



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Andrew: A Life That Counts **FOLLOW ME: THE STORY OF DISCIPLESHIP**

John 6:1–14

Josh Caterer | July 16, 2023



As the pastor of worship here, I'm excited to be back in the pulpit, especially so soon after the last time I preached which was two months ago, so this is fairly unusual for me. I'm more of a once-a-year kind of preacher, which is often the case with worship pastors, usually in the summer. When we're done, they're like, "Ah, that was great, buddy. Now get back over there and sing; we'll see you next year." Then we can relax for about a month, but then the wheels start turning, because we have to start working on the message for next summer. We're going to need all eleven months to get 35 minutes of content together. That's the rhythm that works for me: eleven months for 35 minutes.

So when they asked me to preach again after only two months, I was like, "Okay, but the message might only be seven minutes long. I mean, I could stretch it to ten if I talk really slow." But they're like, "No, seven minutes will be fine. The people will love you. You'll be very popular. Seven minutes is what people want."

I was actually talking with somebody here last week and mentioned that I'm preaching again next Sunday. They said, "Oh yeah? Where?" I'm like, "Here. Here at Sugar Grove." They're like, "Didn't you just do that?" I'm like, "I know how you feel. I feel like this is a mistake. Like in Monopoly, when you draw the yellow card that says, 'Bank error in your favor.'" So we'll see how this goes.

In all seriousness, I have to tell you that I'm very grateful for the opportunity to do this. I love God's Word and love digging into it. I love that this is a church that takes God's Word seriously. I love that we believe God's Word has life-changing power and is worth studying. I appreciate the confidence that is shown to me by Tim and the leadership here to let me get up here and try to preach sometimes. It is not a responsibility that I take lightly.

We're in a series called "Follow Me," focusing on the apostles of Jesus Christ. This morning we'll be talking about the apostle Andrew, in a message I've entitled, "A Life That Counts." As followers of Jesus Christ, we want our lives to count for the Kingdom. We don't want to just be marking off days on a calendar until we can die and go to heaven. God has us here for a reason. We want to know that we're being used for His purposes while we're here, to advance His cause, to help build His Kingdom on earth while we have breath. We want our lives to count for the Kingdom, don't we?

But there's a problem. Sometimes we feel like we can't do that because we don't have enough. "I don't have enough time; my schedule is too busy. I can't serve the Lord right now; I don't have enough talent. I'm not good at what I see other people doing around here. Obviously, God can't use me." Then there's this common excuse: "I don't have enough treasure. Finances are tight right now; I don't have much to give."

Whatever it is, we think we don't have enough of something to make any real difference, so we decide to wait until we do have enough, then we end up giving nothing. We're not tithing to the church. We're not regularly serving in any ministries. We're not trying to share the gospel with people outside the church. We're not finding some way to contribute to the work of the Lord.

When that's the case, we're a little bit like Sisyphus. Remember Sisyphus? Maybe you learned about him in school. In Greek mythology, Sisyphus was the guy who was condemned to rolling a boulder uphill for all of eternity. But every time, before he got to the top, he would slip and roll back down to the bottom, where he'd have to start all over again. If we're not serving the Lord in some way, then our lives are like that. Every day we're just putting in the effort to get through the day. Life takes effort. It's a struggle. We get through the day, then when we wake up the next day, the boulder is back at the bottom of the hill. We didn't do anything that made it to the top. Nothing with any kind of transcendent, eternal value. We're just rolling a boulder uphill.

That can be true for us as Christians, even if we believe in the promise of heaven and are looking forward to that day when we see Christ face to face and get to spend all of eternity with Him. That might be what our hearts are set on, but our day-to-day reality looks a lot more like Sisyphus. We're just rolling a boulder up a hill and hope that's enough until we get called to heaven. But that's no way to live. That's not how we want to live and that's not what God has planned for us. "I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord in Jeremiah 29:11. He has plans to use us for His glory. He has good works prepared for us to do, even if we don't know how we can possibly accomplish them (Ephesians 2:10).

We're going to look at a passage of Scripture this morning that shows us how God works through His people to accomplish His purposes, even when they don't have enough. Turn in your Bible to the Gospel of John, chapter six. We're going to look at a story known as "The feeding of the 5,000." Pastor Phil talked about this story a little bit a couple weeks ago when he preached on the apostle Philip. This morning we're going to look at it from a slightly different angle and focus on the seemingly small but actually very significant role that Andrew played in this story.

