The Power of Sharing

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John 6:1-14

After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the
Sea of Tiberias. [2]A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs
that he was doing for the sick. [3]Jesus went up the mountain and sat down
there with his disciples. [4]Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was
near. [5]When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming towards him, Jesus
said to Philip, 'Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?' [6]He said
this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. [7]Philip answered
him, 'Six months' wages would not buy enough bread 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
among so many people?' [10]Jesus said, 'Make the people sit down.' Now there
was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in
all.[11]Then Jesus 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]When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, 'Gather up the
fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.' [13]So they gathered them up,
and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten,
they filled twelve baskets. [14]When the people saw the sign that he had done,
they began to say, 'This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.'

1. Imagine No Malaria

Did you know that on average, every 60 seconds, malaria claims a life in Africa? Malaria, as you may know, is caused by the bite of a female mosquito. Someone with malaria experiences a high fever, chills, joint pain and headaches. Left untreated, symptoms can advance to organ failure. Nearly 90 percent of malaria victims are children under age of 5 and pregnant women. What have people been doing to eliminate this disease? "Imagine No Malaria" is an extraordinary effort of the United Methodist Church. The people of the New England Conference of the United Methodist Church are unified in the fight against this preventable killer through program. By the end of 2016, the New England Conference raised $1 million for the program. The total amount raised by the United Methodist Church is $12 million saving 1.2 million lives. The UMC has made a big difference in the world in helping to save the lives of children and mothers. I am so proud of the United Methodist Church for showing this love and allocating resources to share God's love with others.

2. Jesus Feeds Five Thousand People

Today's story in the gospel of John chapter 6 tells us what happened when a little boy shares what he has. After many people see Jesus heal the sick, they follow Jesus to see more signs. Jesus and his disciples go up the mountain and sit there. When Jesus sees the large crowd coming toward him, he asks Phillip, "***Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?***" (verse 5) Phillip answers, "***Six month's wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little***" (verse 7). It would cost roughly $20,000 to feed these people. What Phillip says is "Lord, forget about feeding these people. It would cost a lot. It is not possible for us to feed them. We do not have that much money."

Andrew, the brother of Peter says, "***There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?***" (verse 9) Jesus tells his disciples to have everyone sit down. About five thousand men were in the crowd. Jesus takes the bread in his hands and gives thanks to God. He passes the bread to the people, and he does the same with the fish. Everyone has as much as they want. When they are satisfied, Jesus tells his disciples to gather up the leftovers. The disciples gather them up and fill twelve baskets with what is left over.

With five loaves of bread and two fish, Jesus feeds five thousand men. If they add women and children there would be almost 20,000 people. In the natural, this is of course impossible. What we see here is a miracle. And the point of the retelling of the story is that a little boy's generosity in offering his meal satisfies many people.

The account of the feeding of the five thousand is found in all four gospels. This means that this story is very important in Jesus' ministry. Mark's gospel chapter 6 gives us more detail than John's gospel. Mark explains why Jesus feeds five thousand people. Jesus is moved with compassion when he looks upon the people. It says they are like sheep without a shepherd. The motive of Jesus in performing this miracle is compassion, which his disciples do not have.

I am sure that 12 disciples and other people in the group would have had much more than the little boy has. But they do not bring anything to feed the others. This is probably because the disciples would have thought that they do not have enough to feed over five thousand people. The disciples would have thought that the feeding of the five thousand would be impossible. Yet, we see that the boy does not hesitate to share what he has. This boy's small act of compassion made a big difference in feeding many people.

3. A Mindset of Sharing

What made the little boy share his meal with other people? I am very interested in understanding his mindset. We can't be sure of his mindset;

however, it is likely that the boy felt like he did not need to worry about running out of food. He did not sense a feeling of lack. He must have found joy in sharing and was happy to share everything he has with other people. I think I told you before. My daughter Ahreum loved to give her toys to her friends when they came to visit us while we lived in Kansas City, MO.

