

The Greatest Picnic Ever!

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[0 : 00] If you have your Bible, look with me this morning to the Gospel of Mark. We're continuing our series on the Jesus effect, the impact Jesus has in people's lives. And this morning, we're looking at Mark chapter 6.

We're going to begin our reading in just a moment in verse 30. Give you a chance to find that passage, Mark chapter 6, verse 30. The message this morning is about the greatest picnic that I've ever heard about in my life.

When I was a kid, back in the 50s and 60s, we didn't have a lot of excess money. There weren't a lot of restaurants. You didn't have all the fast food chains you have today.

Did later when I was a teenager. But we didn't eat out a whole lot. But what we did do, really enjoyed as a family, was going on an occasional picnic. We would pack some chicken and some potato salad and deviled eggs.

And we'd go out to, oftentimes, a lake. And we would fish or we would throw a football and just have a big time, make some homemade ice cream, cut a watermelon. You all done that kind of thing?

[1 : 04] You enjoy that? Man, I love it. In fact, I may just go out to church and go on a picnic. I love a good picnic. I don't think anything's any more fun than that. Well, you're going to see a picnic here that you would have loved to have been a part of.

Let's just jump in. Look at verse 30, if you will, in chapter 6. The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught.

Now, you're wondering, what in the world is that about? If you look up earlier in the chapter, verse 6, you find that Jesus has commissioned these 12, sent them out two by two.

He divides them into groups of two. And he sent them out to all the villages and towns in the surrounding area. And this is pretty much the instruction he gave them. He said, I don't want you to worry about money.

I don't want you to worry about food. Take the clothes on your back. You don't need to pack a suitcase. Take the clothes on your back. If you've got a walking stick, use your walking stick. And just go out. And when you come to a place and they take you into their house, stay with that family until you're ready to move to the next place.

[2 : 09] But God will provide. So they do that. They come back. And now they're giving this report to Jesus about what has occurred. And you read about the report they know undoubtedly gave Jesus over in verse 13.

What it tells us is this, that when they came back, they reported to him that they had preached the gospel just as he had been doing. They had healed the sick.

And they had cast out demons. Well, if you've been with us for the last six, seven weeks, you know that's what Jesus, we've seen him to this point doing. And so they just replicated, duplicated, if you will, his ministry.

So you've got to understand if crowds are following Jesus, crowds are now following these disciples. Because they want to see what's going to happen next.

Well, look if you will at verse 31. He said to them, come away by yourselves to a remote place and rest for a while. Jesus recognizes these disciples are exhausted.

[3 : 19] He can look in their face and see it. Those of you who have difficult jobs, when you come home and you're just thoroughly exhausted, you've spent everything, your family can look at you and they just tell, man, he or she is just spent.

They don't have any more to give. But Jesus looked into the face of his disciples and knew these guys were worn out. They'd already been traveling with Jesus for some time. And so the way had always been difficult.

But now the responsibility had rested on their shoulders. So he said, come away by yourselves. And notice this, underscore that in your mind, to a remote place. You know what a remote place is, right?

A remote place is a place where there's no fanfare. There are not big crowds. It's isolated. You're not going to find a Ferris wheel there. Some of you enjoy going to the beach. In fact, probably most of you enjoy going to the beach.

Some of you, though, want to go where there's lots of activities, right? And others of you, like myself, you say, I want to go somewhere like Ocean Isle, Cherry Grove. I want to get away from as much of the hustle and bustle as I can get away from.

[4 : 21] And I want it to be quiet and still and not a whole lot going on. Well, I think they're looking for a place even more remote than those I mentioned. They're looking for a place out in the wilderness where they can absolutely be by themselves.

Come away by yourselves to a remote place and rest for a while. For many people were coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat. Now, some of you in this room, you know what that's like.

