

Good morning everyone and welcome to Fellowship Dallas. We're glad you are here. My name is Randy and I'm one of the Associate Pastors here at the church. We're heading into the middle of summer and with the opportunity for vacations and other activities, we realize it is sometimes difficult to make it to church on Sunday, so we're glad you could make it here today.

My family and I will be able to take a small summer vacation in a few weeks and, with our little girls, traveling has become quite the experience. Something that no one really tells you as you prepare for kids is how much summer vacations change on you. Everything is different when you go from two adults to adults plus kids.

The biggest challenge for us is in the packing. In the past, whenever we would travel somewhere, my wife and I could each take a small bag with everything we would need for an entire week, but now, we are taking snacks, toys, books, pack and plays, high chairs, strollers, not to mention clothes and baby supplies all with less room because of the car seats. I feel like we need to rent a U-Haul just to visit the in-laws.

And, of course, with 500 things on the packing list, you're bound to leave something home. So, with almost every trip now, we leave something behind. Usually it's something small or simple like a toothbrush or socks, but a few months ago, we left something home that was super important. We didn't realize it was gone until we were four hours away and you would have thought our world was falling apart. Before you go there, no – we didn't Home Alone one of our children.

What did we leave behind that was so important? What on earth could cause such devastation? I'll tell you what it was, it was this – my phone charger. And when do you realize your phone charger is gone? When your phone has 3% battery left, that's when. I got into our luggage, pulling everything out, going through every pocket of the suitcase. And of course, I throw my wife under the bus, as if she's my charger's keeper. "Jen? Where did you put my charger?" "I don't know, did you check your bag?" Yeah, I checked my bag, you must have moved it." "I didn't touch it." And I'm sure that somehow all this is her fault.

So after tearing everything apart, I had to resort to asking the friends we were staying with if I could borrow their charger. After all, you never know when you might get a really important text message. Because whenever someone has something really important to say, they always text it first.

But, seriously, so much of my schedule and communication is wrapped up in this small little device. And this device is rendered useless if it doesn't have this little, relatively inexpensive cord to go with it – to give it the power it needs to function. When I lose my power cord, I lost my phone. And when I lose my phone, I feel disconnected. I feel disconnected to my schedule, my family, my friends. I feel like I'm not in control.

Trying to stay on top of things – trying to stay “in control” – is something we all do, but there are times in life when we are suffering circumstances far beyond our control. There are times in life that are bigger than just having a cell phone with no battery. For example, there are times when my cell phone is fully operational, yet I still feel like I’m treading water because of a schedule that’s too full. I don’t think that this scenario – having a schedule that is too full – is out of the ordinary. It’s easy to feel like we have 1,000 things to do, with no time to do them.

Sometimes circumstances are far more severe. Because we go through these prayer cards each week, we know that there are people scattered all throughout the congregation who feel like they’re up against pretty intense circumstances. Some people are in a lot of debt. Maybe they’ve incurred some unexpected expenses and they’re concerned about how they’re going to keep their heads above water, financially. Others have lost their job and they’re trying to figure out how they’re going to get some income. Meanwhile, the church is praying, asking God to fill out its budget this week. All of these logistical circumstances can feel impossible, at times.

But there are other circumstances that have nothing to do with earthly resources – nothing to do with time or money. Many in here have their finances in order and their schedule is manageable, but they’re dealing with sickness. A loved one has cancer. Health seems to be failing. There are these insurmountable odds in front of you. Or perhaps your marriage is struggling or you are having trouble mending fences with another family member. No matter how hard you try, you don’t seem to make up any ground with your loved ones.

Whether it’s a logistical challenge, a health scare or a relationship in distress, chances are most everyone in this room is up against what seems like impossible odds and it seems like there’s not much that can be done to fix anything.

Last week, if you were here, we took an in-depth look at the sixth chapter of Mark. And one of the things I said is that if we have God and we have one another, we have everything we need. I said that if we have the power and authority of God and the ability to rely on other believers, we have all we need to accomplish the mission on which we’ve been sent, as followers of Jesus. But this concept is far easier to understand than it is to believe. Many of us *know* that it’s true that to have God and one another is enough, but it’s far more difficult to rely on that truth when life happens. What about those times when you know God is enough, but you don’t feel like it? What do you do when it doesn’t seem like you have what it takes to overcome the impossible circumstances that life throws at you? What should our response be when we feel like we are powerless and don’t have what we need?

Jesus addresses this question in the second half of chapter six. If you have your Bibles, turn with me to the sixth chapter of Mark. Specifically, we will look at verses 32-56. Mark 6:32-56.

For the past couple of months, we've been reading through the Gospel of Mark, distinguishing between those who are fans of Jesus and those who are followers of Jesus. Today, we will discover that while fans of Jesus may acknowledge that Jesus is God and recognize His power and authority, followers of Jesus don't take their power source for granted. A follower holds on to Jesus as the source of their power and provision. ***Followers hold on to Jesus as their provider and their power.***

Let's read Mark six. We'll begin reading vv. 32-44. This is Mark 6:32-44: "And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things. And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." And they said to him, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?" And he said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." And when they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men."

