

A Little With Jesus Equals Much!

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[0 : 00] Good morning and greetings from Virginia and I. It's a real privilege to worship with you this morning.

We are enjoying our time here in Montana tremendously. And let me just, James mentioned something about the tour leading.

Let me just say something about that. But Virginia's parents led tours for, well, 1979 was the first time that they took a tour to Israel.

And I think they guided probably 45 or 46 tours. And one of the questions we always had was, or we would ask them, don't you get tired of just going year after year and, you know, just another tour. And they kept saying, no, no, we just don't. And so in 2016, when her dad's Parkinson's got to the point where it's no longer feasible for him to tour, we transitioned and took over.

[1 : 11] And so it's now been a number of years that we're doing it. We're beginning to understand why they said that, because it's the people that we go with. Meeting friends like James and Carol is just a tremendous blessing.

And it's a phase of life that Virginia and I are really enjoying. Meeting new people, expanding our circle of friendship. It's just such a wonderful experience, going with a group of 30, 40-plus people. And so looking forward to this week, meeting our friends again. So it's, that's one of the blessings of the Christian life, is it not?

It's just fellowshiping with people. God designed us to fellowship with each other. We need it. We just, we really need it.

That's how God designed and created us. Let me just say a few things about, or introduce yourselves, so you know a little bit about the strangers from the East.

[2 : 26] I'm not going to spend a lot of time. I'm a Troyer, married a Troyer. We're six cousins, not closely related. Some of you, many of you know Manny, that used to live here.

He's my second cousin. My second cousin, very, very good, dear friend of mine. But Virginia and I grew up in Sugar Creek, Ohio.

I was, I grew up old order. She was new order. I was converted at the age of 19, joined the new order church, married. And then we were in Sugar Creek for eight years, moved to Leesburg, south of Columbus, about an hour.

And we were there for 24 years. That's where we raised her family of four, three daughters, one son. The three daughters are married.

Lynette is also in Sarasota, where we're living at right now. Kara is in Newark, Ohio. And Erica is in South Carolina. And then we have a son, Grant, lives with Virginia's parents in the base, single.

[3 : 39] And so I was ordained in 03, 02, after the church in Leesburg switched from Amish to Mennonite, the whole church, and I was ordained and was lead pastor there for up until 2021, I think.

Somehow we ended up in Sarasota. I'm not sure how that all transpired, but that's for another day. Anyway, I would like to begin in 1 Kings chapter 17, and then move to the New Testament.

1 Kings 17, verses 8 through 16, I would like to read. And this is Elijah.

The verses I'm going to read is associated with the third miracle that Elijah was with or performed. The first one was his prediction of the drought that came true in verse 1. And then he was fed by the ravens in the next couple verses, 2 through 7.

[5 : 01] And now we come to the third miracle, verses 8 through 16. Elijah was miraculously fed for three different times. One by the ravens, here by the lady from Zarephath, and then the angel in chapter 19, or under the juniper tree.

Something just on a side note this morning that I noticed. You know, Elijah, as far as we can tell, performed about 16 miracles. His successor, Elisha, if we remember, asked for a double portion. And Elisha performed 32 miracles. Interesting. But Elijah and John the Baptist are often, they are similar in a lot of ways.

And I noticed this on my side notes this morning. And I'm just going to, it's not associated with the sermon that I'm preaching, but perhaps something that is interesting.

Just there are points of similarity between Elijah and John the Baptist. There's 14 of them here. Number one, both were anointed with the same spirit and power.

[6 : 21] Two, both were familiar with deserts and solitude. Three, they wore the same kinds of garments and lived simply. Both were fearless and bold to rebuke kings.

They were sought to be killed by kings. Both were prone to discouragement. They were preachers of righteousness. Both incurred enmity of a queen. Number nine, both were fruitful in their ministry. Ten, both had a great influence over Israel. They were subjects of prophecy. Number 12, they had been or will be a forerunner of the Messiah. John before the first event.

Elijah before the second. Thirteen, both had a lapse of faith but quickly recovered. Fourteen, both were prophets. Lots. Okay, so I'd like to read verses 8 through 16.

Story of how a little meal and a little oil was multiplied, and it's a parallel of sorts to the New Testament miracle of the feeding of the 5,000, which I would like to then turn to after this.

