The Gospel of John: God Plus Anything Equals Enough

John 6:1-14

John 6:1 After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. 2 And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. 3 Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. 4 Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. 5 Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?” 6 He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. 7 Philip answered him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little.” 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, 9 “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?” 10 Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. 11 Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. 12 And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost.” 13 So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. 14 When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!”

In its early days, Dallas Theological Seminary was in critical need of $10,000 to keep the work going. During a prayer meeting, renowned Bible teacher Harry Ironside, a lecturer at the school, prayed, “Lord, you own the cattle on a thousand hills. Please sell some of those cattle to help us meet this need.” Shortly after the prayer meeting, a check for $10,000 arrived at the school, sent days earlier by a friend who had no idea of the urgent need or of Ironside’s prayer. The man simply said the money came from the sale of some of his cattle!

It was at that point, that if those in the meeting did not know before, they knew now that God on their side is enough.

No doubt everyone one of us, at some time or another, have asked the question, do we have enough, do I have what I need? Will I make it through this? We sing the blessed old hymns, "Be not dismayed, what’re betide, God Will Take Care of You!"; and, "He will Supply, He will Supply, Yes, I Know He Will Supply!" Though, we sing it, preach it, and hear it, yet still when we find ourselves to the point of exhaustion, and all that we find that we have left is the Lord, we, with necessity, must ask the question, "Is God Enough?"

As we continue to walk through John, we move into chapter 6 having seen Jesus heal a lame man who had been on his sick bed for 38 years and we have seen that this healing caused an uproar with the Jewish leaders, so much so, these leaders are moved to want Jesus dead. He is claiming to be equal with God and his healings keep proving him right.

We read, John 6:1 After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. 2 And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. 3 Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. 4 Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand.
We find Jesus at the beginning of chapter 6 near the Sea of Galilee. This is the Hellenistic name for the lake Jesus was near. In later Roman times it became known as the Sea of Tiberias following the completion by Herod Antipas in A.D. 20 of the city with that same name on the west shore.

The hills in this region would provide an ideal place for Jesus to climb and sit down with his disciples. The news of Jesus’ healings was getting out, so many would follow Him, even to remote areas asking, who is this man who does such miracles, signs and wonders?

John tells us that the time of this scene is the Passover. This was intentional because I believe John wanted us to draw parallels between Moses and the saving of the Children of Israel and the Passover Lamb, with Jesus who was the Lamb of God.

Jesus is in the midst of a crowd who has followed him, and they are hungry and tired, and as a good father would, he wanted to provide for them, and through his provision we learn more about God our father.

Most of us know the story, Jesus feeds them with two fish and five loaves of bread. The story of the loaves is the only miracle of Jesus recorded in all four gospels. This is such an important lesson for us to learn that all four gospels talk about it.

This story provides a problem, to many people, not enough food. But Jesus shows us that God plus anything equals enough. Whatever you are going through or dealing with today, I want you to leave with this one point if nothing else, God plus anything equals enough.

There are 5 points I want us to learn from this occasion...

1. We can’t handle God size problems with human size faith.

John 6:5 Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?” 6 He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. 7 Philip answered him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little.”

We see this account in Mark chapter six. Mark tells us that it was the disciples who brought the question up of the people needing to eat. However, their suggestion was to let them go find food, Jesus replies with, “you find them food.”

When we search more, we find that most commentaries believe that the 5,000 was just the men. The total number of people who needed to be fed was more than 5,000.

So, Jesus, seeing this crowd asked the question where are we to buy food? Philip answered by saying buying food is not an option. Notice Philip did not answer the question. Jesus asked where are we to buy food, but Philip answered Jesus’ question with human size faith. Like most of us, Philip thought what you asked doesn’t add up.

Phillips quick calculation was, it would take about a years wage to feed this crowd. Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little.” Two hundred denarii is about a years wage. There is no way we can handle this problem, there is no way we can solve this, there is no solution Jesus. Jesus, let’s be practical about this. You are making too big of an ask.
Rather than kick into faith mode he started to use his humanistic view of numbers and logically count, 5,000 men plus their families equals about a year’s wage.

We are so like Philip; we calculate rather than listening to Jesus. We go human, in most situations. When we see a problem, we see the obstacles, not God. We see the road blocks, not God. I understand, we have been in this practical, rational world and taught that if we can’t add it up, we should give up. But what Jesus wants us to see is, when God reveals something to you that does not make sense, He wants you to see Him in the midst of the problem. The question we have to ask ourselves is, are we viewing this through His eyes or are we basing it on our own knowledge.

When we look at the problems we are facing, are we looking through eyes of being practical, or are we living in God’s presence? Practical says, there is no way we can minister in such a harsh environment. Faith says, God’s presence can change any situation. Practical says, our budget has reached its capacity. Faith says, God owns the cattle on a thousand hills. Practical says, the marriage is over there is no turning back, faith says, God can turn a person’s heart from bitterness, to blessing. Practical says, throw in the towel, faith says we are just getting started.