Some of you have found yourselves in the midst of chaos at work, and you're going to be 90, and it's been that way not just one day but two days or three days or a week or two or three weeks. And at times, you don't even have time to stop for lunch and barely even have a chance to grab a cup of coffee out the door in the morning, and you're just famished and absolutely exhausted. And that's what had happened to these disciples. So that's what they decided to do. Look at verse 32. So they went away in the boat themselves to a remote place.

[5 : 21] They take Jesus' advice. They get in the boat, they shove off, and they're headed to a remote place. But look at verse 33. But many saw them leaving and recognized them.

They become popular figures. People ran there by land from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. So their intent is we're going to get away.

We're not going to take a crowd of folk with us. We're going to take a break, a timeout from ministry. We're not going to preach. We're not going to heal. We're not going to cast out demons.

We're just going to get along and catch our breath, refresh ourselves spiritually, talk to God, get a sense of direction. We're going to this remote place. The people see them leaving.

And when they see them leaving, can you hear them? Hey, that's Jesus in that boat. Hey, that's that disciple who was over in Capernaum and he did those miracles. And pretty soon word spreads and the townsfolk are running down to the shore.

[6 : 19] And they anticipate apparently where Jesus is going to land. And so they run along the Sea of Galilee. Apparently it didn't get too far from the shoreline.

And the crowd is running. And when Jesus and his disciples get to this place where they think we're finally going to be all alone, guess what? They're not. There's a crowd that is run along beside them.

So look at verse 20 or 33 one more time. But many saw them leaving and recognized them. People ran there by land from all the towns and arrived ahead of them.

Now, Jesus loved people. The disciples loved people apparently. But I got to tell you, they're probably a little bit disappointed, right? How many of you saw the movie What About Bob?

Can you all remember that one? It was a Bill Murray movie years and years ago. He played this guy who was a hypochondriac. And he had this psychologist. And the psychologist just needed a break from him.

[7 : 18] And so he goes off somewhere up in New England. And he's hiding out. And lo and behold, he goes to the door. And there's this guy. There's Bob, right? And some of you have probably felt like that at some time in your life.

You tell somebody, we're going away. Well, where are you going? And you know the feeling, right? You don't want to tell because you don't want any company, right? You want to be there by yourself. But Jesus gets there, and there's a huge, huge crowd ahead of him.

So how does he respond? Look at verse 34. So as he stepped ashore, he saw a huge crowd and had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

Jesus, every one of these 12, they want to get alone. They want to rest. They want to eat. They want to sleep. They just want to relax a little bit. But as soon as you get there, Mark says, here's this huge crowd.

Now, all through this study in Mark, we've seen some really huge crowds, right? I mean, there are times they're pressing on him. Remember a few weeks ago, they're pressing against Jesus, and Jesus says, somebody touched me.

[8 : 18] And one of the disciples turned and said, touched you? Who hasn't touched you, you know? So it's massive crowds. Can I tell you something? I wouldn't be surprised if this is the largest crowd to date.

You're going to see why in just a moment. Let me just tell you, let's cut it out of the bag. There are at least 5,000 men in this crowd. We don't know about ladies and children, but this is a massive, huge crowd.

But when Jesus comes ashore, the scripture says he sees them, and when he sees them, he envisions them as sheep without a shepherd.

Matthew uses the exact same description, and it moves his heart with compassion. He just looked at them, and his heart melted. I mean, he just saw such great, great need there.

I'm going to tell you, if you ever go to India, Haiti, Kenya, some of those places, and you see people who come out to greet you, you'll have that same experience.

[9 : 21] You'll see a level of need unlike anything you've seen in this country. And it just breaks your heart. Your heart melts. You want to do something for these people. And so Jesus was moved with compassion.

Now, I think there's a reason the scripture uses that phrase, he saw them as sheep without a shepherd. What do you know about sheep? Anybody here raise sheep? I don't know a whole lot about them, but I've had a little bit of experience with them.

