

Text: John 6:5-15

Title: “When You’re In Over Your Head”

INTRODUCTION

Let’s open our Bibles to John 6:5. As you’re turning I want to encourage you to be part of our Leadership Summit this evening. If you serve in any capacity in our SMBS ministry this is vital equipping for you. We also have need for people who will volunteer to help teach our boys and girls in preschool and children’s SMBS. You can come this evening and find out more about how you can get involved. The details are in your worship guide today.

This summer we’re studying some of the miracles of Jesus and the one we’re looking at today may be the most familiar of all of Jesus’ miracles ... the Feeding of the Five Thousand. It’s found in all four of the Gospels, so it’s a big deal. Read John 6:5-15.

ILLUSTRATION – My first job as a teenager was as a busboy at a cafe in my hometown. Because my family wasn’t well off we didn’t eat out very often. So I wasn’t familiar with what people did after they finished eating, paid their check and left. I remember the first table I cleaned at the café I noticed that someone had left some money on the table. I thought, “That’s nice that people leave money for me to clean off their table,” and I put the money in my pocket. I honestly thought it was for me. Well, the crusty old waitress who had waited that table saw what I did and she stormed over and lit into me. She called me names I had never heard before. She informed me that the tip was for her, not for me. I quickly realized in my first job that I was in over my head.

Maybe you’re in a situation today where you feel you’re in over your head ... a tough marriage, a new job, a mountain of debt, a difficult decision you have to make. We’ve all been there, including the disciples of Jesus.

We read in our Bibles of a situation where there is a human need but there is no human solution. Jesus and His disciples are surrounded by a crowd of thousands of people, it’s near evening, and because they are in a remote area there is no way to find food for this many people. This throws the disciples into a panic. In fact, the other Gospel writers tell us that the disciples approached Jesus and said, “It’s getting late. You need to send these people away to get something to eat.” But Jesus shocks them...

Matthew 14:16 - Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.”

I want you to see that this situation didn’t “just happen.” It may look like an out-of-control mob situation, but Jesus knew exactly what He was doing. He’s at the zenith of His popularity. Crowds of people press around Him everywhere He goes. John 6:1 says that Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee. And then v.2 says that a great crowd ran around the shore to get to him because they had seen the miracles Jesus had performed. They wanted more! So in v.3 it says that Jesus took His disciples up on a mountainside and sat them down. But they still couldn’t avoid the crowds.

Jesus orchestrated all of this. He pulled the disciples and the crowds out into a place where they will have a problem, a need, that they cannot solve, but that Jesus will use as a platform from which to display His power. The disciples were in over their heads, but Jesus wasn't.

So what do we do when we face situations in life where we are in over our heads? I want to show you two things. First ...

1. LOOK FOR HOW GOD IS TESTING YOU.

God's great purpose in your life is to shape you into the likeness of His Son Jesus Christ. He's doing that in everything you go through, good or bad ... when you feel you're in control and when you feel you're in over your head.

The disciples don't know it, but Jesus has prepared a little pop quiz.

John 6:5 - When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?"

Jesus was not asking the question because He didn't know what to do. In fact...

John 6:6 - He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

Jesus planned this out very carefully. He wanted the full weight of the human problem to settle in on Philip and the others. These guys had been with Jesus now for two years. They had heard His teachings. They had seen the mighty power of God demonstrated time and time again. Now it's time for a test. Sometimes Jesus will put you in over your head so you will have the opportunity to learn to put your trust in Him.

ILLUSTRATION – I was thinking about this as our grandson Cooper is taking swimming lessons this summer. He's still learning how to handle it when he's in water that is over his head. You don't learn to swim in the kiddie pool. His swim instructor made him jump off of the diving board on the deep end of the pool because he will have to use his swimming abilities to get to the side. If he forgets what he has learned and panics he will have trouble, but if he composes himself and remembers what to do he will become a better swimmer.

So how does Philip do with his test? Not so well.

John 6:7 - Philip answered him, "Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!"

Philip pulled out his pocket calculator and does the math. The screen on the calculator read "IMPOSSIBLE." Has that ever happened to you? Perhaps some of you right now are in that kind of a situation. You are faced with a predicament that has IMPOSSIBLE written all over it.

All Philip can see is the human problem; he hasn't learned to factor in the power of God. But another of the disciples starts seeing the possibilities.

