barely break 100 on an easy course. When it's placed into the hands of Tiger Woods, it turns into the number one golfer in the world. It all depends in whose hand it's in. A paintbrush in my hand will result in a nice picture if it's paint by numbers. But when a paintbrush is put in the hands of Renoir, it's turned into a priceless work of art. It all depends in whose hand it's in. A wooden rod in my hand might keep away a wild animal. A rod in Moses' hands will part the Red Sea. It all depends in whose hands it's in. A sling shot in my hand is a kid's toy. A sling shot in David's hand is a mighty weapon. It depends in whose hands it's in. Two fish and five loaves of bread in my hands is a couple of tasty fish sandwiches. Two fish and five loaves of bread in Jesus' hands fed thousands. It depends in whose hands it's in. Nails in my hands might make a cute little birdhouse. Nails in Jesus Christ's hands gave salvation for the entire world. It depends in whose hands it's in.

What do you need to place in God's hands? What problems in your life seem to have no solution? Put your concerns, your worries, your fears, your hopes, your dreams, your families and your relationships in God's hands because it all depends whose hands it's in.

Unfortunately, many people in the crowd saw the sign but still didn't understand who Jesus was.

"Surely this is the Prophet who is come into the world" (v. 14).

The crowd wanted a political savior and king who would overthrow Roman occupation, not a suffering savior whose kingdom would triumph through the cross and not by force. Jesus doesn't want any part of it and knowing this crowd could get out of hand, he flees and his disciples do the same. The disciples leave without Jesus at night by boat and head to the other side of the lake. This brings us to scene 2.

Scene 2: Jesus Walks on the Water

The Sea of Galilee is about 13 miles long and about 6 miles wide and lies 650 feet below sea level. It is fed by the Jordan River and is surrounded by rugged hills and mountains. Cool winds frequently rush down the steep cliffs surrounding the sea and stir up violent storms on the surface of the warm water. We find the disciples in the middle of a nasty storm, without Jesus, struggling to get to the other side. Their fear of rough water was soon surpassed by their terror at seeing Jesus walking to them on the water. In Mark's account of this, he says the disciples were afraid because they thought they were seeing a ghost. Either way, the disciples are horrified at the sight of Jesus walking on the water. Probably because last time I checked, people don't walk on water! But this isn't just anyone, is it? John calls him in chapter 1, the *Logos*. This is God walking on the water. When Jesus arrives at the boat and climbs inside, he calms their fears by identifying himself with a term that reflects back to the story of the Exodus. Jesus says,

"It is I, don't be afraid" (v. 20).

Let me stop right there because some of you need to hear those words from Jesus today, "*Don't be afraid, I am.*" The term "I am" is God's divine name given to Moses on Mount Sinai (Ex. 3:14). Remember that scene? Moses has an encounter with God through a burning bush and was afraid to even look at God for fear he'd be destroyed. During their conversation Moses asked God what his name is and God declares, "*I Am Who I Am.*" Mark recounts that Jesus calmed the storm when he entered the boat, but John seems to say that they were barely able to get him in the boat and suddenly they were on the other side of the lake, yet another miracle.

Jesus, because he is God feeds, protects, rescues and guides his followers despite the storms that surround them. The disciples were afraid of the storm and terrified at the sight of seeing Jesus walking on water. But at the words of Jesus, the Great I AM, the storm ceases and their fears are erased. I wish I could tell you storms always cease, but you know they often do not. Jesus doesn't promise us a life free of storms but a life where he will

be with us through the storms. Jesus is greater than all our fears. Jesus is bigger than all our problems. "Don't be afraid, I am."

Let's pause for a moment and consider some of the Old Testament and Jewish themes from this passage. A connection between Moses and Jesus is made and the Jewish Passover is mentioned again. Moses was the great hero of the Passover. He rescued God's people from Egypt, led them through the Red Sea, and miraculously provided manna to eat for 40 years while they wandered in the desert. In John 6, Jesus appears at Passover, he too feeds people in the desert, and he comes to the disciples walking on the sea. What's the significance? Jesus is fulfilling and recreating images from Israel's sacred past. He, like Moses, knows God's power intimately. John wants us to understand Jesus is greater than Moses. Jesus is ushering in a new kingdom through a new exodus. He is rescuing his people from death, sin, and Satan. And that brings us to scene 3 where Jesus makes his first of seven "I am" statements further emphasizing his superiority over Judaism.

Scene 3: Jesus is the Bread of Life

Jesus started on a mountainside; he then came to the disciples walking on the water; now in verses 25–59 we find Jesus in a synagogue in Capernaum and it's Passover. In this passage, Jesus has been called Prophet, King and Rabbi. Yet, so far, many in the crowd still don't understand who he really is. They've eaten the bread, seen the miracles, listened to his teaching but continue to ask the wrong questions.

