

***When Your Ship Comes In!*** John 6:1-21

Frances Havergal was only 47 years old when she died. Through out her brief life, while in frail and delicate health, she was an avid student. She learned several languages and was fluent in Greek and Hebrew. She was talented in music, and was known as a brilliant pianist. When she was told by here physician that she was going to die, Miss Havergal replied, "If I am really going, it is too good to be true." At the bottom of her bed she had her favorite Bible verse fixed so she could see it. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." While having penned many Christian hymns, it was she who wrote the words of the hymn, "I am trusting you Lord Jesus, never let me fall, I am trusting you forever and for all." This was her favorite hymn from among all the hymns that she wrote. It was the hymn she was singing with a group of friends when she died.

We remember from last week that Jesus had suggested a break, but the crowds eager to see more miracles followed Jesus around the lake. Jesus and his disciples got there first and sat down on this hillside, but the crowds knew where they were going and Jesus and his disciples could see the huge crowd gathering. So Jesus turns to his disciples and says to Phillip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him for he knew what he was going to do.

Phillip's response showed he was aware of the great need, but little trust. He looked at the overwhelming need of 5,000 plus people and he looked at the amount of money the disciples had, and this was his response. Like any good board member, Phillip gasps in despair. "Lord, how can we do this? Eight months wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.'

Has that ever happened to you? Someone brings a need to your attention. What is asked is so beyond your resources that you can't see anyway out of it except to send then away. But is that trusting Jesus?

Andrew has a good idea, he exercises some initiative and searches the multitude for food, and all he finds is a boy with his lunch, "five small barley loaves and two small fish," with the emphasis on small. We are hoping that Andrew will demonstrate what Jesus is looking for but Andrew then goes on to say, "But what is that among so many"

Again the assumption is...look at the overwhelming needs, and look at the few resources Then Jesus demonstrates to the disciples exactly what he was hoping they would see and trust when faced with overwhelming needs

What do we do when we hear Jesus commands to meet people's needs? Our natural reaction is that of Phillip and Andrew. We have the eagle eye that can see the shortfall from a mile away, but do we know where to go after that? We look at the needs, and we look at the resources and the conclusion we so often come up with is "send them away" or "but what are they among so many?"

The only one who trusts in this story is the little boy and his lunch from home. The little boy is willing to give up his lunch and share it with Jesus.

Now it is significant to me what Jesus does next. He has the people sit down. Our text tells us that Jesus took that little lunch from the little boy and gave thanks for the little. The disciples focusing on the overwhelming need could only see the lack of resources, and are driven to despair. The sad thing is that they didn't even trust that Jesus could do something in the face of the overwhelming need.

Jesus gives thanks for the little he does have. If this sign points in any direction, it points us in the direction of giving thanks for what little we do have. But it goes beyond that. Placing the little in our Lord's hands, just as the little boy was willing to risk giving up his lunch to Jesus, we discover in the Gospels that our little resources go a lot further in meeting needs that Jesus sets before us. The gospel tells us that after Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were seated, they had as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

And after everyone had eaten, Jesus sent them out after it was all over with the command, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces from the barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

Instead of an affirmation of what Jesus can do with our resources in meeting needs I wonder what happened to those 12 baskets.

It is certainly a reminder to the disciples to trust Jesus to make our resources go further in his hand. But what if those baskets were given to that little boy? When we place into our Lord's hand what we have, we will live to see some of these same results by his grace. Did the disciples get where this sign is pointing? Do we?

Well, the people don't get it, for this portion of the Gospel closes: "When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force and make him king, he withdrew to the mountain by himself." Jesus shows himself to be God, but he shows us that we can trust him to meet peoples' needs through the little that we have, and still have some left over. It's just the way it works in the Kingdom of God. Jesus will not permit his gift of grace to be turned into a glory move of authority and power

In the next part of the Gospel the disciples wait around for Jesus, but Jesus doesn't show, and so they push out by themselves. Before long there is another storm. They are not doing well. They had rowed 3 and a half miles across the lake. The sea of Galilee is 7 miles across. They saw Jesus, walking on the water, approaching the boat, and they were terrified.

Mark tells us that it was about the fourth hour of the night. That it was very late indeed. They had a long period of failure to undergo before he came. Might not he have come sooner? He knows what is the best time to intervene before we do. He shows that God

can be glorified through his very delay. If he seems to delay a moment too long for us, it will prove to always have been good for us.

Sometimes he delays in order to let us understand how futile and unsuccessful all our hard efforts can be when we fail to look to him

Yet we need not fear. The time of his coming is often the very moment when we seem to be at the end of our powers and our patience, when the waves of danger and the opposing winds are at their fiercest and the darkness is most perplexing. "He came to them walking on the sea"

The word he spoke to them was the same word God used when he spoke to Moses at the burning bush when he told him his name. (Ex 3:14) "It is I or I Am. Do not fear!"

But even when he was there, it was only when the disciples recognized his voice that they knew it was his own presence. Then their fear of the elements vanished. They recognized him not through his visible shape or action, not through the figure they could dimly see with their eyes. What they saw with their eyes only brought terror to their hearts, but what they heard with their ears was the voice of the true shepherd and master.

That is why we must learn to listen with our ears more than to look with our eyes if we want to be assured of the presence of Christ in our midst. Remember some of the Easter appearances of Jesus. It was only when Jesus spoke that they knew he was risen from the dead. His promise is, "my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me."

That is why in the midst of terrible darkness and waves of struggle...that is why God's disciples, you and me...must listen constantly to the Word of God, for it is by speaking through the Holy Scriptures that Christ makes his presence known in the midst of our troubles and causes us to hear his voice.

Our following Christ will always be a faith in which ears will play a larger part than the eyes. When Christ comes to reveal himself and convey his power to us He seeks to do so through a clear and definite word.

That night on the lake, Jesus spoke such a word. And in succeeding years when the disciples preached the Gospel they often told this story as an example of the miracle that can happen when Christ comes into the midst in the darkness and depression and storm to speak his word as we struggle across the sea of life.

His word proves him to be Lord over the waves and wind, over the forces of evil and darkness and destruction that may be ranged against us. As he spoke it, he stood on the waves to prove how little their apparent fierceness and force could prevail over him. It is the word of the risen Lord. There is nothing through which he cannot or will not come in order speak his word and save his people.

His coming in this way insures that you and his church will fulfill the mission on which he has sent it. John finishes the account by saying. "Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going."

Your ship will come in to the safe harbor where God intends us to be.

A woman by the name of Deborah Packard, describing some of the events in her life says it this way five years after the death of her husband. "I see, in a much clearer way, what faith really is. It's throwing up your hands and saying through your tears, "I sure don't get it, Lord, but my life is in your hands." Prayer and faith aren't about assuming that God will always give us what we ask for. They're about truly knowing and accepting, as I do now, that our salvation, not our earthly wants, is the object of our lives."

Or take the words of Clay Sherer the man who does our flowers for the church. I thank God for what he has given me

I thank God for what he has taken away

I thank God for what he has left me.

Or hear Paul writing from prison "So that Christ may dwell in your hearts that you being rooted and grounded in love may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with the fullness of God

In a few moments you will receive a little bread and a little wine.

You will hear Christ's voice and in that voice you will hear of Christ's sharing his life for you, you will hear of your forgiveness of sins, and you will be assured in his voice that ultimately your Ship Will Come In to the safe harbor where God intends for it to be.

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