

Jesus Can Use Your Little to Do Big Things

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[0 : 00] John chapter 6, beginning in verse 1, if you please stand with me as we honor the reading of God's word together.

After this, Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. And a large crowd was following him because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick.

Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. Lifting up his eyes then, and seeing a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, where are we to buy bread so that these people may eat?

He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, 200 denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, there's a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?

Jesus said, I read an article recently about church growth, and it's one of a countless number of articles and books and pamphlets and seminars that have been produced over the years for pastors and church leaders to take and to employ in their ministries in order to produce greater results.

[2 : 32] And there's pressure on a lot of pastors and ministry leaders to produce bigger and greater results for their churches and their ministries.

So these resources, when they come out, they're devoured just about as quickly as they hit or come off the presses. However, the article that I read, this article looked at church from a different perspective.

It used to be that those in the business world would take direction from the local church as to how they should manage their businesses.

In fact, there was a time when if you owned a business in a community, you would go to church. And unfortunately, not a lot of times, some of the times, the primary motivation for you to go to church was to get to know your customers so that you could get them to come and buy from your company.

Things have changed more recently with the advent of big change stores in larger corporations. And the church has now looked more and more to the business world for business models and methods to achieve bigger and greater results.

[3 : 53] One well-known mega-pastor had a sign in his office that said, or asked, Who is our customer? The question is reflective of a new ministry philosophy that borrows a methodology developed by businesses and how they market themselves to who they want to buy their product.

Really, the question seeks to help the church identify who they are seeking to attract and then doing what is necessary to attract them. A for-profit company has one primary objective with their growth. Their growth in size and their growth in profitability. That's what they're after. Growth in size, growth in profitability. However, as we've realized, bigger doesn't always mean better for the customer, does it?

If you go to a mom-and-pop store, chances are you are going to come in contact with the owner of that store either at the cash register or stocking a shelf or there in an aisle to ask your question, When's the last time you went to Walmart and met the CEO of Walmart?

Probably never. And not only does that make, is that a big change from the big business model to a smaller one, right?

[5 : 26] But also, the products have gotten cheaper. They're cheaper made, though the price has stayed the same or increased. So again, as customers, we haven't always benefited from this type of bigger is better business model.

Like big businesses, churches have become obsessed with counting nickels and noses in order to determine its effectiveness. Similarly, store managers have a lot to gain if their store performs well. Promotions and performance and bonuses are up for grabs. Maybe they think I'll be recruited to another company who has noticed the success that I've had here in this place.

Likewise, pastors have come to the same attitude towards their church, thinking, If I do well here, other more lucrative opportunities may come, may arise before too long.

And so many church growth consultants often recommend designing sermon content about topics that will attract people to your church, which usually those sermons become glorified self-help talks, promising to make you a better and more successful version of you.

[6 : 52] But few of those types of sermons result with anyone who listens to them actually loving the Lord more. Few of those sermons result with the congregation selling themselves out completely to Christ as his disciples, going to all the world to make more disciples as they share the good news of Jesus Christ.

Calling for that level of commitment as a matter of fact, that level of change, is one that Jesus asked for repeatedly from those who listened to him.

He didn't call them to give a little bit of their selves to him, but to give everything to him. As a matter of fact, he demanded these things even at the heights of his popularity.

His message never changed. But you see, Jesus never viewed his disciples, his followers, as his customers.

Jesus never viewed his disciples or those who were listening to him preach as his customers. In fact, the one whom he relentlessly pursued were the ones who were not yet a part of his flock.

[8 : 19] This is the good shepherd who leads behind the 99 in order to find the one. Relentlessly pursuing sinners. That they would hear the good news and come into his fold.

His concern wasn't with how he could keep his following from departing him, but how he could equip them and encourage them to engage sinners in their sinful world and enlighten them with the truth that they would be saved from their sins.

He was more concerned, I think, with the quality of his disciples in regards to how he could help them better fulfill his father's will than he was in the quantity of his following.