[7 : 31] Verse 8, and I have my King James Bible this morning. Verse 8, 1 Kings 17. The word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there.

Behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee. So he arose, went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks, and he called to her and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water and a vessel that I may drink. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake but a handful of meal in a barrel and a little oil in a croons.

And behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die. Elijah said unto her, Fear not, go and do as thou hast said.

But make me therefore a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the Lord, God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruise of oil fail, till the days of the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.

[8 : 53] She went and did according to the saying of Elijah and he, and her house did eat many days. The barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruise of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah.

And like I said, this is a parallel of sorts to the feeding of the 5,000, which I'm going to turn then to Mark chapter 6, read his account.

There's an exciting aspect about being a Christian, living the life of a Christian, and having the kind of God over us that we do and experience, and that is, little things can become much, empty things can become full, impossible things can become possible, last is first, small becomes big.

We could go on and on. It's those kinds of things that you and I experience that are just such a blessing in our Christian life.

We would say they are spiritual equations that defy logic, as was the case here with the lady and her son.

[10 : 20] And we have more examples, lots of examples in scriptures of how God takes what is lacking, what is insignificant, what is insufficient, and supplies peoples and our needs.

It turns it into our situation that was in need into something that is plenty, adequate, and sufficient. It's not unusual for us to experience those situations. I'm sure you've been there. If you're not, you're not normal, I don't think.

But Virginia and I know what it is to scuffle financially, wondering how we're going to make ends meet. I don't know how the economy is out here in Montana or how it was.

I had a business for 24 years. I did painting and staining. And the years from late 07 to 2012 were really a test.

[11 : 34] The time in Ohio was hit very hard. And there were times when I would look over our situation and wonder just how in the world are we going to make ends meet?

How is this going to, how are we going to make these payments? And how are we going to make it? And in 2011 was our worst year.

Business was like down 48%. And Lynette, the oldest daughter, thought that would be the best year to get married on top of that. So, but you know, as we look back over some of those lean years, I remember going to the shop one morning, literally had almost no jobs on the list, wondering what is going to happen.

And I remember the shop was 500 feet away from our house and I prayed on the way there and just committed it to the Lord.

And the phone rings while I was going. And in a matter of a half hour, I had three good-sized jobs. That was kind of a low point and it took off from there.

[12 : 56] But just, I'm sure you've had those situations where you just thought, and it's not just financially, it's other situations too where we find ourselves in where we wonder how is this going to develop?

How can this be possible? And so, that's just like, from my perspective, you know, from my vantage point, if I were God, you know, this is just how I sometimes think.

If I were God, and I would look down on a person's situation and say they were really struggling and financially, or maybe an illness or a disease that is really debilitating and all sorts, we could just call it adversities of life.

We look down and wouldn't it just be tremendous to just come along and perform a miracle for a person like that? We would think it does happen.

That is for sure. Just like the Lord did for Elijah and the widow lady here, we have evidence that God does that.

[14 : 21] We experience his provision for us and in miraculous ways. He is our very present help in time of need. But then I also know that I know that it delights the Lord when you and I in our time of need, our option is to turn to him.

That's really kind of all we have left. Let me just say it that way. I know that kind of dependency and putting our trust, our lives into his trust in those times is also something that the Lord delights and enjoys.

When we do that, when we see our own insufficiency, our own inadequacy, and then we turn to God in those situations.

Let's read the account of the feeding of the 5,000. Mark chapter 6. I could use some of the other Gospels.

There's a few details here in Mark that I like better. Verses 30 through 34. This miracle could have multiple sermons.

[15 : 44] In this text, numerous different titles, subtitles, etc. I chose to title the sermon A Little With Jesus Equals Much.

There's at least two main problems that occur in this text and we'll get to those as we move along here.

The question that comes up in this account is how do you feed 5,000 people with 5 loaves and 2 fishes? How can you do that?

The background of this miracle is that the disciples were out two by two and of course we have the story of the beheading of John the Baptist just before this and I think this really took energy out of the disciples just hearing what happened to him trying to process this.

I'm sure it didn't make sense. You know, what is this? Is this what kingdom life looks like? Is this and so in verse 30 the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus and told him all things both what they had done and what they had taught and he said unto them come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest a while for there were many coming and going and they had no leisure so much as to eat.

[17 : 23] You know, vacations like this are good for anyone. We're out here for 10 days.