Andrew was the brother of Simon Peter. Not only is that mentioned here, but pretty much every time he is introduced in the Gospels, we're told he was the brother of Simon Peter. These authors really want you to know that. But notice also that when they introduce Simon Peter, they don't tell you that he was the brother of Andrew. This might suggest that Andrew was the younger brother.

The first chapter of the Gospel of John tells us Andrew was actually the first of the apostles to encounter and start following Jesus, so he has become known throughout church history as "the first called." That's kind of a cool fact about Andrew.

We're also told that one of the first things he did after he became a follower of Jesus Christ was find his brother, Simon. He said, "Look, we have found the Messiah. You've got to come meet Him." Then it says Andrew brought Simon Peter to Jesus. So Andrew was the point of connection between Simon and Jesus. In fact, he was the point of connection for a few different people throughout the Gospels, because he sort of had this ministry of connection. That was his thing. He connected people to Jesus, and he does that in this story we're going to look at today. So let's keep an eye out for that as we read it.

Let's read John 6:1-14:

¹ After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. ² And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. ³ Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. ⁴ Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. ⁵ Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" ⁶ He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. ⁷ Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little." ⁸ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, ⁹ "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?" ¹⁰ Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. ¹¹ Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹² And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost." ¹³ So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. ¹⁴ When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"

I want to point out three things about this story that show us how God works through His people to accomplish His purposes, even when they don't have enough.

The resources are insufficient.

This is the basic problem in this story. There's this huge crowd of people who need to be fed, but there is simply not enough food. The text says it was 5,000 men, but if you include the people who were traveling with them, families with multiple kids, it's

reasonable to assume there were at least twice that many people. There might have even been 15-20,000 people there. That's a huge crowd. If you're having a hard time picturing a crowd that size, have you ever been to a Kane County Cougars game? They play over at the Northwestern Medicine Field in Geneva and that stadium holds 10,923 people.

Now imagine you're at a Cougars game. It's packed Every seat is filled—and everybody has one more person sitting on their lap. Aside from the fact that would be a pretty weird night at a Cougars game, it doesn't usually happen that way. But that gives you some idea of the massive amount of people following Jesus and His little band of disciples.

So Jesus said to His disciples, "Where are we going to buy bread to feed all these people?" It's a rhetorical question, because the answer is: you can't do it. There's no earthly way to do it. He addressed this question specifically to Philip, perhaps because He knew what kind of answer He was going to get from Philip. As Pastor Phil pointed out a couple weeks ago, Philip was a numbers guy. Very practical. So he did some quick calculations and came to the conclusion that even if they had 200 denarii, they couldn't do it. A denarius was about a day's wage. So he basically said, "Even if we had six months' wages—which by the way, we don't because we all quit our jobs to follow You—we would not be able to buy enough bread to solve this problem."

The problem, from an earthly perspective, was unsolvable, because the resources were insufficient—and that's pretty much where Philip left it. He just said, "We don't have it." He kind of shrugged, then he was done.

But here's where our boy Andrew came into the story. He didn't stop where Philip did. He didn't just shrug his shoulders and give up. He decided to look around and see if he could find something, anything. He was thinking, "There's got to be something here that might be useful." So he found this kid with a picnic basket that had five loaves of bread and two fish.

Now, if Philip had seen that kid and looked in that basket, I imagine Philip, Mister Numbers, would say, "All right, whadda you got there? Five loaves of bread. Okay, five loaves of bread. There are 20,000 people. That's one loaf of bread per 4,000 people, 20 slices per loaf. That means one slice of bread has to feed 200 people."

Have you ever tried to cut one slice of bread into 200 pieces? You would need a pair of tweezers and a magnifying glass. It wouldn't even be worth doing. Resources were definitely insufficient here.

Not only would Philip have known that, but Andrew could see that too; he's a little self-conscious about the offering, even as he's bringing it. He was like, "Here's the kid's five loaves and two fishes, but what is that for so many? Obviously, it's not enough." But it's something and if anybody could do something with that, it would be Jesus. We've already seen Jesus turn water into wine. We've seen Jesus heal the sick. We've seen Jesus tell the invalid to pick up his mat and walk. So if anybody could somehow stretch this out and make this work, it would be the Lord Jesus Christ. So Andrew brought the kid and his picnic basket to Jesus. He did this ministry of connection, almost as an offering. He offered it to the Lord Jesus, asking, "What can You do with this, Jesus?"

The offering is multiplied.

The resources are insufficient, but the offering is multiplied. Notice how Jesus responded to this offering of insufficient resources. He didn't seem offended. He was not upset. He didn't even express disappointment, like, "C'mon, man. Five loaves, two fish? What are we going to do with that? That's not enough. Now, go out there and get some food." He didn't say that. He just said, "Have the people sit down; it's time to eat." Then He proceeded to do what He had been planning to do the whole time. We know this because verse six says, *"He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do."* Jesus was always planning on feeding these people and He knew it would be a miracle because there wasn't enough food.

