

MULTIPLYING OUR WORTH

John 6:1-13

It is the lad of these beautiful verses we especially want to think about and speak about today. I want you to notice what happened when this lad presented five loaves and two fishes to the Lord Jesus. Perhaps we can understand the lessons taught by using three words: "Possession", "Presentation", "Multiplication".

This passage speaks of and points out to us the humble deed of a little lad whose name we do not know. It speaks of a lad who went his quiet way in a crowd. It speaks of a little boy who brightened the lives of others. It tells about a halo of honor upon the brow of a lad who had neither riches nor honor, nor station--only five barley loaves and two small fishes.

When Jesus looked upon that large company of people and saw them weary and hungry, he said to that matter-of-fact man Philip, "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" Perhaps Philip did not answer immediately. He may have wended his way through the great multitude trying to estimate just how much bread it would take to feed them. Anyway he said to the Master, "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that everyone of them may take a little." Andrew, that apostle who was always looking for opportunities to serve his Lord, had been listening to the conversation, so he remarked: "There is a lad here, who has five barley loaves and two small fishes; but what are they among so many?"

No doubt this lad was like the lads of our day. Our lads with their dreams, their questionings, their bad habits which they learn largely from us older folks, their evil tendencies which they inherited from others, their appetites and their fun. Our lads--- upon whom our heart's affections fasten and around whom our hopes circle. Our lads, like unto the lads of long ago, subject to temptations, capable of the same plunges of moral degradation, and susceptible to the same redemptive motives. I have little doubt that if that lad of the long ago were living to day he would enjoy going to a modern circus and would act as a modern American boy. And I have little doubt that if that lad were living today he would give us, even as our lads give us today, hours of concern, hours of joy, and an occasional hour of sorrow because of capabilities of high things and of low things.

This little lad had only five loaves and two fishes. Not a sack of flour did he have, but a little. Not a bin of bread, but a bit of bread. Not a net full of fishes, but two small fishes. Not a smoke-house full of meat, but a little. Not much..but something. And that little something he had brought for himself on his picnic. But this lad was not poor. The mountains were his to behold. Not poor at all. All the songs of all the singing birds were his. Not poor, for God leases this universe to all who have spiritual capacity to appreciate it.

He had only five loaves and two fishes. They were his possessions. They didn't seem very much, just enough for his hungry self. What have you? What are your talents? They may seem few and insignificant to you, but not to God you Creator. Ask yourself, "What am I worth?" You are worth to the world the amount of human happiness which you provide for others, plus the difference between what you consume and what you produce, plus every way in which you have given others a better chance. Yes, we are worth the good which we leave to be inherited by the next generation. We need to realize that the largest graveyard in the world is that in which we are burying the unused talents of human beings.

Somebody went to the lad and asked him for his five loaves and two small fishes. Maybe it was the disciples who went to him and asked him for his lunch. Maybe Jesus asked the lad for the food. No matter who asked him, it is to his credit and honor that he listened to those who spoke for the Lord and for what the Lord wanted. People never miss it when they obey the Lord and do right. We see this lad doing that by letting go of what he had and giving it to the Lord.

There is one glory of holding on. There is another glory of letting go. Sam Morse, who for nine years endured the adverse criticisms of the press and the jeers of Congress in behalf of his telegraph, manifested the glory of holding on--and holding out. So did Cyrus Field, who tied continents together with copper cables; for his cable for over ten years was denounced as a mad freak of stubborn ignorance. So did McCormick, whose first reaper clumsily clicked its way into the Temple of Fame in 1831. So did Howe, whose sewing machine -- a machine which has lightened the burdens of millions of women--was smashed by a Boston mob. So did Palissy manifest the glory of holding on when, working sometimes without sleep for nights, working sometimes amid the condemnations of his friends, he worked sixteen years to discover the secret of white enamel. And there have been and are many others about whom the glory of going on and holding out shines but time forbids calling them by name.

But this lad has the glory of letting go around his head as a halo. He let go his five barley loaves. He gave up to others his two small fishes. He relinquished his all. And there he stands today in Christ's hall of fame along with the one who holds a cup of cold water in his hand--along with the widow who dropped in her two mites.

The lad let go of things that meant for his comfort. He was ready to suffer hunger. He let go of his substance and let Jesus have it. He could have eaten that lunch and would have been entirely forgotten. Selfishness has wrapped up most people in a hard shell. They present nothing to the Lord. Some are prone to look at the size of the task, then glance at their little possessions and talents, and say, "Oh! What's the use? My bit in this work amounts to nothing." There are many people who spend their time whining about their small possessions and their few opportunities. Their whining stops them from using whatever talents they do have. All the Lord asks of us is that we dedicate just what we have to His service.

A great base-ball player said, "If a man were to let me choose the easiest place in base-ball, I'd like to play in the field alongside of Tris Speaker." When a ball is a few inches outside of his own area, he doesn't say, "Let George get it." He has the reputation of going after everything. When he is in the game he plays hard every minute. Read the lives of great men in every walk of life and you will find them to have been "hard workers." What I mean is, they buried their lives in the lives of others.

