

**Jesus says: “Do it Yourself!”**  
**Matthew 14:13-21**  
**Sunday, March 1, 2020**

After the birth of Jesus, the death of Jesus and the resurrection of Jesus, there are really only a few stories concerning Jesus that we repeat and teach over and over again. The story of Jesus feeding the 5000 is certainly one of them. Can you think of any others?

The story gives us a picture of the incredible nature of Jesus as fully human and fully God. It shows us his generosity. It shows his power and his ability to provide.

There are deeper meanings to this story as well – showing how Jesus relates to the promises and teachings of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament). This story gives a deeper look into Jesus’ identity and purpose on earth and in the cosmos.

If you came here looking for depth this morning, I’m afraid I’m going to disappoint you. We’re going to keep this quite close to the surface. No matter how deep or how shallow you go with this passage, there is much to learn and much to live here.

Here’s the story as recorded in Matthew 14: Jesus had just heard that his cousin John the Baptist had been executed. Jesus needs to take time to be alone and to pray. <sup>13</sup> ***When Jesus heard what had happened [to John the Baptist], he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns.*** <sup>14</sup> ***When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.***

Jesus cannot get a moments rest to think, pray, reflect and grieve. The people show up, demanding and full of needs. Instead of resenting them, as I and many of you would have, Jesus has compassion on them. He heals. He listens. He engages. He gives of himself, even during a time of loss.

It’s a large crowd and they’re there a long time. <sup>15</sup> ***As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.”***

There are lots of needy people here, Jesus. They’re been here a long time. They need to eat. Send them away so they can get food.

<sup>16</sup> ***Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away.”*** Jesus seems to want to continue spending time with them.

Then he tells the disciples, ***“You give them something to eat.”***

The disciples bring up reality to Jesus: these people will be hungry and will need food. There’s really no food here.

Jesus agrees! This will be a problem! But he says to the disciples, “You solve it.”

### Jesus says: "Do it yourself!"

We forget that Christianity has a bias toward action. Yes, Christianity is primarily about our identity as children of God and followers of Jesus. Christianity is far more about who we ARE than what we DO.

But following that, to live Christianly is to actively do something in the name of Jesus in this world.

People knew Christ was alive amongst the early church because of the evidence of the things that they did and the way that they lived. In Acts 2 we read:

***<sup>44</sup> All the believers stayed together. They shared everything. <sup>45</sup> They sold their land and the things they owned. Then they divided the money and gave it to those people who needed it. <sup>46</sup> The believers met together in the Temple every day. They all had the same purpose. They broke bread in their homes, happy to share their food with joyful hearts. <sup>47</sup> They praised God, and all the people liked them. More and more people were being saved every day; the Lord was adding those people to the group of believers.***

This understanding of us and God inevitably leads us to live an active, outward faith.

Michelle Anthony wrote an excellent book called *Spiritual Parenting*. In it she describes what became the family motto in her home: **"What needs to be done?"** If the kids came home with concern over a classmate: "What needs to be done?" If a neighbor was struggling and their yard was in disrepair: "What needs to be done?" If there was a homeless man on the street holding a sign saying that he's hungry: "What needs to be done?"

Sometimes the question was bothersome. Sometimes there are problems that we complain about that we have no interest in solving. But in the Anthony household, the question reminded them that to have a relationship with Jesus is to live a life of action. It was a reminder that faith is not just for heads and hearts, but for hands and feet.

The Anthony family asks, "What needs to be done?"

Jesus answers that question to his disciples (and us): "Do it yourself!"

We know we are supposed to rely on Jesus for everything. We are to live lives of complete dependence on God. But as we trust, **we often confuse relying on God with doing nothing.**

Ben Franklin is credited with this quote: "Serving God is doing good to man, but **praying** is thought an easier service and therefore more generally chosen." I would argue that prayer may be more essential than action, but prayer is often where we stop in many situations.

We see people in need and ask God, "Please send someone to help that person."

We experience a conflict with family or friends, and we beg God, "Please restore our relationship."

We see a lonely person and we ask God, "Please send someone to care for that person."

And all the while we are deaf to the call of Jesus to “Do it yourself!” You share with that person and help with their need. You have that hard conversation with your friend or family and restore that relationship. You spend time with that lonely person.

Relying on God is not asking God to do our errands or bidding. When we see problems, is there something we can do to move towards a solution?

In living an active faith, we must remember that **a bias towards action is not a bias towards frenzy.** There are needs absolutely everywhere. There is no end to the needs within our church, our schools, our neighborhoods, our city, our province, our country, our world. You cannot solve every problem. Chances are good that we may only be able to give our time to one problem! You cannot be everywhere, and if you try to be everywhere you will end up nowhere. But as problems arise, it is worth asking “What needs to be done” and question whether you can be part of the solution.

