

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good; his love endures forever. Amen.

After this, Jesus crossed over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias). ²A large crowd followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he was performing on those who were sick. ³Jesus went up on the hillside and sat down there with his disciples. ⁴The Jewish Passover Festival was near.

⁵When Jesus looked up and saw a huge crowd coming toward him, he asked Philip, “Where can we buy bread for these people to eat?” ⁶But Jesus was saying this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. ⁷Philip answered him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to have just a little.”

⁸One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, ⁹“There’s a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what is that for so many people?” ¹⁰Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” There was plenty of grass in that place, so they sat down. There were about five thousand men. ¹¹Then Jesus took the loaves and, after giving thanks, he distributed pieces to those who were seated. He also did the same with the fish—as much as they wanted.

¹²When the people were full, he told his disciples, “Gather the pieces that are left over so that nothing is wasted.” ¹³So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with pieces from the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

¹⁴When the people saw the miraculous sign Jesus did, they said, “This really is the Prophet who is coming into the world.” ¹⁵When Jesus realized that they intended to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself. **This is the Gospel of the Lord.**

Dear Friends,

Many people have heard the story I just read about Jesus feeding the 5000 with just those five loaves of bread and two fishes. It is one of the Basic Bible Stories we teach in our Sunday School. When this story is told the teacher usually concentrates on how God provides for his people and that certainly is one of the lessons contained in this portion of scripture but Jesus is the greatest teacher of all time and there is more than one lesson to be learned from this story.

This morning we want to look at some of these “**Lessons from the Master.**” The first lesson certainly has to be, “**A Lesson in How God Provides,**” but there is also a, “**A Lesson in Giving,**” as well as, “**A Lesson about Jesus as our King.**”

I. This event takes place towards the end of Jesus’ second year of ministry. He is popular but opposition towards him is building. The disciples have returned from their first missionary journeys and are excited. Jesus himself has been preaching and healing people and now he needs a break so he and his disciples get into a boat and head across the lake to escape the crowds. They end up on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee which is a far distance from Jerusalem; the center of his opposition.

Jesus and his disciples go up on the mountainside and sit down. It is quiet, peaceful, and restful but not for long. As they sit there they can see a long line of people making their way towards them – like a large caravan stretching for miles.

The people gathered around Jesus and his disciples. They wanted to hear what he had to say. This group quickly grew from a few hundred to a few thousand. As evening approached, Jesus

knew that this crowd would require more than spiritual food – they would need physical food as well. John tells us, **“He already had in mind what he was going to do.”** Now was the time to see if the disciples had learned anything in the last year and especially from their recent experiences. He was going to put them to the test.

“[Jesus] said to Philip, ‘Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?’⁷ Philip answered him, ‘Eight months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!’” In other words, If we did have enough money, which we probably don’t, there isn’t any place to buy that much bread. From the other gospels we know that Jesus let the disciples ponder this question while he went among the crowd healing and preaching as the day wore on. Towards the end of the day the disciples recommended they send the crowd away to fend for themselves. (Mt. 14:15). I guess they forgot about how Jesus had changed the water into wine at the wedding of Cana, or all the people Jesus had healed, or how he had brought Jairus’ daughter back to life. They had seen Jesus’ divine power many times but somehow missed applying it to the present situation.

That’s when Andrew brought the boy with the bread and fishes but listen closely to his words, **“Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?”**

The boy probably offered all he had but how far could that go? Not very. The disciples thought this was an impossible situation. They had failed the test and now Jesus was going to provide a divine solution to this seemingly impossible situation. **Note the events that unfold:**

1. Have the people sit down in groups of 50 or 100 which certainly gives some order as well as an opportunity to count the total number.
2. Jesus gave thanks. Every thing we have comes from God and it is proper to thank God for what he provides. James says, **“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights.”** (James 1:17). That is why it’s proper for us to pray before we sit down to eat.
3. Jesus distributed the food to his disciples who in turn distributed it to the crowd. The food kept coming until everyone was full. God is not stingy with his blessings. The people had more than enough.
4. Then Jesus had the disciples pick up the leftovers so as not to be wasteful. This also emphasized what a great miracle this was. They started with 5 loaves and 2 fishes – an amount that probably did not even fill one basket and now they had twelve baskets of leftovers.
5. The disciples, as well as the people, had to be amazed at the solution to this problem. It was a great blessing for all of them. They were happy.