It's not that, you know, we're under so much stress or duress presently but, you know, Jesus and his disciples they needed their rest just like you and I at times.

We just need to come apart as it says here and we need to rest a while and what a better way to spend it with friends like James and Carol and others and it renews our energy and our zeal but just showing again I think the humanity of Christ and his disciples as he called them apart and just let's go let's go to a desert place and let's rest a while.

That didn't turn out the way they had hoped for but reading anyway continue here in verse 32 they departed into a desert place by ship privately the people saw them departing and many knew him ran a foot thither out of all the cities out went them and came together unto him Jesus when he came out saw much people was moved with compassion toward them because they were as a sheep not having a shepherd and he began to teach them many things when the day was now far spent his disciples came unto him and said this is a desert place and now the time is far past send them away that they may go into the country round about into the villages and buy themselves bread for they have nothing to eat and he answered and said unto them give ye them to eat and they said unto him shall we go and buy two hundred penny worth of bread and give them to eat he saith unto them how many loaves have ye go and see and when they knew they say five and two fishes he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass they sat down in ranks by hundreds and by fifties when he had taken the five loaves and two fishes he looked up to heaven and blessed and break the loaves gave them to his disciples set before them the two fishes divided he among them all they did all eat and were filled they took up the twelve baskets full of fragments and of the fishes and they did eat of the loaves and they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men how do you feed five thousand people with five loaves and two fishes you know this is not even this is not even a head scratcher as it were where you could carefully ration and portion out little bitty morsels from five loaves and two fishes and somehow make it stretch or make it fill the need no this was not this was way way short it was not even and as we think of it says five thousand men

I'm thinking I don't know if this if it was actually men or if it's talking about people either way it was a tremendous need here but you know again this is not you know sometimes financially we need to go over our budget perhaps things are tight and we can we can tweak this and we can tweak that and go over it and somehow we're we're good you know it it somehow comes out okay this is not how this was five thousand people in need of food and how are we going to do this no this this was not anything that could be remedied by careful proportion or etc like I said the setting here the disciples came back from a two by two mission were in need of a breather and so

[21 : 59] Jesus suggests in verse 31 that they come apart rest a while go into a private place and their attempt to separate themselves we notice didn't go so well didn't turn out so well just thinking about the setting there in the Sea of Galilee I forget if we actually visited the traditional site of the feeding of the five thousand when when you were along or not I kind of I don't think we actually did it's it's not a it's not one of the more meaningful spots it's just just a place south at Capernaum where they have it's a traditional spot but it is it is thought to have been somewhere close to Capernaum and so as we think here of Jesus leaving leaving a place going into a desert place by ship privately and then it says in verse 33 that the people saw them departing many knew him and ran a foot thither out of the cities out went them came together unto him the upper end of the sea of Galilee is about eight miles wide if I had my sometimes they crossed over this is a situation where I don't think that happened because if the people would have ran around the horn of the sea of Galilee and caught up with Jesus on the other side I just don't think that would have been a practical distance for them to do this so I'm thinking what happened here is Jesus and the disciples went from along the west coast of the sea of Galilee from point A to point B perhaps cut across the corner somewhere that's how it would have been possible in my mind just thinking of the geography of the people following after them and catching up with them as we see here in 33 that's beside the point but the people kept up on foot and caught up to them question we could ask here so the disciples and Jesus wanted a break they wanted some rest didn't work out the people just followed after them what happens to us when our plans don't pan out

I know James and Carol had thoughts of going to Alaska this summer didn't work out Lord had other plans with Ray's situation so how do we respond when things don't go as planned when our plans are interrupted what is our tendency we experience things just don't turn out the way they did that we planned last fall we had our second trip planned to Israel and Europe we had a departure date of October the 9th October the 7th the war started fortunately we had Europe planned first that was a first usually we go to

