

J.J.

## THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND : A LESSON IN MINISTRY

*John 6: 4 Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. 5 Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" 6 He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. 7 Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little." 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 9 "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?" 10 Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. 11 Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. 12 And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost." 13 So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten.*

**Our theme for this month was about missions.**

**Week 1:** We shared from God's Word, the reason why our Lord came here : To seek and save the lost.

**Week 2:** Ptr. Fred talked about the urgency of the time and the need for missions : We need to "wake up, clean up and dress up" (Romans 13:11-12)

**Week 3 :** Rey Awatin who is a missionary shared with us the need to pray for missionaries. "Pray for their Spiritual life, Pray for Financial Provision

**It is crucial that we not only talk about mission but also act on it.**

**BONO CLAPS HIS HANDS** There's a story going around when the biggest rock band in the world U2 in one of their concerts, Bono, the lead singer who is an advocate of ending extreme poverty in the world stopped singing in the middle of the concert and started to slow clap. He said every time he claps his hands, a child in Africa dies. He wanted to bring awareness of what's happening in that continent. Then he started to slow clap again his hands and then reminds the people again that each time he claps his hands another child dies in Africa. He does this several times and reminds people that each time he claps his hands, a child dies in Africa until someone from the audience shouted, "Then stop clapping your hands."

**Now, I won't clap my hands but last year alone in 2023, 61 million people died.**

(Source : ourworldindata.org)

Let's say half of them were not believers, **that's roughly 30 million people who went to hell because they were without our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**We need to make missions a priority.**

**But someone might say, "We're just a small church – how can we impact the world?"**

**And this is why by God's grace, we'll hear from God's Word today about feeding the five thousand.**

### **Background :**

- **You can see the story in all of the four Gospels.** And we will refer to some of the verses in the other Gospels
- **But it is only in the Gospel of John, where we find**

### **Jesus was using this incident to test the disciple Philip :**

*5....“Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?” 6 He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do.*

**Side note on verse 6...** our Lord already knows what to do in an impossible situation. Again, He is testing how the disciples see Him.

### **And it is only in the Gospel of John where we find out where the bread and the fish came from.**

*8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 9 “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish*

- **Let us also remember, that the five thousand mentioned here are only men.**

*Matthew 14: 21 The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.*

**So let's say, the 3,000 of the men have families.** And the women had a minimum of one child each. So this could be a minimum of feeding 11,000 people. Some pastors estimate, the number could go up to 25,000 people being fed.

**This is a great miracle indeed!**

**Today, we'll talk about the lesson in ministry so that we can impact many.**

In ministry, we need tenderness for people, sureness in the Lord and a readiness to serve.

## **I. TENDERNESS FOR PEOPLE**

**CONTEXT:** Jesus learned that John the Baptist was killed by Herod. He asked the disciples to go to a quiet place to get some rest.

**But the people heard where he was going and followed him.** In fact, the crowd got ahead of them.

Remember, you wanted to get some rest. You are tired, you are sad because one of your good friends just got killed and you are hungry.

*Mark 6:31 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.”*

**And then you saw a crowd, waiting for you when you have been doing a lot of healing at that time already.**

**I would understand if Jesus wouldn't want to minister at that time. He's tired, he's sad and he's hungry.**

**DON'T WANT TO GO TO CHURCH** There's the story of a wife who was asking her husband to go to church and they were already late. But the husband doesn't want to get out of bed. The wife said, "Let's go, we'll be late for church." The husband, still in bed, said, "I don't want to go, people don't like me there." The wife said, "It's ok, come on get up and dress up." The husband said, "I don't want to go, people don't appreciate me there." The wife said, "No, we have to go." The husband replied to the wife, "Give me 3 reasons why we have to go." The wife answered, "1. We go there for the Lord. 2. We are going there to serve people and #3, you are the pastor of the church." That's why you have to go.

**Jesus had all the reason to not see the crowd and choose to rest. But here's our Lord's reaction when he saw them.**

*Matthew 14:14 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.*

*Mark 6: 34 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.*

**As a church, we need to have compassion on people** specially to those who are not yet saved.

**Etymology :** compassion "splanchnizomai" where we get the word "spleen"

It's coming from the gut...(that's why when you're nervous, you want to vomit). It is said that the gut or the bowels is the seat of love and pity. Compassion is a show of tenderness and emotion because you love and pity their situation.

