

Soul food

part 2

Mark 6:30-44 – Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

³⁰ The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. ³¹ Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”

³² So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. ³³ But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. ³⁴ When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

³⁵ By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. “This is a remote place,” they said, “and it’s already very late. ³⁶ Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.”

³⁷ But he answered, “You give them something to eat.”

They said to him, “That would take more than half a year’s wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?”

³⁸ “How many loaves do you have?” he asked. “Go and see.”

When they found out, they said, “Five—and two fish.”

³⁹ Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰ So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. ⁴¹ 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 his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. ⁴² They all ate and were satisfied, ⁴³ and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. ⁴⁴ The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

Have you ever been at a restaurant where you order and you wait... and wait... and wait. And your mind starts to question your decisions, Should I keep eating this bread? Should I stay? Should I go get a happy meal? You start to glare at the waitress as she goes past. Your blood pressure is rising and your stomach is rumbling. There is nothing worse than being hangry, stuck somewhere between angry and without food.

Jesus sees his people and takes pity and wants to save them from turning into a hangry mob.

Jesus in his time loved his food. The Pharisees would criticize Jesus for going to too many dinners. He loved to share a meal with others, he turns water into wine, he tells parables about inviting people to a great banquet and here he uses his power to feed 5000 out in the middle of nowhere.

But as I said last week, God rarely uses his power just to feed people but he uses these event a food for the soul, to nourish them in the way they need most.

Let's set the scene: JC and the disciples are being swamped, run off their feet by people wanting to hear from JC and be taught. They're so busy, they didn't have a chance to eat, so they get in a boat to get away and have some time to eat and recover but they can't escape, the crowd beats them there.

He takes pity and starts to teach. Jesus gives the disciples a task... he says feed my people. There is an alternative (v36) but Jesus says no... I want you to feed my people. Not too surprisingly they respond by saying, we can't, were not up to the task, we don't have the resources, we don't have the skills or know how but most importantly the task it too big.

V37 "That would take more than half a year's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat? "

To the disciple the task is outrageous

So what does Jesus say to them next...

³⁸ "How many loaves do you have?" he asked. "Go and see."

He tells bring me what you got, bring me what you have and let's see what happens. What they bring him is totally inadequate: 5 loaves, 2 fish for 5000?

But with their meagre gifts Jesus does something amazing. But this is not just about feeding hungry people. It's not about food for the belly, but food for the soul.

There was an alternative, send them away to find food on their own but Jesus sees them as sheep without a shepherd and wants to teach them, and teach them he does.

But what is the message he is teaching, what is it he wants them to know. Why perform this miracle? Most of the crowd probably had no idea it was happening. They just probably thought they brought a lot of food with them. But for those on the inside Jesus was teaching them one of the most important lessons of all.

Because Jesus gives the disciple an impossible task. He says build my church. How? Can't be done, they don't have the skills, gifts, the knowledges the resources? But Jesus says bring me what you have and I will do miraculous things.

We live in a time where the church is in decline. Religion is widely unpopular and our country is rapidly becoming more secular. The census data show this from 86-'11 Christian's have dropped from 73% to 61%. While non-religious has risen from 12% - 22%. The media is often very vocal in its opposition to the church. Congregations are shrinking, as well as aging and yet we have been given a task – go to all nations, making disciples and baptising them in my name.

The task seems impossible... how could we possibly do it? We don't have the resources, we don't have the gifts, the capacity – the task is too big. But Jesus says, bring me what you have, bring me your gifts, your time and I will use what you have to build my church.

But that's the point isn't it... Jesus doesn't ask us to do the impossible. He asked us to bring the gift we have so he can do the miraculous.

There is a Uniting Church in Hillston in far west NSW. Dwindling, struggling, like so many other churches they realised that there were regular backpackers doing fruit picking so they thought, they could put on a BBQ, start to make contact. They don't have much to offer, tiny old church building, aging congregation but now backpackers visit the church often, Christians that are missing their church overseas. They bring what they have in faith, God uses it for his glory.

What Jesus required of us is that in faith we offer what we have. That we earnestly offer to God the gifts, resources, time because with very little God can do a lot.

John Dickson, the evangelist tells the story of his conversion. That while he was a teen, a middle aged woman invite a number of kids to her house where she would stuff them full to the brim with food, hot dogs, hamburgers, milkshakes until they were so full, they would just sit there in a food coma. Then she would open up the Bible, start leading a study. She wasn't cool or flashy or amazingly gifted, she brought what she had, her hospitality, her love for kids, God did great things

Eastwood uniting was rebuilding their site. To the congregation at Epping said, we will move our service time, so you can meet in our building until the work is done. The Epping congregation, more traditional, said we don't have much but let us give what we have.

What are you bringing, what gift, big or small are you offering to God because that's the point, the disciple brought JC the fish and loaves. Jesus wanted them to offer what they had before he could do something amazing. God wants you to bring what you have and believe that with little our God can do much.