

Pastor Mark R Jacobson † Pentecost 10 Sermon † August 1, 2021

¹After this, Jesus crossed over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias). ²A large crowd followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he was performing on those who were sick. ³Jesus went up on the hillside and sat down there with his disciples. ⁴The Jewish Passover Festival was near. ⁵When Jesus looked up and saw a huge crowd coming toward him, he asked Philip, "Where can we buy bread for these people to eat?" ⁶But Jesus was saying this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. ⁷Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to have just a little." ⁸One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, ⁹"There's a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what is that for so many people?" ¹⁰Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, so they sat down. There were about five thousand men. ¹¹Then Jesus took the loaves and, after giving thanks, he distributed pieces to those who were seated. He also did the same with the fish—as much as they wanted. ¹²When the people were full, he told his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over so that nothing is wasted." ¹³So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with pieces from the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. ¹⁴When the people saw the miraculous sign Jesus did, they said, "This really is the Prophet who is coming into the world." ¹⁵When Jesus realized that they intended to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself. — John 6:1-15

HOW ARE WE GOING TO MAKE THIS WORK?

The budgeting process doesn't ruin everything, but the budgeting process does make everything less fun. Vacations are fun. Vacationing on a budget means peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. It is fun to get the keys to a brand new home or brand new car, but these shopping experiences are less fun when you have fine wine tastes and light beer income. It is fun to be able to do whatever you want. It's less fun to do whatever you want as long as you can afford it. Whether the budgeting process involves money as in the examples I have provided or if the budgeting process involves a different set of variables like time or energy. A question we often find ourselves asking is, "How are we going to make this work?" Our Lord Jesus likes such analytical thinking.

1. Our Lord Jesus likes such analytical thinking.

We know our Lord Jesus likes analytical thinking because our lesson states, "Jesus was saying this to test him." The "him" in this verse is the Apostle Philip. Philip had grown up in the nearby town of Bethsaida, and what Jesus said to test Philip was, "Where can we buy bread for these people to eat?" The way the Gospel of John reads, we might imagine that all of these Bible verses happened as fast as we read them...that Philip had less than a second to take this test and hand in his answer. John tells us in his Gospel that Jesus gave the test to Philip, "When Jesus looked up and saw a huge crowd coming toward him." The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell us that Philip gave Jesus his answer after Jesus was done teaching the people. So imagine Jesus preaching to a crowd of people like I am here, and imagine Jesus teaching a crowd like Pastor Clark will be in the Fellowship Hall, and all the while these preaching and teaching activities are going on, Philip is taking his test, "Where can we buy bread for these people to eat?"

Philip will fail the test, but let's give Philip an "A" for effort. In these Olympic weeks we will deduct points for execution, but add points for degree of difficulty. Philip tries really hard on this test. It's obvious that Philip thinks and thinks about this question. It's also obvious that Philip talks and talks with the other disciples about this question, too. They estimated the number of people and the cost of getting food to feed them. The disciples didn't bring any food and evidently none of the other grown-ups brought food either, but they did find a boy who brought five barley loaves and two fish. Time to hand in the test.

How have you done with your tests? Do you emulate Philip's analytical thinking? Do you think before you speak? Do you measure twice and cut once? Do you ask yourself, "What does God's Word say about this matter? Do you share your problems with others like Philip did? Most of our Christianity is a group test. Only on Judgment Day do we stand alone before God. Good Christian friends can encourage you and help you. The best Christian friend will tell you when you are wrong and correct you. Talk about it with your allies. Give your best effort to pass the test. Brothers and sisters, most of the time we will pass our tests if we do exactly as Philip did. Think. Talk. Try. Most of the time, these God-given abilities will solve our problems. Our Lord Jesus likes such analytical thinking. He has given us these cognitive abilities, but some of our tests do require divine intervention. Some problems we cannot solve. When that kind of test is presented to us, our Lord Jesus is looking for absolute trust.

2. Our Lord Jesus is also looking for absolute trust.

"Jesus said, 'Have the people sit down.' There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, 'Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.' So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten."

This test Jesus gave appears to be one of those trick questions, those questions teachers ask at the end of a test to see if you have mastered the study material. Really, though, this test was like a first question on a test, an easy question that if you get wrong you kind of smack yourself in the forehead and say, "I can't believe I got that one wrong," because you knew the answer.

Consider the study sessions Jesus had given these 12. Already in John's Gospel, Jesus changed water into wine. Jesus healed the sick, and Jesus gave sight to the blind. Time and again, Jesus had demonstrated such power that there was nothing he could not do. As the disciples helped Jesus distribute the bread and fish, they must have been hitting their foreheads and saying, "Duh!" Right? And yet what do we do when we are asked or ask ourselves, "How are we going to make this work?" Aren't we like the disciples more prone to panic than we are to pray? Aren't we more likely to have hearts that are troubles rather than to have hearts that trust?

Often the answer to our tests are, "think," or "talk," or "try." Sometimes, though, the only answer that works is, "trust." As the Proverb says, *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding."* We learn in the Psalms, *"Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver you and you will honor me."* Another word we use is pray. Jesus prayed. Jesus prayed here, giving thanks for the five barley loaves and the two fish, and these gifts indeed were blessed. The five barley loaves and two fish miraculously fed a crowd of 5,000 men in addition to women and children. The 12 disciples each had a doggie bag of bread. In this small matter of food, Jesus prayed. In the weightier matter of our sin, Jesus prayed. With sweat that looked like drops of blood Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, *"Father, if possible remove this cup from me, but not my will, but your will be done."* And later from the cross Jesus prayed, *"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."* Jesus prayed, and God provided.

God will always provide for us, too. What is your circumstance where you need God to provide for you? In what situation have you thought and thought or talked and talked or tried and tried, but God is calling on you to trust? Take it to the Lord in prayer! Amen.