John 6:8 - Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up,

John 6:9 - "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"

Now Andrew is getting a little closer to the solution, but he still can only see the human possibilities. Andrew's words tell us that he's a "little" thinker. The word for "boy" literally means "little boy." And this little boy has five "small" barley loaves, which are more like stale crackers. And there were two "small" fish, more like minnows. And how far will this little bit go in the face of such a great need. Neither Philip nor Andrew factored in the reality that Almighty God in human flesh was sitting right there with them.

We don't grow in our faith unless our faith is tested ... until we are convinced we are in over our heads and God alone has the solution. That's why the Bible says in...

James 1:2-3 - Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.

The miracle that Jesus performs here takes the human need and turns it into a platform to display the power of God. Things start to change when Jesus takes over. He tells the disciples to have the people sit down on the grass. There are 5000 men, plus women and children, so we're talking maybe ten to twelve thousand people. Jesus takes in His hands the five loaves of bread and He does something amazing ... He gave thanks. You see, you can give thanks when there is little when you know that when the little you have is placed in the hands of God great things can happen. Jesus does the same thing with the two little fish. And He has the disciples begin to distribute the bread and fish throughout the crowd, and as it was passed from person to person a miracle occurred ... it kept multiplying and multiplying. And after all of it was distributed there was still a huge amount left over. There's no explanation except that Jesus worked a miracle.

God is good to put us in situation where we are in over our heads and we know we can't do what we need to do without His help. And to watch God come through strengthens our faith. So when you're in over your head, look for how God is testing you. But also...

2. LOOK FOR WHAT GOD IS TEACHING YOU.

If you are faithful to trust God in your trials you will look back one day and realize that God taught you some things about Himself that you would have not learned any other way. So look for what God is teaching you...

ABOUT HIS IDENTITY...

Now there are two groups of people here. There were the disciples who followed Jesus and were committed to Jesus, though they were still growing in their faith. And there were the crowds of people who were just curious about Jesus because they had seen the miracles that He performed. Notice what Jesus does:

John 6:14 - After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.”

John 6:15 - Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

Now why wouldn't Jesus want the people to applaud Him as a prophet? Why wouldn't He want them to make Him king? It is because He was not the kind of prophet they expected. He was not the kind of king they expected. He was teaching them about Himself. You see, the typical Jew was looking for a conquering Messiah who would perform miracles and lead the nation of Israel to overthrow their oppressors, the Romans. But that was not the kind of Messiah Jesus came to be. He would bring God's Kingdom to earth not by overthrowing nations, but by capturing the hearts of men and women. But that's not who the crowds wanted Jesus to be.

There's a lot of identity theft happening when it comes to Jesus. Many people are excited about Jesus so long as they can make Him into what they want Him to be, not the Jesus revealed in the Bible. So there is the prosperity Jesus, or the social activist Jesus, or the entrepreneur Jesus, or the cool Jesus, or the manly Jesus, or the Republican Jesus, or the Democratic Jesus. Jesus will not allow His identity to be stolen like that. He is the Son of Man who came not to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many. That's why He walked away from the crowds that day.

When you're in over your head, look for how God is revealing Himself to you and teaching you about Himself ... who He really is and what He really came to do.

But Jesus was also teaching them something...

ABOUT HIS AUTHORITY...

We'll see this more next week. Jesus' power extends into every realm. Just like He turned water into wine, death into life, and sickness into health, Jesus turned a little food into a lot of food. Little becomes much in the hands of the Lord. Never underestimate what God can do with the little that you have. What is *transferred* to Jesus is *transformed* by Jesus. Jesus had a way He wanted to meet this need, and we must yield to His authority.

But Jesus was also teaching them something...

ABOUT HIS SUFFICIENCY...

It's no coincidence that John describes the miracle in the terms he did. When the bread was distributed, the people there had...

John 6:11b - as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

John 6:12 - When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, “Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.”

John 6:13 - So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

Twelve baskets ... that's interesting. How many disciples were there at this point? Twelve. When everyone had their fill there was still enough bread to fill the pouches of the twelve disciples of Jesus. Jesus is saying, "I took care of the huge crowd; I will take care of you."

But here's the big deal: Jesus works in our lives to bring us to the place where we don't just trust Him to *bring us bread* ... we trust Him to *be our Bread*. Jesus would say that several verses later...

John 6:35 - Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.

You never know that Jesus is all you need until you come to a place where Jesus is all you have. When you're in over your head, it isn't over His head.