

When God Does Big Things
Mark 6:30-44

Big Ideas: Small things matter.

Introduction:

Good morning! My name is Patrick Gibbs and I am one of the pastors here at MVBC. If you are visiting us today, you are our guest and I hope we have been treating you well.

When I was a little kid, I hated going to bed. I liked staying up as late as the adults. SO sometimes after I was in a bed, I would sneak down the hallway and I'd lay underneath an end table at the end of the couch and watch TV with my mom. But she didn't know it. Actually, she probably did because I think I feel asleep there sometimes. But I can remember on more than one occasion mom watching some religious programming. And they had a 24 hour prayer hotline of sorts. And I can remember being a kid and praying that God would make my dad see. And I can remember calling that prayer line and asking them to pray that my dad would be able to see, because, after all, he made blind people see in the Bible so why not my dad.

Have you ever read some of the miracles in the Bible and wondered why it seems God doesn't show up today like he used to? Does it make me a bad Christian to wonder that out loud? Are God's miracle days over or does God still do big things today?

This morning we're going to look at one of those stories in the Bible where it seems like God showed up big. He did something amazing. We find the story in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. It's the only miracle that appears in all 4 except the resurrection of Jesus. We are going to look at in Mark, chapter 6. Let me tell you the story.

The disciples had been out on tour, going from place to place talking about Jesus. When they returned, they were exhausted. So Jesus is taking them to some remote place to get some rest. But people recognize them, especially Jesus and there is a crowd of people waiting on shore when their boat lands. And although they are exhausted, their compassion compelled them to teach and minister to some 5000 families. As it got later in the afternoon, the disciples told Jesus to start sending people home because there was no food in this remote place and they had been there for hours. But Jesus tells the disciples to feed the 5000 families. But the disciples don't have that kind of money or food supply. And so Jesus asks them to come up with as much as they can. They end up with 5 small loaves of bread and 2 small fishes. Then Jesus prays and starts handing out baskets of food to the disciples to feed the crowd. And the supply never runs out. 5000 families later, everyone has eaten and the disciples pick up the leftover food. Now, I don't know about you, but I would say God showed up pretty big that day.

I mean, he catered a picnic for 5000 families. If you're one that believes in miracles, this might be one. So, what are we to do with this? Does that mean for our SHOUT event coming up, we shouldn't plan? We'll just show up and hope God does too? I mean, I'd like to see God show up that big in our day, at our church, in our families, wouldn't you?

But since Jesus isn't on this earth and probably won't physically show up in person at most things, is he done performing big things so people go, "Wow, that was God?"

Well, in our time this morning, I'd like to look at what transpired when God showed up in this story. And hopefully, we'll find a few principles to help us understand how God shows up.

The first principle I see is almost a disclaimer of sorts. ► Here's the principle: **God shows up big for a reason.** When we talk about God showing up big, we're talking about him doing something out of the ordinary; something that doesn't happen every day. The Bible teaches that nothing happens outside God's awareness. So God is already involved. But there are times where God chooses to do the unexpected, where he chooses to do something remarkable- like a free picnic for 5000 hungry families. The disciples suggested 2 options that made sense to them: send the people away to get their own food or go buy food for everyone. If Jesus could feed 5000 people with a few loaves of bread, certainly he could have provided the money for food or inspired someone to donate the food or just quenched everybody's hunger. But he chose to do it this way. And in the end, doing something spectacular is up to Him.

And feeding of the 5000 certainly met a practical need; there were 5000 hungry families. But the purpose for doing something big was a spiritual one more than a practical one. Let me show you.

After the meal on the hillside, the disciples set sail for the other side of the lake and Jesus goes into the mountains to pray. In the middle of the night, the disciple's boat is stuck in a storm and Jesus walks on the water and calms the storm. Look at what Mark says.►

^{NLT} **Mark 6:51** Then he climbed into the boat, and the wind stopped. They were totally amazed, ⁵² for they still didn't understand the significance of the miracle of the loaves. Their hearts were too hard to take it in.