Those few disciples were so qualified by the time of Jesus' departure, once he had poured everything of himself into them, that soon after his ascension and the Holy Spirit's coming, they were prepared to reap a large quantity of new believers through their sold-out efforts to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ.

A quote from that article that stuck out to me was this. The author said, Quality in kingdom terms means treating members as the church personified and equipping and empowering them accordingly so that they can be effective in reaching the real customer.

[9 : 54] I don't like using that word customer to describe the lost, but I agree with his point. We as a church aren't a social club. We are gospel ambassadors.

We are torch bearers. We are those who fight the good fight by taking the good news of Jesus Christ wherever we go. We aren't in competition with the church down the road to keep ours and to take their customers.

We are a missions organization, a collective of transformed people who are in possession of the greatest truth and the greatest hope that there ever could be heard or come to know.

Perhaps the weakened position that the church is in in our nation right now and the decreasing baptisms and membership that has only snowballed over the past few decades is because we are following the wrong organizational model and because our faith is so small and because we are so fickle, thinking that if we don't get, or church members thinking that if they don't get what I want from my church, well then guess what?

I as the customer will take my business elsewhere. Listen, the world right now does not need any more Christian consumers.

[11 : 32] The world right now doesn't need any more Christians who take the attitude towards their church that they are the customer and whose primary concern when they enter into the assembly, when they go into the church building, is what's in it for me?

What's in it for me here? And who put their needs then before anyone else's and who gather on Sunday for a concert and a brief devotion that makes them feel like they are the hero of their own life story?

That's not going to get it done. That's not going to help our world. That's not going to heal our nation. So what will? Jesus ends his conflict with the Pharisees in chapter 5 as we've been going through that and he crosses over the Sea of Galilee and we understand from the text that a large crowd follows him as he's doing that because they've seen his miraculous healings and they're interested in him.

During this time, John tells us that the Passover was at hand. Now, any alert Jewish mind, when they would hear that word Passover, they would automatically understand the significance of what the Passover was and what it meant for them as a people.

The Passover for them marked the time when Israel was delivered from their slavery and their bondage to the Egyptians. It was through the Passover that their freedom was secured and they were ushered by God into the wilderness where eventually they would be brought into the land that he had promised them.

[13:22] But during that time, as they were wandering, they would be reminded of the fact that their fathers and their mothers, grandfathers and great-grandfathers and great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers were totally dependent upon God in every way as they were traveling out of their bondage and on the way to their promised home.

The Israelites were traveling in the wilderness. They were spending many of their days and nights in the desert. They were experiencing, as a result of that, extreme heat during the day and extreme cold during the night.

There weren't any Walmarts along the way for them to stop and stock up on supplies. They were totally dependent upon God for everything, for food and for water.

And so this is the picture, I believe, that John is setting before us in the opening verses of this chapter. It's a picture of human limitations and human limitations in regards to their resources that we don't have enough, that we are ill-prepared to manage our own lives and especially to try to save ourselves, that we are ill-equipped, but Jesus is not.

John then moves to show that though our resources are limited, again, Jesus's aren't. In ancient times and in some cultures still today, having an abundance of food was equated with being wealthy and prosperous.

[15:16] Jesus will declare later on in this chapter when we get to verse 35, He says, 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.

His point, as we'll see in greater extent when we get there, is that spiritual prosperity, the abundant life, cannot be found by indulging in ourselves, but only by pursuing Him.

We cannot create true and lasting satisfaction for ourselves. Only He can provide the purpose and the peace that we seek in so many other people, in so many other places, in so many other things. And when Jesus performs this miracle, He doesn't just meet the need of the people. He doesn't stop at making just enough so that when the last bite is taken and there's nothing left over, everybody says, that was good and I am full.

No, He oversupplies. And this was not an oversight on His part. Jesus knew what He was doing all the time and why He was doing.

[16:34] and so He oversupplied these people to show them a more significant truth about Himself. A.W. Pink observed that when Abraham went to intercede on God's behalf of the righteous in Sodom, that God never ceased granting until Abraham ceased asking.