Israel and then we go to Europe but for some reason mostly because of weather I thought it would be better to do Europe on the front end get that out of the way and then we go to Israel the latter half of October before it gets too chilly and cool in Europe so just saying our plans were interrupted Israel we decided we're going to go to Europe do that portion of the trip everything was pretty much

paid decided if we don't go to Europe we're going to lose all of that money and so while we were in Europe the first week our plans to fly to Israel were canceled and you know that I could spend some time giving you info on how that all went but when all was said and done we just saw the Lord's hand in all of it there was a couple families along that their dad passed away and had we gone to Israel we would have been in the thick of it just again how do how do I respond when plans don't pan out the way that I thought they should Jesus we notice here has plan B Jesus took advantage of having their plan being interrupted and instead of becoming upset at the people let's notice in verse 34 when and Jesus when he came out so much people was moved with compassion isn't that tremendous one of the really great characteristics about Jesus is his compassionate nature instead of becoming upset he uses plan B and it says that moved with compassion toward them because they were as a sheep not having a shepherd so he he took their interrupted plans and looks at it from a shepherd's perspective and it says that they were referring to the people as a sheep not having a shepherd what's the problem with with that that's that's the first problem that we see here is that sheep not having a shepherd what's what's the problem with that well spiritually a lot a whole lot is is wrong with us as sheep not having a shepherd and especially as we think of the of raising sheep in the U.S.

[28 : 52] is okay let me say it this way the nature of sheep in Israel is the same as in the U.S. raising them is different in if we think about raising sheep in Israel and how vital the shepherd is to a flock of sheep they can't survive without it they just simply cannot the shepherd guides them to their food to the water they're defenseless it's not like many places here where we put sheep into a fenced area they're safe in there and we feed them and nourish etc no over over in Israel it means crossing over barren mountains and valleys and finding food here in a special place finding water here the sheep are literally dependent on a shepherd and so

Jesus is using this analogy he sees the people as sheep without a shepherd that's a big problem spiritually just like the natural sheep we're not going to survive either without a shepherd and so Jesus because of his compassion gives his attention to this I like how it says in the German if we understand German the move with compassion has the words as it's like it's something really deep that affects us it's something internally that it's just much more than a surface like feeling sorry for someone or having pity the type of compassion here that

Jesus had for these sheep not having a shepherd was something very deep it affected him physically very much and so that is an outstanding characteristic of Jesus our shepherd is the compassion that he has for sheep not having a shepherd something else that we see going on in this account is that it's fairly obvious that the ministry of Jesus was really compelling people to to follow him from I think not just Galilee but from all areas because if we think about it I think they were following him to the point of not even rationally thinking of how are we going to feed ourselves where are we going to get food and water you know

I think the people were just enamored they were following Jesus some for the wrong reasons obviously but they were following him and they were probably not actually thinking of sustaining themselves but Jesus has a plan here again I don't think all of these people were local I think they were from regions round about but anyway Jesus is teaching here and it's it seems that as it's coming to the end of the day time to catch a meal it says here in verse 35 the day was now far spent disciples came unto him and said this is a desert place now the time is far spent send them away that they may go into the country round about and into the villages once again how do you feed 5,000 people with two loaves with five loaves and two fishes and that's the second problem that comes up is a physical one in a desert place people were in need of a meal what is the solution here disciples said send them home send them away that they may go into the country round about and into the villages by themselves spread

Jesus has another option in verse 37 he says give you them to me how would we have responded to Jesus suggestion or command I'm thinking I would have done the very same thing they thought of it logically verse 37 going and buying enough is going to be way too expensive that's not that's not going to work what are you thinking Jesus John here has the includes the couple verses of the little lad that was there that we don't read here in this portion one of the disciples

[35 : 01] Andrew Simon Peter Simon Peter's brother saith unto him there's a lad here which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes but what are they among so many yeah what what is five what are five loaves and two fishes what are those among so many nothing like I mentioned earlier we all encounter these situations when we don't have enough or what is necessary to come to

situations where from our viewpoint it's just not going to possibly it's not we don't have what is needed or sufficient and I know it's elementary to say or to suggest that in those times we bring our need before the

Lord but that's what we need to do and that's what the disciples did here they did bring it before this situation to him you know the need of feeding all of these people but the thing is what is five thousand loaves or what is five loaves and two fishes what is that among so many nevertheless that's what you and I sometimes have to do our five loaves and two fishes sometimes just not enough and we need to bring it before the Lord as he did here reminds me of some of the George Mueller stories you read tremendous I'm sure you've heard some of Mueller's testimonies ran what five orphanages in

