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# When There's Just Not Enough

Thinking Globally  
Acting Locally...  
**Stewardship**



## Stewardship Day Sermon

Prepared by the Stewardship Department of the  
North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists

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## When There's Just Not Enough

You may have experienced it—a nagging sensation as you pass through a small town. You can see a post office, a couple of banks, and a sprinkling of small businesses, maybe a mall and a car dealership. And there are churches, public schools, and fire stations.

But something seems to be missing. This is a typical town, with typical people. They are all going about life just as they would in any other town. As you pull away from the last intersection and pick up speed, the realization of what exactly was missing hits you. Yes, that town, along with thousands elsewhere, has no Seventh-day Adventist church.

How can the angelic messages of Revelation 14 be fulfilled? Is the gospel really going to all the world? This town isn't the only one like this—millions of towns, villages, and cities in the world have no Seventh-day Adventists living there, spreading the wonderful news of Jesus.

How do we know what needs to be done? Is there an answer to this perplexing question?

Christian researchers have calculated that nearly one half of the world's population has not been touched with the gospel. And what about Seventh-day Adventists and their distinctive beliefs?

Is the global mission given to God's people a realistic task? As Seventh-day Adventists we have taken on that challenge, but is it realistic? Has any other world movement ever been successful? Not communism, socialism, or democracy. No social idealism or religion has ever won the world.

From a small beginning over a century ago we have grown to over 21 million believers. Adventists can be found on every continent. But what about the towns that you and I have driven through? What about our world's large cities, where only a handful of Sabbathkeepers gather together for worship?

If God gave us the commission to go into all the world, how can this overwhelming objective be accomplished? Let's see what God has to say about this subject.

Is there anything in the life of Jesus, God's personal message to us, that would show us how to tackle the impossible? Do we ever find Jesus dealing with circumstances that seemed overwhelming to those about Him?

Let's take a look at when Jesus fed the 5,000. This story is told in each of the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Though we will draw from all of them, let's read it from Mark 6.

**Mark 6:30-44 (NIV)**

30 The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. 31 Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

32 So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. 33 But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. 34 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

35 By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. 36 Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat."

37 But he answered, "You give them something to eat."

They said to him, "That would take more than half a year's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?"

38 "How many loaves do you have?" he asked. "Go and see."

When they found out, they said, "Five—and two fish."

39 Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. 40 So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. 41 Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. 42 They all ate and were satisfied, 43 and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. 44 The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

Yes, this story is a familiar one to most of us. But it's more than just the remarkable story of a lunch that fed a bunch. It's a story of the impossible. It could be the answer to our perplexing questions.

To find our answer, we must move beyond the familiar. We must actually walk right into the story. Let's join the disciples as they reunite with Jesus along the shores of Galilee.

Not too long ago, Jesus sent them out in twos to preach, teach, and heal in the villages they passed through. As they followed His instructions, they experienced His miraculous power in their own lives. People listened to them. Many repented. They courageously drove out demons in Jesus' name and anointed the sick, and the people they healed praised God! Can you imagine that? Now the disciples are excited to share their stories about everything they have done and taught. They have never experienced such joy, such success, or such a response.

It seems like everyone is talking at once, but Jesus isn't sharing in the excitement. He's just heard the news about John. John the Baptist, His cousin, has been beheaded.

Jesus had a high regard for John. The disciples can feel His sadness as He suggests that they all find a little solitude on the other side of the lake. And they agree; a rest would do them all some good.

But reaching the far shore, they discover it is far from restful. People have heard about Jesus the healer and come to see Him. Many have brought their sick loved ones with them.

"They are like sheep without a shepherd," Jesus says. The compassion on His face grows as He takes in the large crowd of people. This is His mission. These are His sheep. He wants to love them, touch them, heal their sick, and save their souls. And He does! He never passes by an opportunity to help someone. He gives and gives and gives.

Is this story starting to become more real than familiar to you? Let's see what happens next.

Jesus is still moving about, teaching, healing, and helping. For the disciples it is nice to be with Jesus on an occasion like this, nice to be one of His close followers. But the shadows of the Galilean hills are beginning to lengthen and it's getting late. The people were so excited about what Jesus was saying and doing that they didn't even notice the time.

The disciples come to Jesus and pull Him aside. "Jesus," they say, "it is very late, and we're in the middle of nowhere. It is probably time to send these folks off to the surrounding villages so they can buy something to eat."

