

Family Baptist Church – October 24, 2021

Making Your Life Count – Matthew 14:13-21

Good morning! Congratulations on making it to the middle of the Fall Season! The Fall 2021 season officially began on September 22nd and will be officially over on December 21st. All I can say is that MN is a lot cooler in the Fall than SC. 😊 I have found that the halfway points are some of the most challenging. It is challenging to be halfway done with a homework assignment, halfway done with a work project, halfway done picking up the toys and putting the kids to bed, halfway through your workout, halfway through the work week, halfway finished with a college paper.

[By the way, we have been blessed this weekend to have a team of 23 students here from Faith Baptist Bible College. They helped us deep clean the auditorium, pull some weeds on the hills, and declutter the basement of our church. It has been a quick trip for the team but also a FULL trip for the team. THANK YOU!]

This morning, I want to offer a word of encouragement for those of us who struggle with feeling like we are stuck in the halfway point of tackling a task only to find ourselves OUT OF RESOURCES (time, talents, and treasures). The problem is NOT that you stopped trying to solve the problem, the problem is that you are starting to think that YOU CAN'T SOLVE THE PROBLEM. You have reached the ceiling or come up against an impenetrable brick wall.

What if all the effort you have been putting into “changing” yourself, someone else, or something else is destined to fail? What if the life you are currently living is lacking meaning and purpose? If you stopped doing whatever you do on a regular basis, would anyone notice you stopped?

Listen as I read an excerpt from a CNN article about a discovery made on March 8, 2014...

(CNN) -- For years, the payments went out of the woman's bank account. Nobody batted an eyelid. Bills were paid. And life went on as normal in the quiet neighborhood of Pontiac, Michigan. Neighbors didn't notice anything unusual. The woman traveled a lot, they said, and kept to herself. One of them mowed her grass to keep things looking tidy.

At some point, her bank account ran dry. The bills stopped being paid. After its warnings went unanswered, the bank holding the mortgage foreclosed on the house, a common occurrence in a region hit hard by economic woes. Still, nobody noticed what had happened inside the house. Nobody wondered out loud what had become of the owner. Not until this week, when a worker sent by the bank to repair a hole in the roof made a grisly discovery. The woman's mummified body was sitting in the back seat of her car, parked in the garage. The key was halfway in the ignition. Authorities say they believe the woman died at least five years ago. They're still trying to figure out what happened. "I've been doing this 37 years. Never seen anything like this before," said Undersheriff Mike McCabe of Oakland County, just outside Detroit.

Michigan woman's auto-payments hid her death for over 5 years

By Jethro Mullen and Kevin Conlon, CNN (March 8, 2014).

In his book, “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People”, Stephen Covey encourages his readers to begin with the end in mind. This is what he says at the beginning of chapter two: “In your mind’s eye, see yourself going to the funeral of a loved one. Picture yourself driving to the funeral parlor or chapel, parking the car, and getting out. As you walk inside the building, you notice the flowers, the soft organ music. You see the faces of friends

and family you pass along the way. You feel the shared sorrow of losing, the joy of having known, that radiates from the hearts of the people there.

As you walk down to the front of the room and look inside the casket, you suddenly come face to face with yourself. This is your funeral, three years from today. All these people have come to honor you, to express feelings of love and appreciation for your life.

As you take a seat and wait for the services to begin, you look at the program in your hand. There are to be four speakers. The first is from your family, immediate and also extended—children, brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents who have come from all over the country to attend. The second speaker is one of your friends, someone who can give a sense of what you were as a person. The third speaker is from your work or profession. And the fourth is from your church or some community organization where you've been involved in service.

Now think deeply. What character would you like them to have seen in you? What contributions, what achievements would you want them to remember? Look carefully at the people around you. What difference would you like to have made in their lives? [end of quote]

What I want to overhear people say about me...

- Acts 11:24 -- ²⁴ for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.

This morning I want to talk with you about “Making Your Life Count” [breaking through the halfway point and achieving your goals. What, after all, should be your ultimate life goal? What would provide you meaning and purpose? What will help you leave a legacy and do something that really counts?]

