

John 6:1-15

The Increase of Our Offerings

And Jesus took the loaves, and having given thanks he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to those reclining, in like manner, also of the little fishes as much as they wished – v. 11.

The 6th chapter of John presents to us a pivotal moment during the earthly ministry of Jesus. Remember John's purpose in writing this gospel – *that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name – 20:31.*

It might be easy to second guess John at this point by asking – if your purpose, John, is convince people that Jesus is the Christ, then why would you include this chapter in your gospel? This chapter begins, you see, with the large crowd. Look at what v. 2 says *And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.*

This is a typical statement based on what we've seen in the previous chapters. [**trace the “growing” references up to this point**].

And now we have in 6:2 another reference to His growing ministry in these words – *a great multitude followed him.* And in v. 5 *When Jesus then lift up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him...* Add to this the words of v. 15. One might argue that this marks the second time they would make Him king – *When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king (cf. 2:24)* So it's not hard to detect from the beginning of John's gospel up to this point a growing audience for the Lord Jesus. This has all the outward appearance of being a successful ministry by our Lord.

But then you come to the words of v. 60 *Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?* And a few verses later in v. 66 *From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.* So widespread were these departures that we find Christ in the very next verse saying to the twelve disciples: *Will ye also go away?* It's as if Christ said to them – *everyone else has left or is leaving, will you follow the crowd?*

And so it appears on the surface of it that Christ's ministry was but a flash in the pan so to speak. This pivotal point in Christ's ministry would happen in a way that is related to the miracle that occurs in the opening verses of this chapter, the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. The decline that would take place in Christ's ministry would come about when Christ would call for the right ordering of priorities between the earthly, material things of this world with the spiritual things that are everlasting in duration. The key verse in the chapter, I think, can be found in Christ's words in v. 27 where Christ says: *Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life...*

We'll get to this verse in due course but for now I think it's worth noting that this miracle of feeding the five thousand is recorded in every one of the gospels. Matthew

records in the 14th chapter of his gospel. Mark records it in the 6th chapter of his gospel and Luke records it in the 9th chapter of his gospel. Certainly a miracle that receives this much attention in the gospels calls for our special attention. And what I want to do this morning is to direct your attention to the source from which Christ took the five barley loaves and the two fishes. None of the other gospel authors have anything to say about that source.

Only John in his gospel reveals that source. Look at vv. 8,9 *One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, 9 There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? "There is a lad here."* That's all we're told. We're not given a name or a city where the lad was from. The word *lad* means a child. So we're dealing with a child here.

And I want to emphasize this to the children of this church. You can make your offering to Jesus and He will accept that offering. In fact He is able to do things with your offering that go way beyond what you can imagine. This is something that children and adults need to note. Christ uses our offerings – whether those offerings take the form of the money we give, or the time we spend serving Christ, or the words we speak, or the deeds we perform. The Lord Jesus is able to do so much more than we can ask our think with our offerings.

So this is what I want to draw your attention to this morning:

The Lessons We Learn From Our Offerings to Christ

The first lesson I would call your attention to is this:

I. Christ is Pleased to Take Our Offerings

Ver. 9 indicates to us that the disciples must have taken a quick inventory of the multitude only to discover that there was basically nothing in their midst. In all 3 of the other gospels we have Christ's command recorded to His disciples – *give ye them to eat*. That's a little bit, I suppose, like me announcing right on the spot a pitch-in fellowship right after the service and saying to the church officers – *give ye them to eat*.

Now in the case of the disciples, their inventory did reveal a lad – a child as I said a moment ago. And this child had 5 loaves of barley and 2 fishes. *There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?* Picture in your mind this lad bringing to Jesus his 5 loaves and 2 fishes. I'm inclined to think that he offered them freely to Christ with a child-like simplicity to his faith.

And I'm inclined to think that he would have offered his 5 loaves and 2 fishes without a thought for the consequences of his offering. He couldn't have known what Jesus was about to do and he probably gave no thought to the fact that he was giving his own lunch away and might have to go hungry himself as a result.