Pink goes on to say, this is what Jesus does to all His people. He comes to the poor bankrupt believer and placing in His hands a draft of the resources of heaven, says to Him, write on it what thou wilt.

Such, He says, is our precious Lord still. If we are straightened, it is not in Him but in ourselves. If we are poor and weak or tired and tempted, it is not that we cannot help ourselves.

It is because we do not. We have so little faith in things unseen and eternal. We draw so little on the resources of Christ. We come not to Him with our spiritual wants, our empty ventils, and draw, He concludes, on the ocean of His grace.

In John 6, 1-4, the stage has been set. There is a problem and a people in need.

[17:58] He presents us then with three individuals, Philip, Andrew, and a little boy. Each person seeks to answer the need in a different way.

Two are effective. One is not. Our nation today, again, needs the church to be the church. country clubs don't bring change and transformation.

Large corporations may donate money and claim to stand for change and transformation in some cases, but again, their end goal and primary motivation is their bottom line. This nation needs the church to function as its Lord has commanded it, to be active in going, active in making disciples, and boldly declaring the gospel and living lives that are sold out in every way to the Lord who gave His all, who gave His best for you and for me.

Let's not shortchange Him with the lives that He's given us to live. We see that the problems that our nation has right now are immense.

And we can look around here and we can see that we don't have the resources it seems to meet the need to solve the problem.

[19 : 32] Even in our own community, we can check our church's bank statement. We can perceive that our resources are sparse and insufficient for the job, but the mission that our Lord has called us to participate in does not rely on our strength nor on our resources, but upon Christ's strength and His sufficiency and our faith in Him.

So here's this morning's main idea. God can use your little to accomplish great things. God can use your little to accomplish great things.

whatever you place into the Lord's hands will be used and multiplied by Him to build His kingdom.

John tells us about three individuals again and how they respond to a problem.

One of them responded in a completely unhelpful way and that unhelpful excuse me response is unfortunately I believe the typical response of many Christians today.

However, two of them responded in a way that produced a miraculous result when they entrusted their little to their great Savior.

[20 : 59] I want you to listen to the response of each one of these individuals and ask yourself two questions as we do so.

First question, which one am I? Which one most typically describes you? And then the second question, which one of them is the Lord calling me to be like today?

Which one am I now? Which one is the Lord calling me to be at the end of our time together moving on with the rest of my life? And so the first person that we encounter in this story is Philip.

And this is not a spoiler. He was the one with the wrong attitude. Philip shows us the attitude of calculating without Christ.

The error of calculating without Christ. Verses five through seven again, it says that lifting up his eyes, Jesus seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, where are we by bread so that these people may eat?

[22 : 13] He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, 200 denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little.

And so we understand, we've already read, Jesus is going to perform a great miracle. He knows he's going to do this. He's going to feed thousands of people and he's going to do so with the sack lunch of a little kid.

But before we look closer at Philip's response, we need to understand what alternative actions Jesus could have taken to meet this need.

Jesus could have seen this and he could have lifted up his hands to the sky and he could have commanded for manna to fall down from heaven and the people would have been fed. He could have created a loaf of bread to instantly pop into the hands of every person who was there.

He could have done that. That was an option. That wasn't beyond his ability to do. But instead, Jesus chose to solve the problem in a different way. He didn't choose to solve the problem in any of those other ways.

[23 : 22] Instead, he shows and he reveals to us that he desires to accomplish his work through other people. He desires more specifically to accomplish his church through his people, through you and through me.

And so the first person that he turns to is Philip. Philip was from Bethsaida and that town was in this region.

And so Philip would have been very familiar with that region and with that locality and so he was a logical person for Jesus to have turned to to ask this question.

Here's somebody who's from here. Maybe he knows. But John tells us that Jesus doesn't ask his advice for any of those reasons. He's not really looking to Philip to fix the problem but to test him. Now what is Jesus testing in Philip? Well, he's testing his faith. He's testing his faith. And how does Philip answer to this test?

[24 : 34] Well, he answers with faith but it's not faith in Jesus. His answer reveals that at that time his faith was primarily in himself more specifically again in his knowledge.

