

## It's a Miracle John 6:1-14

One of the best things about summertime in Ohio is sharing a meal outdoors with family and friends around the picnic table. Though our dining room tables are ideal for more formal celebrations such as Sunday dinners and Thanksgiving feasts and the kitchen table is fine for a quick meal after work there is nothing like eating a special meal outdoors. In spite of ants, raindrops and other minor nuisances of nature it seems that God intends us to eat outdoors where we can enjoy the sights and sounds of creation and perhaps even ponder how tiny seeds tossed into the ground combined with the right amount of sunshine and water are transformed to provide food for millions of people. Though we often take it for granted it is really a miraculous thing.

Webster's dictionary defines a miracle as *"an unusual or wonderful event that is believed to be caused by the power of God"* yet few of us would see a field of wheat or barley or for that matter those miniature fields in our own backyards which we call gardens and recognize them as miracles in progress. Scientists may be able to explain how a seed becomes a plant but not why it happens.

When you think about there are really **four things required to sustain human life- bread, water, oxygen and miracles**. They also need to be in the right proportion. Ask an experienced farmer or gardener and they will tell us that too much or too little water will destroy the crop that will one day be used to make the bread that feeds us. Mariners understand that the water that floats the boat can also sink it. It is a matter of proper distribution. Too few miracles and we may question God and too many we will take them for granted.

Jesus faced a problem with distribution on the mountainside that day, and yet it was nothing he hadn't experienced before. The great crowds that followed him from place to place considered Him to be a great doctor, someone who could heal them of their infirmities and cure them of their diseases. As much as we complain about our health care system today, it is far superior to that in Biblical times.

There were no hospitals, no emergency rooms, no doctor's offices or waiting rooms filled with old magazines. Simple infections that are easily treated today with modern antibiotics would have been deadly to those who contracted them then. There was no such thing as penicillin or Tylenol, so Jesus was the only hope for many. It was no wonder that there was such a crowd of people on the mountainside that day. To put the size of the crowd in perspective, there were more people there than at a sold-out show at the Covelli Center. For the most part, people came that day with a positive attitude, hoping to get close enough to Jesus to ask to be healed, or failing that get close enough to touch His tunic.

However, there was at least one person there who seemed to let the crowds get the best of him. His name was Philip, and he was one of Jesus twelve apostles. Jesus asks him a question in verse 5- "Philip, where are we going to buy bread for these people to eat? For Philip, the question must have seemed ridiculous. I can imagine Philip doing the math in his head. Here they were on the side of a mountain with 5000 hungry people in front of them and not a store or restaurant in sight. And even if there were, they certainly would not have enough inventories to feed a crowd of this size. Then there was the cost involved. Even buying from the dollar menu at McDonalds would have cost 7 or 8 thousand dollars. Phillip either failed to believe that it could be done or didn't think it necessary to do it. Maybe he was thinking to himself that it's not our fault they didn't bring a lunch. Let them fend for themselves.

Andrew on the other hand was different. Maybe he went into the crowd looking for a wealthy benefactor, someone who would donate the funds for a big shopping trip into town. But instead all he could come up with was a small lunch that a young boy had brought with him. I wonder if the boy's mother sent it along with him or if he was an entrepreneur-an early food vendor. Whatever the case was, Andrew in typical fashion brings not just the lunch but also the boy to Jesus. Verse 9- there is a boy here who has 5 barley loaves and 2 fish. But what are they among so many people? In other words, he was saying Lord, it's just a drop in the bucket but maybe you can do something with it.

People get unruly when they don't think there is enough to go around and there would be no riot or stampede as long as Jesus was there. Verse 10- "Make the people sit down". He gave God thanks for what they had and then began to feed all who desired to eat. When the picnic was over, they had enough food left over for their journey to the next town; twelve baskets in all, one for each of the disciples.

So how do we apply this lesson in distribution to our own lives? This is one of those times where we will need to focus not on what Jesus did that day but on what He didn't do. He didn't send part of the crowd home so that there would be enough food to feed the few that were left. He didn't feed some and leave others hungry. He didn't take the 5 loaves and two fish and give each person in the crowd a tiny crumb and leave none satisfied. He didn't make them get in line and pass by the picnic table. Jesus did something very different. He gave thanks for what they had, asked God to multiply it and proceeded to take the food to them believing there would be enough to feed all that were hungry. It was a holy picnic if there ever was one.

Faith played a big part in the miracle of the loaves and fish, and it wasn't just the faith of Jesus that was at work. If Andrew had ignored the small boy and his lunch and continued looking for a bag of money perhaps no one would have been fed. The boy's willingness to share his lunch and Andrew's willingness to bring him to Jesus were part of the process in feeding the multitudes. Contrast that with Philip's lack of faith-he simply thought it couldn't be done.

As we continue to seek answers to the many problems facing our churches, our nation and our world we will need Andrew's positive attitude and an even greater measure of faith. **The right answers will be found when we ask God to make us part of the solution.** To quote Christian apologist Ravi Zacharias the gospel ought not just be heard but also seen. Problems of distribution, whether they be with food, money or faith can be solved, provided we rely upon God and Biblical principles as we seek to find a satisfactory solution, a solution where resources will multiply and grow to meet our needs. **With a tiny bit of faith, we can also do amazing things.** The future of our church and our community depends on it. In the meantime, I invite you to join me and pray for courage and wisdom as we ask God to provide for us a holy picnic of our own. Amen