There's a wonderful simplicity about this lad giving his loaves and fish to Jesus. And it's this same simplicity that needs to characterize our offerings to Christ. Too often, I'm afraid, we're too calculating in our offerings. I don't have much to give, we reason, and

since I face so many needs myself there's no point in giving my offering to the Lord. Now we need to take note here that the miracle Christ would perform with these 5 loaves and 2 fishes would be a miracle of creation. Basically Christ would create loaves and fish out of nothing, *ex-nihilo* is the phrase you sometimes hear with regard to Christ creating the world – *ex-nihilo* or “out of nothing.”

And so you could say that there's a sense in which Jesus did not need the 5 loaves or 2 fishes that were given to Him by the lad. If Jesus could multiply these loaves and fishes enough times to feed a multitude and have 12 baskets of leftovers, then Jesus could certainly perform the same miracle by beginning with nothing.

And yet v. 11 tells us that Jesus *took the loaves*. And He did the same with the fishes – *He took them*. And by Christ taking the 5 loaves and 2 fishes, even though He could have performed this miracle without them, He thus demonstrates to us His willingness and His desire to accept our offerings. Before Jesus took these loaves and fishes from the lad we have the account of his conversation with Philip. Look at what it says in v.5 *When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?* The next verse is very telling and serves to show us how Christ was in complete control.

Notice what it says in v. 6 *And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do*. Doesn't that show us that Jesus is God? Doesn't that show us that He reigns over all and that He's the Creator and Sustainer of the world? And doesn't it further explain to us how Christ deals with us? He knows what He's going to do and He speaks to us to prove us.

You could apply these words to the book of Job. When it came to Job's testing from the Lord, the Lord knew exactly what He was going to do. He knew how long and how deep Job's trial would run. He added every ingredient to Job's trial. Nothing came Job's way apart from God. The malice of Satan could go no further than what God would allow.

And what Christ said to Philip, and what could be applied to Job, applies to you and me. Jesus knows what He's going to do. Now you and I don't know. How could we know? We have no capacity to see into the future unless God tells us, which He often does through prophecy, but apart from that you and I can't see ahead.

But what we can see, because it's revealed so clearly from cover to cover in our Bibles – what we can see is that God and Christ know what they're going to do. We have a tendency in our lives, I'm afraid, to doubt that. We're so prone to think that we're on our own. And when you think you're on your own, the last thing you'll do is hand over your meager supply of loaves and fish to Christ.

I was listening earlier this week to the book of 1 Samuel. I listened to the story again of David and Goliath. What great faith David had in taking on the giant. And yet his faith was based on his experience of proving the Lord. So he tells a skeptical King Saul how he'd killed a lion and a bear and rescued a lamb from the lion's mouth. That's not something a shepherd does every day. David certainly knew that it was the Lord that

delivered that lion and bear into his hand and so based on his experience of proving the Lord he says to Saul in 1Sam. 17:37 *The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee.*

And when I heard those words read from my audio Bible I shook my head and said to myself, *if only David possessed that faith on another occasion.* And I remembered how Saul would pursue David and on two occasions the Lord would deliver Saul into David's hand and David would spare Saul's life. But instead of concluding that Saul would never kill him because the Lord had delivered Saul into his hand time and again – instead David came to a different conclusion that's recorded for us in 1Sam. 27:1 *And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand.*

Do you hear what David is actually saying in those words. He's saying *I'm on my own. I have to fend for myself. God will not keep doing for me what He's done up to this point.* By implication he's saying *Saul is more powerful than God.* And he lost faith and entered into what could be regarded as one of the low points of his life.

And so does the Lord prove us today. He knows what He's going to do but He wants to see if you have the confidence to believe that He knows what He's going to do. If you have that confidence, then you, like the lad will have the simple faith that will enable you to make your little offering to the Lord. And it was a little offering wasn't it? The disciples wondered aloud how such an offering could possibly do any good.

One of the most challenging and convicting verses that I find when it comes to the matter of giving is found in 2Co 8:8 *I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.* Isn't that the motive you want behind your offering to Christ? – to prove the sincerity of your love.