So, Jesus and the disciples were going out to find a place to rest, and the crowd sees them get in their boat, sees where they're headed, and begins to run around the sea to catch up with them and they meet them when they get to shore. And Jesus, who was there to rest with His followers, took compassion on the crowd. And the word for compassion here means a deep-seated, gut-wrenching compassion. There are thousands of people here who ran and ran and ran and they needed Jesus. So, the disciples get some rest while Jesus begins to teach and it grows late.

And when the disciples look at their watch and bring up the time of day to Jesus so the crowd can go eat, Jesus turns everything around on His followers. He replies, "You give them something to eat." God turns to His followers and says, "You do it!" And the disciples shoot right back at Him – never a good idea when chatting with God – are you going to give us some money so we can go pick something up at the Tom Thumb? In short, they see the logistical task in front of them and say to themselves, this is impossible.

And Jesus asks them a simple question, “What do you have?” And He takes what they have – everything they bring to the table – and multiplies it for thousands of people. What started out as *small* became *enough* and all Jesus did was take what the disciples would offer and He became the Provider.

Earlier in chapter six, we read that these disciples, who had just gone out and proclaimed the Good News, were healing people and preaching the truth on the authority of Jesus. But just hours later, the disciples had lost the art of following Jesus. They were no wiser than the fans of Jesus who had gathered on the hillside. They went from healing the sick in the name of Jesus to not recognizing that Jesus could provide whatever is needed for the wellbeing of His followers. And here, Jesus reminds His disciples that He is the Great Provider. ***Jesus is the Great Provider.***

And not only had He provided food for the thousands; so much food that the disciples each were left holding a basket full of leftovers. Jesus demonstrated to the disciples that He could provide for their needs as well, as ministers of truth. Jesus demonstrated to His followers that He can take whatever they bring to the table and make it enough. They didn’t know how. They didn’t understand the methodology. But they had what they needed to help the helpless and bring fulfillment to the needy. Jesus took their efforts and made it enough. Jesus is the Great Provider.

After the people ate, Jesus made the disciples get back in the boat to head home. Let’s read vv. 45-52. “Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.” And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.”

So Jesus sends His followers back out onto the lake while He stayed back to dismiss the crowds and to pray. So Jesus is up on this mountain and He sees the disciples in the middle of the sea having a difficult time getting to where they wanted to go. In fact, it’s taking them a long time. So long, in fact that they’re probably turning to one another, saying to themselves, this is impossible.

So, at about 3 am, or so – in the middle of the night – Jesus decides to walk by the disciples. Verse 48 says that Jesus “meant to pass by them.” The words “pass by them” are key here, because Jesus is identifying Himself with God Almighty, the God of Moses. This is a throwback to the Book of Exodus.

We see in chapter 33 of Exodus that Moses asks God if he could physically see Him and God responds to Moses saying that He will “pass by” him. We read about this in Exodus 33: “Moses said, “Please show me your glory.” And he said, “I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The Lord.’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.”

So Jesus decides to “pass by” the disciples in order to graciously reveal Himself to them; to show them His divinity, once again. As if the miracles, the healings, controlling the weather, feeding the thousands wasn’t enough, Jesus is approaching the disciples, walking on the water to reveal His true self, His divinity. And as the disciples look up, instead of recognizing Jesus for who He is, they freak out and started crying out in terror because they think they’re seeing a ghost.

Jesus gets in the boat with them, and the wind calms down, they look at one another and are astounded. Why? Verse 52: “because they did not understand about the loaves.” Jesus just walked on water to pass by them and they freaked out. And they looked at one another because they still did not catch that Jesus. Is. God.

He just took five loaves and made it enough for thousands of people and they didn’t get it. After that miracle of feeding the thousands, the disciples should have understood Jesus as someone who could do anything. Yes, He was fully man, but He is also fully God. And God can do anything that can be done. Jesus reminds His disciples that He is all-powerful. ***Jesus is all-powerful.***

But the disciples’ hearts were hardened. They didn’t understand. They had lost the art of following Jesus. Whereas the previous miracle was in front of everyone, this demonstration of divinity was just for the disciples, yet they remained hardened to the truth. And what is Jesus’ response? He continues His ministry.

Let’s read vv. 53-56. In 6:53-56, Mark writes, “When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored to the shore. And when they got out of the boat, the people immediately recognized him and ran about the whole region and began to bring the sick people on their beds to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and implored him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well.”

So what began as a vacation for the disciples turned into an all-nighter. And they get to the other side of the lake, everyone sees them and updates their facebook status to let their friends and relatives know that Jesus is around. And people come out of the woodwork to see Jesus.

Jesus is just walking around. And, by now, the people know that all they have to do is get someone who is sick to touch just the hem of his clothes. He doesn’t have to

recognize them, pray for them, touch them or bless them. The sick just have to touch Him and they are made well. And the disciples who had just been reminded that Jesus is the Great Provider and that Jesus is all-powerful are now being reminded that Jesus is the authority. ***Jesus is the authority.***

The disciples see Jesus from afar and think He's a ghost. Random people see Jesus from afar and recognize Him as the one who has authority even over disease. And they look at their sick relatives – their friends who can't walk well and they think to themselves, this is impossible. They'll never get better. Until they see Jesus. And they take their impossible situation to Him and He makes it all better, just by His presence. Meanwhile, the ones who were closest to Jesus were the ones who were most confused.

