

The Only Person Who Planned Ahead

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John 6

6 Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), 2 and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick. 3 Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. 4 The Jewish Passover Feast was near.

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?” 6 He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

7 Philip answered him, “Eight months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!”

8 Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up, 9 “Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?”

10 Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. 11 Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

12 When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, “Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.” 13 So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

14 After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.” 15 Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

Possible Intro: The balsawood airplane climbing up to the top of the fieldhouse at the OM World Finals. I imagine that this is a little bit like the energy that happened one mountainside as Jesus fed the 5000.

Several people in our Adult Ed hour said that Jesus feeding the Five Thousand was a favorite Jesus story.

I have, on more than one occasion, heard someone say that they had their own “loaves and fishes” story. One such story I remember hearing was about the wife of a wealthy Muslim who came to her husband and told him she wanted to become a Christian. He said yes on condition that she would agree to fulfill the obligations to the community they had during Ramadan. It was their custom to provide a meal to the poor in the neighborhood. As sunset approached, one of the women of the household came into the kitchen in a panic. The line of people standing outside the courtyard gate was easily twice as long as they had anticipated. The lady of the house gathered the women together around the large pot of food, prayed to Jesus, and began serving. Ladle after ladle, plate after plate they served in the night. All who had come that evening were blessed.

The problem, tension, or conflict in the story?

What is the invitation?

What is the “beautiful question”?

The answer to these questions depends on which characters you focus on.

If put ourselves in amongst the **crowd**, the problem is about real felt need - hunger, the invitation is to sit and receive, and the beautiful question might be, “How will I trust God more because now that I’ve experienced a miracle?”

If we put ourselves amongst the **disciples**, the problem is about obedience – submitting to Jesus’s instructions even when it seems absurd. The invitation is to join him in the work of distributing God’s abundance to a hungry world. The beautiful question might be, “What story can I tell others about God’s miraculous provision in my life?”

The person I tend to gravitate toward is **the boy Andrew finds**. What if we put ourselves in his place?

John’s version of the Feeding story – amazingly enough – it is the only version that says it was a boy who had the fish and the bread. All four gospels include the feeding story – which is pretty remarkable in and of itself – but only John mentions the boy. He also makes the direct connection between this feeding, and the Passover – which is to say the John already has the Last Supper in

mind when he is telling it.

When I think about this boy, the problem seemed pretty obvious: He's the only person who planned ahead! The invitation is to give it up. Yes, I'm sure he was a very polite and generous boy who would comply if the Teacher asked him for his lunch. Maybe he thought he was going to have the honor of feeding the prophet. That would be a pretty great story to tell your friends, maybe even your grandkids. I gave Jesus my lunch! Surely neither he nor the disciples what was going to happen next. How could they? One of the reasons this a favorite Jesus story for kids and adults alike is because it is awesome!

So imagine being this boy, and watching Jesus take the food your mom packed for you, and begin to break the bread, hand out the fish, and... keep doing it, on and on and on. Maybe his beautiful question was, "Why me?" How did I get so lucky as to be part of this amazing miracle?

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