I've never entered into the debate that some Christians enter about how much a Christian should give. Should I tithe? And if I tithe should I tithe my gross income or my net income? My thought on the whole matter is pretty simple and it goes like this – something is better than nothing. If the discipline of tithing is something you've never mastered, and statistics indicate that this is the case with most Christians. In such a circumstance I say something is better than nothing.

The Lord took the loaves and the fishes. He chose to work with this offering instead of working with nothing. He could have worked with nothing but He would prove us and provide occasion for us to prove the sincerity of our love. Giving, you could say is a grace, a wonderful grace for it truly is more blessed to give than to receive. And the instructions that Paul gives to the saints at Corinth recognizes the grace in giving. So in that regard Paul writes in 2Cor. 8:7 *Therefore, as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.*

So that's the first lesson we learn from our offerings to Christ – the Lord is pleased to take our offerings. Would you consider next:

II. Christ is Pleased to Multiply Our Offerings

Look at the words of our text again: *And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.*

What a pitch-in fellowship that day turned into. There was plenty for everyone and 12 baskets full of leftovers. I wonder if those leftovers were donated to the poor? Giving to the poor was one of the major topics covered at the recent "For God and Truth" conference down in Alabama. Maybe that's what makes me wonder about those leftover baskets. The point I'm making just now, however, is that Jesus multiplied the offering and He multiplied it many times over. There was certainly no excuse for anyone going hungry that day.

Now when we think of our offerings to the Lord we usually think in terms of advancing the cause of the gospel. When David DiCanio over saw the erection of a radio tower in Liberia, he made known what a tremendous deal had come his way for the purchasing of equipment if only the Lord would raise the money. And the Lord was pleased to raise that money and you could say that the offerings that went into covering the cost of that equipment have been multiplied many times over as the gospel has been sounding out now all over the city of Monrovia and beyond.

The last time Dr. Cairns was here in our church which was quite a few years back now, he told me how the radio ministry was being blessed in our churches in Nepal. 6 full time radio evangelists had been hired to follow up the contacts that were created by that radio ministry and they couldn't keep up with the demand. I believe at last count (and this was some time ago) there were 90+ Free Presbyterian Churches planted in the country of Nepal.

Now think of your offerings to the Lord with regard to your prayers. Your prayer are offerings. What is the Lord able to do with the offering of your prayers? He's able to do amazing things. He's able to fill your heart to overflowing in your knowledge of the length and breadth and depth and height of Christ's love. He's able to save the souls you pray for and beyond. This is one of the points J.C. Ryle makes in his commentary on this portion of John's gospel.

We have, for one thing, in this miracle, a lesson about Christ's almighty power. We see our Lord feeding five thousand men with "five barley loaves and two small fish." We see clear proof that a miraculous event took place in the "twelve baskets of fragments" that remained after all had eaten. Creative power was manifestly exercised. Food was called into existence that did not exist before. In healing the sick, and raising the dead, something was amended or restored that had already existed. In feeding five thousand men with five loaves, something must have been created which before had no existence.

Such a history as this ought to be specially instructive and encouraging to all who endeavor to do good to souls. It shows us the Lord Jesus "able to save to the uttermost." He is One who has all power over dead hearts. Not only can He mend that which is broken — build up that which is ruined — heal that which is sick — strengthen that which is weak. He can do even greater things than these. He can call into being that which was not before, and call it out of nothing. We must never despair of any one being saved. So long as there is life there is hope. Reason and sense may say that some poor sinner is too hardened, or too old to be converted. Faith will reply — "Our Master can create as well as renew. With a Savior who, by His Spirit, can create a new heart, nothing is impossible."

Let this blessed truth of the Lord's almighty power govern the offering of your prayers and govern the offering of your gospel endeavors. A word spoken for Christ may go further than you can possibly know. Or a gospel tract handed out to a soul in need may go way beyond that soul. I've told you the story of a good friend of mine who was so deep in despair that he made the decision to kill himself. He lived in Alaska and while walking to the river in order to throw himself in, he found a gospel tract in the snow. Instead of taking his life, he found new life in Christ and devoted himself to leading as many as he could to Christ. You use to always see him giving out gospel tracts, at restaurants, or at toll booths, where ever he could he would hand out gospel tracts.

