

John 6:1-15

When faced with the impossible, entrust it to Jesus.

- I. He places the impossible in front of us.
- II. He provides for us according to His plan, not ours.

I.

“Build a box shaped boat longer than a football field and about four stories high. Then gather some of all of the different kinds of animals together to live with you on that boat for almost a year.” Sounds impossible, but that's what Noah did.

“You need to move to a new land where you've never been. You'll be a stranger there. And your wife will eventually give birth to a child even though she's sixty-five years old - past her child bearing years - and she was unable to have children when she was younger.” Sounds impossible, but that's what God promised Abraham.

“Although you are a virgin, you will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and He will be called the Son of God.” How impossible, but Mary believed this diving message.

We read throughout the Bible about all kinds of impossible situations that the people of God face. Remember when God's people were in the wilderness? How could so many people be sustained with food in the wilderness. What about Gideon and his 300 men going up against the whole army of the Midianites and the Amalekites and defeating them. Elijah against the 450 prophets of Baal. Daniel in the Lions' den. Still today, we, God's people, often faces situations that seem impossible. And we might think to ourselves, “Well, I'm not Abraham or Moses or Mary.” So what are we supposed to do? How are we supposed to handle the impossible situations that come into our lives? Let's look at our text today to see how Jesus trained His disciples to face the impossible.

Jesus was trying to get away to a isolated place where He could pray and privately teach his disciples. This takes place at the end of Jesus' second year of ministry which is sometimes referred to as “The Year of Popularity.” Jesus had a lot of people following Him, wanting to hear Him speak, and most importantly for them, they wanted healing for themselves and their loved ones. They had heard of the miracles that Jesus had done and of all the people who had been healed. And so as we see in verse 2, because of these signs, when the people found out where Jesus was going, they followed Him. As the crowds followed Jesus into the wilderness, this would provide the perfect setting for the sign He was about to perform.

There were a lot of people - 5000 men, and so with women and children the number of people may have been 10,000 to 15,000. When Jesus saw the crowd coming, He asked Phillip the impossible: “Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?” And then the text tells us that He said this to test him for he already knew what he was going to do.

Maybe Phillip or the other disciples should have picked up on this. Didn't Jesus have the answers? At the wedding of Cana He was asked, “Where will we get more wine?” On the stormy sea the disciples asked Jesus, “Teacher, don't you care if we drown.” Others had dilemmas and problems for Jesus to provide the answer for, but here Jesus asks the disciples the question. Was this finally the situation that Jesus couldn't solve? Did He really not know what He was going to do?

If the disciples had caught on, they would have realized that this was a test - that Jesus had the answer. But they didn't catch on. Phillip responds to Jesus, “Two hundred denarii (or

about eight months' wages) would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.” Andrew follows with his response, “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?”

The disciples saw no way that such a large crowd could be fed. In essence, their response to Jesus' inquiry as to how these people could be fed was, “Lord, it can't be done.”

We've been there, haven't we? I know we can all think of a situation in which we've said, “Lord, it can't be done.” “How am I going to pay these bills?” “How am I supposed to deal with this sickness?” “How can I fight this nagging temptation or addiction?” “The car's broken down again and we can't afford to fix it, and buying a new one is out of the question.” “Retirement was supposed to be right around the corner, but we've hardly saved a penny.” “Lord, it can't be done.”

Too often, we look at God in the same way that we look at that little disclaimer that's attached to our investments - past performance does not guarantee future results. “Sure, God took care of that problem I had, but this one is really bad. I don't think even God can get me out of this problem.”

But He can. He can get you through every single problem you face. We have the record of Scripture which gives us countless examples of how God has provided for His people even in what seemed to be impossible situations. Our Old Testament reading is an example of that - a very similar situation to what we see in our sermon text. He has promised that He will always be with us. He has promised that He will work all things together for good to those that love Him.

Most importantly, remember how God took care of the greatest problem we face in life. Paul wrote in Romans 8:32, “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” If you want to talk about an impossible situation, let's talk about the payment that we owe God because of our sin. There is no way that we that we could have dealt with the insurmountable guilt that we bear because of our daily sins. But God provided the solution for even that. He sent his Son to be the solution. Jesus' sacrifice and death on the cross was and remains the only answer to our guilt and the perfect payment for our sins. And if that is how God dealt with our biggest problem—providing a perfect solution that frees us from hell and places us in his heavenly family forever—then do you think that the Lord might be able to take the struggles and sicknesses and temptations and troubles we face and make them work out for our good on his divine timetable? Absolutely He can, and He does.

II.

As we read on in our text, we find out that Jesus had the answer for feeding these people. He had all of the people sit down, took the 5 loaves and 2 fish that Andrew had found, and gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. And not only were they able to give to each person as much as they wanted, but they collected 12 baskets of leftover bread. Absolutely incredible. For some, it's a bit too incredible.

The crowd saw this miracle. They understood that Jesus had just caused the impossible to happen. They even, to some degree, made an accurate confession of who Jesus was - “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world.” But no mere prophet could do what Jesus did. He is more than a prophet. He is the Son of God, and that's why you can trust Him to do the impossible for you.

We've established already that Jesus can and does provide for our needs, but it isn't always in the way we want it. For example, the crowd wanted Jesus to be the leader they wanted Him to be. They wanted the bread king, the political leader. What they got was not what they

wanted. And when Jesus makes it clear by the end of John 6 that Jesus was not who they wanted Him to be, many of them stopped following Him. The problem was that while Jesus had provided for their needs, He didn't do so in the way they wanted Him to.

I'm pretty sure that if we had our own choice, our solution to the problems we face would simply be that we have no more problems. Why couldn't Jesus just take our problems away? Why do we have to suffer in this world? Why does Jesus place the impossible before us in the first place? Why can't he just make everything easy? And so when we go through difficult times how often do we become frustrated that God has not given us the easy life that we want?

God doesn't promise that we will have an easy life. In fact, He promises His disciples just the opposite in John 16:33, "In this world you will have trouble." As we follow Him on the narrow path, we may find ourselves in awkward situations that don't feel all that good. But those times remind us to put our trust in the Savior. If everything was easy, we would be tempted to believe that we were ok by ourselves, and we would quickly forget how much we need the Lord for everything - for our very lives. And so God places the impossible into our lives to bring us to our knees so that we cry out, "I can't." "I can't. But you can." And so we pray, "I can't Jesus, but I trust your way. I won't refuse where you lead. I will listen and follow, though I don't understand or see the outcome. Your way, dear Lord, not mine. Your will be done, not mine." And He may lead you through dark valleys and thorny thickets, over treacherous mountains and burning deserts, paths that are impossible for us unless we follow Him. But follow on, for from the impossible, Jesus works blessings beyond what you can imagine!

What a blessing He has worked for us by traveling that impossible path to the cross, weighed down by the sins of the world, that impossible path by which our God became one of us and died in our place, that impossible path by which he conquered death and rose in victory to give that victory to you who believe in Him. He prepares us to join Noah, Abraham, Mary, and all those who have gone before in faith, trusting in God to provide for the impossible situations in their lives.

So when faced with the impossible, entrust it to Jesus. Follow Him on the impossible paths of life, listening to His voice as it calls to you from the Scriptures and Sacraments. As God provided food for the 5000, so He provides for you, not just your daily bread, but everything, and most importantly, your eternal salvation. Amen.