

## Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

John 6:1-15 (NIV84)

<sup>1</sup> Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), <sup>2</sup> and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick. <sup>3</sup> Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. <sup>4</sup> The Jewish Passover Feast was near. <sup>5</sup> When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" <sup>6</sup> He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. <sup>7</sup> Philip answered him, "Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" <sup>8</sup> Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, <sup>9</sup> "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" <sup>10</sup> Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. <sup>11</sup> Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. <sup>12</sup> When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." <sup>13</sup> So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. <sup>14</sup> After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." <sup>15</sup> Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

While Jesus and the disciples were taking a much needed rest as we talked about last week, a large crowd came towards them. The rest was over, and it was time to get back to work. Jesus turns to his disciple Philip and asks, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" (verse 5) Why ask Philip? We are used to Peter being the spokesman for the disciples. Maybe it was because Philip was from the area, that he of all the disciples would know best what resources were around to aid them in accomplishing this task.

Philip's response was immediate and definite. "Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" (verse 7) This is impossible, Jesus! We don't have the money to buy enough food for these people. And where would we possibly find that much food readily available for this crowd of over 5000 people? We can't do it!

Another disciple, Andrew, Peter's brother, offers something. "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" (verse 9) Almost in the same breath in which he offers a small solution, Andrew admits that this will not take care of the problem. There are not enough resources, not enough money, not enough bread, not enough time to satisfy the hunger of all these people. The disciples' answers to Jesus' bread question are all hopeless.

But there was a purpose to Jesus asking the question. He asked Philip where they were going to buy bread for the people "only to test him." (verse 6) Jesus purposefully wanted to get Philip thinking about solutions. He wanted him to think practically, see how he would handle it.

Thinking of practical solutions is generally our first response to supplying physical needs. Your cupboard is getting bare, bills are coming due, emergencies have left you drained, and you honestly don't know how you are going to make it through another week. You scramble for solutions. Where might there be a little extra money? What can we cut out to make it through this shortage? Can I go to Mom and Dad and ask for a little extra, or are they strapped like me? Do I have to think about taking out a loan? Do they even give loans for these kinds of situations? Do I ask the church for a little help? Do I hit up Family Connection? How long can we live on ramen? What can I do to make this work, to get me through? When we see that our means are not going to meet our daily needs, we go thinking about all the practical solutions that exist. We put it on ourselves to solve our problem of providing daily bread.

Yet there are times when we come to the same conclusion as Philip and Andrew did. Even after all the scrimping and saving, there is no way that we can make this work. I might as well be asked like Philip to figure out how to feed 5000+ people with my current means. We don't have the money. We don't have the resources. God, this is impossible! I have a little, but it will never go far enough.

When Jesus got Philip thinking about their daily bread problem for the 5000+ people, "he already had in mind what he was going to do." (verse 6) He told the disciples to have all the people sit down in the grassy area. "Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish." (verse 11) There was no practical solution. Instead, the people and the disciples got a miraculous one. Jesus broke the bread and distributed it. He did the same with the fish. Those seated, the 5000+ people, got as much as they wanted. Hungry bellies went filled. Jesus produced the bread solution.

“When they had all had enough to eat, [Jesus] said to his disciples, ‘Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.’ So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.” (verses 12-13) Eight months’ wages weren’t enough to give everyone a bite, but Jesus produced so much food on the spot that not only was everyone full, but there were twelve baskets of leftovers.

Twelve baskets of leftovers and twelve disciples – not a coincidence. Jesus’ test of his disciples was coming to a completion. They could not figure out how to provide for the 5000+ people, but they didn’t ask God for a solution. God had already figured it out. He showed the disciples that he was the solution. He provided the daily bread. Not only does he provide enough bread and fish for that day, but they had twelve baskets leftovers! God provided so much more than what was needed to meet the huge crowd’s growling bellies.

I know that my family has been there when we didn’t know how the daily bread would come. When we first got married, we knew that it was going to be difficult to sustain a living with both my wife and I being full time students and part time workers. There was tuition to pay, rent, utilities, insurance – all of it. We were being all grown up and paying our bills. The goal was to make it two years so that Wendy would graduate and I would enter my vicar year, an internship year when I would get paid to be learning to be a pastor instead of paying tuition. We saved pretty much all of the money gifted to us at our wedding and put it in savings to get us through. But right from the get-go, though, we saw that we would run out of money about 3-4 months before our two year goal. We kept working at it to scrimp and save, but the numbers kept telling us the same thing, we were going to run out.

Then, we get to those last couple of months, and we ended up not only having enough money to pay our rent, utilities, bills, all of that, we actually had built up our savings a little bit. Now, I can tell you the little things here and there that worked to do that, but we did not have enough because we are thrifty people who budget well (but that does help). We had enough because God saw fit to provide enough, more than enough, through practical means. God gave us what we needed piece by piece which ended up not only being what we needed for those last couple of months, but it was even more than what we had asked for. God gave us our daily bread and more, even while it looked to us as there was no possibly way that it was going to work.

When you see that your daily bread is not going to cut it, before you go to all the practical solutions, before you start looking in the couch cushions for that little extra that you hope is there, go and ask your Father in heaven for the solution, just as Jesus was teaching his disciples to do. Jesus wanted them to ask him, but they didn’t. God invites us to ask him to provide your daily bread. Ask him, because you know that he cares about your day to day physical necessities. He provided a meal for over 5000 people. You know that he cares about you getting daily bread. He knows how to see you through those times when your means are not going to cut it, when the little you have just isn’t enough, and when it looks impossible for us to make it practically.

I know that not every story of financial difficulty ends the way mine did. Sometimes you go to God with your worries and concerns about your daily bread, and there is seemingly no response. You do all the right things: you budget, you scrimp, you save, you get rid of the non-essentials, yet you are still coming up short. The answer in those situations is not to give up on God or to think that he is ignoring your prayer. Maybe realize that he is testing you as he did with Philip.

When God tests us, his purpose is always to strengthen us as his child, as his believer. These are not punishments, as if I did such a horrific act that I now need divine justice administered upon me while I am still living on earth. No, he tests us so that we have to rely on him day to day without necessarily seeing how or when he will meet our daily needs. He will give us what we need for today, even when we think that it’s not enough to get us through. God knows exactly how much we need, when we need it, and he provides.

God is our solution to the problems we experience of coming up short on our daily bread needs. He makes the rain fall on the righteous and the unrighteous alike. He provides for sinners and saints at the same time. By doing so, and even by providing in miraculous ways like with the feeding of the 5000+ people, he proves over and over again that he cares about people meeting their day to day needs.

God provides our daily bread. He has done it since the creation of the world, and he continues to provide all that we need for day to day living and more. So come to him when you find yourself lacking in the daily bread department, in those day to day necessities. God will provide the solution and give us this day our daily bread. Amen.