

**Goal: That the hearers would follow Jesus command and witness His miracles.**

One day a scientist approached God and said, *“You know God, we’ve decided that we really don’t need You anymore. We can clone people, we can transplant organs, and do all sorts of things that used to be thought to be miraculous.”* *“Oh, you don’t need Me?”* God replied, *“Let’s put your theory to the test and see who can make a human being, a male?”* The scientist agreed. Then, God said, *“Let’s do it old school, like how I did it back in the Garden, when I created Adam.”* The scientist had heard the story before. He knew that God went down into the dust, picked up some dirt, and started forming it, so that’s what he does. He picks up a handful of dirt, and God says, *“Wait a minute. Get your own dirt!”*

In Latin, the phrase is *“ex nihilo,”* *“out of nothing.”* That’s how God created. There was absolutely nothing, and then there was. ***“God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.”*** That’s how God works. But, as we observe the natural world, scientists have come up with laws that govern how this world works. One of them is the law of conservation of mass, which states, matter or energy cannot be created nor destroyed, only transferred. As a Biochemist, knowing this, I always wondered how Jesus was able to perform this miracle. Have you ever thought about that? How was he able to take something as small as five loaves of bread to feed 5000?

Here I have 5 pitas, like the 5 loaves in our text. How many do you think this could feed? Five? Maybe if you put something inside of it. I’m going to ask two of our elders, to come up, and distribute it, and we’ll see how far it gets. Rest assured, I washed my hands and so did they. Please break off some and pass it down. You don’t have to eat it, unless you want to. This is more of an object lesson. Five loaves of bread, that’s not very much. Here, maybe 50 or 60 of us got a tiny, little piece, but to feed 5000 men to the point that they were full, that’s miraculous. So, how did Jesus do it? First, He’s not bound by the laws of science. He’s God. And God often makes something very small become something really great.

Jesus sees people hungry for good news. They live in a time like ours, when people want to hear something good because there was so much bad news going around. People were hungry for something good. And Jesus fed them good news, all day long, and you thought my sermons were long. So, at the end of the day, they head off to a desolate place, a barren place, where there were no stores with food around the corner. This is the wilderness. And what does Jesus tell His disciples to do? He says, ***“When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things. And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, “This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.” But he answered them, “You give them something to eat.” (And they said to him, “Shall we go and buy 200 denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?” And he said to them, “How many loaves do you have? Go and see.” And when***

*they had found out, they said, “5, and 2 fish.” (Mark 6: 34 – 38)* That’s an impossible task. So, the disciples respond, *“Even if we had the money, there’s not enough food anywhere to feed this many people. 5000 men, and their families. How are we supposed to feed them? It’s impossible.”*

But Jesus isn’t asking them to do the impossible. He’s telling them to take the initiative for God’s kingdom. He says, *“Go, find out what do you have.”* *“Well, just 5, 5 loaves of bread and these 2 dinky little fish, but how far can that go?”* Jesus isn’t telling them to provide for everyone, He’s just asking what they have. He didn’t call them to change the world, just to follow Him, because changing-the-world isn’t something that we’re capable of, only God can. And when we follow Jesus, like the disciples, He does all the HEAVY LIFTING. God doesn’t demand miracles of His people, but He asks us to come along and watch as He does the heavy lifting. What does He ask of us? Just five and two. *(“Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. So, they sat down in groups, by 100s and by 50s. And taking the 5 loaves and the 2 fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the 2 fish among them all. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up 12 baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. And those who ate the loaves were 5000 men.” (Mark 6: 39 – 44)*

There are no small things in the kingdom. Those things we think are small can actually be significant, and the things that we may think are significant may be things God sees as insignificant. Size doesn’t matter in the kingdom. There are no small things in the kingdom.

Sometimes it’s the small things that have the greatest impact. For example, maybe it’s a smile from someone who you wouldn’t expect when you’re having a really bad day. Or maybe, someone pulls over on the side of the road to help you fix your flat. I was talking with a teacher this past week, as she shared her frustrations that she couldn’t positively impact all of her students. But I suggested that she not try to change an entire generation, just focus on one. It may not be that significant; it might be a small thing, yet the right man dying at the right time in the right way, on a cross, that had the biggest impact ever. God doesn’t call us to do miracles, He just calls us to follow Him, and all the little things are the work of His kingdom.

Rachel and I have been learning this through our PLI training, to make disciples who make disciples. A simple point is that Jesus never told His followers to *“go and make a huge church”*. He said, *“Go and make disciples.” (“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28: 19 – 20)* Therefore, we are to focus on pouring ourselves into people, just like Jesus did. That’s how He multiplied the love of God in this world. And, I’d say, that’s the strategy for the mission of His Church today. But it’s horribly inefficient. It can be an extremely slow process, but it’s how Jesus modeled for us.

How many people did Jesus disciple? Twelve, in three years. That's it. Oh, He certainly poured Himself into other people in smaller amounts, but those 12 are the ones that He focused on. And He poured so much of His life into them that they were able to multiply it out to the entire world, wherever they went. So today, because of them, we can hear the good news of a Savior who died for us. That Jesus died for you. Twelve guys told that story, and the world has never been the same since. It's not efficient, but it's effective.

Rachel and I have been being discipled by other Christians through the PLI program and we recognize that God is calling us, to disciple others, who will disciple others, who will multiply out the life of Jesus in the same way that people have poured themselves into us. I'll admit, it's not easy, because following Jesus isn't easy. But if you want to hear the story of what God has been doing in both of our hearts and how He's been leading us, just ask, because it's pretty amazing. But the thing that we keep on going back to is that God isn't calling us to do miracles, He's not calling us to change the world, or even to change hearts. He's simple asking us to follow Jesus, and to be Jesus to others, doing the things that He did.

So, the question I have for you is if Jesus' goal is for us to be disciples who make disciples, what would it take for you to do just that? If we're supposed to be disciples following after Jesus who multiply His life into those around us, what does that look like in your life? It's taken me years to get to the point where I'm okay with saying, "*Yeah. I'm ready to disciple another person like I've been discipled.*" It's not easy, but there's good news.

Jesus says to you, "***You give them something to eat.***" But He's not going to do it without first feeding you with what you need. Here at His altar He gives you His miraculous meal of forgiveness and strength and love to equip you for the road ahead. Jesus takes His life and places it into you so that you, in turn, can multiply that love to those around you. Remember, He's not expecting you to perform miracles, He does the heavy lifting. He's only asking you for something small. What have you got? Five loaves and two fish? He'll take it. And just watch as He will blow your mind with what He can do.

And there's more good news, you'll never go alone. Jesus promises to be with you. He will sustain you through all these difficult conversations that you have to have, about what it means to be God's people, about what it means to follow Jesus, about what it means to be the Church. And those are good conversations to have, because it is through those conversations that you will pour yourself into them and they learn what truly following Jesus and being a disciple is all about. Jesus says, "***You give them something to eat.***" Amen.