Years ago, the church that I was pastor of, we did a thing called Journey Through Bethlehem, and we brought these camels in, one named Omar from Florida and another one. And we brought in some donkeys and some goats and sheep, and we did a thing where about 20,000 people a week would come through and see our Journey Through Bethlehem.

So I know a little bit about sheep. We put them in a pen, and one day they got out of that pen. Our minister of education come around and said, man, we've got to get all you out there. These sheep have escaped, and we've got to get them. Can I tell you something?

Sheep are not the brightest animals in the world. I'll just tell you that. And they just kind of scatter, and then they come back together. And if you run after them, can I tell you something?

[10 : 30] That's not what you want to do. They just really then flee. You just got to kind of let them gather, and then you kind of lead them along how you want them to go. But sheep, the truth of the matter is, they're defenseless.

They don't prey on anything. If they're going to eat, you're going to have to give them something to eat. If they're going to drink, you're going to have to lead them where there's some water. You're going to have to protect them from the ailments.

You just pretty much have to do everything for sheep. Jesus looked in the eyes of these people, and that's what he saw, sheep without a shepherd. Can I tell you something? I think that's a picture of how our world looks today.

I mean, people are just going to be 90 in 100 different directions, but they're clueless, aren't they? I mean, they don't know up from down morally, spiritually, right from wrong.

They don't know if God exists or he doesn't exist. They're living for things, chasing after things that have no fulfillment in their life, and they're like sheep without a shepherd.

[11 : 35] So Jesus is moved with compassion. So what does he do? The end of verse 34 says this. Then he began to teach them many things.

He's coming ashore. He's planning to rest and recuperate. He sees these people, and he just takes all his plans for rest and relaxation, and he puts them on the back burner.

And he sits down apparently with this massive crowd, and he begins to talk to them. You know what I think he began to talk to them about? The things of God. This is God, as I said a couple weeks ago, in human flesh.

If anybody could reveal God to them, Jesus could. He begins to talk to them about what life is all about and how they can live a fulfilled life by serving the Lord and what the Lord expects of them.

And apparently this discussion went on for hours and hours and hours. Now just imagine this. You don't have a preacher here. Imagine you have Jesus here, and Jesus is sitting here on these steps, and he's talking to you in this audience about his Father and about how his Father intends for you to

live and about how you can make wise choices and you can walk with God.

[12:49] He would talk for a while, and you know what would happen? One of you would say, Jesus, can I ask you about such and such? And so they're asking questions, and Jesus is answering those questions.

And after a while, time just gets away from them, and they're having a great time, but nobody wants to leave. Well, notice what happens. Verse 35.

When it was already late, his disciples approached him and said, this place is a wilderness. In other words, Lord, remember, we were coming to a remote place. We're a long way from anywhere.

We did that purposefully, but they sought us out here. And it is already late. Send them away so they can go into the surrounding countryside and villages to buy themselves something to eat.

Now, I want to tell you something. This is not these disciples reacting and saying, goodness gracious, would you look how long he's gone? I'm hungry, aren't you? How about it, John?

[13:49] Wouldn't you like a biscuit? Man, we got to get out of here. Now, I know there are times when I'm up preaching, and some of you are thinking, somebody needs to nudge that guy. Somebody needs to tell him, it's late, right?

We need to get out of here. But that's not what happens here. They have the crowd at their heart. They have the crowd's best interest at heart.

And they finally, one of them gets encouraged, and he comes over and says, Jesus, boy, everybody's having a great time. You're doing a brilliant job. I love hearing about God. God, it's late. Remember, we came to this place to get away? We're a long way from any town, village. It's already, it's getting dark. Can you imagine how hard it was to travel at night in those days without all the light we have?

Jesus, you need to let them cut loose. You need to let them go and go somewhere and find something to eat. Now, if it'd been me, I'll tell you what, oh, yeah, I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

[14:50] Let's have prayer and go, right? But not Jesus. I want you to notice what Jesus says in verse 37. You give them something to eat. He responded.