England and had like ten thousand orphans under his care and never drew a salary never directly asked anyone for any funds and literally prayed millions of dollars to fund his orphanages remember sure you remember this one where one morning the they had three hundred children they were dressed and ready to school but the maid tells George they're dressed and ready to school but they don't have any food and George tells her to take them to the dining room the children all went to the dining room and George thanked the Lord for the food they didn't have when they were done there was a knock on the door it was the it was a it was a baker who said he couldn't sleep last night woke up during the night and somehow he was moved to get up and to bake bread and somehow he had a premonition that the orphanage needed food so he knocked on George's door at the orphanage's door and said he couldn't sleep last night

I baked X amount of loaves could you use my bread that happened and just minutes later the milkman knocks on the door his cart had broken down on the outside and he said it's going to take a while for me to get my rig fixed my wheel repaired could you use my ten cartons of milk that I have here I'm afraid it's not going to keep itself by the time it's fixed can you use it stories like this just over and over again bringing our situation before the Lord bringing our five loaves and two fishes to God I'm always encouraged with Virginia's parents story back in the late 70s they had a desire to go to the mission work in the north they were in northwest

Ontario some years before that and after they were home they had a desire to sometime serve the Lord in mission work in the northwest and so anyway they laid this matter before the Lord Edwin's were very typical they had a farm they had mortgage they had debt just the normal things that you and I had and so for them going to the mission field was not a matter of going through their budget and tweaking things and maybe we can do this and this and maybe we can eke out something to make it possible that we can go to the mission field no the Lord had to provide a way to pay for their mortgage unless otherwise they couldn't go go one evening completely out of the blue a man from Texas was from a radio communications company knocks on their door and said he's been around the

[40 : 56] Holmes County area here he's looking for a place to put a radio communications tower on and he was over on this road and he has information that this certain place on top of the hill is your acreage and would you consider the thought of us putting up a communications tower on your piece of ground and of course Edwin wasn't initially he wasn't interested he thought communications tower in the neighborhood he just wasn't interested but anyway they had another visit from this man and so they Edwin decided you know he's going to at least see what what they're going to offer as far as finances for for this for this tower and long story short but they offered for the four month for the tower monthly was within dollars of their mortgage payment there it was just another story of how

God can take our five loaves and two fishes and he can multiply what we have what we think is insufficient is not near enough those those are opportunities for us to bring it to the Lord and he can multiply things little can become much when God is in it something that I think is sometimes lost in the story here is I wonder what the response was of the little lad here with the five barley loaves five barley loaves suggests that this little lad came from a poor family the poor in the land would have had barley and the others would have had wheat so it suggests he came from a poor family had two small fishes again hardly anything in comparison to think of feeding 5,000 people in reality though five loaves and two fishes we could say that in reality this lad was loaded was he not because God used what he had and multiplied it into something much much more what's what's in our basket I don't know if this little lad had a basket to carry his food in or not I'm just imagining what's in your what's in my basket this morning is it something that the Lord can use he can multiply I don't

know it doesn't say if this was the only person that had food alone we don't have that information either but one thing we could I guess ask ourselves what do we represent do we represent the 4999 that didn't have any food alone or do we represent the one who had five loaves and two fishes and God took that and multiply it and he had enough for everyone the lessons again as I mentioned from this miracle are many

I just wrote down a few here we are in constant need of the Lord's provision we just are we are we are needy creatures he is our source and sustainer spiritually materially physically doesn't necessarily mean that what we always want is what we're going to get but God really is our sustainer he really is not only do we need things in life but what we have is also an opportunity to distribute to the needs of others just a little oil and a little meal a few loaves and a few fishes is what God can use to meet people's needs if you and I are open handed God can use that little as much when God is in it both in what we receive and what we also give I like the song there is someone who daily my needs doth supply these good things don't just happen there is someone on high tis his mercy and grace that allows me to live he deserves all the thanks I can give and the chorus I have someone to thank for every new day I have someone to thank for the gifts on life's way he's the one who expects the one who accepts all the thanks that I feel each day let's pray our father in heaven we thank you that you are the giver and sustainer of life father help us the people that entrust our situations into your care and especially in those times when our five loaves and two fishes seem inadequate they do not seem to be the amount or the the sufficiency that we need help us to be to bring these situations before you we know that you are a multiplier of things you can take little and you can perform miracles and bring about that which is much and so just father help us to be see ourselves as people that need your provision you need your care on a daily basis help us to not become self-sufficient within ourselves but we see that we need your experience we need your life in our lives each and every day in Jesus name we pray amen