- And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. (John 17:3)
 - Get honest about your limitations and weaknesses.
 - Surrender what little you have to Jesus and watch Him doing exceeding and abundantly above all that you ask or think.

We are going to do this through the lens of Matthew 14:13-21 and the story of the feeding of the 5,000.

- **The Feeding of the 5,000**
 - **Only miracle recorded in all four gospels.**
- **Except for the Greatest Miracle of All!**
 - **The Resurrection of Christ.**

To set the stage, let me give you the basic Story Line Common to all 4 Gospels:

- Jesus relocated to a desolate place.
- His disciples joined him.
- The crowd of at least 5,000 men followed him.
- Jesus had compassion on the crowd and healed the sick until evening.
- The crowd was hungry.
- Jesus asked the disciples to feed the crowds.
- The disciples gave Jesus 5 barley loaves (John 6) and 2 fish.
- The disciples organized the crowds into manageable groups and had them sit on the grass.
- Jesus blessed the food.
- Jesus divided the food and gave it to the disciples.
- The disciples distributed the food until everyone was satisfied.
- The disciples collected 12 baskets full of uneaten food.

Extra Background Details:

- **Exact Location~**
 - **Luke 9:10-17** -- The desolate place was in the vicinity of Bethsaida (NE tip of the Sea of Galilee). (10)
- **Available Resources***
 - **Mark 6:37 & John 6:7**
 - Description given of the disciples' treasury. (37 & John 6:7)
 - *200 denari or enough money for the group to survive for 15 days if each spent an entire days wage... more likely, the money could last them at least a month
 - It is interesting that Philip was willing to spend all of it to meet the needs of the crowd!
- **Organizational Details^**
 - **Matthew 14:19** – Jesus instructed the disciples to have the crowds sit down in the grass.
 - **Mark 6:40** – They were divided into groups of 100's and 50's
 - **Luke 9:14** – They were divided into groups of 50's
 - ^The 5,000 arranged in groups of 100s and 50s.
 - If you figure around 20,000 people present (5,000 men plus women and children [larger families were the norm]) and you divided the group into 50's, each of the 12 was responsible to distribute food to 33 different groups.
 - If you figure around 5,000 divided into groups of 50's, each of the 12 was responsible to distribute food to approximately 8 groups each.
 - Any way you look at it, they distributed the same amount of food [It is staggering!]
- **Reason for the Miracle**
 - **John 6:6** – Jesus “tested” the faith of the disciples
- **Response to the Miracle#**
 - **In all four accounts, the disciples trusted Christ with the limited resources they received.**
 - **In John 6:14-15** -- The people acknowledged Jesus as “the Prophet.” (14) and the people wanted to force him to become their king. (15)

Jesus understands your limitations... so must you!

Jesus desires to work in and through you... don't waste your life, lose it!

I. **Jesus understands your limitations. (13-15)**

¹³ Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns.

○ **You will experience exhaustion. – Exhaustion**

- **Rest is essential. (Mark 6:30-32)**

³⁰The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. ³¹**And he said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.** ³²And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. John 4:6 – “wearied as he was from his journey...”

- Matt. 8:24 – “ And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he (Jesus) was asleep.”

○ **You will face personal loss. – Personal Loss**

- John 11:35 – “Jesus wept.” (over Lazarus and the unbelief around him)
- Luke 19:41 ff – Jesus wept over the future destruction of the city and the implication this destruction would have on the people of the city.
- ***Matthew 14:13 – Jesus was grieved about John the Baptist (14:23 – “And after he dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray.”)***

○ **You will struggle with illness. – SICKNESS**

¹⁴ When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

- ***Jesus frequently cared for the sick***
- Matthew 4:23-25 – Jesus began his public ministry healing every disease brought to him.
- Matthew 8 – Jesus healed a leper; the Centurion’s servant; (14-17) he healed Peter’s mother-in-law along with “many who were brought to him”; he healed two demon-possessed men;
- Matthew 9 – Jesus heals a paralytic; he brought back a girl from the dead; he healed the woman suffering with a blood disease for 12 years; 2 blind men; a mute man
- Matthew 10 – Jesus sent out the disciples to heal every disease and every affliction
- Matthew 11 – Jesus heals the blind, the lame, and the lepers in front of John’s disciples
- Matthew 12 – Jesus heals the man with a withered hand on the Sabbath
- Matthew 13 – Matthew concludes the chapter with a reference to the fact that Jesus did not do MANY MIGHTY WORKS in Nazareth (the other Gospels tell us that he did do some!)