You all have needs and believe it or not, God knows what your needs are – each one individually. And he knows how he is going to supply those needs. Paul tells us in our second lesson for today, **“Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will**

be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.” (2 Corinthians 9:10-11). God provides for our needs but in the process, God sometimes tests us just as he tested the disciples.

In a perfect world we would trust God for our every need but we don't live in a perfect world so we often fail to look to God for help, let alone trust that he can provide for us. But it's not only the world that is imperfect we, too, are not perfect. That's not to say we don't take our problems to God, but how often do we go to God as a last resort, acknowledging that the situation is hopeless and even when we ask God for help, we doubt he will really be able to do anything – let alone, do the impossible? Thankfully God provides for us in spite of our weakness of faith and even though we may fail the test, as the disciples did, he still provides for our needs and reassures us through his actions. It's not always the solution we are looking for but it is a solution that will provide for our need according to God's will and plan for our lives.

II. But this story also has a lesson about giving. The young boy offered up his bread and fish – all the food that he had. He wanted to help and he was willing to give all that he had, yet Andrew, as he acknowledged the gift, insulted the giver by implying it was too little and would have no impact. How many times are we like Andrew, evaluating the situation and determining just how impossible it looks, and rather than asking God to take what we have and bless it and our efforts, we do nothing? Or how often do we belittle someone's offering as not being enough, even though it is a great sacrifice on their part?

Jesus did not need the five loaves of bread and two fish to feed the 5000 but it was offered from a willing heart and so he took it and used it for his purpose. As we bring our offerings we have to remember that God does not need them, but he desires we bring them with a willing heart to show our love and obedience to him who loves us. Bringing our gifts is a part of worship and has been a part of worship since the beginning of time.

It is simply taking some of what God has given us and returning it to him. And God allows us to decide how much to return to him. He says that each person should decide in his own heart what to give and to set that amount aside as the first fruits – the best we can offer to our God.

As you think about this young boy giving all that he had, re-evaluate your own giving. Take a look at how you approach it, what percentage you have decided in your heart to give, and then not only bring your offerings to the Lord but also ask him to bless what you have brought.

III. This portion of scripture ends with, “A Lesson about our King,” The people saw all that Jesus had done and thought, “This guy is the fulfillment of the prophecy from Deuteronomy that talks about God raising up a prophet like Moses.” I think they were remembering how God brought manna and quail to the people for forty years under the leadership of Moses and figured Jesus was the prophet like Moses, and through him God would bring them bread and fish every day.

They were right in the fact that Jesus was a fulfillment of this prophecy, but God was not going to be limited to a paltry earthly kingdom in this small area of the world. Jesus came into this world to be a king, but his kingdom is not of this world and so, knowing what they were planning to do, he withdrew by himself.

The people would try and make Jesus their earthly king again on Palm Sunday (about a year from this incident) but Jesus, as our king, rode into Jerusalem to fight a battle far greater than anyone could imagine and in the most unexpected place. Jesus went to the cross to fight the ultimate battle that crushed the head of the devil, by paying for the sins of the world and making Satan powerless. But as Jesus fought this battle for you and I and all people, so many could not see what was going on and rejected him as their king.

We are thankful that Jesus won the battle against Satan for us and now as our king he rules the world for the benefit of all believers and he rules in our hearts just as he rules in the heart of every believer, through his Word.

This story of Jesus feeding the 5000 reminds us of how people try to limit God in so many different ways. We often join in that sin of limiting our God. We often doubt or limit what God can do for us and with us. But we are thankful that God forgives our weakness of faith, even when we fail the test, like the disciples. We are thankful that God doesn't bless according to our expectations, but rather blesses us according to his will.

May we never underestimate God's power to provide for us. May we always bring our best to our God with the expectation that he will use it to do great things, and may we let him rule in our hearts as our Savior and King. Amen.