It is a rational suggestion. It has probably been a long time since any of these people last had a meal. But Jesus gives the disciples an irrational answer: "You give them something to eat."

There it is! There is the overwhelming impossibility! When Jesus and the disciples got into that boat to cross to the other side of the lake, they hadn't even brought provisions for themselves, let alone for 5,000 plus people.

An absurd comment deserves one in return, so the disciples respond, "Even if we had 200 denarii, we still couldn't buy enough food for all these people. We are talking about eight months of good wages, just to give each person a ration. And even if we did have that much money, should we spend it on bread? Think again, Jesus. This is impossible!"

That is exactly Jesus' point. How handily He gets it across. But just in case the disciples are still trying to calculate the numbers in their heads, Jesus presses His point even further. It's one thing to figure out how much money it would take to feed several thousand people, even if you don't have the money. But it's quite another thing to feed them without money at all. So Jesus removes any legitimate ways of solving this perplexing problem.

"How many loaves do you have?" He asks. "Go and see."

We know that Andrew is the one who finds the boy with the little basket of food. "Five loaves—and let's see, two fish." What a find. One loaf for every thousand men and a bite of fish for the women and children.

The disciples are probably thinking that there is no way these people are going to get fed unless Jesus sends them away. Why is He so reluctant to do that?

But what Jesus wants them—and us—to realize from this experience is that His commands are humanly impossible. Salvation is humanly impossible. Winning the world is humanly impossible. Giving enough to finish God's work on earth is humanly impossible. This is the understanding Jesus wants His disciples to come to. This is the message that He wants us to grasp. This is the point where grace meets humanity.

But grace does not leave humanity here! That is why we have the rest of the story. Jesus asked them simply to bring Him what they had. Was it inadequate? Yes. Insufficient? Yes. But was it part of what they had? Was it all five loaves and two fish, minus a bite or two? No. They brought everything to Jesus, and did He say what He was going to do with it? No. He just asked them to bring all they had.

Grace meets me and you only when we understand the human impossibility of carrying out God's commands. Grace calls us to bring everything we have to Jesus.

The excitement mounts and stomachs growl as Jesus has the people sit down in manageable groups. Quietly He lifts His eyes toward heaven and gives thanks for this miracle of grace that is beyond the human comprehension of those seated about Him. Then He breaks the bread and the fish. He gives the pieces to the disciples to distribute.

The disciples probably have to borrow baskets from the crowd to help carry all the food. These are not small baskets like the one the boy brought, but large baskets used for gathering crops and carrying provisions to the Passover feast.

Each time they lift one of these baskets full of food from Jesus' hands, the disciples realize that they are receiving back from Him much more than they brought to Him. This is the miracle of grace. When faced with an impossibility, they brought all they had to Jesus, and now they have more than they can share with the thousands of people waiting to be fed.

But the grand finale still lies ahead. Even after every person eats all they can until they're satisfied, the disciples still pick up twelve baskets of leftover bread and fish. Twelve doubting, questioning, faithless disciples—each one without exception—must now figure out what to do with the leftover food.

Is it true? Can it really be? Just a few minutes ago there wasn't enough! Now there is more than enough! They just had this discussion, absurd as it was, about what it would take to feed these thousands of people. And there was no way.

We have walked into this story. We have stood on the sidelines and watched it unfold. Now we must take this story from the pages of our Bibles and put it into the streets where we live. We must take it to the little towns we have driven through. We must take it to the massive cities and the world. We must live the story as we travel this earth.

All of us, young and old, are a part of this story. Surrounded by the traditions of the church, encompassed with the materialism of this world, we are like sheep without a shepherd.

As a world church, we cannot by ourselves share Jesus' message with the masses living on this globe. There really is only one way to accomplish the impossible.

Grace meets you and me only when we understand the human impossibility of carrying out God's commands. God calls us to bring everything we have to Jesus. Grace provides a supply of the Bread of Life that is sufficient for a world waiting to be fed.

Christ asks us to bring all that we have. Not just a portion. And as we bring our all to the altar, I pray that God's grace will:

- Give us a deep love for people.
- Open our eyes to the challenge of spreading His gospel.
- Purify our lives and prepare us for the task He has chosen for us in fulfilling His global mission.
- Make us bold, energetic Christians, ready to attempt new methods to plant