His faith was in his own ability to analyze the issue, to analyze the problem and perhaps also he's a little bit prideful because Jesus, the teacher, asks him, the student, for an answer.

And so maybe he's a little bit prideful. Oh, I feel Jesus is asking me. And I'm going to give him a good answer. I'm going to show him how much I know. Philip had been confronted by Jesus with a trying situation, much as we often face today, don't we?

But his response, unfortunately, is the typical response that many of us have when faced with similar problems and difficulties. A bill comes in the mail and it's larger than what you have in your account.

Your marriage is falling apart. Your child is acting rebelliously. You feel lonely and depressed.

You're battling an illness or you're awaiting a diagnosis.

[25 : 54] How do you respond in such difficult times? Many of our minds, I know mine does often, automatically begin to analyze what the worst case scenario might be.

And then you know what we do often? We plan and act as if that worst case scenario is the most likely outcome of whatever our difficult problem is.

And all along the way, we stress and we are afraid and we are tempted to doubt and we are overcome at times with anxiety and we've forgotten to turn to Jesus with our concern, with our difficult situation.

situation. Here, Philip fails the test because he doesn't turn the difficult situation back over to Jesus. He thinks it's up to him to find a solution.

He thinks it's up to him to find an answer because this problem to him seems to be maybe in that moment too big for Jesus to handle or else why would he ask him to do it?

[27 : 10] So Philip begins making calculations in his head without consulting Christ. He looks around, okay, there's a few hundred over there, looks somewhere else, oh, that's a large group, thousand or two over there, oh, look over the hillside, there's more coming, 5,000 men including their wives and all of their children, about 20,000 people here.

And so he starts making calculations in his mind. How much do we have? I think maybe you want to enter our account. Oh, I know it's not enough. Let's see here.

If we multiply this times that, divide here, well, even 200 denarii, eight months worth of wages could not provide enough for each person to even get a bite.

It's hopeless. We can't do it. We don't have the means or the resources. Philip was an intelligent man. That was fast counting.

I am impressed by his fast counting ability as somebody who struggled in math all my life and continues to struggle today. That was quick computing. He probably would have been a good accountant.

[28 : 23] But intelligence can be a handicap when it becomes something that we take pride in. Relying on your intelligence, your smarts can keep you from trusting in the Lord.

Lord. But when it's placed in the hands of Jesus, it becomes valuable and beneficial, not just to you, but to your family, to your church, to your community.

Also, Philip thinks that the only solution to the problem is more money. That's how he answers the problem. We need more money. But Jesus didn't need money to fix any problem that he encountered.

And the same is true today. Listen, money won't fix you. More money won't fix you.

And money, more of it, won't fix the problems that we as a church face today. It's not the solution that we need.

[29 : 30] Nor can we get caught up into thinking that we don't have enough money. And therefore, the problem is unsolvable. But again, just like your intelligence can be a stumbling block, so also can your money be.

Both your excess of it or lack of it. But then again, your money in the hands of the Lord will be more effective than it could ever be if it remains in your wallet.

And your small offering, as we'll soon see, in the hands of the Lord, can be multiplied in ways that far exceed what the best Wall Street stock broker or Warren Buffet himself could ever hope to return on your investment.

Phillips' approach to the problem, both looking inward and trusting in his intellect and outward by thinking of everything in terms of dollar signs, limited his vision.

And he was left to deduce, as many of us are when we look at ourselves and at our churches, that this is all we've got. This is the best that we can do.

[30 : 44] This is the best that can be hoped for or expected. This is it. Let's use our brains, please.

Let's use our funds, and let's use anything and everything else that the Lord has blessed us with, but above all, as we do so, let's never make calculations without first considering Christ into the equation.

Let's not even begin to make those calculations before we first consider Jesus Christ. Let's have the kind of vision that stretches beyond our limitations, and causes us then to fully depend upon Jesus Christ for the solution.

Let's not take an approach to Christ like Philip says. Yes, I know that you've changed water into wine, Lord. I know that you healed the noble man's son. That was neat.