The secret of Abraham's greatness was to be found in the fact that he obeyed the Lord. Consecration to God and to the service of mankind led the saintly David Livingstone into the heart of Africa that those in darkness might have heaven's light; inspired Florence Nightingale to care so tenderly for the soldiers of the Crimean War that she was called "The Angel of Crimea"; urged Lincoln to lead this nation in the freeing of four million slaves; caused Russel Conwell to take his motto "Try to meet the needs of others."

Presentation to the Lord brings life. A shoe merchant placed this unique sign over his door, "God first, family second, shoes third." That is what is meant by presentation--putting God first in your life.

A Christian business man was conversing with a friend. He said to this Christian gentleman, "I don't see why you are so much interested in church. I have never derived any good from it." The Christian answered, No. I have always noticed that dividends are paid only to stock-holders." We must give to get. We must invest to derive dividends. When one invests in Christ's cause and the Church he will get something out of it to benefit him. There are no exceptions to the rule. I have never seen a single person present himself or herself to the Lord who has not been blessed. Bring to the Lord what you have. That is the lesson which we need to learn from the lad who brought and presented to Jesus his five loaves and two fishes.

There was a wonderful multiplication of what the lad presented. Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to the disciples, and they in turn distributed to the people. This multiplication of the bread and fishes in Jesus' hands continued until the hunger of every one of the five thousand people had been satisfied. Then Jesus commanded the disciples to gether up the fragments so that nothing be wasted. These fragments filled twelve baskets. There were more fragments left than there were loaves when they began to serve.

Just as our Lord multiplied the loaves and fishes, so He has multiplied the usefulness and worth of thousands of believers who have given their lives to Him. We would possibly never have heard of Paul, had it not been for the fact that he was converted and saved by the Lord. The peasant fisherman, who later became apostles and eminent preachers, would have lived and died in their boats--poor, ignorant men--had they not met Jesus. He multiplied their worth.

It is hard to understand how a farmer can throw away a few bushels of seed in the spring and then go out in the summer and gather in a great harvest. But that happens every year and that's exactly the way in which our Lord multiplies the worth of a man who buries his life in His service.

Friend, if you will give your whole being to the Master and follow Him, you life will burst out into new joys and assurances and blessings for others. Most certainly in Christ's hands your worth will be multiplied.

Fanny Crosby was blind. She presented her life to God. Immediately she began to write those more than six thousand gospel hymns which are sung in worship and praise in every land.

You are only an installment of what you can be. Presentation and obedience are twins. Think it over--you have never seen anyone present anything to the Lord that there was not a multiplication.

This lad reached out from himself to others--through Christ. This lad reached out to many and filled their hands with food--through the hands of Christ. The lad reached out beyond the day in which he lived to other days, even to the days in which we live, in influence--for the Lord. And this he did through the Master.

When Richard Baxter lay dying, his friends, pitying his pain, liked to comfort him by speaking of the good that he had achieved by means of his writings. Baxter shook his head and said, "No, I was but a pen in God's hand, and what praise is due to a pen?" When Saladin saw the sword with which Richard Coeur De Leon had fought so bravely, he marvelled that so common a blade should have wrought such mighty deeds. One of the English officers replied, "It was not the sword, it was the arm of Richard."

When Paganini appeared for the first time at the Royal Opera House in Paris the aristocracy of France was gathered to hear him. In his peculiar ghostly manner he glided on to the stage amidst the breathless silence of the expectant throng.

Commencing to tune his violin, a string snapped. The audience tittered. Commencing again, a second string broke; and a moment later, a third string gave way. The people stared in consternation. Paganini paused for just a second, and then, giving one of his grim smiles, he lifted his instrument, and, from the single string, drew music that seemed almost divine.

Only a pen--but a pen in the hand of a poet.
Only a common sword--but a sword in the hand of Richard.
Only a broken violin--but a violin in the hand of a master.
Only five loaves and two small fishes--but five loaves and two small fishes in the hands of the Son of God.

A little lad with a little. But the Lord lengthened it out, and all because the lad yielded it to Christ.

"Nobody knows what a boy is worth,
A boy at his work or play,
A boy who whistles around the place,
Or laughs in an artless way.

Nobody knows what a boy is worth
And the world must wait and see,
For every man in an honored place,
Is a boy that used to be.

Nobody knows what a boy is worth,
A boy with his face aglow,
For hid in his heart there are secrets deep
Not even the wisest know.

Nobody knows what a boy is worth,
A boy with his bare, white feet;
So have a smile and kindly word,
For every boy you meet."

Friends, if you will present your possessions to the Lord, you will be of far more value. Your worth will be multiplied. You will produce more than you consume. You will contribute to the world's happiness and will leave an inheritance of goodness which will make it easier for the next generation. Yes, three words, "POSSESSION", "PRESENTATION", "MULTIPLICATION", tell the story of every life which is earnestly lived in the Lord Jesus Christ.