

Forgotten Lives
The Unselfish Boy

John 6:1-14

July 19, 2026

HDBC

It happens in thousands of homes across America. Mom gets the kids up for school then goes to the kitchen takes out a piece of ham, the peanut butter and jelly, or maybe some left over roast beef, and smashes it between two pieces of bread. She then puts it in a clear plastic bag drops it in a sack along with a snack. Then shoves it into the hands of her child as they make the daily trek to school.

And how does he feel about it? He has a **love/hate relationship** with it. Hates having to fool with it in the morning, but come lunch time, he has warmed up to the idea. Of course most kids don't just open the bag and eat, they **compare, trade and sell**. **School cafeteria is a good training ground for business**. Where else can you trade a Twinkie for slice of pizza.

Moms have been making sack lunches for long time. In fact it was a little boy's sack lunch that **stole the show** during one of Jesus' biggest rallies.

READ the TEXT – John 6:1-14

These verses tell us that a miracle occurred. That was not that unusual when Jesus was present. He did many miracles. This one was unique.

1. It is the only one recorded in all four gospels.
2. **Quantity of witnesses. 5,000 plus saw it. (Likely more than 20,000)**
3. Strictly initiated by Jesus. They did not ask to be fed.
4. **There is an under-aged, unnamed hero in this story.**

That's why it is included in this series. Looking at ***Forgotten Lives***, people who tend to be overshadowed by others. In this case it was a young boy, who remains unnamed. **Yet for one moment he stepped onto the stage** and played a critical role in one of the great miracles of Jesus. **Things we learn from this miracle:**

1. People have needs that only Jesus can meet. (1-5)

The account begins with Jesus and His disciples moving from one side of the lake to another side, by boat. They were not actually going straight across, but simply going to another location along the shore.

The other gospels help us fill in the gaps. Jesus had sent out his twelve disciples on a ministry tour and they have reported back. They had also received word that **John the Baptist had been beheaded**. Jesus and the twelve were so busy they had not had time to grieve. He invited them to get away for a desolate place to rest and recharge.

When the people realized where he was going, they followed on foot. Jesus needed rest, but the crowds continued to come to Him. Why? Because they had needs. They wanted His healing and His teaching.

Matthew adds that Jesus *had compassion on them*. He healed the sick and taught throughout the day. It was the end of a long day.

Mark adds that Jesus viewed them as *sheep without a shepherd*. He knew that the religious leaders had failed in their responsibility to lead the people into a right relationship with God. They needed a good shepherd; someone to teach, lead, feed and protect them. **He would be that good shepherd.** All day He acted like a good shepherd would. Caring for the sheep and seeing their needs.

As He looked over multitude He must have seen many needs, but their most pressing need was for food. **They were hungry.** **He would not ignore that need.**

Keep something in mind . . . Most of these people were coming to Jesus with selfish motives. And another thing to remember is this; most would never become disciples of Christ. They would reject Him and see Him placed on a cross. He knew that, but showed grace to them. **He knew that He was the only one who could meet their deepest need.**

2. Jesus challenges us be faith-driven. (5-7)

Jesus asks Philip where they could buy food to feed the crowd. It would have been great if Phillip had responded by saying . . .

Lord, we've seen you turn water into wine. I've watched you heal a royal official's son without even going to him. We've seen you strengthen the weak legs of a man cripple for 38 years. We've watched you do the impossible. I have no doubt that you can and will meet this need.

But that is not how Phillip responded. He looked at the problem, not at Jesus. *He saw it as an impossible situation rather than as an opportunity for a miracle.* He was a bean counter. 8 month's pay would not be enough to feed this group. This was a difficult situation. Actually, it was impossible. HUNGRY CROWD, NO FOOD, NO MARKET, NO MONEY.

Jesus asked the question to **test Phillip**. He was not trying to trip him up, nor to embarrass him. He was using it to teach Phillip and the others. It was a learning experience that would lead them to maturity. *In his question to Philip, Jesus was doing several things . . .*

- 1) He was teaching the disciples to notice the needs of others.
- 2) He was pointing out the impossibility of the situation.
- 3) He was preparing them for a miracle.
- 4) He was training them to become **faith-driven**.

He wanted to teach them to look at every situation through the eyes of faith rather than reason or logic. Think beyond what they could do to what God could do.

Jesus still uses difficult situations to help us grow in our faith. *In fact we grow more in the seasons of struggle than in the seasons of ease.* We tend to want a quick escape. Jesus could provide that, but He uses the process to make us more like Himself and to strengthen our faith.

3. A little faith is better than no faith. (8-9)

If Phillip failed the test with an F, Andrew should be credited with a C+.