I know that you made the paralyzed man walk. I'm still astounded by that, but I don't think that you can handle this problem that I have. I don't think that you can solve this issue for me.

[31 : 54] I don't think that you have the resources that it takes to fix me. I believe that there is nothing today that God has already done that he can't still do.

If he has put you in a similar situation to test your faith today, know and believe and trust that whatever that situation is, he's so much bigger than it.

He's so much bigger than it. Don't calculate the situation without considering Christ in the equation. With Christ, we are never without hope.

Never without hope. Don't be like Philip, at least at that time in his life. Andrew, next person we see. Andrew shows us that we need to see the problem and work towards a solution.

Seeing the problem, working towards a solution. Verses 8 and 9. 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 for so many?

[33 : 11] You see, Andrew was in the exact same position as Philip so far as having the resources to be able to meet the need.

He had no food, just as Philip had no food. He didn't have the money to cover the expense, just as Philip didn't have the money either. But Andrew did something different that Philip didn't do.

Andrew noticed a boy, and he went and brought that boy and his small offering to the Lord. Andrew has reservations about how big the issue is, but his reservations don't make him cynical and they didn't make him skeptical.

He knew he didn't have the resources, but he looked for someone who did or who might add a little bit to solve the issue. And so, again, Andrew sees a boy who packed a small lunch and thinks it's not much, but at least it's something.

And think of the profound effect that Andrew's approach must have had on that little boy for the rest of his life. Apart from what Andrew did that day in Galilee, that boy was probably just like any other boy at that time.

[34 : 29] I'm going to go see Jesus. And I'm little, I'm probably going to be in the back, in the peanut gallery, right? in the cheap seats.

But I got a little lunch, just enough to eat, and then I'll go home and I'll play marbles in my backyard or whatever little kids did back then in ancient times.

You know what I mean? It was just an exciting day probably in that boy's life, but he wasn't anticipating what the Lord was going to do through him. And I believe that we'll see that little boy in heaven one day as a result of Andrew's going and getting him and bringing him to the Lord.

And what a great testimony that he had to share for the rest of his life. Let me tell you about the day when I had a little bit of bread and a couple of fish and I brought it to the Lord and he multiplied it so much so that he fed 20,000 people and there were leftovers afterwards.

Let me tell you about Jesus. Let me tell you about your problem. Let me tell you about the solution. All because Andrew brought him to the Lord that day.

[35 : 37] You know I thank God for people like Andrew in my life. I was my youth pastor when I was probably 17 or 18 years old after I was called to the ministry when I was 16 and a lot of people really doubted that in my church because they knew me too well I guess.

And he had moved on by that time but he had found out and he called me and he was still in seminary and he said hey I'm I'm out at this little Methodist church in the country and I preach there every Sunday.

Would you like to come with me sometime? And so at first we would take turns preaching and then I remember he was going to leave out of town and he said okay I want you to preach for me this Sunday.

And there was maybe 20 or 30 people and I got paid \$75 for doing that and I thought that was the greatest thing in the world. world but he was an Andrew for me.

You know he gave me an opportunity. So many others along my walk with Christ have been such a blessing to me and still today God has blessed me with Andrews who have vested into my life invested into my education invested in recommending me to serve in ways that others wouldn't have thought to give me the chance.

[37 : 02] Be an Andrew. To be an Andrew you can't have a consumer mentality. You can't be caught up in thinking what's in it for me but what can I do here to serve and how can I help others serve here too.

And so be an Andrew in helping work towards solutions to the problem instead of thinking something like this is again the best that can be expected. We've always done it this way. We'll always do it this way.

We'll always get the same results. Instead be like Andrew and invest in the lives of one another.

Encourage people to use their resources to build up the body of Christ.

And then third we come to the boy. And from the boy we learn this. Though I may be insignificant and my resources insufficient, in the hands of Jesus what I am and what I have become both sufficient and significant.

Though I may be insignificant and my resources insufficient, in the hands of Jesus what I am and what I have becomes both sufficient and significant.

