For many of us, the story of the feeding of the 5,000 was one of, if not, the most familiar stories in the Bible. It is recorded in all four of the gospels, with only some slight variations in terms of exactly how many people were reported there, but then again who was really counting? And besides, that’s NOT the most important part of the story anyway.

This miraculous feeding of a multitude came on the heel of a series of miracles that Jesus was about to perform, including walking across the sea and into the disciples’ boat on the other side of the Galilee. Not only did Jesus feed the people spiritually, but he now also fed them physically as well, and with plenty of leftovers to be shared at the end. However, in order for us to understand the magnitude of this miracle event, we must pay more careful attention to the details, and not be content with the obvious of what we see.

In our story today, Jesus and his disciples found themselves once again being surrounded by a multitude. These people came spiritually hungry for Jesus’ teaching, but it was getting late in the day, and this crowd was getting physically hungry as well. All of a sudden, the disciples realized that they had a real crisis at hand. How on earth were they going to feed all those people, 5,000+ not including women and children? That didn’t seem fair to the disciples, did it? Dinner was NOT supposed to be included. You bring your own dinner, or you go home to eat and come back tomorrow. In one of the gospels, Jesus told his disciples that “YOU” give them something to eat. How in the world are the disciples expected to come up with enough food to feed those 5000+ people? Some began to panic, while others turned to Jesus for help!

Somehow Jesus remained calm and took all of this in strides. As he has done in other occasions, Jesus turned this seemingly dire situation into a teaching moment for his disciples and those who followed him around. Jesus was an Opportunist, who took advantage of every opportunity for the sake of furthering the gospel and advancing God’s Kingdom!

However, instead of focusing on the miracle act of feeding, I’m more intrigued by the disciples’ reaction and the choices that Jesus had challenged them to make.

When Jesus asked his disciples whether they would have enough food to feed all those people, where else could they go? There was no Costco or BJ, or a nearby buffet that would feed this many people? But Jesus knew exactly what he was about to do. He was focusing on the much larger picture instead of the smaller details. God will make things right, in spite of the challenges.

One of the disciples, Philip asked “*How in the world are we going to feed all these hungry people? Not even six months of wages would be enough for each person to have a bite!”* Perhaps Philip was just being a pragmatist. Philip saw things as the ways they appear, nothing more, nothing less. It is what it is and not what it may become. Philip was probably a “half-empty” rather than a “half-full” kind of person. Can we really blame him? I’m sure we know someone like that as well.

When Philip was presented with the situation he immediately came to the conclusion that there’s not much else that they can do. We do NOT have enough money to buy food for all these people. Let’s just send these people home and eat on their own and ask them to come back tomorrow morning. We’re not in a business of feeding people. I’m sorry, we just can’t!

On the other hand, there was **Andrew, the opportunist or the idealist**. Andrew seized the opportunity and made the most out of a desperate and seemingly hopeless situation. He kept his eyes opened with what was available before him. Andrew looked around and came across this young boy with a small portion of food (5 loaves and 2 fishes) and he took what the young boy was willing to offer and presented to Jesus. Seriously?!? What’s that going to do, right? That’s not even enough to feed a regular adult. Perhaps Andrew saw something that others didn’t. Andrew was thinking BIG and had faith that Jesus was going to do something with whatever we’ve got. He saw the potential while paying attention to the smaller details.

As you can see, both Philip and Andrew seemed to take on different approach when it comes to their problem-solving skill and perhaps that’s their personality. Imagine if we were in the same situation, how would we have reacted? Some of us might react like **Philip** who concluded that there was simply not much that we could do or try, so we toss our hands up in the air and just sit back, let things happen, and some of us might even whine and complain about the problems that “others” have caused. We come up with different excuses for not trying harder. Oh, we’ve tried that before and it’s not going to work. Why even bother?

Or on the other hand, we could be like **Andrew**, who looked beyond the circumstances and challenges at hand and search for the best possible scenario…try thinking “half-full” instead of being “half-empty”. What can we still salvage out of a seemingly bad situation? Andrew was an opportunist seeking for the solutions rather than getting hung up and being stuck with the problems at hand.

