

**- Saint John's Pulpit (July 25, Nineth Sunday after Pentecost)  
- "No One Knows until God Works" John 6:1-14**

**6** After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. **2** A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. **3** Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. **4** Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. **5** When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" **6** He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. **7** Philip answered him, "Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." **8** One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, **9** "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" **10** 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. **11** 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. **12** When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." **13** So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. **14** 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."

***Memories from my campus ministry in July***

Whenever I meet the last week of July, memories from my campus ministry are knocking on my heart. In 2010 July... I served one Korean immigrant church in Minneapolis close to University of Minnesota Twin Cities Campus. It was a small church with at best 40 people or so. A major group of congregations is the first generation of immigrants in Minneapolis. The other group was students from the campus mainly from South Korea.

As their new school year begins in August, international students had to move to their campus from July because they had to do lots of things to settle down. Certainly, the last week of July was their peak time to rush!

For me, inviting those students was my big outreach and mission. In 2010, Uber or Lyft was not yet. Most international students had no cell phones or someone to ask for help. Thus, the biggest task was to give them a ride from the airport to their dormitory. For them, the most reliable person was a pastor in the local area. Pastors usually put their telephone numbers or email address on their church websites and looking for calls from students...

So, in 2010 summer, with several volunteers from my church, I gave 40 students a ride from the airport to their dorms. 40 students! One day, I had to serve 4 or 5 students, because I was the only one who has a minivan among volunteers. My wife served meals and snacks for students. Usually, around this time, my wife and I invited students and their friends to a park near the campus and had a welcoming banquet. I mastered cooking and grilling hamburger patties perfectly! So, while I was serving the church, my summer went quickly. Also, my credit card bills came to me so quickly...

However, although this should be praised greatly, there were some people who had a different view in my church. Their logic was mainly from pragmatism or a lack of resources to support those students. What I was told were...

"Pastor, you need to focus on those who have lived and served the church a long time. Students stay at best four years. They will leave soon! They are not those who support the church, rather they are the ones to be supported by the church! Please know that who will serve and stay a long time at the church."

Does it make sense? What do you think about their rationale? The main message from this rationale was this. Short-term staying students cannot contribute... This is a very sad reality but is understandable because all are doing their best to support their church.

Let's go back to the story today. It is a story of feeding the five thousand people which can be presented in all four Gospels. So, it is not a stretch to call it a signature story to know Jesus' ministry in the Bible. To all people, this story presents Jesus' graceful and wonderful miracle to feed all people. Do we need something else? However, here is one thing to ponder carefully.

Even in this beautiful story, we see a kind of juggling between mission and marketing theories. Surprisingly, this juggling is from Jesus' disciples. When people needed something to eat after joining such a mass revival meeting by Jesus, one urgent task was how to eat these people. So, Jesus asked Philip how to feed them. Why? According to the Gospel of Luke dealing with the same story, the place where this miracle happened was Bethsaida.

*10 On their return the apostles told Jesus all they had done. He took them with him and withdrew privately to a city called Bethsaida. Luke 9:10 NRSV*

Do you know that Philip is originally from Bethsaida?

*44 Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. John 1:44 NIV*

So, in the eyes of Jesus, Philip was the best one to figure out this task as he knows everything in this local area! Simply speaking, if there was a District clergy meeting at St. John's, and if all attendants need something to eat, District Superintendent might call me and ask me where to eat... Why? I know everything around this place.

However, Philip was not a big help in the story. When Andrew found that one anonymous boy donated his bag lunch of five barley loaves and two fish, he also was skeptical and doubtful whether it could be helpful...

*9 "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" John 6:9 NRSV*

Presumably, Jesus' disciples were juggling between Jesus' direct and powerful one-time miracle and the lunch bag from the little boy. Ironically, no one could see hope from this little boy. Why? They thought that things never be improved with such a little thing!

But Jesus was totally different than his disciples. When no one could see possibility from the boy's lunch box, Jesus invited this little boy, appreciated his dedication, blessed his lunch bag, and invited all to the Heavenly Fish and Bread Buffet!

Although our business and market theories show some negative projection and prediction, in Christ, we also experience improbable grace in our faith

life. Maybe, the seed of that grace is always from our attitude to be thankful for little things even though we cannot see hope.

***No one knows until God works!***

A couple of weeks ago, on Sunday afternoon, I was enjoying myself on my favorite recliner relaxing and relaxing. My wife got a phone call and she was so delighted to talk to someone on the phone. Who is that guy? He was one of my students when I did my ministry in Minneapolis about ten years ago. He just finished his master's degree in Boston, got a new job in Vienna. In Europe? Nay, in Northern Virginia! Now on the way to see his apartment to rent in this area, he just gave a phone call surprisingly. No more peace on my recliner! Got dressed hurriedly and met him and serve dinner for him!

The other student in my church became pastor and now is serving one of the neighboring churches in Alexandria District. Yesterday she was my student, and now she is my ministry colleague. Who knows? She will become a DS ahead of me...

Two students married and one became a professor at SUNY (The State University of New York), and her husband is a computer and sound expert. When Eunice joined the national harp competition virtually a month ago, they came from Long Island and took care of every tech stuff for Eunice's competition. Their son was baptized here a couple of years ago, Easter Sunday too.

Look, don't you think that all these are wonderful fruits in God's Kingdom? Ten or eleven years ago, they looked powerless or hopeless in the eyes of church people. However, God used them to show His nurturing Grace to all people. Yes, the Kingdom theory eventually won over business or market theories in the world.

The five barley loaves and two fish... including you and me, we might raise a question. How much would they be helpful? But here is one thing we cannot see. No one knows until God works! Don't you think that this is the reason why we are so excited to walk with Jesus, our Lord every day?