

God of the Impossible: Jesus feeds the 5,000

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[0 : 00] All right. I want to return to our collect of the day. I was really moved by this. I think the Holy Spirit's active right now here. And I just want to pray this. Let's pray together. O God, whose never-failing providence orders all things both in heaven and earth, we humbly beseech you that during this, the preaching of your word, you would put away from us all hurtful things and give us those things which are profitable for us.

May only the truth be spoken and only the truth be heard through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. I'm just going to move this until my mic comes out.

Then I'll have to use it. I'm still in cottage mode. I don't know if you can tell. I'm just kind of like, whew, okay, here we go. Amy and I got back yesterday. My head's still a little bit in the clouds. I was crying when I put my boat away into the garage. I'll get it out. I swear I'll get it out again today or this year before I have to winterize it. There's a time in ministry to down tools.

There's a time to get away and to do the things and just enjoy creation, enjoy our families. But then there's also a time in ministry to clear our heads, slam it back down into gear, and get to work.

[1 : 17] And that's kind of where we are now as a church. And it can be a little bit jarring. I was talking actually with Gary Graber, who's the academic dean of Ryle, and he was saying he was kind of feeling the same thing getting back from Phoenix, from his holidays.

It can be very jarring. And the reason I say that is when we look at the feeding of the 5,000, which I'm going to be focusing on, Luke 9, 10 to 17, there's a Bible down here for you.

If you don't have one, it's our gift to you. Basically, Jesus is trying to get the disciples to shift into gear here and to start really taking up their ministry.

And as you're going to see, for the disciples here and after, throughout Luke, he's just dragging them along here, trying to get them to get along with a program, get along with business.

It's a little bit jarring for them. Other than the resurrection, the feeding of the 5,000 is the only miracle that is found in all four Gospels.

[2 : 22] So that says something to us. That speaks to us of the importance of this story for the early church as they sought to share the Gospel in an alien world. So I really think it's important for us to park there and focus on it, especially as we get into a season where we're revving back up for ministry here in Ottawa.

There's a whole host of themes from Jesus' life and ministry that all come together here in this story.

We see compassion. We see his control, his sovereignty over creation. We see how he provides for his people. We see Old Testament themes that actually are woven into this passage.

End times themes that we're going to see in Revelation when you read there. They're actually woven through here. Now, I can't go through all of that stuff. We'd be here all afternoon. But it's important for us to realize that those are there.

That these things exist in the passage. Because Jesus is bringing it all together and he's trying to challenge his disciples to up their expectations for what is possible in ministry.

[3 : 34] He's just trying to get them to up those expectations. Last week, we were in Luke 7.

Obviously, after that, we're flashing forward a couple of chapters and we're in Luke 9. When we left Jesus last week, he was ministering around the north part, kind of the north part of the Sea of Galilee, popping in and out of some small villages of about a thousand people.

His miracles, though, are getting just a little more profound. And by the time that we come to Jesus now in verse 9, he's moved down to the southwest of the Sea of Galilee.

And as he's gone there, his message is starting to pick up momentum. And then he's gone across the Sea of Galilee to the east side.

So he's just, he's surrounding that whole region and something's starting to stir. As I mentioned, Amy and I were at, and that's where we're picking him up, Amy and I were at camp for the last while.

I love to fish. I always try to talk about fishing in my sermons. It's just something that I grew up doing in Halliburton. And one of the, you know, where we are in Bancroft, the water is often very serene on Faraday Lake.

[4 : 43] There's hills all around us so that the way, the wind very seldom kicks up too much waves. And so I can stand, I'm in a little 14 foot boat with a flat bottom. I can stand there and I can just do my thing and kind of have my Zen moment with the Lord, bringing in whatever it is that he deigns to put onto my hook.

And it's a wonderful moment until about two o'clock in the afternoon when the camp starts taking kids on their tubing rides in their 300 horsepower ski natique.

And it's a big round bay. And while I'm there, I can hear it start up and they start with the kids and then they start going around.

And I don't know if you've ever seen a boat that big and the waves that come off it, they're pretty large. And they don't just have one of these boats, they have two of them. And so the boat starts and when this one gets here, the next one starts.

And for two to three hours, they're just having a blast going around and around in that bay. And in my little fishing boat, I'm no longer standing. It's undeniable.

[5 : 50] The waves are crashing off each other, which is part of the point when you're tubing. And everything's getting churned up. You know, I still might be trying to relax, but I'm not standing anymore. In contrast to last week where Jesus is kind of just in a small area, his ministry and his reputation is spreading out all around the sea.

He's just circling the Sea of Galilee here, like those boats. And his waves are just crashing off everything to the point that the royal family, if you just look back in 9-7, you know, the royal family is starting to take notice of what Jesus is doing here.

There are very few people in that entire region that aren't aware of Jesus at this moment and aren't trying to figure out who it is that he is. And his parables are starting to pick up momentum.

I just commend you from 7 to 9 to start reading some of those parables. They're coming very pointed at the people, at his disciples, at the leadership. And also his miracles are becoming more and more astounding.

