

Greetings! Yesterday was our Independence day and we give thanks to God for the freedom we enjoy in our country. We need to pray regularly for our country that God's blessings would be upon her. Our theme for this morning is that 'God multiplies the gifts of the generous giver.' In the gospel reading for today we see a large crowd of people follow Jesus because they had seen him doing signs and wonders and healing the sick. Jesus goes up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. Mark is describing a picture for us to visualize. It was also a time when the Jewish Passover festival was near. The crowds were coming towards Jesus and he asked Philip, 'Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?' Mark as the narrator tells us that Jesus knew what he was going to do but was only testing Philip to see what answer he would come up with. Philip saw the huge crowd and said that it would take half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite. In other words Philip was looking at the enormity of the crowd and the impossibility of humanly doing anything to salvage that situation. Many a time we too are in the midst of situations which seem too enormous for us and that we cannot salvage it by any human processes. How do we respond in situations like that? Do we trust in a God who is bigger than all our situations or are we swamped with the enormity of the problems that are before us? How does Jesus change this situation?

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother spoke up and said there was a small boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish. Just imagine the little boy's mother would have known that he would be hungry soon and so we see both the fish and the barley loaves were small, basically good enough for a child. The child seems to have volunteered to give his lunch probably overhearing the conversation about how to feed so many. Here was a little boy who was a generous giver and gave out of all that he had. He was willing to give his lunch for the sake of others. Jesus then tells the disciples to have the people seated on the grass on the mountainside. Mark records for us that there were five thousand men. Women and children were not taken into account and so the figure could have possibly been double or more.

What does Jesus do? Jesus took the bread, gave thanks to God, and distributed to those who were seated and they ate as much as they wanted. In a similar manner he took the fish and gave thanks and gave it to the people to eat. When they had all eaten enough Jesus asked his disciples to gather the leftovers so that nothing should be wasted. The disciples went around gathering the leftovers and they collected twelve baskets full. Jesus took a small offering made by a little boy and used that to feed a multitude. Jesus multiplied the gifts of a generous giver. The small boy who never even thought for a moment about his own hunger gave everything to Jesus who took it and blessed it so that it became a blessing to many. Jesus teaches several truths from this passage. First of all that God can change impossible situations to possible ones. Philip never ever imagined that the crowd could be fed, but Jesus did that miraculously. Secondly, we see the unselfish nature of the little boy who does not think about himself but about the needs of others.

By collecting the twelve baskets full Jesus was showing that he was indeed the bread of life and that he was sufficient for the twelve tribes of Israel. Later on in the same chapter Jesus says, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty" (John 6:35 NIV). Jesus himself is the true bread who can sustain us spiritually. Jesus shows himself to be the Messiah who will sustain all Israel. The people also thought that he was the prophet who was to come into the world. Jesus continues to offer himself to us as the bread of life so that we may feed on him. All this was possible because a little boy gave up his lunch and gave it generously for the sake of others. God took that gift and multiplied it. May we also truly be generous givers.

Shalom,
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