

THE FIVE LOAVES AND TWO FISH

John 6:1-15

Key Verse: 6:9

"Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"

In John's gospel there are seven miraculous signs: First, turning water into sweet wine (2:1-11). Second, healing the royal official's son (4:43-54). Third, healing the man who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years (5:1-9a). Fourth, feeding the 5,000 hungry people (6:1-15). Fifth, walking on water in the middle of the night (6:16-24). Sixth, opening the eyes of the blind man (9:1-7). Seventh, raising the dead Lazarus (11:38-44). These signs help us open our spiritual eyes to see that Jesus is God. In today's passage, Jesus' feeding the 5,000 people is the fourth miraculous sign in John's gospel. All miracles were done not to demonstrate his magic power. But they were done because Jesus had a great shepherd heart for his people and wanted his disciples to do the same for God's flock. His feeding the 5,000 people teaches us that Jesus has a great shepherd heart. Jesus also teaches us to have faith to feed the 5,000 hungry people with five small loaves and two small fish.

I. Jesus' shepherd heart (1-9)

First, Jesus' company's vacation was frustrated by the crowd of people (1-4). Look at verse 1. "Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias)." According to John's gospel, it seems that the preceding event was the healing of the invalid man (5:2-9). According to the flow of the gospel narratives, the evangelistic journey seems more adequate (Mk 6:7,30,31). The evangelistic journey for the disciples was intensive for the sake of evangelistic campaign to come in the future. During the time of the evangelistic journey, they had had exciting experiences. In the past, no one had ever listened to them. But when the disciples depended on the authority of Jesus, "They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them" (Mk 6:13). After the evangelistic journey, Jesus knew that the disciples needed some rest. So Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee with his disciples. Perhaps the [sun](#) had already begun to set as the disciples got into the boat. As the sun slipped behind the western horizon and the boat glided smoothly through the placid water, the disciples were very happy, so happy that they began to sing. They enjoyed the cool sea breeze and the gentle sound of waves. What a surprise! Out of nowhere, they heard something that sounded like the sound of a thunderstorm. But it was not. It was the sound of the crowd. Why did they follow Jesus? It was because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed many times. They went there expecting another miracle of Jesus. All those who came to Jesus were sick or needy people. When we read the gospel stories, we find so many kinds of sick people: the paralyzed, the blind, men with leprosy, and many suffering from demon-possession and those under Satan's torment. So they came to Jesus for help. [The Jewish](#) Passover was near, so people who came to the Passover Feast heard that Jesus was nearby. They came to Jesus one by one until they formed a large multitude. As a result, they frustrated

the vacation of Jesus' company, and they made tremendous impositions on them.

Second, Jesus had compassion on them. The crowd of people frustrated the vacation of Jesus' company. They figured out and somehow came to the place where Jesus and his disciples planned to have a vacation. The crowd of people thronged about them and the vacation was frustrated. But what did Jesus do for them? Jesus went up on the hill so that he might see all the people at a glance without missing one (3). Jesus welcomed them and wanted to help them.

Jesus saw them with shepherd heart. Jesus saw them with God's eyes. Matthew 9:36 says, "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." Jesus was compassionate instead of being irritable. Again, Mark 6:34a says, "When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd." Jesus thought that they were in that miserable situation not because they were wrong, but because they had no shepherd. Jesus saw them with God's shepherd heart. We must also see people as Jesus did. We must also see that their problems came because they had no shepherd. Jesus knew that the people were hungry and that they had to eat something. Jesus was a mother-like shepherd who always wants to give something to her children, good food, good clothes--anything, even herself.

Third, Jesus tests Philip's faith. Look at verse 5. "When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, 'Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?'" Jesus knew that the crowd of people were very hungry. Mark 8:3 says, "If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance." So Jesus said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" When Jesus said this, he hoped that Philip would say, "No problem, sir. I will figure it out by any means, sir. I believe that God helps those who help themselves, sir." But he did not say so. Look at verse 7. "Philip answered him, 'Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!'" He was really a brilliant person. He could estimate the size of the crowd at a glance and give an immediate answer that eight months' wages would not be enough for each to have a bite. But he failed the test mainly because he only calculated, then despaired. Jesus was eager to use brilliant people like Philip. But Jesus could not use Philip, because he depended only on his calculation. Philip was smart. But he had no faith in God. God cannot use those who only calculate. God can use those who have faith in God.

Without being smart, we can't survive in this competitive world. But we must know the meaning of the word "smart." In the dictionary, the first meaning of "smart" is "to cause sharp and stinging pain." The second meaning is "to feel distress or irritation." "Intelligent" or "clever" is the third or fourth meaning. Now we see clearly that the first definition is very true. Many promising young people suffer from anxiety and restlessness. Many brilliant people die of heart attacks caused by anxieties. Many are trying to escape from reason and despair and become a kind of "Unabomber." A young man was asked why he stayed up all night and slept all day. He said, "I can't sleep at night because I suffer from anxiety." When he lived in this way, he became a

college drop-out. Next he became a truck driver. Recently he lost his job.