You see, the significance of Jesus doing something big with the loaves and fish was meant to speak to their heart. It had a spiritual point. The word for *hard* here means a "dulled spiritual perception." And even though Jesus did something amazing designed to reach their heart and teach them a spiritual lesson, they still missed it.

The point is, God does big things for His reasons; reasons we sometimes don't understand. So I wonder, does God show up and I just miss it? I mean, people in the first century saw Jesus do tons of cool stuff and they still didn't believe. I think God shows up big, even today, when it accomplishes His purpose. And I also think my "dulled spiritual perception" sometimes misses when he does.

But this ► principle is more about our thinking. How do we think about God and his willingness or ability to show up big? But there are also some things we can do. Just remember, because of principle number one, these things aren't a formula to get God to do something amazing. They're just seemingly little things by themselves. But when done in obedience to God's directing, they have the potential of being huge. And that brings me to my big idea this morning: ► Small things matter. God uses the seemingly small things to accomplish the big huge results. Let's see how that works.

When Jesus told the disciples to feed the people, they balked at the cost required to feed all those people. In fact, the amount they threw out equals approx 40 weeks of work. Imagine working 40 weeks to pay for a picnic. So Jesus told them to find what they could. Look at verse 38.►

^{NLT} **Mark 6:38** "How much bread do you have?" he asked. "Go and find out." They came back and reported, "We have five loaves of bread and two fish."

In all those people, they found 5 loaves of bread and 2 fishes. Now consider this for a moment. You're a disciple; you've been on tour for weeks. You try and get some R&R but your manager is Jesus and no one leaves you alone. So, instead of R&R, you spend the whole day listening to a sermon you've probably heard a dozen times. It's getting late and instead of sending people away, the boss tells you to find all the food you can and feed these 5000 families. Let me ask you a question: How hard are you looking for food? We already know there ain't enough. It almost seems like they came back with the most pathetic attempt possible. "Here Jesus, this is what we found- 5 loaves and 2 fishes. Can we go home now?"

Or maybe they really couldn't get any more than that. Maybe no one had any food left, or maybe they ate it all, but there was one person who had food. And it was a little boy. We know that from the book of John that also tells this same story. And John says, ►

^{NLT} **John 6:9** "There's a young boy here with five barley loaves and two fish. But what good is that with this huge crowd?"

And here's the principle for us; ► **we can give what we have.** But as I read this again, I was struck by the question the disciples asked, "What good is that with this huge crowd?". And I wonder how many of us have asked that question before? "What good is my small contribution with this overwhelming need? All I have is x, but it looks like I need z." Have you ever thought that before? I must admit I was convicted as I studied this week. I have thought or said that dozens of times. What good is my \$20 a week with a church budget of \$800,000? What good are my few cans of Vienna Sausages when dozens of people in this neighborhood are starving? I've looked at my paycheck and said, what good is so little when the bills are so big? As a pastor, I ponder how small we are in the face of such pain and suffering in our neighborhood. But I am moved by a young boy willing to give what he had. It was small- seemingly. And it was probably a sacrifice. He had no idea Jesus would feed everybody with it. For all he knew, Jesus needed his lunch and he gave it. He may not have even known he was the only giver. But look what God did with his "small" gift. God took what he gave and turned it into something huge. He didn't need to use the little boy's lunch, but he chose to. God seems to take delight in taking what we give- especially when we give what we have instead of giving what we can- and turning it into something far bigger and better than we can imagine.

We can give what we have because small things matter.

► Next we see Jesus doing something seemingly small; **he prayed** for what he had. Look at verse 41. ►

^{NLT} **Mark 6:41** Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, looked up toward heaven, and blessed them.

He prayed. That's something seemingly small we can do, can't we. "Blessed" can mean a few different things all having to do with praising something. It means to ask for God's favor or to ask God to prosper or to celebrate something. When Jesus looked toward heaven, I am guessing his blessing included all those things. He was thankful for what he had even though it was smaller than he needed. I assume he asked his father to stretch it farther than what seemed possible. And when we pray for what we have, when we bless it, thank God for it, ask him to stretch it, is it possible that God can do that in ways we may or may not see? Absolutely.