There are many things that frustrate and aggravate me. There are many things that make me sad. But I can’t be everywhere and I can’t do everything. So personally I try to focus on education and educators. As a youth and family pastor I spent hours upon hours in local schools. I volunteer at Kayde’s school currently and try to be involved in the community there. I try to support teachers and other school staff. I try to advocate on behalf of our schools and their students.

There are an endless number of ways I can serve and minister within schools in our city. But if I try to solve every local problem, I won’t have any time to be involved with local education. If I live the frenzied life of trying to solve every problem, I will break the commitments I’ve made, and I’ll neglect the very people and places I may be called to be.

Jesus says, “Do it yourself!” as it relates to the problems in our world. He asks us to think. He calls us to act.

As we go back to the story at hand, the disciples are probably taken aback at Jesus’ demand. They sputter, <sup>17</sup> **“We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish.”** There are thousands that gathered to meet Jesus. 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish would do nothing to solve the problem of the people’s hunger.

Well, it would do close to nothing. It would do a little something.

Jesus will remind the disciples, and show us, **we have more resources than we realize.** The amount of fish and bread will do little to address the full need. But the problem at hand requires food. And they have food.

The disciples know what they have. They see that at least marginally relates to the problem.

It’s not like they have an old boot and a tin can. They have something, as little as it is, that relates to the need.

Sometimes we see a problem and we have absolutely nothing in our resources that can help the situation. Sometimes we may have the heart and desire to help, but we have absolutely no resources to do anything about the problem. That's ok.

But in this scenario, the tiny resources do meet part of the need. In his life and teachings **Jesus constantly brings our attention back to small things**. When a widow gives a tiny offering, it is great because she gave everything that she had! Small things are a big deal to Jesus.

We have more resources than we realize! Do not disqualify yourself from giving or helping or doing – you have more at your disposal than you think you do!

Ron Hutchcraft, in talking about the qualifications people think they need to do youth ministry, gives this reminder:

**“You [have] the power of the Holy Spirit of God, a resurrected Christ, and the awesome God who created a hundred million galaxies in a moment, living inside you.”**

In many situations you have more resources at your disposal than you think you have, one of those resources being the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit of power, living within you!

Jesus says, “Do it yourself.”

You have more resources than you think you do.

Jesus takes what little that the disciples have, and amazing things take place.

*<sup>18</sup> “Bring them here to me,” he said. <sup>19</sup> And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people.*

*<sup>20</sup> They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. <sup>21</sup> The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.*

All of this from what the disciples did not think they could do, from what they did not think they had! What was dismissed as small and irrelevant, Jesus gladly takes and gladly uses.

<sup>18</sup> **“Bring them here to me,” [Jesus] said.**

**Whatever you have, Jesus multiplies.** Yes, to be a Christian is to have a bias toward action. BUT that action is done in service to Christ, in submission to him, with all things that we have submitted and surrendered to him.

This is where action is not enough. This is where trust comes in. We are confident enough that we can and should do something. We contribute that small thing. And Jesus takes and uses that “small” thing in ways that continue to surprise us. Whatever you have, and that you surrender, Jesus multiplies.

And he does not multiply these things for our benefit. He multiplies these things for the benefit of the world.

At some point in their lives, everyone ought to write a sermon or prepare a Bible study.

It's not that you need to for a sense of accomplishment or for personal discipline.

In my experience, preparing a sermon really kicks your butt.

I figured out the outline for today in about 3 minutes.

- Jesus tells us to solve the problems we see.
- We have more resources than you realize.
- Whatever you have, Jesus multiplies.

Bing. Bang. Boom. Done! A smug satisfaction began to wash over me, as I was aglow in my brilliance and brevity.

And as I looked at the words I was met with a, "Wuh oh."

There were specific situations coming into my life. Problems where I thought, "Well somebody really ought to do something about that." The dawning realization became, "That somebody . . . could be ME!"

As problems come up, we look to outside forces to deliver us. Family. Church. National government. Local government. Social programs. And all of these have their role and responsibility.

But more often than we like to admit, the solution to these problems falls to us.

Like the disciples we say, "There sure are a lot of people with problems around here. We probably should send them away. Not much we can do for them."

And Jesus stuns us, saying, "We do not need to send them away. You solve this."

And we say, "But we only have this small insignificant resource."

And Jesus says, "Bring them here to me."

Who or what has Jesus been bringing to your attention?

What needs to be done?

How can God use your time, your voice, your talent, your stuff to do something ?