

## 072824 English Sermon "Five Loaves and Two Fish" John 6:1-15

In the miracle of the five loaves and two fish, Jesus proclaimed the Gospel in the field of Bethsaida, and the people did not leave Him. The sun had set. Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" Verse 6 said, "He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do." Let's pause here.

There is probably not a single person among us who likes tests, neither when you were a student nor as an adult. But often, when we read the Gospels, we come across scenes where the Lord tests the faith of His disciples. Jesus often allows us to face challenges to test and grow our faith. Philip's response here and other disciples' responses in other Gospels reflect a common human tendency to rely on our own understanding and resources.

"Lord, it's a remote place. We cannot get anything to feed these people."

"Lord, it's evening. It's too late to get something to eat."

"Lord, even if we had 200 denaris (about \$20,000), that would not be enough! We have no money."

What they said were all true. These are all based on facts. They are words that reflect their reality and situation very well. When doing something, we often consider all the possibilities. It's good to be cautious, but there are times when we just worry too much and can't do anything, can't move even one step forward.

In this situation, while all the other disciples were only thinking about the reasons why they could not do it, Andrew came to Jesus with a boy who had a lunchbox containing two fish and five loaves of bread. And as we know, what was accomplished was not done according to the facts, but it was initiated by faith.

In the Bible, we do not know the motive of the boy who brought his lunch box to the Lord, whether it was his own idea or because his parents told him to do so. But there was clearly a pure heart and sacrifice of a child who saw the Lord looking for something for people to eat and wanted to give Him his own lunch. There was also Andrew, who believed that the Lord would surely do something with even the smallest thing.

A miracle happened through Andrew and the little boy. I'm pretty sure Jesus blessed not only the food but also the gathering, the people. Then everyone ate and satisfied. And when they gathered up what was left, they had 12 baskets full. Jesus performed this miracle through their faith and small acts of faith.

Faith is seeking the kingdom of God and will of the Lord in given circumstances. Faith is not just a thought, a momentary conviction, or an easily changed emotion; Faith is trusting that God, by his grace, will lead you in the right path, even when it seems as though you are in the valley of the shadow of death. That's faith!

John 6:14-15 said, "When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, 'This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.' 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."

Because it was not Jesus' teachings that filled their hearts but the miraculous bread that filled their stomachs, they wanted to make Jesus their king and possess him for themselves. They did not follow Jesus' teachings that awakened their hearts and followed him according to his teachings, but they followed him according to the bread.

Deuteronomy 8:3 said, "He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord."

Jesus captured these Words in Matthew 4:4, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

In other words, it is an invitation to change from a life lived to solve endless problems to a life of relying on God's word and having fellowship with God.

There is a story I would like to share with you.

One day, a king called three servants to test their loyalty and said, "Go and fill these jars with water from the pond." But all the jars had holes in the bottom, and so two servants soon gave up. However, the last servant faithfully continued to pour water from the pond into the jars because the king said so. And eventually, the water in the pond was almost gone and its floor was exposed. I don't know how big the pond was, but he must have thought a lot

what he was doing and sweated a lot before scooping out all the water from the pond.

However, there was a glittering and shining thing in the middle of the pond, and it was a big gold bar. This servant took this gold to the king and explained what had happened, and the king was overjoyed! He rejoiced at the loyal obedient servant and rewarded the servant with the gold found. From then on, the king trusted the servant and entrusted him with great responsibility.

I think we can all relate to this story. Often our attention is only on the jar. If the jar is filled with water, we think the problem will be solved. Whether you have financial problems, health problems, or relationship problems right now, you think that if you could just solve those problems, everything would be fine, but even if you do, another problem will just be waiting for you.

When the problem we think of doesn't get solved right away, when we feel like the jar is broken and no matter how much water we pour into it, it's no use, we are quick to want to give up. But remember! Maybe, God's plan is not to fill the jar, but to expose the bottom of the pond! A broken jar is not the end of the world; it can create new beginnings, new possibilities in the presence of God. God often prepares treasure in places we do not expect at all.

When we read the story of the five loaves and two fish in different Gospels, Jesus directly said to his disciples, 'Give them something to eat,' certainly knowing that there was not enough food for the crowd. When the Lord says to you or when you feel in your heart that it is a voice from God, just try to obey him. And don't just look at your broken situation, but pray to see where God's will is and whether there is a new opportunity He wants to show you, like the bottom of a pond being revealed and gold hidden in the floor is revealed.

When I had been serving at my previous church for five years, seven years ago in 2017, one day a part of the ceiling of the sanctuary collapsed. The church building was almost 200 years old, and the ceiling of the sanctuary had been damaged by rain for a long time. When the ceiling collapsed, my heart collapsed too. And I prayed, 'Lord, the number of people is increasing, and last year, an education center was dedicated, and this year, a new playground was built for the children. Half of the congregation are Yale college and graduate students. Why is there a large-scale renovation of the sanctuary at such a time as this? What should we do?'

In that desperate situation, God gave me this answer to my prayer. 'The church renovation project is not your job, but my job. Don't try to force me into your work, but become a participant in my ministry. You just have to respond to this with faith...' So my wife and I talked about what we could do, and we decided to make a building donation first! The following Sunday, I preached a sermon based on the text of the Five Loaves and Two Fish and shared the situation with the congregation.

I have truly seen the miracles God can accomplish through small things like the five loaves and two fish of a boy. After the service, a church member asked to see me briefly and said that it was the first month's income and first fruit of her newly opened nail shop, and that God had inspired her to give it all as a building offering. One church couple, who had financial difficulties and did not have money at the time, was so moved that they sold their wedding jewelry and made a donation.

In another case, a child broke a piggy bank that he had been saving for several years and brought it to church. There were some church members who pledged large sums of money even though they were in really difficult situations. In just three weeks, the congregation pledged over \$240,000. What started out that way was completed two years later with \$500,000 construction project, and by the grace of God the dedication ceremony was held in November 2019. If you ask me if the miracle of the five loaves and two fish is really possible, I can answer with confidence: Yes, it is!

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, God wants us to experience His presence when we share with others, even when we feel we don't have enough. This passage teaches us that our willingness to give, even out of our shortage, is met with God's miraculous provision and abundant blessing. Let's take these lessons to heart, knowing that in our moments of giving and sharing, we are not alone. God is with us, working through us, and making His presence known in the midst of our faithfulness and generosity. Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you, your family, your business, your studies, and with the lives of your children. To Christ be thanks and praise. Amen.