**Remember, when we hurt, He hurts too. It's a mark of God.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ when telling the story of the prodigal Son described the Father who saw the prodigal son who **was lost with compassion.**

*Luke 15:20 "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.*

**Our Lord wept when he stood over the grave of Lazarus..**

**Another example :** This is the reason in his healing of the people, **it's not because He has to, you will see it several examples in the Gospels...He was healing them out of compassion. He saw the need physically and most importantly spiritually! (they were like sheep without a shepherd.)**

**Quote :** To have an impact on people, **we need to have compassion on them like Jesus Christ.**

The reason we are concerned about missions, about serving those who are less fortunate than us is because we have compassion over them – their situation here on earth and for those who are not saved, their situation for eternity.

One of the reasons why we support children in Compassion Canada – they are not only looking at the physical needs but more importantly looking at the spiritual needs of the children.

## **II. SURENESS IN THE LORD.**

### **When the Lord asked Philip**

*5... "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" 6 He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do.*

Here's the reply of Philip :

*7 Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little."*

**Note :** 1 denarii is equal to a day's wage.

### **What's the reply of the disciples in the other Gospels?**

*Matthew 14: 15 As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food." (same reply in Mark 6:36 and Luke 9:12)*

### **What's happening here?**

**Philip looked at what they have – they only have 200 denarii.**

### **In Mark, here is what's written :**

*Mark 6: 37 But he answered, "You give them something to eat."  
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?"*

### **In Luke, it was written**

*Luke 9: 13 He replied, "You give them something to eat."  
They answered, "We have **only** five loaves of bread and two fish—unless we go and buy food for all this crowd."*

**Quote :** The disciples looked at their own power and resources, they forgot the power and resources of Jesus Christ.

**Short memory :** Remember, the disciples already saw most of the miracles of our Lord Jesus Christ. He healed everyone in sight. He turned water into wine. He made the deaf hear, the blind see, raised the dead, and commanded the weather to be quiet.

**In short, nothing is impossible with God.**

**And that's what we should be remembering in missions and even in our own lives...**

Don't only say, "nothing is impossible with God." Also say, "ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE WITH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST."

**When it comes to missions and resources, DON'T PUT GOD IN A BOX. HE IS TOO BIG TO FIT IN A BOX.**

**Quote :** We often try to put God in a box. The God who fits in our boxes isn't the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. - A.W. Tozer

**Let's not put our hope and confidence and sureness in ourselves BUT ON GOD.**

**That's the problem with the disciples and with men, we often only look at what we have and what we can do rather than looking what God has and what He can do.**

**Illustration :** I will always love this illustration. The father said to his 7 year old son, testing him to push a big rock. The young child pushed as hard as he can but he can't. The father said, "Use all your strength and power." The young child pushed again and the stone did not move and said, "I can't do it." The father said again, "You can do it. Use all your strength and power." The son tried again, and said again, "I can't do it." The father asked him, "Did you use all your strength and power?" The son said, "yes." The father said, "No son, you did not because you did not ask for my help."

**That's what happens when we use all our strength and power and things are not happening, we get frustrated.** We give up and says, it can't be done. **It's the same with missions, REMEMBER, WE NEED TO REMEMBER THAT WE HAVE OUR LORD WHO IS THE MULTIPLIER!!!**

### **III. READINESS TO SERVE**

**Now imagine this : Jesus already asked them right at the beginning how should we feed them?**

Options that they thought of :

1. Buy food but their money is not enough.
2. Send people home before it gets dark.
3. As implied, they asked people around if they brought some food that they can perhaps share.

**That's why?**

*Matthew 14: 16 Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."*

*17 "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered. (You can also see this in Mark 6:38 and Luke 9:13)*

**But where did the bread and fish come from?**

*John 6: 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 9 "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?"*

**Part of being ready to serve is – SHARE WHAT YOU HAVE.**

**Examples :** You have money, share it with others. You have food, share it with others. Share your home for Bible study. You have a gift of teaching or singing or serving...share it.

**Now, the one thing that the disciples did well is they obeyed immediately.** When Jesus asked them to do something, the immediately obeyed.

*<sup>10</sup> Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. (You can also see this in Matthew 14:19)*

**That's part of readiness to serve.** When God asks you to do something...Do it immediately.

**READY TO SERVE : OBEY IMMEDIATELY**

The disciples did not question, why? Why would we ask them to sit down when there's no food.