Now, I don't know about you, but if I'd been one of those disciples, that's a little bit curt. I mean, that's a little bit of a short answer. I mean, it puts a huge responsibility on these 12 guys who are already hungry themselves.

And remember, they've just come back from being on mission. And remember, before they left what I said, what did he tell them to take with them? Nothing.

So how are they going to feed these thousands of folk? And so notice their response, if you will, in verse 37b.

They said to him, should we go and buy 200 denarii worth of bread and give them something to eat? Now, at that point in time, that coin was so small, it was just almost insignificant.

[15:52] But if you translate it to today's dollars, you know what we're talking about? Eight months wages for the average guy. A denarii is how much a guy earned in a day.

So 200 days of labor, about eight months labor. They didn't have that. That wasn't in their treasury bag. So they turned to him, you want us to get \$200 or 200 denarii worth of food for these folks?

Where are we going to get that? And if we could, where would we buy it? And if we had a place to buy it, where would we get the money? We don't have virtually anything.

Verse 36, or 38 rather. And he asked them, how many loaves do you have? Go look. And when they found out, they said, five and two fish.

Now, let me just pause and interject this because you want to envision this the way it really took place. That's a pitiful amount of food. 5,000 men and you've got five loaves and two fish.

[16:59] You know what else it tells me? This was a poor, poor crowd. Because they knew they were going to a remote spot. So some of them would have run by the house and picked up some groceries, right?

My guess is they brought what they had. And when they look around, they have five loaves and two fish. There were a lot of poor people at this time in Israel.

Roman occupation was in force. And so they come and report to Jesus. Notice what Jesus says, verse 39. Then he instructed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass.

So they sat down in ranks of hundreds and fifties. Then he took the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he blessed and broke the loaves.

He kept giving to them his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. Everyone ate and was filled. Then they picked up twelve baskets full of pieces of bread and fish.

[18 : 03] Now those who ate the loaves were 5,000 men. They come out and say, Jesus, you tell us to feed them.

We've got five loaves and two fish. And Jesus takes the five loaves and the two fish. And the Bible says this. He looks up to heaven. He blessed them.

I don't think it was an ordinary blessing like we pray. He blessed this fish and this bread. And he asked his father to do a miracle. And he immediately began to break the bread and put it into baskets.

And as you put it into the baskets, guess what? Miraculously, and I've just got to be honest with you, I can't even envision this. I don't know how it happened. I can't get my head around it. But as he would break it, it would suddenly, it would be a whole loaf again.

And he'd break it and he'd be a whole loaf again. And he'd break the fish and the fish would be back in order again. And it just continued to multiply and multiply until they began to feed people in sections of 50 and 100 until 5,000 were fed.

[19 : 06] And when they were through, they picked up 12 extra baskets of food. There was surplus. Now, here's the big question. Why are we given this story?

We've never witnessed anything like this. Why are we given this story? What does it teach us? When I tell you this, you're going to think he's going to preach one of those lengthy messages like Jesus.

But I'm going to tell you six things, but I'm going to tell you real, real quickly those six things. You ready? Fasten your seatbelt. Here it goes. First of all, it tells me this. People are hungry for the gospel.

When I see those people running along the banks of the Sea of Galilee, and they run from one town and another and another, and they gather in the numbers in which they gather 5,000 men and their families, and they sit there for apparently hours on end, and they soak up the Word of God.

They just soak up everything coming from Jesus' mouth. I'll tell you something. You know what that tells me? People are hungry for God. And I'm going to tell you something that some of you in this room don't believe, but I believe this with all my heart.

[20 : 24] I think they still are. I think people today are as hungry for God as they have ever been. Let me tell you, make sure you understand what I'm saying. They're not hungry to hear cold, inelastic, tired old messages.

They're not interested in just coming here and preaching like me. They're not interested in hearing your choir, no matter how great your choir sings. They don't give a nickel that this is one of the prettiest buildings you'd ever walk in.

