



JOHN 6:1-15

***When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where should we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked him only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.***

***Philip answered him, "Eight months' wages would not be enough bread for each one to have a bite!"***

***Another of the disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"***

(verses 5-9)

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I am struck by several things in this passage.

The first is that Jesus tests Philip. He singles him out, giving him the opportunity to exercise faith and be drawn into a miracle-moment, one that will be rehearsed down through every succeeding generation of believers. Indeed, this event, the

feeding of the 5000, is the only miracle in Jesus' whole ministry prior to the cross that is recorded for us in each of the four Gospels. This is a big moment. The drumroll is sounding. It's momentous. And Philip is given the opportunity to enter in. If he does, his faith will be strengthened and affirmed, ready for future engagement. If he doesn't, he will receive a lesson he will never forget, also readying him for the future. Either way, the Lord's test is for Philip's good.

The second is that the Lord knew beforehand exactly what he was going to do. It's a powerful insight into life and ministry. When an occasion for prayer arises, how often do we see ourselves as the initiators in making request of the Lord, heroically acting in faith, forgetting the behind-the-scenes insight from this story – *"he already had in mind what he was going to do."* Each occasion to exercise faith is provided by the Lord himself – he wants us to be drawn into his work, to experience him more deeply, however he has chosen to work it out.

The third thing I notice is Philip's response. He chooses to fully embrace impossibility. That, of course, is the clear-sighted evaluation of the circumstance at hand. The need is completely beyond the available resources. That's what Philip sees. That's where he gets stuck. Faith trips on the reality of the moment.

The fourth thing I notice is that Andrew jumps in, somewhat tentatively, but pushing the boundaries of faith. Surveying the situation's impossibility, he sees one slight potential possibility. Somewhat sheepishly he brings it forward. It's not yet mountain-moving faith, by any means. Indeed the question he poses could be heard as unbelief (*"how far will they go among so many"*), but I hear in it the beginnings of faith. He brings the question (and the fish and loaves) to the Lord, with a twinge of hope that these might possibly be touched by miracle. I think I hear tentative faith in his question. That inspires.

All of this is instructive. Jesus is always at work, just like the Father (John 5:17) – he knows what he's going to do. I have the opportunity, like Philip, like Andrew, to step in. Will I get stuck on impossibilities, or will I press closer to Jesus, even with the little faith I have, and ask, *"Might you use this, Lord?"*

Andrew asked the question. All the disciples saw the answer. They never got over it, Philip included.

Believers have been reading about it ever since.

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*Lord Jesus, I look to you today, ready for you to help me see circumstances in which you are choosing to work. Give me ears to hear your promptings and faith to engage with your working, even when things appear daunting. Let me not be arrogant and presumptuous, pushing forward on my own. But let me not hang back. Give me at least the questioning attitude of Andrew, pressing into your hands again the beginning possibilities of faith.*

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Watch:

Keep eyes and ears open today for the Lord's promptings. Watch for the circumstances in which he is choosing to work. Pray, now, inviting him to let you see and hear.

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