As Christians, we believe that everything we have is from God and know that God gives us as much as we need. Yet people in many churches feel they do not have enough money. We talk about generosity, but we do not see as many people as we would think who have the joy of sharing.

What can we learn from the Bible? When God asks the Israelites to build the tabernacle in the wilderness, an amazing thing happened. Exodus 35:29 says, "***All the Israelite men and women whose hearts made them willing to bring anything for the work that the LORD had commanded by Moses to be done, brought it as a freewill-offering to the LORD.***" And Exodus 36:5 says, "***The people are bringing much more than enough for doing the work that the LORD has commanded us to do.***" Listen to what Moses says to the Israelites. "***The people were restrained from bringing; [7]for what they had already brought was more than enough to do all the work***" (Exodus 36:6-7). We wish we could do the same at our church. But this will happen to us too when we believe the power of sharing.

4. VBS in Lawrence

When have we experienced the power of sharing? When I was serving a church in Andover, MA our youth group helped with a VBS in a Spanish speaking congregation in Lawrence, MA, a generally lower income city in our area. One Sunday night, about 20 youth went to the Spanish congregation and slept in the church building and offered a VBS from Monday through Friday in the afternoon. The temperatures were about 100 degrees and their living conditions were not good. Yet the kids loved to lead the VBS every summer, sacrificing their time and money for the other children. They could enjoy their summer break, make money, and spend time with friends. But instead they stayed in an uncomfortable place inside the church and spent their precious time with other children. They did not complain but were happy to spend their time serving the children every summer. I believe this is an example of the power of sharing.

5. 2018 VBS

I am glad that every year we are able to host a VBS for the children in our community. As you know, most VBS children do not belong to our church. We spend our time, energy and resources for the children in this community even though they do not come to our church. I believe our dedication and

service is valuable and makes a difference in the lives of these children. When they grow up, they will remember our VBS and those who are involved in this important ministry. We may not realize the power of our sharing through VBS. However, the children will be forever impacted by their experience of God's love and grace at Swift Memorial Church.

6. Conclusion

If we read the whole chapter 6 of John's gospel, we learn that the story of the feeding of the five thousand teaches us that Jesus is the bread of life. Our sharing is not just the sharing of our resources, but our sharing helps the people to find who Jesus is. People will learn that Jesus is our savior who is always with us and there would be nothing to worry about. We need to remember that the Lord wants us to participate in his ministry sharing what God has given. When we share what we have, we will see miracles that we have never imagined. How much do you think can we share?

7. Application

Let me tell you a story of a Methodist missionary from Texas to Korea in 1907. Her name is Ruby Rachel Kendrick. She was sent to Korea by the North Texas Conference Epworth League. She arrived at Songdo (Keasong), Korea at the age of 24. She died of appendicitis eight months later. At her request, she was buried in Korea. Her last words to her parents were, "If I had a thousand lives, Korean should have them all." Where is such a love from? It is from the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ. She had the joy of sharing the love of Jesus, sacrificing her life for the Korean people. Her sharing the love of Jesus with Korean people contributed to millions of Koreans coming to Christ and shaping the history of Korea for the better. 20 young women in her hometown volunteered to be missionaries to continue her mission in Korea.

Have we experienced the power of sharing? Do we have the joy of sharing? I believe each individual and each church has its own mission of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ in many ways. If we are satisfied with our Sunday worship service without offering any activities for children and youth in our community, we can't expect our youth and children to grow in faith in our church. We can't think of our future.

These days I am so happy to see Anthony Tantillo in our worship service. He is junior in high school. To me his presence in our worship service is a sign of our exciting future. I believe that God will use him for His Kingdom. We must remember always that God wants our church to be light and hope for the community. When each one of us shares the love of God and what we have with the people in the community, we will see miracles in our lives and in our church. Are we ready to experience the power of sharing? Amen.