But I'm going to tell you something. They are hungry to know God. They want to know God as much as they ever want to know God. But I want to tell you something. They don't want to hear about Him.

They don't want somebody to lecture about Him. They want to experience God. They want God to move in their life. They want to feel a personal connection, an intimate connection with God.

They want something they can latch hold to and have a personal relationship with the living God.

But people today are still hungry for God. And the reason is because God has created in the heart, I think, and soul of every human being a God-shaped vacuum that only He can fill.

[21 : 36] And until He's in their life, there's never going to be a sense of satisfaction. They can chase one dream after another and one ambition after another. But they're never going to be satisfied until they're at peace with the one in whose image they're made.

Secondly, Jesus was concerned, and this is really important, about the whole man. Not just His soul, not just the spiritual man, the whole man.

Jesus fed their soul when He sat down and He taught them. But when He got through teaching them, and the disciples reminded them, they're hungry, they need something to eat, you need to send them away.

Jesus didn't disagree. But here's the difference. Where they had concern that these people eat, Jesus saw their problem as being His problem. Jesus said, well, you feed them.

Now, I want you to hear what I'm telling you right now. How in the world do we expect people in our world who we want to share the gospel with because we see the spiritual need in their life?

[22 : 45] It's so evident. How do we expect them to believe us when we stand up in the pulpit or in the street corners or in our businesses where we go and share the gospel?

How do we expect them to believe that we have genuine concern about their eternal soul when we don't apparently have any concern about their living conditions in the moment in which they now find themselves?

Do you understand that? How can I look at somebody and say, you know what? I really do care about where you spend eternity and that you have the fullness of life spiritually. But I can't help you with that thing that you have more money than you have money.

I can't help you with that thing that you have physical disease. I can't help you with that problem that you have an addiction to drugs or alcohol. Or that your life is caught up in immorality.

I can't do anything about that psychological problem you have. But you know what? God will sure give you a great existence in the sweet by and by. In the 60s, when I was a kid, a lot of liberal churches said, we're going to turn our attention because they lost confidence in God to do anything in the spiritual realm.

[23 : 59] And they said, we're going to become do-gooders and we're going to rush out and reach every need we can of people out there who have physical needs in their life. And that was the wrong thing to do.

But evangelical conservatives, you know what we did by and large? In reaction to that, we said, okay, tell you what. They're going to go that direction. They're going to move to the left.

Here's what we're going to do. We're going to focus just on the souls of men. And so we're going to emphasize evangelism, evangelism, evangelism. But we're not going to address the physical problems that face men in this life.

And I'm going to tell you something. Neither of those approaches is right. It doesn't have to be an either or. It should be a both and. You understand that? We ought to be concerned about how people live today, about what's going on in their lives, about people's unemployment and about jobs and about housing for folks.

And can I tell you something? If the church had addressed that years and years ago, I believe with all my heart as I stand here today, there wouldn't be one person on this earth who's going to bed hungry tonight.

[25 : 07] That's a problem the church could end today if we just made it a high priority in our lives. Thirdly, how can we meet that need if we don't have the apparent resources?

I mean, the disciples said, what do you want us to do, find 200 denarii, eight-month salary? The answer is this. God uses whatever we have to meet the needs of others.

God will take what we have, and if we'll put it at his disposal, no matter how much or how little, whatever we have, our talents, our money, our time, our energy, our imaginations, our creativity, if we would bring that all and say, God, I don't know what you can do with this, but we're giving you everything we have, putting it at your disposal.

I want to tell you something, it would always be enough. Here's how I know that. In Philippians chapter 4 and verse 13, this is what Paul says when he's in jail and he's writing to people who are concerned about his condition.

Paul says, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. And then in verse 19, he says, and my God shall supply all your needs, listen to this, according to his riches in glory.

[26 : 24] My God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory. Now, I want you to look up and listen and get this. That's either truth or that's a bald-faced lie.