So Jesus, being God in human form, could have said, "Let there be bread," then loaves would have just sprung up out of the earth. Or He could have snapped His fingers and fish would have fallen from the sky so they could scoop them up with baskets. It had to be something really impressive to display His power but He didn't do it that way.

What did He do? He turned to His disciples and said, "Where are we going to get bread for these people." Where are we...? He made it an 'us' thing. He invited His disciples to participate in this process.

This reminds me of when my kids were little and we would take them camping. We'd be making the campfire, setting up the logs. And what do we say to little kids to get them involved? "Go get me some sticks. We need kindling.." So they forage around and they come back with a few twigs. "How about this?" "That's great. Let's put them right there in the middle. That's what we need."

Why do you have them do that? Partly because you need the sticks for kindling. But it's a lot more than that, isn't it? Partly it's because you want them to learn. You want them to take responsibility and learn the different aspects of making a fire. But it's more than that even. It's a relational thing. It's a bonding thing. You want them to share this with you. You want them to come away from this saying, "I helped Daddy or Mommy to do this. We did this together. I played a role in this." They feel connected to you and you feel connected to them.

So when they bring you that little handful of sticks, you're like, "Good job! That's perfect. That's just what we need." They're beaming up at you, thinking, "Okay, great. I feel so great about this." Then even though those sticks can't really make a fire. If you lit just the sticks, it would only burn about two minutes, then they're gone. The sticks in and of themselves are insufficient resources. The thing is, you're going to combine their insufficient offering with your logs, matches, a lighter fluid, maybe a blow torch—whatever you're going to use to start this fire. You've got immense resources. You're going to take their little offering, add that to your resources, then together you will have made a fire.

This is a snapshot of how the Lord works through His people. He invites us to be part of what He's doing. He's going to take the little handful of sticks we bring to Him and He replies, "That's great. I'm going to receive that offering, combine it with My infinite resources, then together we're going to get the job done. We're going to achieve My purposes."

The result is God-glorifying.

Jesus took what was brought to Him, multiplied the offering, then the third thing is that the result was God-glorifying. Notice verse 14 says, *"When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, 'This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!'"* The ESV version doesn't say "a prophet." It says, "the Prophet," with a capital P.

There's an Old Testament prophecy from Deuteronomy 18:18 where God said to Moses, *"I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him."* So the people were expecting this prophet to be sent from God—essentially another Moses to come along and lead them—as the great and final Prophet, the Messiah. When they saw this miracle, they said, "Ah, this seems like the guy. This is the one we've been waiting for, the one sent from God." Now not everybody in the crowd had been saying that up to this point. It says back in verse two, *"A large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick."* It doesn't say the entire crowd of people followed Him because they believed He was the Savior sent from God, the Word become flesh.

In a crowd this size, there would have been people who were just there because they saw Him healing people, and they said to themselves, "Hey, I don't have health care; I think I'll follow that guy. He seems like a good man to know. I don't know where He gets that power, but who cares. Let's stick with Him and He will take care of us." But then they see this miracle and something about it makes them respond with, "This is the One sent from God." It probably wasn't just the display of power in that miracle, but the benevolent nature of it, the fact that it was power exerted on their behalf, an expression of care for their needs. There was a love and concern that came across in that miracle that displayed the character of God. So they began to acknowledge the deity of Christ and glorify God. Through that miracle, people came to know Christ as their Savior. The resources were insufficient, but the offering was multiplied and the result was God-glorifying.

This is how God works through His people. He invites us to be part of the process of what He's doing. We bring Him our little handful of sticks and He combines them with His resources to multiply them in ways you couldn't possibly have imagined. The results of this were awe-inspiring. He took an offering of food that was only enough for maybe 20 people, and He used it to feed 20,000 people—and there were 12 baskets left over! It was more than enough. That is the God we serve.

So if you're here this morning but you're not serving God right now because you think you don't have enough, I'm here to tell you that you're right. You don't have enough! I don't have enough. None of us have enough to make an actual difference for the Kingdom because the needs of the Kingdom are overwhelming. The obstacles and opposition to the Kingdom are intensifying in this world. How can you even scratch the surface? We don't have enough.

The good news is you don't have to have enough. God's not asking any of us to have enough, because He is enough. He's only asking us to bring whatever insufficient resources we can find, so that we can be used by Him and be part of the process of what

He is going to do. So we can be part of what He has always planned to meet the needs of His people. He's going to take our little offering and He's going to multiply it.