He showed a little bit of faith. And a little faith is better than no faith. Andrew reported that a boy had five loaves and two small fish. Typical lunch. If he had stopped talking at that point he might have earned an A. But he then joined Phillip's pessimism by adding *how much good can these do for so many people.*

The text tells us these were **barley cakes**. Barley was the food of poor people and animals. These were probably the size of small pancakes. The fish were either pickled or dried like sardines. This was not a gourmet meal. **Two things seem apparent:**

- 1) **Andrew was looking for solutions.** He must have been scouring the crowd to see how much food they had.
- 2) **Andrew understood the importance of bringing things and people to Jesus.** It is not stated but clearly Andrew brought the young boy and his lunch to Jesus. Almost every time we see Andrew, He is bringing someone to Jesus. He may not have had great faith, but he had some, and that was enough to prompt a response from Jesus.

4. Limited resources become unlimited when given to Jesus. (10-11) *Not enough becomes more than enough when given to Jesus!*

The people were instructed to sit on the ground. At that point Jesus gave thanks and distributed the food to the people. 5,000 men. Before I get to the actual miracle, I want to consider the obvious, but unreported thing: **this boy was willing to give up his lunch.**

Bible says Jesus took the loaves. You can bet He did not take them by force. This little boy who must have had a caring mom was placed in unusual position. **What were his options?**

- 1) **He could have kept it for himself.** He had every right.
- 2) **He could have shared it with few. Friends.**

- 3) **He could have thrown it away.** I want to be like everyone else.
- 4) **He could have tried to feed them all himself.**
- 5) **He could have given it to Jesus.** That he did.

Once he did that there was no question about the outcome. Jesus takes the little things we give Him, and uses them to do great things. He uses small vessels and limited resources to win His greatest victories. David and sling, Gideon and his 300.

Great principle to remember:

Thank God for what you have. Give it away. Watch God work.

God doesn't see raw materials as we do. We tend to focus on how limited our resources are. Not God. He knows how unlimited His power is. **Do you ever look at yourself and think you are nothing but a broken vessel, inadequate to be effective? The master can take your weak life and make something beautiful from it.**

The miracle itself is not really described . . . just the results. We are not told how or where the bread and meat were multiplied, but clearly they were. Not only was there enough for everyone to have some, but there was **enough for everyone to be satisfied.** Those two things are not always the same.

I grew up in a family of seven. Road trips when we were young. **Stuckey's** stores were a treat. We all loved the pecan logs. I still do. By the time one of those logs is divided seven ways . . . we all got some, but no one was satisfied.

5. When Jesus blesses, he does so abundantly. (12-13)

Jesus instructed the disciples to gather the leftovers. What a surprise (to them) that there were 12 baskets leftover. One for each apostle. God is so cool. Jesus not only fed them all for the day, but provided for the next meal for his disciples. Interestingly, there were 12 and not 13. He was

not concerned about His own next meal. He wanted to build their faith and bless them.

6. The primary desire of Jesus is to meet spiritual needs.

This is not just about filling hungry stomachs, but about the spiritual hunger that only Jesus can satisfy. Later in this same chapter Jesus declared that He was the **bread of life**. The timing is not accidental.

Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. (John 6:35)

He wanted their physical appetites to be satisfied, but more importantly He wanted to fill the deep spiritual longing in each of their hearts.

If you've never tasted Christ as the living bread to give you eternal life, then that is your main need. **Your main need is not for Jesus to heal you or give you a job or provide you with a mate.** Your main need is to come to Jesus for eternal life. Just as you eat bread to sustain your physical life even though you don't understand exactly how it works, so you need to trust in Christ for eternal life.

Takeaways:

1. Jesus sees the needs of people, and cares.

He cares about your physical needs, but more so about your spiritual needs. He can give you a physical meal today, but you may be hungry again tomorrow. But when He meets your spiritual needs, you are satisfied for all eternity. **Do you know Him? Have you trusted Him?**

2. Jesus uses people to meet the needs of people.

He could have fed the people all on His own. But he chose to use other people. He used the disciples. He used the little boy. In doing so He invited them to join in with Him in being a blessing.

3. Jesus uses our surrendered resources to meet needs.

That little boy did not have much, but he gave it all to Jesus. **Jesus never asks of us what we do not have. But He does ask us to give Him what we do have.** We may have a tendency to think that what we have is inadequate. The disciples thought that about the boy's lunch. Even the tragedies in our lives can be used for good when we give them to Him. **Missionary, Elisabeth Elliot offers perspective.**

If the only thing you have to offer is a broken heart, you offer a broken heart. So in a time of grief, the recognition that this is material for sacrifice has been a very great strength for me. Realizing that nothing I have, nothing I am, will be refused on the part of Christ, I simply give it to him as the little boy gave Jesus his five loaves and two fish, with the same feeling of the disciples when they said, "What is the good of that for such a crowd?"

Naturally in almost anything I offer to Christ, my reaction would be, "What is the good of that?" The point is, the use he makes of it is none of my business; it is his business, it is his blessing. So this grief, this loss, this suffering, this pain—whatever it is, which at the moment is God's means of testing my faith and bringing me to the recognition of who he is—that is the thing I offer.