It can't be both. Either what Paul said is true, God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory, or it is a bald-faced lie.

And I believe it's the absolute truth. If we'll take what God gives us, put it at his disposal, God can use it to solve all the world's problems. Fourth thing I want you to see is this.

We need to stop trying to solve spiritual problems through earthly means. Their mind, those disciples, when Jesus said, feed them, it went to one thing.

How do we get the money? How do we go buy the food? Instead of saying, what do we have and what can God do? When a problem arises in your life, can I ask you something?

[27 : 27] And would you be honest and candid about this? Is your first response to say, let's see what I got in my wallet. Let's see what I got in my checkbook. Let's see what I know about this situation.

Who do I know I can call in for a favor? What can I do? What can I do? Or is your response to say, Lord, here's a huge need. Now, how are you going to work this out?

How are you going to use me as part of the solution to solve this problem? That's what Jesus did.

What do we have? And then he offers it to God and says, God, what are you going to do?

I'll tell you a story this morning, to my shame, to another man's credit. There's a man named Dan Johnson, 70 years old, died last December. I buried him at Brushy Creek.

Good, good, good friend of mine. Died of COVID. He ran Evangelical Institute, the best kept secret I know in South Carolina, religiously speaking, over in Greenville, over on Parrish Mountain.

[28 : 27] Every year, Dan and a couple other guys, teachers, would bring in 50 students, 25 domestic students from America and Canada, 25 students from abroad.

He would literally live, eat, sleep, and breathe with these 50 students for two years. When they were done, they made a commitment and promised they would go back to their homes.

If it was in America or Canada, they went to those places. If it was abroad, they couldn't stay here in the United States, had to go back to their foreign country. They became preachers and missionaries, church leaders, outstanding believers.

He would teach them the book of Romans. Mostly, he would teach them how to pray and how to fellowship and walk with God. Never known anyone in my life to pray like Dan Johnson prayed. He was my prayer partner for five years.

The last five years, I was pastor at Brushy Creek. Got four of the guys. We met on Tuesday morning, 7 o'clock every week. Well, one Tuesday morning, the other guys had other commitments and couldn't be there.

[29 : 32] It's just me and Dan. We're sitting in my office, Brushy Creek. No one else there. The building's empty. Doors are open. We're praying. We get through praying, and Dan's phone rings.

He takes his cell phone, looks at it, and says, Can I step out in the hall and answer it? Sure. He goes into my secretary's office, and he's on the phone. Doors open, not trying to eavesdrop, but you can just hear one side of the conversation.

But you can pretty much piece it together. It's obvious there's a student on the other end of the line, and the student has a significant problem, at least in his mind, significant problem.

He's telling Dan all about this. Dan's not saying a whole lot. Every now and then, saying a little bit.

He comes back in. He sits down in my office after he ends the conversation. I turned to him, and I smiled, because I don't take it.

My life at that point in time, it was pretty chaotic. I was used to people just about every day coming in and saying, Pastor, here's my situation. Here's a problem. Can you help me solve this? One of the things I discovered after doing it for a long time was, a lot of times, it's easier just to, instead of helping them to find the problem, to find the solution, to tell them the solution, and to put it into effect and to solve the problem for them, right?

[30 : 44] And so, he's sitting here in my office, and I turned to him, and I said, Dan, you got a problem? Mm-hmm. Student? Mm-hmm. Is it one you can handle? Mm-hmm.

You going to solve it for him? I don't know. And when he said that, it startled me. I said, what do you mean you don't know? If I could solve it, I'd just solve it and get it out of the way and go on the next one, right?

And he smiled, and he said, well, that's the easy way. He said, but if I do that, let me tell you what will happen. I could make a phone call or two, and I could solve this kid's problem, but I would be the hero.

And he said, the next time he has a problem, because I'm the hero, he'd rush to me to solve the problem again. And he said, so I think what I'm going to do is just turn it over to God and ask God to move in his life and ask the young man to pray and wait and see what God does.