○ **You will encounter seemingly impossible situations. – PRESSURE**

¹⁵ Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves.”

- Matthew 14:15 – the disciples were in a desolate place surrounded by 20,000+ people in need of some food and their time to do something productive about it was quickly coming to an end “the day is now over”
- To make matters worse, they were convinced that they lacked the resources necessary to meet the challenge at hand.
- ***Jesus experienced the overwhelming feeling in Gethsemane of baring the weight of the sin of the world!!!***

Illustration of understanding my own limitations:

- I remember how I felt the day I turned 40 years old. I was sitting in the balcony of the FMA at BJU and I suddenly struggled to read the PowerPoint for the songs.
- I share this with you because something happens when you reach 40. You begin to realize your own limitations, weaknesses, and missed opportunities. NO. DON’T WORRY. I DIDN’T GO OUT AND BUY A MORTORCYLCLE. I didn’t try and out do the Dr. Pepper Mobile owned at one time by Mr. Buiters. ☺
- What I am trying to say is that I have an acute awareness of my limitations. **I am color blind**. I can’t see the 3-Day Puzzle Picture if my life depended on it. While I love to view things from the 50,000 foot view and give suggestions regarding how to go forward, **I am not so fond of the details necessary to**

get there. For example, I love teaching but **don't particularly enjoy taking attendance or RECORDING MIDTERM GRADES.** But this doesn't mean that I don't do what I must do. I know the effects of exhaustion, personal loss, sickness, and pressure. And I want you to know something, JESUS UNDERSTANDS AND HE IS STILL INTERESTED IN USING ME FOR HIS GLORY. And that my friend is absolutely amazing. -- **Jesus understands your limitations – so must you!**

I. *Jesus understands your limitations. (13-15)*

II. **Jesus desires to work in and through you. (16-21)**

○ **Embrace your limitations. (16)**

¹⁶ But Jesus said, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat."

- He could have provided food for the 5,000 without involving the 12.
- *Your perspective always changes when you can't shift the responsibility to anyone else. You are forced to come to the end of yourself.*
 - Instead, he wanted them to come to the end of themselves (Mark 6:37 & John 6:7 that 200 denari would not be enough... it is too late even if it was enough...; Consider also the significance of Christ asking the disciples who were from Bethsaida [John 1:44 – identifies Bethsaida as the home town of Philip, Andrew, and Peter...the place they were ministering].
 - John 6 tells us that Jesus asked Philip for a solution... Philip told him that they lacked the resources
 - It was Andrew who found the boy with his sack lunch
 - The interesting thing about Andrew is that although very limited comments are made about him by the gospel writers, when we do see him mentioned, he is usually bringing people to Jesus! [Jn 1:40-41 brings Peter to Jesus and in Jn 6:8 brings the boy to Jesus].
 - He was looking for nothing less than TOTAL DEPENDENCE!

○ **Surrender what you have. (17-19)**

¹⁷ They said to him, "We have only five loaves here and two fish." ¹⁸ And he said, "Bring them here to me." ¹⁹ Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds.

- Jesus wanted the disciples to offer to him what they had.
 - Five loaves and two fish
 - Application: When a need arises, we have a tendency to look for the answer in some outside resource. Jesus encouraged them to look from within.
- Jesus wanted to see if they would trust him.
 - Bring them here to me. (KEY TRUTH IN THIS TEXT – BRING WHAT YOU HAVE TO CHRIST AND WATCH WHAT HE CAN DO IN AND THROUGH YOU!!!)