So the Lord is pleased to multiply our offerings, in whatever form our offerings take – whether it be monetary giving, or our praying, or our speaking, or our doing good deeds with the aim of giving out the gospel – such is the grace and power of our Lord that He can take and use and multiply many times over our meager offerings.

And the impact this should have on us should be to compel us to sow bountifully. Imagine an investor who figured out a sure fire way to bring in a large return on his investment. How would it look if he only invested \$5 to make \$50 when he could turn \$500 into half a million? If you truly believe that the Lord can and will multiply your offerings then you will labor to be a big investor for the kingdom of Christ.

So we have this lesson of the Lord multiplying our offerings. This is perhaps the most obvious lesson of the passage and how often do we hear it prayed over the offerings we take in this church – *Lord, use these offerings and multiply them greatly*. Such a petition is a standard routine and so it should be. May we learn this lesson well and put it into practice that the Lord will not only accept our offerings, but will multiply them in every form they take.

And then let's think finally on the lesson that:

III. Christ is Glorified and the Offerer is Memorialized in Our Offerings

Verse 14: *Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.*

Their view of Christ was certainly elevated as a result of the miracle that was traceable to the lad that donated the 5 loaves and 2 fishes. And this is what we want in our offerings. This is the end for which we aim – that Christ may be exalted. Now I cannot deny that their view of Christ was not yet where it needed to be.

It's interesting to note that when the crowd acknowledged Christ to be *that prophet* they were referencing something that had been foretold in the book of Deut. 18:15 where we read: *The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.*

This is a reference to the Messiah in His prophetic office. The Jews of Christ's day could come that far in acknowledging Christ. And they could even go a step further as we read in the next verse in Jn. 6:15 *When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.*

They would glorify Him by exalting Him to be a prophet and a king. But as the rest of the chapter will show, there was yet one other office to Christ's Mediatorial role that would find beyond their understanding and they would be insulted by it – that is the office of Christ as our Priest. And in His role as our Priest He would offer Himself and He would make reference to eating His flesh and drinking His blood.

There was a spiritual dimension, you see, to Christ's ministry which they absolutely did not understand and would in the end turn away. The point I'm making now, however, is that they did nevertheless hold an exalted view of Christ as *that prophet* and so as Christ takes our offerings and increases them the end will be an exalted view of Christ. He is glorified, you see, when He takes and blesses our offerings and that should be a motivational factor to us giving our offerings. We desire that Christ be magnified. Of course we desire that Christ also be fully understood in all His mediatorial offices as prophet, priest, and king. And we have the added advantage of a completed New Testament to aid us in our understanding and communication of all that Christ is and all that He's done.

So He's glorified in our offerings. But not only is He glorified, but the offerer is memorialized. In other words Christ remembers our offerings to Him. This lad isn't named in this gospel account but you can be sure that Christ knows who he is. So He says in Mt. 10:41,42 *He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. 42 And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.*

Christ is very gracious and very generous to remember our offerings. And most often our offerings to Christ take the form of the way we minister to each other. You remember Christ's words in Mt. 25 when He's divided His followers from His rejecters and to His followers He says *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was*

thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

And His followers, being amazed at such words and such a gracious reward ask the question: *Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? 38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? 39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?* To which the Lord answers in v. 40 *Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

Oh the Lord takes note of our offerings and though they be forgotten by others and even forgotten by us, Christ nevertheless remembers. The same thing can be applied to you in your little offering as was said about the woman who anointed Christ with that precious ointment: *Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her* (Mt. 26:13).

So learn the lessons of your offerings to the Lord this day from these verses in John's gospel – Christ takes your offerings and blesses and increases them. They are graciously accepted by Him and He's glorified in them and you will not be forgotten however insignificant your offering may appear in the eyes of men.

May the Lord cause His grace to abound toward us then, that *ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work* (2Cor. 9:8).