[38 : 17] Now we know this boy is poor because barley was the cheapest kind of bread that you could buy. In fact many people viewed it as animal food.

It was coarse. It was rough. It was the kind of bread that you would eat and it would scratch your throat and leave you with a sore throat the next day. The boy's offering was small.

It was poor. It was meager. But when it was placed in the hands of the Lord, however small, however meager, however insignificant and insufficient it was, it became instantly incredibly valuable.

In the hands of the Lord, what is worthless becomes worthy. And we see this truth throughout the pages of Scripture. What is more worthless than dust?

Yet from dust, God formed a man and breathed life into him. And what is more valuable than life?

The jawbone of a donkey is a pretty worthless thing to come across.

[39 : 20] But in the hands of God's champion, it delivered a crushing blow to the enemies of God's people. A shepherd's staff isn't much, just a stick.

But in the hands of God's prophet, it was a tool that delivered people out of their bondage to slavery. A sling is pretty unimportant, maybe just a child's toy.

But in the hands of a teenage boy who would be king, God used it to slay the giant. A poor, insignificant, virgin girl from an unimportant town in the vast Roman Empire was used by God to bring the Redeemer of all mankind into this world.

Child of God, don't you ever fall for the lie that you and what you have are useless. in the eyes of the world.

You may not be much and you may not have much, but your value to God never depends on what you have to give, but who he's created you to be.

[40 : 30] If you will take what God has given you, no matter how small or how great it may seem to you, if you will put it into the hands of your master, you will find, I promise you, a greater return on your investment than you ever thought possible.

What is your gift? What is your offering? Your time, your talents, your treasures? Ask that God would show that to you.

And when he shows that to you, please say yes. Yes, Lord, I will. I will do that. Over 20 years ago, a man from my church wrote an \$800 check for me to go to a Christian youth convention in Toronto, Canada.

I was 16 years old and I didn't want to go because we had a baseball tournament that weekend that I would much rather have been at. But I found out from my youth pastor that if I did not go, which was my choice, that man would not have his money refunded to him.

And even though I was a very selfish and self-centered teenager, I wasn't so selfish to let that man lose that large sum of money. And so I went and God called me undeniably to ministry during that week at that convention.

[42 : 02] And here's the thing. I didn't know who that man was. And he didn't know much about me. But God placed it on his heart to write a check because he knew how stubborn I was that I wouldn't go.

And I still don't know who that guy is. Because he wanted to be an anonymous giver. I don't know. I have an idea. I don't know. But I am forever grateful for his gift.

Forever grateful for his willingness to say yes to what God asked him to do for me. Be like Andrew. Be like that little boy. Give your best. First, give your life to God. Say yes to whatever he asks you to do.

And if you do so, I promise you the results will astound you. Are you ready to do that? We see that Jesus performs the miracle and twelve baskets are filled.

[43 : 17] Some people ask, well, why twelve? And they think there's some kind of significance to that number. Maybe there is. But I think more importantly what Jesus is saying is he's showing that he's capable of over supplying the needs that we have.

He gives in abundance. He does so to remind us that his grace, his mercy, his love, his forgiveness, his sacrifice, knows no limitations. Poor Philip failed the test that day.

And maybe you feel like you've failed many tests as well. But he would be presented with other tests later on.

And guess what? He'd pass. He wasn't fired that day from being a disciple, right? Jesus didn't pull him over to the side after him. We're like, Philip, man, you got an F.

Get out of here. No. So maybe you've failed tests before, but like Philip, you'll get another opportunity.

[44 : 23] And when you do, I hope you've learned the lesson that the Lord had you to teach in that. And when that other chance comes today, tomorrow, in the weeks and months to come, that you'll be reminded by this passage and you'll say, yes, Lord.

Yes, I will do that. Will you choose today to give the Lord your best? If this is where God has called you to be a church member, will you pledge today to give us your best?

For the glory of Jesus Christ, for the advancement of the gospel in this community, will you commit to being more like Andrew, to being more like that little boy?

Will you commit to being more like Christ above all, who gave his life as an atoning sacrifice to purchase our salvation? Thank you.