

I can work with that

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Mark 6:30-44

Something many of you don't know about me is that I was a Boy Scout.

I'm not kidding.

Allow me to explain.

I was, for two summers in my early 20's, the manager of the camp store in a Boy Scout camp in rural Ohio.

And, the deal was, regardless of gender, all camp employees had to be card-carrying members of the Boy Scouts.

I really mean card-carrying, I still have the card somewhere.

I was, by golly, a Boy Scout.

I wore a Boy Scout uniform to work every day --

I have the pictures to prove it.

You will never see them.

I was, frankly, a much better Boy Scout than I had ever been as a Girl Scout ... as a Girl Scout I sold a total of twelve boxes of cookies --

I was actually given the booby prize at the end of the annual cookie drive.

And I believe I earned a whopping three merit badges.

But as a Boy Scout I did quite well for myself.

My little camp store was remarkably profitable.

I sold official Boy Scout merchandise in the store:

Boy Scout penknives, Boy Scout hats,

Boy Scout socks.

These were not where I turned a profit, however.

The success of my store was almost entirely from the Slushie machine.

After a long hot day hiking through the woods,

on the hunt for merit badges,

what every kid in camp wanted was one of my slushies.

I kept the machine churning away all day;

I had to have been personally responsible for hundreds of cavities in the Akron area that year.

Because of course the only thing that goes into a Slushie is massive amounts of corn syrup and Red Dye #1. Or Blue Dye #2.

The Slushie goop came in big gallon bottles, clear so that you could see the colors -- colors which are not found in nature.

And you just dumped this syrupy stuff it into the machine, churned it around, and happiness ensued.

Now, I was great at *selling* slushies.

But I wasn't always **so** great at counting supplies and re-ordering in a timely manner.

All of which led to the great Slushie debacle in mid-July, when I ran out of Slushie syrup.

Oh, the disappointment.

Dozens of Boy Scouts streaming into my store, exhausted, thirsty, dreaming of their blue Slushie -- and I had nothing.

Oh, the sorrow of the Scouts.

Oh, the anger of the Scoutmasters.

"Seriously? How can you *not* have slushies?"

You know the classic nightmare where you go to class and it's the final exam and you realize you don't even know what class this is? --

well, my nightmare for years was that Boy Scouts show up in your store and you've run out of slushies.

So -- I know -- this is the point in the sermon where you start thinking -- where is she going with this?

Work with me.

Blake just read you the story of the loaves and the fishes, same story I talked about with the kids earlier.

This amazing, crazy miracle where Jesus takes two fish and five loaves and turns it into a feast --

I mean, next to walking on water, this is probably the miracle that just about *everyone* has heard of.

But I want you *not* to think about those magically multiplying fish; not right now anyhow, we'll get to that.

I want you to think about the moments right *before* that.

Those moments are the empty Slushie machine moments.

Those moments are when there's a crowd standing in front of you and they are *not* happy.

Those moments are when all you can say is "I'm sorry, I got nothing for you", and it is not pretty.

And those moments - those moments before the miracle, those are what Jesus' disciples experienced.

He's up there teaching, teaching wonderful things about love and forgiveness and joy and the kingdom.

The disciples are out in the crowd.

And first one person and then another says,

"excuse me, what do you got for food around here?" ...

"hey buddy, my kids are thirsty, can you help me out with that?"...

"yo, friend of Jesus, did you think maybe some food trucks would have been a nice idea?"

And all the disciples can say is "so sorry -- so, so sorry, we got nothing.

Didn't think about that. Didn't place that order.

Weren't really expecting this many folks. We got nothing."

It's getting a little scary.

It's getting Slushie-machine-down-in-the-Boy-Scout-Camp scary.

Or at least, really awkward.

So that's when the disciples go to Jesus, and they say, um, it's getting a little tense out there, people want stuff, we don't have it, Jesus, can you please (this is what they actually say), can you please send them away.

Direct quote, Mark 6 verse 36:

Send them away.

Which seems reasonable, frankly.

What Jesus says next, *not* so reasonable.

To his disciples, his friends, he says:

Nah. You give them something to eat.

And the disciples say, in essence, what are you talking about?

We don't *have* enough food.

What do you want us to do?

Go buy food for a few thousand people? With what money?

And then there's this crazy amazing moment where Jesus says,

"All right, well, what do you have? we'll make it work."

So you know what happens then -- they bring him the measly little amount of food that they *do* have, which is not possibly enough to serve all those people, and somehow it becomes more than enough to serve all these people, to feed the hungry multitudes.

It's a pretty cool story.

And this story, this story --

I know it's called the feeding of the five thousand, that's how everybody knows it.

But it strikes me that the ones who **really** get fed here are those disciples, those overwhelmed disciples who are absolutely sure that they don't have enough, that they can't possibly take care of everyone else.

Because really, they're not just out of food,
they are out of patience with the crowd,
they are out of compassion,
and they are darn sure out of faith.

And Jesus says to them "whatever you got, it's going to be enough."
Not just your little bit of food, but your little bit of faith.
I'm going to make it enough. I'm going to make it ALL enough.

The truth is that Jesus did things like this over and over again.
I don't mean fish and bread miracles necessarily.
I mean that over and over again in the gospels,
Jesus took whatever little folks had,
and he made it enough.