Philip failed also because he was a nihilist. He always thought from what he did not have. When he thought about the situation of his pocket, he became helpless. Perhaps he regretted being a disciple of poor Jesus. His habit of thinking from what he did not have made him a nihilist. These kinds of people see only what they haven't received from their parents or from God, even though they have received so much. They are very bitter toward others and toward God. These nihilists compare themselves with others and find out what others have and what they don't have. Actually, Jesus had already decided to feed the crowd of 5,000 people (6b). When Jesus asked Philip, "Where shall we buy bread?" it was to test him, to see if he had faith in God or if he had a shepherd heart.

Fourth, Andrew's faith (8-9). Another disciple appears on the stage. He was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. When Andrew had led his brother Simon to Jesus, Jesus was only interested in Simon (Jn 1:42). Jesus seemed to have ignored Andrew as if he were not there. This time, too, Jesus didn't pay any attention to Andrew, but spoke only to Philip, who looked brilliant. Anyway, Andrew drew Jesus' attention. He said in verse 8, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" He brought five small barley loaves and two small fish to Jesus. The loaves and fish Andrew brought were not even his own. Maybe Andrew saw a boy who had brought a lunchbox for himself. Andrew drew near the boy and coaxed him to give them to Jesus. Here, Andrew looks very funny. But we can learn three things from him.

Firstly, Andrew was a man of possibility. Philip thought only of what he didn't have. He didn't have eight months' wages, so he could not feed the 5,000 people. But Andrew was different. He began to think about what he had. He dug into his pocket to see if he had some money. When his finger did not feel money in his pocket, he didn't think that he had no money. He didn't think, "I can't do anything because I have no money." Instead, he began to look around here and there. When he found nothing, he looked around here and there again and again until he found a boy with a small lunch box. He took it away from the boy. I don't know how he talked the boy out of his lunch. Perhaps with a big smile he asked him for his lunch box. "That's it!" But there is more than comedy in this story. We learn from Andrew how to find a certain possibility, even when the situation looks impossible. His full name may have been Andrew the Possible.

Andrew took the five small barley loaves and two small fish away from the boy and brought them to Jesus. He said, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" A little while ago, he had made a little boy cry by taking his lunch box away. Now he made Jesus laugh by offering him this tiny lunch box to feed the crowd of 5,000 people. If he had eight months' wages, he would have tried to feed one million people! Andrew was a man of a certain possibility and a brilliantly creative person.

Secondly, he was a man of faith. He had faith in Jesus. When Andrew brought the five loaves and two fish to Jesus, he knew that they were

not enough to feed the crowd of 5,000 people. But he believed that Jesus would accept these loaves and fish. Yes! Jesus accepted his five loaves and two fish. Andrew was a man of faith. He had faith, "We can do nothing, but Jesus can do everything" (Php 4:13). We are weak, but Jesus is strong! All we have to do is bring five loaves and two fish to Jesus. When Andrew brought five loaves and two fish to Jesus, he was not making fun of anybody. When he brought five loaves and two fish, he was not depending on the lunch box; he was depending on Jesus. He had faith in Jesus. He had faith in Jesus that he would accept his five loaves and two fish as his expression of faith. One young man committed himself to campus evangelism. But he had no special ability. So he had been a doorkeeper of UBF centers for 15 years. His faithfulness was his five loaves and two fish. In God's time he became the Korean UBF director. One young man, the only son of a widow, was persistent in nagging his widowed mother's love. His persistence was his five loaves and two fish. He gave his persistence in doing God's work as his five loaves and two fish. Then, God blessed his ministry. Now he has 900 of God's sheep under his care. God gave each of us at least five loaves and two fish. We must discover what our five loaves and two fish are. We must give them to God. Then God will not only bless us, but also this nation and the world.

Thirdly, he was a man of prayer. "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" When we read this sentence prayerfully, we find that this is Andrew's prayer to Jesus. He knew Jesus' shepherd heart and that Jesus desired to feed the crowd of 5,000 people. When he brought the five loaves and two fish, it was Andrew's earnest prayer. Jesus accepted Andrew's five loaves and two fish and fed the crowd of 5,000 people. Faith makes the impossible possible.

II. Jesus' blessing is overflowing (10-15)

First, Jesus coworks with his disciples (10). When Andrew brought the five loaves and two fish, Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Here we see that Jesus didn't work all by himself. Jesus is not a loner. Jesus coworked with his disciples. To "make-sit-down" job seems to be nothing. But we can't deny the fact that Jesus coworked with his disciples. It is the way of God. God worked with Abraham. Jesus worked with Peter. To cowork or not to cowork makes a big difference in history.

Second, Jesus asked God's blessing upon the five loaves and two fish (11). Verse 11 tells us that Jesus looked at the five loaves and two fish. It was far too small an amount to feed the 5,000 people. But Andrew brought the five loaves and two fish by faith. Jesus prayed to God that he would bless Andrew's faith that he brought the five loaves and two fish. Jesus prayed that God would accept his sincere prayers and feed the crowd of 5,000 people with Andrew's five loaves and two fish.

Third, God's blessing overflows (12-15). What did Jesus do with the five loaves and two fish? He fed the hungry people until they were all satisfied. God blessed Andrew's five loaves and two fish. When they had all had enough to eat, Jesus said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." So they gathered them and

filled 12 baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. God blessed Andrew's faith until it overflowed.

In this passage we learn that we must live by faith, not by calculation. Moreover, we must give our five loaves and two fish to God so that God can bless us and this nation abundantly.