**Illustration:** I was a boy scout in the Philippines when I was young and the motto of the Scouts then was “Laging Handa”. It means always be ready.

It’s the same with serving the Lord, we should be “Laging Handa”

**Now look, at our Lord’s instructions :**

*Mark 6: 39 Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. 40 So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties.*

*Luke 9:14 But he said to his disciples, “Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each.” 15 The disciples did so, and everyone sat down.*

**This gives us also an insight when it comes to serving God...**

**Disorganized Van: During Christmas Eve (Dec 24) in the Philippines after the Christmas Eve service,** one of the ministries of the church is we load the van with food and go around the city to find homeless and street children and give them food for Christmas eve. So we drive around and we hand food. There was one thing we never anticipated, people would be “dumug” (chaotically surrounding and chasing the van) and that hands were all over the place...it was chaotic. One of the church members, male, who also came from the streets, got so mad that he started kicking some of the people and swearing at them.

I’m not giving an excuse for the behaviour of the man, that was really uncalled for. But I was thinking, this would have been prevented when we would have been more prepared and organized in distributing food.

The reason why I’m telling this story is because that’s the reason our Lord asked the disciples to group the people and asked them to sit down. Remember, these folks are tired and hungry already and when they see the food, there will be chaos because people will have their share.

To be unorganized will give an opportunity for the devil to disrupt what should have been a good thing.

**That’s why in ministry and in missions, there needs to be order in our service.**

*1 Corinthians 14:33 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people.*

**Example :** This is the reason why when you want to give to missions or there are special donations to be made, Kuya Tony will encourage us to give it through the church, so it will be organized for tax purposes, for reporting to the government and etc.

And then the elders pray and then decides which mission organization or missionary we can support by God’s grace.

**That’s how we will create an impact when it comes to missions.**

**Now, one last thing when it comes to our readiness to serve.**

**In Mark, it was written :**

*Mark 9: 31 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.”*

**And you know already what happened, the crowds came, Jesus began healing and teaching. They had no rest and they haven’t eaten anything also and now they are feeding the crowd.**

**Illustration :** Simon Sinek wrote a book about Leadership. In the book, he asked the Marine Corps General, General Flynn (remember, the U.S. Marines are the best soldiers in the U.S.Armed Forces). Simon Sinek asked General Flynn, “What makes the Marines so great?” General Flynn looked at him and said, “Officers Eat Last”... and that’s why he titled the book, “Leaders eat last.”

It’s so different from the world, where people only look after themselves and the look first for number one which is themselves before anyone else.

**But as Christians, we put ourselves as last...even if sometimes we are already tired and hungry.**

**That’s what ministry, serving is all about... PUT OTHERS FIRST ABOVE YOUR OWN NEEDS.**

**Isn’t that what our Lord said?**

*Mark 9:35 Jesus sat down and called the followers to Him. He said, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be last of all. He will be the one to care for all.”*

*Matthew 20:26 Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—*

**That’s why in order for us to have an impact when it comes to ministry –**

- We need to have Tenderness to people
- We need to have Sureness in our Lord.
- We need to have Readiness To Serve

**AND WHEN WE DO THAT...SEE HOW GOD MULTIPLIES WHAT WE HAVE IN ORDER TO SERVE AND SAVE MANY**

Now, let me end with this story, **to understand the urgency when it comes to missions.**

**STORY :** (Video) Cameraman Ian Mcguire who is also a skydiver has already logged in hundred of jumps from an airplane recording people on his rigged camera. One day in 1988, he was doing his usual thing of jumping off the airplane to film people. It was his third jump for the day, meaning, they jumped, parachuted then landed first time and then the second time. On the third time, he jumped from the back of the airplane while the other two skydivers jumped from the front of the plane. He was filming them. The two skydivers who were together pulled the parachute already. But when Ian reached out for his cord, he realized, he did not have a parachute. Since he was used to jumping already, he mistakenly thought that the backpack camera that he has was his parachute.

When he realized that, there's nothing he can do and his last words that were recorded was, "Oh my God, no!"

The reason why I told this story is because a lot of people think they are safe and they are ok, not knowing that without Jesus who is their parachute, when they die, they will realize, too late that their souls are plunging into hell and the only thing they can say is, "Oh my God, no".

That's why it's very important for us to make sure we are true to our mission and we are in the mission of saving souls through Christ Jesus our Lord.

**S.G.D.**