And I thought to myself, you know, that's the difference in somebody making converts and somebody making disciples, because he was exactly right.

[31 : 54] I was wrong. He was exactly, exactly right. We don't need to always try to solve the world's problems by just pulling out our wallets or by just simply making a phone call or creating an organization or trying to do this, that, that.

We need to be more attentive to turning to God. Fifth thing I want you to see is this. If we aren't very, very careful, alert, and extremely careful, what God does, even the miraculous, can completely escape us.

Now, I know what you're thinking. If I saw 5,000 people fed with a few fish and a few loaves of bread, I wouldn't forget that. Well, if you were to go over to Mark chapter 8, 1 to 4, they've got that on the screen.

You know what you'd find? In fact, just turn, turn over. I'm not going to ask you to read it, but just turn there to that passage. You see it? Just a couple of pages over from where you are. Mark chapter 8. What's the heading on that passage?

Anybody see it? Mark 8, 1 to 4? Mark 1, Jesus feeds the 4,000. Can I tell you something?

[33 : 12] They're not the same story. He didn't make a mistake. He didn't suffer from Alzheimer's. He didn't say, boy, I know the story. I just tell the same one again. No. It's a different story.

The synoptics give us this same miracle again. This is a second miracle just days after the first one. If you read through those first four verses, you know what you'll find?

Almost the same identical thing happens where Jesus says, give them something to eat, and they turn to him and say, how are we going to do that? Duh. Duh. Duh. Just a few days before, Jesus solved this problem.

But now, they've already forgotten. I hope you'll get this. Spiritually speaking, we have short, short, short memories, don't we?

I want to ask you something. If I ask you right now, what's the last miracle God did in your life?

There are some of you that would look like a deer in headlights. And you would say, well, you know, I don't know. I'm sure back sometime there was a miracle.

[34 : 16] But the truth of the matter is, when you stop and think about it, you know this. You have prayed and prayed, and God has delivered again and again and again. He's blessed in your lives.

I've heard you say that so many times. So how do we forget? I'll tell you one of the things a friend of mine, Jim Acker, one of the things he does in his Bible in the very back, every time he prays and God answers a prayer, he writes it down in the back of his Bible, and he dates it.

He's struggling right now with cancer. He's fighting for his life. And I know one of the things that sustains Jim, even now in this difficult place he finds himself in life, is the faithfulness of God, because he's got a register of every time God has ever moved in his life, and God has answered. Here's the final six thing that Jeff alluded to. I appreciate him giving me a plug in the message earlier today. Here's the sixth and final point, and that is think big.

Think big. Don't send them away. Now I know you're wondering, what are you talking about? How does that relate to us?

[35 : 36] Everybody in this room, at one time or another, has encountered a situation similar to what Jesus encountered. I promise you have.

I don't mean there were 5,000 people. There weren't necessarily hungry people. But you saw a situation where you saw this guy, this gal, this group of people, these children, they really need help.

Big help. Bigger than me. Bigger than you. And you thought, how pitiful. Some of you may have even cried over them.

You might have shed a tear over them. Boy, something needs to be, the government needs to step in. And you know what at the end of the day most of us do? We say, I'm sure you're going to have to go away.

You're going to have to find the answer somewhere else. We send them to their homes. We send them backpacking wherever they went to before. I'm going to tell you, people who really serve God, do something with their life in a big, big, big way, they think big all the time.

[36 : 49] And they do big things because they have big faith. When I retired four and a half years ago, nearly five years ago now, I began to take inventory of my life.

And I began to think to myself, you know, I've been pastor all these years. I preached all these years. Relocated a couple churches. Seen them grow numerically. Seen people come to know Christ.

But I got to be honest with you. It all seemed like pretty much small potatoes. I mean, I just thought, I just don't think I've done much with my life. And I began to look around.

