

Planting Hope: Are You Hungry? John 6:3-13

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I love dishes. I really appreciate a beautifully set table. My fetish with dishes started when I was picking out my wedding china. I couldn't believe all the beautiful plates, bowls, cups, saucers that there were to choose from. I loved the variety of patterns, colors, and designs that were available. I finally decided on my favorite pattern, and after all these years I have enough for 20 place settings! The thing is, I didn't stop my fetish for dishes with just getting fine china. I wanted more. I have had over 12 different sets of dishes in my home over the years. I am down to just four sets now. Recently, I saw on Facebook Marketplace that I could add more dishes to two of my sets. When I mentioned it to my husband, Jim, he asked a very simple yet profound question, "How many dishes are enough, Sandy?" It got me thinking why am I always looking for more? How much is enough?

That is a really good question. How much is enough? A rich man once said, "Enough means just a little bit more." The question behind wanting more is, why do I have such a desire for more and more, how much is enough? Actually, it isn't about how much is enough. It is not about enough at all. It is about the opposite of enough...emptiness. It is about an emptiness inside of us that many of us try to fill with more. And those times when I can recognize I am doing it, I realize that the emptiness I am really trying to fill is spiritual. It is a spiritual hunger. And this hunger can't be filled by acquiring more. It can only be filled by God.

There is a spiritual hunger that dwells within each one of us. We were created with this hunger for God. And when we find ourselves caught up in trying to fill that spiritual void with stuff, we end up feeling more empty. What we really seek is to fill that spiritual hunger. That hunger is experienced when we know we are enough. That we are wonderfully made and loved by God. It is when we live into this, this complete love of God, then that spiritual hunger is filled, knowing that we are enough. And one of the ways we can live into that

spiritual hunger is through following Jesus.

In today's reading from John, Jesus addresses the needs of hunger. Both Spiritual hunger and Physical hunger. And these two hungers are intimately connected. Jesus is the way that both hungers are satisfied. Every single person on earth has needs to be filled with both physical and spiritual food. In our scripture Jesus shares that it is in following him that hunger is satisfied. Our reading is from the Gospel of John, the 6th chapter.

³ Then Jesus climbed a hill and sat down with his disciples around him. ⁴ (It was nearly time for the Jewish Passover celebration.) ⁵ Jesus soon saw a huge crowd of people coming to look for him. Turning to Philip, he asked, "Where can we buy bread to feed all these people?" ⁶ He was testing Philip, for he already knew what he was going to do.

⁷ Philip replied, "Even if we worked for months, we wouldn't have enough money to feed them!"

⁸ Then Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up. ⁹ "There's a young boy here with five barley loaves and two fish. But what good is that with this huge crowd?"

¹⁰ "Tell everyone to sit down," Jesus said. So they all sat down on the grassy slopes. (The men alone numbered about 5,000.) ¹¹ Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks to God, and distributed them to the people. Afterward he did the same with the fish. And they all ate as much as they wanted. ¹² After everyone was full, Jesus told his disciples, "Now gather the leftovers, so that nothing is wasted." ¹³ So they picked up the pieces and filled twelve baskets with scraps left by the people who had eaten from the five barley loaves.

Let's take some time to go over what that scene must have looked like. Imagine large crowds had gathered seeking Jesus. Some had heard Jesus performed miracles, so they came hoping to see some kind of miracle. Others heard that Jesus could heal the sick, bringing them close to Jesus for a chance to be healed. Others came because they had seen what Jesus had done and they wanted to see even more action from him. And for some, it was possibly to be entertained by such a popular figure.

The crowd had been waiting for Jesus a long time. By the time Jesus and his disciples showed up it was dinner time. By now those who had been waiting were hungry, very hungry. It had been hours since any of

them had eaten. Their empty stomachs started taking over. At this point all they cared about was getting food in their stomachs! Their attention changed from wanting healing or miracles or entertainment to food, now! As the crowd became more restless, Jesus approached his disciple Philip and asked an interesting question. Jesus said, "Where can we buy bread to feed all these people?" First thing Philip does is look in the money bag. He quickly discovers that there isn't enough money to buy bread for a few, let alone a huge crowd! He gave up and said, "Not going to happen, there isn't enough money to buy food for everyone."

Philip never once asks Jesus what he can do about the situation, rather he relies on his own resources, his own abilities. And who would blame him. If we're honest with ourselves, most of us would have come up with the same response. There is not enough. Philip viewed the situation as hopeless even though Jesus was right there. Philip could not see beyond his own power to do anything about the situation. He gave up.

There are times you and I can feel like Philip. We see a great need, we look at our resources, and we decide that we are powerless to do anything to help. We can think we don't have enough to make a difference. Sometimes we forget to bring Jesus into the mix. Asking Jesus what he can do with our resources.

Now let's look at Andrew. Andrew saw the same problem. So, Andrew went out among the crowd looking to see what could be done. He found a boy who had a picnic lunch. It was only enough food to feed one hungry, growing boy, but Andrew decides instead of giving up he goes to Jesus with what he had found.

Andrew hands Jesus such a small amount of food, hardly enough for just one boy to eat. Then Jesus takes what was given to him and makes it into enough. More than enough for everyone! Jesus uses what was brought to him and turned the very little into an abundance. Jesus turns it into enough food to feed over 5,000 people. And if that wasn't enough there was ample food left over!

Not only had the physical hunger of the crowd been filled, but also the spiritual hunger. The disciples knew there was not enough to feed such a crowd, yet Jesus made it happen. The crowd, well once they had enough to eat, they too saw that Jesus provided enough. He not only filled their physical hunger, but they experienced with the miracle their spiritual hunger fed as well.

Jesus is continuously filling our spiritual and physical hunger. And did you know that there is more than enough food to feed the world? However, there is a distribution problem. So what can we, as followers of Jesus, who have enough to eat and long to have our spiritual hunger filled, do about it?

Those who have enough food to eat are called to help feed those who are hungry. We are called to share our resources. Sometimes we can get overwhelmed by the need. We may think, like Philip, "How will my resources help with so many hungry people?" What can God do with our resources? Remember, Jesus can take what we give and make it reach way beyond our wildest imagination!

A couple of the ways this happens is through our Mission Outpost and Feed My Starving Children. Those who receive food are filled not only physically, but spiritually as well. It is in helping to feed the hungry that your spiritual hunger gets filled. Let me say that again, as you feed those who are physically hungry, you give them an opportunity to fill their spiritual hunger, and in that process you will find your spiritual hunger has been fed as well.

There are so many people around us—who are hungry for food. The good news is that God has unlimited resources. You and I, we are the resources that God uses to feed a hungry world. Jesus does an amazing thing through those who feed the hungry. Even if we can't always see the many ways Jesus will use our resources, even if we think what we have is not enough, to make a difference we know that in Christ there is enough. Jesus fills the hunger that is longed for. As we feed those who are physically hungry, our spiritual hunger gets fed and we literally become the hands and feet of Jesus.

Today take some time to reflect on how Jesus has provided for your needs, and then what can you offer so that others have their needs met?

Here is an opportunity you can engage in right now. Text the word HUNGER to 270-330-8350 and you will receive a link where you can sign up to pack meals or to donate to the Feed My Starving Children South Metro Meal Pack.