A man fell off a cliff, but managed to grab a tree limb on the way down. The following conversation ensued: "Is anyone up there?" "I am here. I am the Lord. Do you believe me?" "Yes, Lord, I believe. I really believe, but I can’t hang on much longer." "That’s all right, if you really believe you have nothing to worry about. I will save you. Just let go of the branch." A moment of pause, then: "Is anyone else up there?"

When God presents us with God sized problems, we must approach them with God sized faith.

1. We can’t handle God sized problems with human sized faith.

2. Don’t underestimate what you have, instead, understand what God can do with it.

John 6:8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, 9 “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?”

So, Andrew at least presented an option. He says, we have a boy with some tuna fish sandwiches. But these tuna fishes could barely feed the disciples. What Andrew doesn’t understand is that God does not need much to do much. He saw the two fish and five loaves, what Jesus saw was an opportunity for God to do exceedingly and abundantly above all we could ask or imagine.

I know what you are thinking. My business is too small to make a difference. My influence is too small to make an impact, my voice is to weak to stand out. God is saying, your small investment is exactly what I need to make a difference, your input is exactly what I need to change the world. Your weakness is exactly what I need to bring Me glory.

You can’t despise that which has no notoriety. It might be the point for your breakthrough. You can’t despise the little things God can use to knock down walls. We have been so conditioned to calculate our shortcomings, that we give up before we get started. We quit because our thought is, how can God do anything with this. My title is too small, my influence is too small, my input has no value.
Alex & Brett Harris state in their book, ‘Do Hard things’ “Here’s how it works. When the elephant is still young, his owner takes him from his mother and shackles him to a large tree-with a heavy chain around his right hind leg. For days and weeks, the young elephant will strain and pull, trying to break free, but all he succeeds in doing is causing the shackle to cut deep into his leg. Eventually he gives up and accepts the idea that he can’t go anywhere when there is something around his right hind leg. Soon the owner can replace the tree with a post and the chain with a piece of twine. Once the elephant feels resistance, he stops. There’s nothing but a piece of twine around his ankle, but there are heavy shackles around his mind. Like this elephant, we have proven strength and God-given potential—the potential to do hard, important things—but we are held captive by a lie. We have been conditioned to believe what is false, to stop when things feel hard, and to miss out on God’s incredible purpose.”

Too many of us are missing out on God using us to do big things because we have believed that what we have is insignificant. The enemy wants you to believe you are weak, the enemy wants you to believe that you are worthless, the enemy wants you to believe that any effort you give is a waste of time, when He can take your one hour a week to read to a child, to increase that child’s reading level by 25%. The enemy wants you to believe your volunteering is a drop in the bucket, God wants you to see that your volunteering can be the example used to bring someone to ask, how can I have the faith you have. The enemy wants you to believe that you are insufficient, God wants you to see that His grace is more than sufficient.

I think about my mom, when I was growing up, we didn’t have much, but my mom could take a pound of ground meat and put her hands to work. And that which seemed like little to nothing would soon become the best meat loaf you have ever tasted, that which seemed like a waste of time would feed the house with leftovers for lunch.

God wants us to see that when we take the little portion we have and place it in his hand, He can take our little and do more than we could imagine.

1. We can’t handle God sized problems with human sized faith.
2. Don’t underestimate what you have, instead, understand what God can do with it.
3. Humility is the key to open the doors of God’s blessing.

John 6:10 Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number.

Jesus says have the people sit down. This was a call for obedience and humility. But Jesus, I’m hungry and my family is hungry, sit down, but Jesus, we traveled all this way to see you and hear you and we are without nourishment, Jesus says, sit down. But Jesus you don’t understand I have to make something happen or my family will starve. Jesus says, sit down. If you trust God, you will humble yourself and sit down.

Too many Christians are missing out on the blessings of God because we won’t sit down. Our culture tells us to stand up, our network tells us to stand up, our experience with human culture tells us to stand up, keep standing, make something happen, Jesus says be still.
The Psalmist writes it like this, Psalm 46:10 “Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!” 11 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Jesus told those who were willing to receive what He had to offer to sit down. If you were still standing up you didn't get anything because you weren't willing to position yourself to receive. He only gave it to those who were willing to go low! If you are not willing to humble yourself God will have to deal with you. God honors the humble, He abhors the prideful.

James 4:6 But he gives more grace. Therefore, it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

Humility is a virtue that we rarely find in our day. Humility is seen as weakness. Humility is seen as soft or being a pushover. God wants us to see that humility is the key that opens the door of opportunity.

Paul gives us a picture of humility with Christ. Philippians 2:3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

We don’t want to be like the well-known Christian businessman who was visiting a church and was asked to give his testimony. He said, “I have a fine family, a large house, a successful business, and a good reputation. I have plenty of money so I can support some Christian ministries very generously. Many organizations want me on their board of directors. I have good health and almost unlimited opportunities. What more could I ask from God?” As he paused for effect, a voice shouted from the back of the auditorium, “How about asking Him for a good dose of humility?”