"What must we do to do the works God requires?"
(v. 28).

It's really important for us to understand what the crowd is asking and how Jesus answers them. They want to know the works God requires of them. What must we do for God? Jesus sets them straight.

"The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent" (v. 29).

Eternal life is a gift of God and the work God requires is faith. Not just faith in general but faith "in the one he has sent." Faith in Jesus. Later on in this passage we learn that faith is a fruit of God's activity in us. God draws us to himself. He is at work in us. If you are at all interested in Jesus it's because of God's work in you. Never forget that. Every religion in the world today spells salvation as **do**. It's what you **do** for God that is important. Be a good moral person, say your prayers, go to church, and most likely you'll make it into heaven. But a relationship with Jesus is not spelled **do**; it is spelled **done**. It's not what you **do** for God, it's what Jesus has **done** on the cross for you. That is what Jesus is explaining here in these verses.

In order to drive home this point for his Jewish audience (remember he is teaching in the synagogue), he makes yet another connection between himself and the Old Testament by talking

about manna. During Israel's wilderness wanderings, God fed them from heaven with manna. Manna was a bread-like substance they named, "What is it?" Jewish people believed one day God would send more bread from heaven—a Messiah who would rescue Israel. As Jesus is teaching in the synagogue, he explains the spiritual significance of the miracle he performed on the mountainside. Instead of focusing on the miracle of five loaves and two fish, Jesus wants them to understand that he has greater food, spiritual food that lasts forever. The gift of bread is not as important as the giver of bread.

"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty" (v. 35).

Jesus tells his audience several things about this bread. First, it comes from God. God fed Israel from heaven with manna and now God feeds his children through his word. Deuteronomy 8:3 says, *"He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD."* The Word of God is our spiritual food. Second, the bread of God is a person *"that comes down from heaven"* (v. 33). Jesus has been sent by God and gives life to a hungry and thirsty world. Jesus is "living bread" and he is "living water." Are you spiritually hungry this morning? Is your soul thirsty for living water? Jesus offers you the same invitation he gave the crowd.

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever"
(v. 51).

You eat the bread of Jesus by believing in Jesus and trusting him. The invitation is really simple. Jesus says come, not get your act together and clean up. No, just come. Come as you are. That's it. God's after some of you here. He's wooing you to himself and all you need to do is put down your guard and come to him in faith.

At 17 years old I was a popular, smart and athletic kid, but on the inside I was spiritually hungry and dying of thirst. I longed for purpose and meaning in life and tried to fill my hunger and thirst with achievements, girls, weed and alcohol only for the hunger to intensify. I could sense God working in my life and getting a hold of me but I didn't know where to go or what to do. Then some guys on my high school football team had the guts to invite me to a youth rally at their church. That night I heard about Jesus, the Bread of life. I learned he was bigger than my problems and my needs. I learned that if I believed in him I could live forever. I realize now I wasn't there that night by accident. God was drawing me to himself and opening up my heart to know him. I responded to his invitation to come and I placed my trust in him and began a life long journey of following Jesus. God then gave me a hunger for his word and every morning I'd get up early before school and read the Bible allowing my soul to be filled and

quenched. Has my life been easy and worry free since then? Of course not. I am a sinner saved by grace. What I continue to learn and what this passage teaches us all is this—Jesus, the Bread of Life, is bigger than all our problems and needs. Whoever believes in him will live forever.

What's keeping you from trusting God to meet your needs? He promises to do so if you will place your needs in his hands. He may not answer your prayers the way you want, but he'll give you daily bread. What is keeping you from trusting God to deal with your problems? We can either be people who are problem-centered or Jesus-centered. When Jesus is at the center of our lives our problems become much smaller because we have the right perspective. Remind yourself today that Jesus is the Great I Am. If he can walk on water and calm the storm surely he can deal with your problems. He may not fix them, but he'll be with you

through them. If you are not a follower of Jesus, what's keeping you from eating the bread of life this morning? Like the crowd are you grumbling to yourself thinking, "I don't believe in this god stuff." All you need is faith the size of a mustard seed. That's all Jesus is asking of you this morning. Simply come to him and say all that I am and all I hope to be I give to you this morning. The Bible tells us to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God that he may lift you up (1 Peter 5:6). I'm going to pray and ask God to continue to work in your life and in your heart.

Jesus, the Bread of Life, is bigger than all our problems and needs. Whoever believes in him will live forever.

Do you believe that this morning?

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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