So, in this chapter, we see that Jesus is the Great Provider. We see that Jesus is all-powerful. And we see that Jesus is The Authority. But what does this chapter indicate for followers of Jesus today? There are a few things we can point to as takeaways from this chapter.

Firstly, ***Hold on to Jesus as your provider.*** Followers of Jesus: understand you don't have enough. You need someone to provide through you. ***Hold on to Jesus as your Provider.*** We might think that we have enough. We definitely *act like* we have enough. But the truth is, we don't have enough. Just like the disciples came to the table with five loaves and a couple of fish to feed thousands of people, we approach life with some things, but not nearly enough.

Even if you're smart, you don't have enough. Even if you're rich, you don't have enough. Even if you have a sense of humor almost as good as mine, you don't have enough. If you think you have what it takes to be a great Christian on your own, you're wrong. You don't have what it takes to be a good husband or a good wife. You don't have what it takes to be a good son or a good daughter. You don't have what it takes to be a good employee or boss and I don't have what it takes to be a good pastor. Now – I didn't say you have nothing. You have something. You just don't have enough. And we have to Hold On to Jesus as our Provider.

You think you don't have enough words to say to your loved one about Jesus? You don't. You think you don't have the right words to say to your gay friend who just started planning a wedding? You don't. But God can take your love and multiply it so that it can be enough. Don't ask how. Just dwell in the truth that the God who loves you will give you the right words to say. Use His provision to serve others. Maintain love as your motive and let God move through you.

I think we approach impossible situations in our lives one of two ways. The first way says, "I'll take care of it!" Our temptation is to try and do things on our own, the way we want to do things. And we place God on the sideline, as if we're in control. The second way is equally bad and it says, "I'll let God take care of it!" And you absolve

yourself of all responsibility. This way sounds super holy, because you say to yourself, God can do anything He wants, so I'll step aside and let Him save my loved one and I'll just be over here praying. This sounds great until you realize that God has sent us to join Him on His mission.

There's a third and better way. This third way says, "God will take care of it, and maybe He'll use me." This way approaches God with our meager offering, with a heart full of love for Him and for the people around you, and allows God to do mighty things with our feeble hands. Don't view life's crises as problems, view life's crises as opportunities for God to win and for you to join Him in His mission.

Psalm 127:1-2 says, "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep." In order for a job to be done, God must get it done, but He uses His people to accomplish His mission. If we are working too hard without God, if we are, as the Psalmist says, "eating the bread of anxious toil," maybe it's because we haven't offered who we are to God. Hold on to Jesus as your Provider.

The second thing we learn from this passage is that we need to ***Hold on to Jesus as your power***. We need to hold on to Jesus as the source of our power. ***Hold on to Jesus as your power***. We have what we need to conquer fear. Remember, God can do anything that can be done. And in the midst of storms in our lives, we need to hold on to Jesus as our power. We need to see Him for who He is.

Feeding 5,000 people? That's an impossible situation. Getting a boat to the other side of the sea in the middle of horrible weather? That's an impossible situation. And I don't know what impossible situation you brought into this room today, but I want you to know that God is bigger than your circumstances, He is still on His throne. He isn't surprised by what you bring before Him. He isn't surprised by your sickness or your job situation. He isn't surprised by your marital problems or Supreme Court decisions. He is on His throne and He *NEVER* relinquishes His power. He has not handed His crown to another.

So I don't know why you're up against this impossible situation. All I know is that God is good and His timing is perfect. And whatever you are up against, you will be far better off if you allow God to work through you instead of trying to fight life by yourself. Go to God in prayer. Go to other believers with your request and openly confess to God and to your believing friends what you are up against so that God can shine through. These everyday situations should drive us to people of prayer.

Isn't it exhausting trying to do it on our own? Aren't you tired doing it on your own? Allow God to work through you. In 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, Paul writes these verses: "But [God] said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that

the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong." Holding on to Jesus as your power means that you read scripture, pray and seek His leading and strength in your life.

Hold on to Jesus as your Provider and your Power. Hold on to Jesus for your provision and your power. Remember the disciples in this passage. Just because they were close to God doesn't mean they were following Him. Open your eyes to Jesus as Provider and your Power.

We, as a church, must hold on to Jesus. Because there is great risk if we fail to remember Christ as provider and power. When we try to go out on our own, we miss being able to participate in His mission. God's work is going to continue here in Dallas with or without us. We can be willing participants, or we can be on the sidelines.

If, however, we join with Him on His mission, our church will be stronger. Our families will be stronger. Our community, our city, will be transformed. We will not fear. We may wonder *how*, but we will not wonder *who*. We will have the overwhelming pleasure of participating in ministry with God, even when that ministry carries us into heavy/dark times. ***Hold on to Jesus as your provider and your power.***