

Proper 12 B  
John 6:1-21  
July 28, 2024

*“Never Enough”*

Rev. Dr. Brandon S. Perrine

*After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming towards him, Jesus said to Philip, ‘Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?’ He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, ‘Six months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.’ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, ‘There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?’ Jesus said, ‘Make the people sit down.’ Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, ‘Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.’ So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, ‘This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.’ When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.*

*When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, got into a boat, and started across the lake to Capernaum. It was now dark, and*

*Jesus had not yet come to them. The lake became rough because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the lake and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. But he said to them, 'It is I; do not be afraid.' Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land towards which they were going.*

~o~

I read last week that Jesus feeding 5,000 people with two fishes and five loaves of bread isn't a miracle – it's tapas! Those of you familiar with Mesón Sabika or Altiro know what I'm talking about. No matter how you slice it, this is a pretty amazing story!

The author tells us that Jesus was being followed by a massive crowd (5,000 men plus women and children). He knew that the crowd must be hungry so he asked the disciples where to buy bread. "For all of them?!" Philip replied. "It would take 6 months wages for them each to have a bite!" But Andrew came forward with the lunch a little boy's mother had packed him: five barley loaves and two fish. Jesus told the crowd to sit down. He said grace and then passed out the pieces and everyone ate until they were full. Twelve baskets of leftovers were then collected. Go big or go home – that was Jesus. But Jesus could get away with it, couldn't he? After all, by this time in John's gospel he had already turned water into wine at the Wedding at Cana, healed an official's son in Capernaum, and healed a paralyzed man at Bethesda. What's a picnic for 5,000+ after all that?

A story is told of a young minister preaching her first sermon. She was nervous and it showed. "The Master fed the multitude," she said tremulously, "with 5,000 loaves and 2,000 fish." Catching the mistake, a heckler in the front row chuckled sarcastically and said, "Well, I could do that!" The next Sunday the young minister tried again. "Last Sunday I meant to say that the Master fed 5,000 people with five loaves and two tiny fish." Then she turned to the heckler and asked, "Could you do that?"

Without miss a beat, he grinned and said, “I could if you’d let me use what we had leftover last week!”<sup>1</sup>

With just five loaves and two fish, the author tells us that Jesus fed a crowd of thousands. The classic liberal interpretation of this story goes something like this: the little boy’s generous sharing inspired the crowd and they all took out their own lunch boxes and began to share. And when everyone finally shared what they had, there was more than enough to go around. It just took a little guilt from Jesus and abundance overflowed.

I like this interpretation. I appreciate the way that it reminds us that there really is enough. People get so caught up in the narrative of scarcity, that there’s never enough, that they hoard for themselves and forget about others. And honestly, with that mindset, it wouldn’t matter if it was five fish and two loaves or 5,000 fish and 2,000 loaves. There’s never enough.

I’m reminded of a song from the 2017 film *The Greatest Showman* entitled “Never Enough.” The lyrics read:

All the shine of a thousand spotlights  
All the stars we steal from the night sky  
Will never be enough  
Never be enough  
Towers of gold are still too little  
These hands could hold the world but it’ll  
Never be enough  
Never be enough  
For me<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Mark Katrick. “Church Picnics and Corny Jokes,” Newarkadvocate.com, July 30, 2022: <https://www.newarkadvocate.com/story/life/2022/07/30/katrick-church-picnics-and-corny-jokes/9679192002/>.

<sup>2</sup> Allred, Loren. Never Enough. Atlantic, 2017, Accessed July 25, 2024. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fKEMBn\\_JdCE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fKEMBn_JdCE).

That's not Jesus' attitude though, is it? In the story, he never pauses to consider whether or not he and his disciples *should* feed the crowd. He jumps straight to the question of *how they can* feed the crowd. But there's no question that they should be fed. There is enough. Always enough with the realm of heaven.

But, the truth is, as individuals, as churches, and as a society, we can become stuck in a mindset of scarcity instead of abundance. This is the notion that everything we want and need is limited. "Life is a zero-sum game. If someone else does well, it must be at the expense of everyone else who's doing poorly. It implies that once resources are depleted, they cannot be replaced—therefore, you must compete to get as many resources as possible while restricting them from others."<sup>3</sup> If we engage in some self-reflection, I'm guessing it won't be hard to see this mindset active in our personal lives, in our society, and even in our church. Let me be clear, as it relates to church, a mindset of scarcity affects much more than our conversations about pledges and budgets. It relates to our impact on others, service to our community, and lives changed through our ministry together. Churches that live out of a scarcity mindset are, more often than not, dying churches.

A mindset of sustainability and of abundance, on the other hand, sees "all of the opportunities that life has to offer. Instead of seeing the depletion of resources, [it] see[s] how human ingenuity can create new, practical solutions and breakthroughs. [It] see[s] endless opportunity."<sup>4</sup> It sees the multitude of talents and gifts at its disposal. It sees untapped potential and boundless growth. Individuals, societies, and churches that live out of sustainability and abundance, try new things, reach new groups, and minister effectively to the needs of others.

---

<sup>3</sup>"Mindset Matters: Abundance Mindset vs. Scarcity Mindset," Strategiccoach.com:

<https://resources.strategiccoach.com/the-multiplier-mindset-blog/mindset-matters-abundance-mindset-vs-scarcity-mindset>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

A mindset of scarcity sees hungry people and sends them home because there's no food and no money to buy it with. A mindset of abundance sees hungry people, decides they will be fed, and leverages its resources to make it happen because there is enough. Always enough with the realm of heaven.

As Michael Beckwith states in the words of our Invitation to gather:

The truth is that there's more than enough good to go around. There is more than enough creativ[ity]. There is more than enough power. There is more than enough love. There's more than enough joy. There is enough for everyone.

May we learn to live like this is true. May we learn to live like this is gospel. Because it is. Amen.