Whatever. Whatever they were lacking in,
resources, health, spirit, courage, belief,
he didn't care. He made it enough.

"You got faith the size of a mustard seed?" he said, "I can work with that."
Didn't matter.

He took people where they were, with what they had,
and he made it enough. It's what he did.

As you know, 235 of us have just recently returned from a week of service to the
people of West Virginia.

It was our 39th trip with the Appalachia Service Project,
39 years of doing home repair for families who are barely getting by,
living in homes that are desperately in need of fixing,
from roofs that let the rain pour in, to foundations that are teetering on old
stumps.

One of the things that I do before the trip,
in addition to group meetings and orientations,
is that I sit down for a conversation with each and every teenager who is going
on the trip, all 165 of them,
so that they can have a chance to tell me

what they're excited for, what they're hoping for, and what they're nervous about.

And of course it's the new kids who are the most anxious.

And what they're anxious about comes down to this:

not having enough.

Not having enough courage, enough strength of spirit, enough knowledge.

One freshman said to me, "I hear it's really hard to see the poverty there, like really sad. I'm worried that I won't be able to handle it."

"I've never been away from home before," said another boy, "I'm worried that I might be really lonely."

And this, the number one worry I heard over and over:

"I know we're going to fix houses,
but, um, I really don't know how to do that."

What they were all saying is

*I know you want me to go and serve these people,
but with what? How is what I have enough?*

Just like the disciples

who said to the crowds "we got nothing,"

who said to Jesus "we got nothing,"

my earnest and anxious kids, nervously sitting in my office,
couldn't see how this was all going to work.

How they could possibly have enough to care for God's people,
to serve God's people.

And what happened? just like the disciples,
they found out that they **did have enough**.

Because they were **given** enough:

by a God who opened up to them deep wells of the Spirit for their souls to drink
from,

and bread for the journey.

They sat on porches in the rain -- there was a lot of rain -- and talked and talked with families they'll never forget.

They scrambled up ladders and learned how to attach tin roofs to keep their new friends dry and warm.

They measured out a ramp for an old coal miner in a wheelchair and cried with him when he wept for joy.

They found they had all the strength they needed,
and compassion in abundance,
and the ability to wield a circular saw too.

They *did* have enough.

What little they came with, Christ made enough ...
and you would have been proud.

And in the months ahead you'll hear their stories,
their own stories of miracle and abundance,
of feeding and being fed.

... You know, I think sometimes -- especially in these days --
I think we all feel like those freshmen,
we all feel like those overwhelmed disciples.

We look at what's around us,
and what we're facing into, and we think,
"I don't know if I have enough."

This world, these things that have happened and keep happenings,
these hurts, these wrongs, these fears ...

I don't have enough, we think.

I don't have enough faith for this,

I don't have enough hope.

I'm running dry on compassion.

Jesus says "take care of these folks,
serve and love this world,"

and like the disciples we say "with *what* exactly?"

And that's why this story is important.

Really, really important.

It is so **not** about bread and fish.

It is about Jesus giving the disciples enough,
about taking the little, very little, that they had
and making it enough for them to keep loving
making it enough for them to keep the faith.

And that's what he does for us.

When he says "well, whaddya got?"

and we say "not much,"

he says "whatever you've got, I'm going to make it enough."

I have a friend who's a pastor of a large church in Alabama,
someone I've gotten to know through ASP.

And last weekend, after Nice and Turkey and Baton Rouge,
he posted on Facebook, as he always does when we need to hear from him.

And this is how Brian began:

"The horrors of Nice ... the chaos in Turkey,

the old wounds uncovered and the new ones that haven't begun to heal from last
week -- it's enough to make you want to switch your heart to airplane mode.

The thought even crossed my mind: am I going to write a Facebook post every
time a tragedy happens?

Do I have that many words? ..."

Which is to say -- do I have enough?

Look, Lord, at what little I have.

And then Brian wrote this, from the depths of his faith,
from his own assurance of the strength our Savior gives us:

"People of faith, this is your chance.

Don't you dare turn your face from the world we have been called to serve and love.

Your faith is meant to be *fuel* for the journey towards a cross, towards the intersection of suffering and unspeakable hope.

So **be** naively kind.

Listen to the ones who make you afraid.

Take risks on people who don't deserve it.

Forgive the ones who will most likely hurt you all over again.

Err again and again on the side of grace."

What faith you have, Brian was saying, will be enough;

what hope you have will be enough --

with God's help, enough ...

enough yet for compassion and forgiveness,

enough yet for kindness and for grace.

On a hillside long ago,

a bunch of overwhelmed friends of Jesus

who thought they had nothing

discovered they had enough to care for everyone.

In the hollers of West Virginia,

a whole lot of teenagers

who wondered if they had enough

discovered that they had all they needed, in abundance.

In the midst of all kinds of hurts and weariness,

my friend Brian proclaimed that there is yet enough within us for grace and kindness and risk-taking love.

Whatever bit of faith, whatever handful of hope,

whatever yearning of the spirit each one of us carries,

that's all you need.

That's all you need to put into Christ's hands.

Whatever you have, it's enough.

In his hands, it will always be *more* than enough. Amen.