In the midst of all of this madness, what seemed to have gotten shortsighted was the young boy who volunteered his own lunch for others. He was the forgotten unsung hero who stepped up and saved the day. This young boy taught all of the adults a lesson that we should all learn, by stepping up to the challenge and offering up what he had and sharing it with others. Although it wasn’t much, but it meant a lot and others took notice. God took notice. **Perhaps the young boy’s innocent act of giving triggered an outpouring domino effect of giving and sharing among the adults.** The changing of the people’s heart might turned out to be the true miracle on top of another miracle.

**Miracles do happen if we simply lay our trust and faith in the One who graciously provides.** **Our God is a gracious God who lavishly provided out of God’s abundance even when we have little or nothing to offer. God is able to collect our fragments of offering (even a small token offering from a child) and multiple them in accordance to God’s plan and purpose**…**so that nothing may be lost.**

Miracles do happen when people begin to open up and share and to think of others first before ourselves, by seeking the greater good of the community rather than our personal gains. **It wasn’t the size of what the young boy’s offering that fed the multitude, but it was the magnitude of his generous heart, as well as his courageous faith, that the crowd was able to be fed off.**

**You see, in God’s economy, nothing is ever wasted, and that includes people as well.** Don’t ever think that you’re no good, without any skills or talents, or you have nothing more to offer. God will always find a way to use us and challenge us to give and share what we have, in order to fulfill God’s purpose and miracle plan for humankind. As scripture reminds us that “***every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights.[[1]](#footnote-1)***

Our earthly treasures are from above and meant for us to share with others. God knows what we are capable of giving, as well as what we have been holding back.

The challenge that stands before us today is this...think of all the choices that we have to make each day. **How can they be glorifying to God in fulfilling God’s purpose and mission here on earth?** What little parts can we do in offering ourselves to fit into God’s broader missional plan of salvation.

In a moment, this community will be witnessing and presenting one of our children for baptism in response to God’s commitment and faithfulness, as we give thanks and dedicate this child’s life for God’s service and glory. We are dedicating this child and placing her into God’s hands and asking for God’s blessings to be showered upon her and her family. Whatever this child has to offer and whatever God may have installed for her in her future, we know that God will use it for God’s glory. As the prophet Jeremiah once prophesied to the people, *“Before I formed you in [your mother’s] womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."[[2]](#footnote-2)*

By the virtue of our own baptism, whether you were baptized as an adult or as a child, we are reminded not only of God’s covenant made towards us but the commitment and the vow that we’ve made to God through our everyday choices. *A new seed has been planted today for a flower to be blossomed tomorrow.* Each day God continues to carry out minor acts of miracles in our lives by nurturing us, sustaining us, making us whole and fulfilling us of what we have to offer.

Living a Christian life is a life-long journey that requires much personal sacrifice and commitment. **Through our faithful response to God’s grace, we are being challenged day-by-day to do what is the right thing to do. As Micah 6:8 reminds us, “*What does the Lord require of us, but to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God?” [[3]](#footnote-3)***

We may be “fragments” and crumbs that are loosely scattered on the floor, and sometimes our life might seem like a big mess, or as “leftovers” that nobody wants and appreciates, but out of God’s unconditional grace, God collects us, gathers us up into baskets full in order to satisfy the spiritual and physical hunger of others. Nothing is wasted in God’s sight! **This is all God’s doing through us and not our own personal accomplishments!** God is inviting us to take our first step of a much longer journey ahead. It all begins when we say “YES” to God!

So therefore, let us keep our eyes focused on the larger picture, and not so much of the earthly challenges that are before us. All of those shall come to past. But instead focus on the finer details of God’s doing and happenings in life – among those who are the least of us all, those who have been living marginally (from the outside looking in) and have little to offer except of their ALL. Indeed, *God’s grace is sufficient for all of us to share*, especially among those who have little or nothing to give. God’s power is made perfect in our weakness.*[[4]](#footnote-4)*

In the name of God the F/S/HS, Amen.

1. *James 1:17* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Jeremiah 1:5* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Micah 6:8* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *II Corinthians 12:9* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)