I remember the first time I decided to start regularly giving to the church. I was sitting at my dining room table with my budget and my bills. And I remember asking God, how much should I give? All these bills take all this money but I want to give something. And we chose an amount and began to give it. And God took care of us. Within 3 months, we received money to cover our bills from places that made no sense. I mean it was literally money we weren't counting on. Coincidence or God showing up? I am convinced God blessed what we had. He made it prosper. He made it go farther. He added to it what we needed.

Look toward heaven and bless what you have. Celebrate it- however small. Ask God to use it, prosper it, help it last. Pray for God to bless its use. We can pray because small things matter.

And that brings us to ► third thing we can do. In also comes in verse 41.

^{NLT} **Mark 6:41** Then, breaking the loaves into pieces, he kept giving the bread to the disciples so they could distribute it to the people.

And here's the principle: ► **we can volunteer**. Somebody had to actually do the work. In this case it was the disciples. Everyone was seated in groups. Back and forth they went, continuing to serve food that never seemed to run out. Their part was seemingly small. All they did was serve some people some food. But as they did, God was doing something significant. But their willingness, their investment, their time- God used in an amazing way. Volunteering your time may seem like a little thing. I mean, can an hour and a half a week with a student really make any significant difference? Can volunteering to help on Sunday morning in refreshments or hospitality or children's church or the SAFE team really matter? I mean its one hour. It's a small thing, right? Maybe, but small things matter. And what might seem small for us is exactly where God is looking to do something big.

Growing up with blind parents, they didn't drive much. But people always made sure we got to church. When I was in 6th and 7th grade, I never missed a youth activity because the Mr. Sparks and Garzony family made sure I got to church. It was a small thing for them. I am guessing today they don't even remember doing it. But I do; because in 6th and 7th grade I became interested in God. Was their volunteering to give me a ride to church a miracle; was it something big? Not really. But it sure turned out to be for me and my family.

You see, we aren't capable of big, like God is. And we don't see what God sees. Little things matter because God uses them and us to do some things that are amazing.

Conclusion:

► We've seen this work at Moon Valley this past year specifically. For Salsa last year, we set a goal for 1000 people- huge for us. And some people contributed money and supplies, and people prayed and about 200 of you volunteered a few hours of your time. And God took our little individual efforts and turned it into something amazing- like 1700 people showing up and getting to know Moon Valley Bible Church.

We experienced the same thing for Easter. The largest Easter service we ever had was 800 people. So this year we said 1000 for an Easter service. And we prayed and people volunteered for setup and hospitality and singing and cleaning. And God again used our small efforts and made it something more than we even asked for- 1100 people for church. Wow! God can and still does take our small and make it big. And I hope we aren't missing the spiritual significance of this story. Your resources, regardless of size, God wants to use for something big. Your prayers, while seemingly small, God uses. Your time, your investment, your willingness to volunteer and work

while it may seem small and not important or significant, is exactly what God uses to create something significant. We all have resources, we all can pray, and we can all volunteer some time some place. And God takes those small steps of obedience and turns them into something great!

We don't really talk a lot about money at Moon Valley and God continues to provide through you. If you aren't a part of giving, I'd encourage you to give it a try. Start small, because small things matter to God and He can make your small sacrifice BIG.

All of us can pray. There are 2 specific things you can pray about right now. Shout- our children's event in June. We'd like God to do something amazing with that event. We also have a missions trip to the Navajo reservation in June. We refer to it as Shonto. It never feels like there is enough money or people, but we know God can do something BIG with what we do have, so let's pray that way.

And lastly, you can volunteer. Today we're signing up to volunteer for SHOUT. God can use your small investment for something BIG. Our Sunday morning hospitality and refreshments teams can always use more people willing to invest a small amount of time in helping MVBC be a place for people to belong. Sign up, give it a try.

Because these small things matter because those are the things God turns into something BIG.

Pray!