

## "EVERYTHING ON MY FLASH DRIVE HAS BEEN ERASED"

Devotional for July 29, 2018 based upon John 6: 1-21

Those were the first words out of my mouth when I tried to find a document that I wanted to work on. About a minute before I had been unable to access the files on my flash drive. A window came up on my computer, which said, "Click here to scan and repair." I clicked there, but instead of scanning and repairing, it erased everything on my flash drive.

Now fortunately I do have paper copies of most everything on my flash drive. I am one of those digital-later-in-life people who do not totally trust computers, so I make sure I have paper copies of almost everything. And on my computer's hard drive I had earlier versions of most of the documents – just not the final version. But most fortunately of all, I remembered that most of the documents that I still wanted I had sent to someone else. I could retrieve them from "Sent" emails. I still had them because I had sent them. I had them because I had given them away.

The pastor of one of the churches where I attended when I was in seminary once told of his brother, who also was a pastor. His home office suffered a terrible fire. All of his books, and all of his sermon files, were destroyed. Fortunately, he had made a habit of mailing copies of his sermons to family and friends. After the tragic fire he said, "The only sermons I had left were the ones I had given away."

The feeding of the five thousand must have made such an impression upon the disciples, because all four Gospels record it. But only John's Gospel tells us where the five loaves and two fish came from. According to John 6: 8-9, one of the disciples, Andrew, who (as always) is called Simon Peter's brother, said to Jesus, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?"

What if the boy had not given Jesus his lunch? Five thousand people would not have been fed, and we would never have heard of him and the story of his generous giving because of his deep faith and trust in Jesus.

We have all heard it said, "The purpose of an apple is not just to produce an apple tree. The purpose of an apple is to produce a whole orchard of apple trees." If every apple – indeed, every apple seed – has within it the potential to produce a whole orchard of apple trees. If that kind of expansion and multiplication from one seed to a whole orchard or field is something that we can see, then why should it surprise us – why should we doubt – that Jesus is able to speed up the process of making a small amount into something great? Something small - given in faith and trust and obedience to

Jesus – becomes enough. In fact, it becomes more than enough. The disciples gathered up twelve baskets full of leftovers. They had more left over at the end than what they had when they first began.

The apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians, “My God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (4: 19).

Like the boy, we may only have five loaves and two fish. Like Andrew, we may wonder, “What are they among so many?” The needs are so great, and what I have to offer is so small.

But, like the boy, we can trust Jesus. Like the boy, we can give what we have. We can give generously from what God has given to us. For God is able to supply our needs. God is able to take what we give and then bless it, multiply it, and make it do more than it ever would have done if we had held on to it for ourselves.

Like the Israelites who tried to collect more than enough manna, we will find that hoarding stinks. Like the boy who gave his lunch, we will find that what we give to Jesus, He will make it into more than enough. Like the pastor and his sermons – like myself with the documents on my flash drive, we will find that we only are really able to keep what we give away.

What do you have to give – what will you give to Jesus?

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