There's a couple I married in Statesville, North Carolina, my first church, Betty Jo and Rusty McClellan. I'm going to hopefully bring them here sometime, first pickings before I leave for you to meet them.

If you ask me today, who do I know in this life has done more with their life than anyone else on this planet, I would name a preacher. I know some preachers who've done some great things.

[37 : 48] I would name a missionary. That'd be my pick. Betty Jo and Rusty McClellan. Let me tell you about them just real quickly. I was in my 30s.

They were in their 20s. They got out of college. He was a graduate of Davidson. She, UNC. I married him. They, he ran a shoe store there in Statesville, a little small shoe store, Long's McClellan shoe store.

It was known as, at that time. When I got ready to leave, she felt God calling her to ministry. She started getting a seminary education, doing it on the weekends whenever she could do it, trying to do it three or four or five years.

Finally, they come to a place where they feel like they need to go to the mission field. But they're not in a place in life where that's going to be possible for them as full-time missionaries. So they go as journeymen to Uganda.

They go as journeymen for two years. They serve two years away from their family. They have one little child, a little girl named Chelsea, and they serve there alongside Southern Baptist missionaries. They come back to the States.

[38 : 51] But God had allowed them to see these sheep without a shepherd. And they just couldn't say, I'm done with it.

You know, I did my part. That's what most of us say, right? We go on a little mission trip and come back. Well, I got that behind me now. I've done that. I contributed. I did my part. All they could see was sheep without a shepherd.

So when they come back, they decide we can't abandon those people. We're going to start a ministry. And they started a ministry called EWT, Equipping with Truth. Let me tell you what they do.

They sat down and said, how did Jesus intend for us to minister to the world? And they believed it was to give people the word of God, which they do, and disciple people, and help people with their physical needs, and teach them how to live a Christ-like life, and how to live a full life in Jesus, and how to earn a living for their families, and how to treat their children, and how to have a good family, husbands and wives together.

And they started to teach them how to drill for water, and they started to teach them how to plant ginger. And can I tell you, they live in Statesville, North Carolina. They spend about three months in Uganda every year, just go over there.

[40 : 06] He still runs that little tiny shoe store in Statesville. They started this organization, and since 2008, it's been underway. They now have a \$500,000 budget that they raise every year.

They're ministering to guards in prison. They're teaching people how to cook, and how to keep their homes. They're teaching people how to live for Jesus. They distribute Bibles. They disciple. I don't mean in the whole time this ministry's been going on.

Every year, they disciple 5,000 people. They have hired a full staff, a lot cheaper in Uganda than here.

They've hired a full staff who do discipleship, who teach school. They have a private school. They're building some orphanages. In fact, my wife and I are involved in that, in building an orphanage there in Uganda.

Can I tell you something? It's the most incredible thing you've ever seen, and I'm going to tell you something. Not billionaires, not millionaires, thousandaires. They're just ordinary.

[41 : 07] Like any two people in this room, they're as ordinary as anybody here in this room today, and yet they're doing remarkable things for God because they think big, because they can't say, send them away, because those people's images are stuck in their minds and hearts, and they can't get them away.

Now, I'm going to tell you something. I'll close with this. I didn't mean to go this long, but I'll just tell you this. There are some of you in this room. Not everybody here, but there are some of you in this room. God has given you a vision for something big at some point in time.

You thought about what you and your family might, could do, but then it was just too hard. Where would I get the means? And you shoved it to the back burner. Don't you do that. Don't you do that. You're going to come to a place you'll be my age one day. Don't you do that. You'll want your life to have really counted for something one day, and that's the only way it ever will, is if you think outside your bubble and other people become as important to you as your family and what goes on in your life.

Let's bow together in prayer. Father, I pray you would give us compassion for people like Jesus had. Do that in my life.

[42 : 33] Thank you, Rusty and Betty Jo. Bless their ministry, God. Bless this church. Help us to think big. Please, God. We make this prayer in your name.

Amen. Amen.