Last week he healed over a distance. He didn't even need to see the centurion's daughter. He's raising people from the dead. So things are, his ministry is just really starting to pick up at this moment.

[7 : 03] And here he is across on the east side of the sea and his disciples are just, you know, they're hanging on for dear life. And then he turns to them and he sends them out with the same power and authority, he says, that he's been using.

No details are given, but we are probably, they probably have the same experiences of healing and ministry that they have in Luke 10, 17. But that's where we pick up.

That's what they're returning from and what's going on. When we read, on their return, the apostles told him all that they had done and he took them and withdrew apart to a town called Bethsaida.

Following the report, right away, we see the compassion of our God. We see the compassion of Jesus. He cares for how hard this ministry is. And so what does he do? He takes them to Bethsaida to get away.

So he's on the east side, I've said, of the Sea of Galilee. Now they've actually, Mark says, gotten into a boat and they've crossed the 13 kilometers to the Sea of Bethsaida and they put in, so they're trying to escape those crowds, they put in and they find themselves a desolate place.

[8 : 17] Somewhere quietly, verse 12 says, you know, on the outside of town in a desolate place for some time away together. And then we see when the crowds learned it, they followed him and welcomed him and he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God and cured those who needed healing.

We're not sure how long they were there, but we get the sense, you know, that they were ultimately foiled. That they ultimately, the crowds found them. If Mark is indeed talking about the same instance, Mark says, you know, they looked, they saw the direction he was going and they must have gotten in the bigger boat or had more guys paddling and they made it there before him and

were actually waiting for him when he got there.

And we see some, some heroic patience in Jesus here at this moment. Now, when I'm done preaching and doing communion twice and we've, we've enjoyed fellowship together, when I get home in the afternoon, it just goes better for everybody if you don't disturb the NFL and NASCAR for me.

You just, it draws, ministry can just draw that out of you and you just need that time to down tools. And so that's where they are and that's the mindset they're in and they get there and there's people. And what does Jesus do? Passage says that Jesus welcomes them. And the term that it is here, there's a certain kind of welcome it's talking, it's not, this is not the welcome of a teacher on the last day of school.

[9 : 48] This is the welcome of a teacher on the first day of school. He welcomes them gladly with open arms. He preaches and He heals them. They crossed 13 kilometers, that's roughly from town out to the junction, out to the Bayshore Mall.

They paddled that far. They don't have a 300 horsepower boat, they have 12 disciple power on paddles. And they went that far to get away and Jesus welcomed them. That, friends, is patience. Thank God that's the patience that the Lord has for us. Now I might be projecting and I probably am, but I hear some exhaustion in the disciples when they say, now the day began to wear away so He's been doing this all day.

The disciples are just standing there and the 12 came and said to Him, send the crowd away to go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find lodging and get provisions for we're here in a desolate place where they put in.

You know, to be honest, they're making sense logistically. They're His interns, they're His disciples. It's their job basically to think about the small stuff so He can focus on the big stuff. So they're doing their job.

[10 : 58] There is interns learning ministry from the ground up and what do they see when they look at the people that are there? What they see are people who aren't locals.

Okay? These are people who it's not going to be easy for them to find a place or food in the night. They don't have one of these where they can turn on their data, Google, and, you know, there's a Best Western with Continental Breakfast down the road.

They don't know anybody here. They don't know Bob on the other side of the road where they can just kind of stop in for the night. It is going to take, it takes time, it takes effort, it's not going to be easy for 5,000 people to find somewhere to be.

And so we see Jesus responds to them not by saying, oh, okay, yes, let's send them off like, you know, I probably would have or you would have. Instead, he commissions the disciples to take up their ministry and provide for his sheep.

Let's see, verse 13. But he said to them, you give them something. They said, we have no more than five loaves and two fish unless we are to go and buy food for all these people away from here, Lord.

[12 : 09] You know, he's asking the impossible and I really, they pointed out to him and I have to say I identify with this often in ministry, friends, you know, things seem impossible.

I think about Messiah here. The Lord says, go start a seminary. The Lord says, go plant a couple churches. To us as individuals, the Lord is calling us to share the faith with people for whom Jesus' name is a swear word.

This seems impossible. It seems impossible. It's supposed to. Our ministry and our calling is supposed to be impossible.

It's supposed to seem that way for one reason. Same reason was for the disciples because it drives us to Jesus. Everything to drive us to Jesus and stop relying on our own power.

Verse 14. For there were about five thousand men and he said to his disciples, have them sit down then in groups of about 50 each. Something's about to happen. Now I've seen five thousand men on a parade square.

[13 : 21] Every year in Petawawa we have a wonderful what we call a gut check which is a twenty kilometer ish rucksack march with four thousand nine hundred and ninety nine of your favorite friends and we sit there and they people who aren't going to walk twenty kilometers are going to watch us do it.

Get up and you know say all kinds of wonderful things about how great this is going to be for us and then we sit there and we get up and we go for a walk and it is a mass of humanity.