Illustration: Gary Walton from Bible's International preached at PBC in the end of January. He emphasized the difference between "VOLUNTEERISM" (one hand in the air) vs. "SURRENDER" (both hands in the air).

- **Volunteerism** can look like 18 credits, 3 extensions, participation in Aiad, and ministry in your local church BUT WHEN IT COMES TO YOUR SCHOOL WORK OR PERSONAL TIME IN THE WORD AND YOU PULL YOUR HAND BACK IN.
- **Surrender** = "I'll go where you want me to go and do what you want me to do... no matter what the cost, discomfort or pain." Surrender implies that you have developed priorities regarding what is

MOST IMPORTANT and you give yourself to that discipline... trusting God for the outcome as we see in verse 19 --

- Having the crowd sit down in groups of 50's or 100's before he multiplied the food.
- Believing that there would be enough left over for the 12 to eat.
- He modeled the beautiful practice of blessing the food (THANKING GOD FOR HIS ABUNDANT RESOURCES!)

▪ **Enjoy the satisfaction that only He can provide. (20-21)**

²⁰ And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. ²¹ And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

- **He has your best interest in mind. (20)**
 - The people ate until they were satisfied (*chortazow* – cause to eat one's fill; be filled to satisfaction; be content)
 - Enough was left over to feed the 12 and Jesus
 - I wonder if Jesus had only 12 baskets collected because he planned to fast over the death of John the Baptist
 - Or he was testing the disciples to see whether or not they would share what they collected with him.

Let me reveal a little known secret about surrender... Jesus said in John 10:10 that He came to give us life and that more abundantly. David said in Psalm 34:8-10 – “⁸O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. ⁹O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. ¹⁰The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.”

- **Abraham** had to leave his homeland (Ur) before he became the “FATHER OF NATIONS.” But please remember, he did become the father of nations!
 - **Joseph** had to choose not to get bitter even though he continued to fall on hard times (brother's mocking him, selling him into slavery, master's wife betraying him, the cupbearer forgetting him...). If anyone had reason to have TRUST issues it was Joseph. But instead of growing bitter he expressed in Gen 50:20 – “²⁰But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.”
 - **Moses** had to reject the solitude of shepherding a flock to the magnitude of shepherding millions of people. But in so doing, Exodus 33:11 states that he enjoyed unique intimacy with God – ¹¹And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.”
 - **Ruth** had to forsake her friends and family first... not knowing that she would end up embraced by Boaz and placed in the line of David which led to the line of Christ!
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- **He always exceeds your highest expectations. (21)**
 - 5,000 fed... not counting woman and children

Apply the Text:

- **Identify your struggle.**
 - You can't fix what you don't know is broken.
 - What impossible situation are you facing?
 - What keeps you awake at night?
- **Acknowledge your weakness.**
 - Write out a list of your limitations.
 - You will get tired and worn out. You are not an exception to the rule. You too must take time to rest.
 - You will lose loved ones. Death is the consequence of the Fall. It cannot be avoided.
 - You will get sick at some point in your life. Regardless of how well you maintain your health or wash your hands.
 - You will face the seemingly impossible challenges both here and at home.
 - REMEMBER: Jesus know, he sees, and he cares!
- **Surrender it all to Christ.**
 - Why not offer to God what you have (both hands in the air) and watch what He can do in and through you?
 - 5 measly barley loaves and 2 fish was all they had. Jesus used what they had to feed 20,000 + people.
 - What resources have you been holding on to because you viewed them as insignificant?
 - Sharing the Gospel
 - Reaching out to a friend
 - Faithful in your financial gifts
 - A ministry idea
 - A family member

Jim Elliot said: "A man is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."

William Borden said: "No Retreats. No Reserves. No Regrets."

The Apostle Paul said (Phil. 3:7-12)

⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. ¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

Jesus said (Matthew 10:37-39)

³⁷ Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸ And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Jesus understands your limitations... so must you!

Jesus desires to work in and through you... don't waste your life, lose it!