Don’t have God make you sit down, understanding that humility speaks to the heart of God, humble yourself.

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4. Learn to thank God for what you haven’t yet seen in expectation that you know He is able.

John 6:11 Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So, also the fish, as much as they wanted.

Get the picture, Jesus picks up this lunch box with two fish and five loaves of bread and gave thanks. He didn’t grumble about how He was supposed to do anything with this snack pack. He didn’t say this is all we have go find more. He simply thanked God for what was there and begin to bless and break.

We have to learn to thank God even when there is no human evidence to do so. The disciples looked at this kid’s lunch and saw despair, Jesus looked at this kid’s lunch and saw possibilities. We have to learn to thank God in expectation that God will come through. We have to learn to be thankful in all things.
But pastor, you don’t understand the grief I am feeling, you don’t understand the hurt that was caused, you don’t understand how much I lost. I don’t want to discredit your feelings. I do however want you to learn that God is aware of your circumstance and is moving even if you don’t see Him moving.

Heb 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

When you are in the middle of a trial and normal human things don't work out, Jesus shows us that this is a great place to give thanks. He gave thanks for not nearly enough. I want to encourage you today, that though whatever you are dealing with seems hopeless, don't stop giving thanks. It seems like there is no answer, don’t stop giving thanks. It is not over until God says it is over. No matter what the doctors say, no matter what the courtroom says, no matter what your friends say, learn to praise God when it seems all is lost because, he wants to know that you recognize his goodness in the midst of your need.

The world is looking at us and asking, if you are Christian, why are you giving up, if you serve this God you talk about, why are you quitting.

In his book *Un-Christian*, David Kinnaman quotes Mike Metzger, “Being Salt and light demands two things: we practice purity in the midst of a fallen world and yet we live in proximity to this fallen world. If you don’t hold up both truths in tension, you invariably become useless and separated from the world God loves. For example, if you only practice purity apart from proximity to the culture, you inevitably become pietistic, separatist, and conceited. If you live in close proximity to the culture without also living in a holy manner, you become indistinguishable from fallen culture and useless in God’s kingdom.” He goes on to say, “As Christians, we should pursue both goals: purity and proximity-living in a way that honors God but doing so in a way that can influence outsiders. What you do and what you learn should provide a lens to understand, interpret, and respond to a morally bankrupt culture.”

Our culture is looking at us and wondering if our faith will hold up. Will our God show himself mighty. We have to live in proximity to this world but have a faith that supersedes this world. Which causes us to look strange to some people because they can’t understand how we can give thanks in the midst of trials. But we know we serve a risen savior who brought us to life by His saving grace and because of that we can thank God no matter what is going on.

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4. Learn to thank God for what you haven’t yet seen in expectation that you know He is able.
5. Carry God’s lessons so that you have a proper response the next time you are tested.

John 6:12 And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost.” 13 So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. 14 When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!”

After feeding this crowd, Jesus tells the disciples to gather the fragments. In other words, not only did He feed five thousand plus people, he had leftovers. The leftovers were a lesson to the disciples and us that God is not just able, He is more than able. There were 12 baskets for the 12 apostles because when they left this place, Jesus wanted them to remember this lesson. God does not run out of grace. God
does not run out of mercy. God does not run out of peace. God does not run out of joy. He is the above all and abundant God. And when he comes through for us, he wants us to carry the basket, carry the lesson so that the next time we are faced with a shortage, the next time we are faced with a trial or circumstance, we will look down at the basket and say, I don’t see how, but I see God. I don’t see a way through, but I see God.

Robert J. Morgan in his book, Mastering Life Before It’s Too Late says, “Those aren’t just random words spoken by a penny-pinching preacher or a conscientious conservationist. They represent a spiritual principle: Gather up the fragments that remain. Don’t let anything go to waste. I don’t think Jesus miscalculated in His food preparation. He wanted to demonstrate that He always provides exceedingly and abundantly, beyond all we could ask or need. He also had twelve disciples who had abandoned their livelihoods to follow Him, but whose families still needed provisions. As long as He was breaking the bread and feeding the multitudes, He made an extra basket for each of the Twelve to take home”

I speak to you not theologically, but experientially, and though you may be facing a problem, persecutions, or peril, I can testify to you today, that GOD IS ENOUGH!!

When the enemy tells you to give up, remember God is enough, when Satan is whispering to you that God won’t come through, Pray, out loud, God is enough! When the world tells you that you are wasting your time, remember God is enough. When it seems, all is lost. Don’t forget, God is enough. The same God that fed five thousand is the same God who sees where you are and knows what you are going through and He wants you to know that He is truly enough. And the church said, Amen!