It's a feat of logistical wizardry just to provision us to stand up with our rucksacks and walk just to do that is it's almost an impossible if you took a group of people it takes them a month just to figure this thing out it's difficult when you start talking about thousands of people we're talking about a mass of humanity here and it's pretty obvious that Jesus doing that for the disciples he's asking for the impossible but in light of just having upped their ministry they've been going around he's been taking them around on the leash he seems to be calling something out of the disciples that they don't know is there but he does through him and I wonder if God is calling you right now he's trying to call something out of you that you don't know is there but he does what is that thing this morning at that moment he grips the situation he creates some order out of it and then we read in taking the five loaves and the two fish he does the traditional Jewish thing he's offering it there's actually a prayer that he would use to offer it to heaven and he looked up to heaven said the blessing over him the normal

Jewish blessing then he broke the loaves and he gave the disciples to set before the crowd and through their connection to Jesus and because they turned to him at this impossible moment the disciples have enough more than enough everybody has a full meal some interpreters like to say that you know well this is a ritual meal and everybody had just a little bit says like everybody ate to their full and there was baskets left over we actually say read what the text says everybody ate to their full and I think it's a pretty obvious and simple message that Jesus meets needs but added to that God's provision comes through his disciples his providing for the world comes through his church and they need to learn to take on the impossible by engaging with him we need to learn to take on the impossible things of ministry in the western world by engaging deeper with him now why does this matter

I think it's very easy for us to get settled into a human view of the church and human view of our ministry in the last few years I've been taking some courses and there's a lot of folks from around the world that come to Toronto for these courses we have people from Asia we have people from Africa we have people from Oceania and they come and we all sit and it's just an amazing experience to sit and talk about spiritual things within that kind of crucible and one of the things we learn from those elsewhere is how they view the western church and they really see us as powerless friends like when they come and they look at the over and over again I heard you know one of the observations of the west is our lack of trust in God's power we have all kinds of trust in our own power all kinds of trust in what I can do with my eloquence not a lot of trust in God's power Proverbs 3:5 says of course trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding many of my fellow students believe very strongly that the Holy Spirit is quenched here for all our riches it is quenched in North America and we miss out or explain away as miracles whereas healings and revival and all these things happen in their home countries happen where they are and we wonder why it doesn't happen here and they have very simple explanation for it now I'm not saying that we all need to be charismaniacs for those who grew up in that like I did but what I submit to you is that there's a striking element of truth in what our brothers and sisters tell us when they come here and this passage stands in challenge of that

[18:03] Jesus has just commissioned his disciples he's given them a taste of what can happen but spoon feeding time is over for them in the western church friends spoon feeding time in this this culture that's that's going back to normal I mean history the normal thing is that the world's against us as Christians and in the western church spoon feeding time is almost over if it isn't already this passage speaks to us at this time and this place Jesus is passing on his torch to the disciples and he's passing it on to us and if we're going to take on this impossible ministry in this world that's turned against Jesus we need to learn greater trust and as individuals in a church we need to be focused on how can we engage more with Jesus everything else is secondary how can we engage as a community together more with

Jesus do not fear but believe he says so many times in the gospels so I have our to do I have us something to consider I want us to consider something this week in engagement with God's word I want you to consider whether you're a believer whether you're just here as a seeker this morning wondering about this God thing do you have a sneaky suspicion that you were made for more do you have a thought that maybe you've bought into a vision of your purpose that is smaller than what it really is do we have that suspicion together as a church that we were meant for more we want to

consider and then as you can see in the growing in grace section or what do we call it this morning growing in grace section I want us to engage with the part two of Luke's gospel is the book of Acts and I commend that to you because we see this working itself over over and over and over again in the book of Acts so for your devotions this week while while you to know to read read the story of how the early church was just constantly called to more and engage with that that that's our challenge I just want to leave that with you and commit that to you the power of Jesus changes the equation of what is possible stop this week consider this week and engage and I prayed about this and I really feel it's a particular message for us there are a host of bold ministries that our board is looking at right now they've spoken about with us in the spring they've commended it to us for prayer over the summer and I really hope we have been and if not that we're going to start fervently praying for these things we're looking at launching into over the next year or so ministries, new ministries we have our ministries we're looking to continue to grow and I really hope that as a church we can hold things as they are right now because things are great even though 417 is closed and everybody from the west isn't here this morning things are great so I really hope that we can hold the way things are in our church with an open hand though and offer it to God for whatever he has coming next considering the ways considering the ways that we can take each new vision that comes to us from our leadership with prayer considering the ways that Jesus is calling each of us as individuals to more to more of life and to more of him

I mean you know the man rose from the dead he rose from the dead three days in a tomb dead alive anything else he asks us as a church friends it's just child's play anything else he asks of you and me just child's play in his power let's pray loving God I give you thanks for for the mission that you've given us as a church I give you thanks for our leadership for the many ministries and interns that we have we just pray Lord God that you would give our board give our leadership a clear vision and you would give us the boldness that you would give us the vision and the power to make that dream a reality in Jesus name we pray Amen