So for example, if you're not tithing right now because things are tight, that's okay. Find a dollar—just one cash dollar—and drop it in the box on the way out. Just do that every week. It might not seem like much. What difference does a dollar make today? But God will take that dollar and use it, and the results will be multiplied for the glory of God.

Maybe you're not serving because you've got a lot going on, the calendar's full, you can't find hours in your week to carve out. Okay, you don't have to commit to multiple hours per week. Find a little nugget of time, a couple hours once a month, to give yourself to specifically Kingdom-related work. It might not be much, but God is going to use it. He's going to multiply it for the Kingdom.

For those of you who are serving in any capacity, I encourage you to trust that God is multiplying that ministry you're doing and is using it in ways you might not even know about. We can get discouraged sometimes because we don't see the fruit of our ministry. We're just kind of plugging away at something that doesn't really seem to be producing a lot of fruit. We especially love to compare ourselves to other people, thinking, "What I'm doing for the Lord isn't as important as what he's doing, or what she's doing. I don't think I'm making a difference."

The thing is sometimes we don't see the difference we're making during this life. We might not get to see all that until we are in glory and see all that God has done with what we've brought to Him. Then we'll see this immense, beautiful tapestry of work that He did. But we don't see it now.

This reminds me of the author C.S. Lewis, the guy who wrote [The Chronicles of Narnia](#). He was a British author and a professor at Oxford and Cambridge Universities. A real smart guy, a real intellectual type. He was not a preacher, not an evangelist. He didn't hold big tent meetings and preach fiery sermons that started revivals. By all accounts he was a fairly low-key, reserved sort of person. In the early 1940s, he was invited to give a series of 15-minute lectures on the BBC radio dealing with the core beliefs of the Christian faith. I've actually heard some of these recordings. The content is very strong, but his delivery was unassuming, kind of dry,. You might say a little bit stuffy. You might even fall asleep listening to him. It's not the kind of thing that would set the world aflame and start a revival. But they were well-received and the text of those lectures was eventually compiled into a book called [Mere Christianity](#) that was published in 1952. Then in 1997, I bought a copy of that book and got saved while reading it. Praise God! I bought it just as part of a spiritual search I was on because of circumstances in my life. That was a pivotal moment in my life.

Somewhere in the middle of that book, there's a famous argument that Jesus was either a liar, a lunatic or Lord. I'm sure some of you are familiar with that. I was reading that and it was like God turned this light on inside me. I just got it and in that moment, I was transformed into a person who now believes that Jesus Christ was Lord and had died for my sins.

I wonder if C.S. Lewis had any inkling when he agreed to do that series of short lectures on the BBC that 45 years later, a printed copy of those lectures would be in the hands of some punk kid from suburban Chicago, and that while reading it, God would completely change his life, save that kid and transform his eternal destiny. I don't think C.S. Lewis saw himself as a global evangelist like Billy Graham.

By the way, Billy Graham was ministering at the same time, so he would have known who C.S. Lewis was. But C.S. Lewis probably thought, "I'm no Billy Graham." His gifts were seemingly more modest and cerebral than that. But he took what he had at his disposal, put it out there and offered it up to the Lord, then the Lord multiplied it far beyond what C.S. Lewis could have ever seen, even during his earthly life. I got saved by reading his book 35 years after he went to heaven. I never had the opportunity to meet C.S. Lewis and thank him for his work. But I will. I will. I have a feeling that when I thank him, he's not going to receive any of that glory. He's going to give all the glory to God.

Do you want your life to count for the Kingdom? Start by letting go of the idea that you have to have enough, or that you have to be enough, to make a difference. You don't have to have a million dollars to give in order for your contribution to make a difference. You don't have to drop everything, quit your job and go into full-time vocational ministry in order for your service to make a difference. You don't have to be up on a platform with a microphone in order for your gifts and abilities to make a

difference. You don't have to be a worldclass evangelist like Billy Graham for your sharing of the gospel to make a difference, for that to be a seed that impacts somebody in ways you might not see immediately.

You don't have to have enough or be enough; you just have to do what Andrew did. You have to look around and see whatever little thing you can find, whatever is at hand for you right now. Then as insufficient as that is, perhaps as desperately inadequate as that is, you still have to bring that and offer it to the Lord. He will multiply the offering. He will make it count in ways beyond what you could ever imagine. And ultimately, He will receive all the glory. Amen?

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All Scriptures quoted directly from English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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