

STEP BY STEP THROUGH YOUR LENTEN JOURNEY BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

Week Four: The Little You Have

Feeding of the 5,000

Even though we might be actively involved in the church we still doubt that we can be helpful to God and His mission on earth. The usual reasoning is that we feel inadequate, not ready or simply unsure. We even pass the responsibility to others: to the priest, the Parish Council, the Women's Guild, benefactors, other people, etc. Along with this, each of us come up with excuses why we cannot help: *I don't speak Armenian; I don't know theology; I don't pray often; I don't have enough time; I don't read the Bible; I don't have enough money; I don't (fill in the blank)*. However, with God, everything is possible. He does not seek how much we have, but how willing we are.

Read John 6:1-15

What do you think?

1. *There are nearly 5,000 men gathered to listen to Christ preach. Men were usually counted as the head of the household, so in reality, it was 5,000 families present. Jesus realizes these people need to be fed and asks Philip how to do it (in other Gospels He asks all the disciples). Have you ever felt called by God to undertake a great or massive mission? What was your reaction?*
2. *Philip's answer speaks of doubt or passing the responsibilities to someone else. When have you tried to pass the responsibility to someone else? And if you did, how did it make you feel?*
3. *Jesus wanted to teach the disciples that financial resources are not the most important ones in this world. We end up limiting what God does in us by assuming what is and is not possible. Is there some impossible task that you believe God wants you to do?*
4. *Andrew, probably trying to emphasize the futility of the moment, says there is a little boy with five loaves and two fish. However, Jesus takes them, gives thanks, breaks them and give them to his disciples. Where else have you heard or seen something similar?*
5. *Have you ever had very little, but offered it in faith and it became great? (It may not be physical)*

We do not know for sure, but perhaps the little boy overheard the conversation between Christ and the disciples and offered the little he had. What is miraculous is that Christ did not reject it or ask for more (like most of us would have done), but took it, blessed it and multiplied it. This is what happens when we offer what we have with faith to Christ. He takes it, blesses it, multiplies it, and gives it back. This is why we must look at situations spiritually.

It is easy to see only the physical side of things while forgetting spiritual essence that exists. Only taking things at face value constrains our thinking and robs us and others of experiencing a miracle. Everything we have: time, talent, treasure, must be offered to God in faith, trusting that He will do what is needed. No matter how small a role we may think we are playing in a situation, God sees our participation as crucial to its success. This is also true with Holy Communion during the Divine Liturgy. It is not an act or performance we attend on a Sunday morning, but a spiritual miracle we participate in.

The feeding of the 5,000 is a foreshadowing in the Gospels of the Last Supper and Holy Communion. The same words are used: *takes, gives thanks, breaks and gives* at the Last Supper (Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19) as with the feeding of the 5,000 (John 6:11). This means that each of us plays a vital role in the Divine Liturgy, like the little boy who brought the bread and fish. We cannot assume that it is only the job of a priest, deacon, choir, Parish Council member or someone else to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, but we, the faithful people of God, are the main participants in the Divine Liturgy. All of us are important for His plan. We were created for a reason: to glorify God and this is done by being active in the miracles He performs, especially the Divine Liturgy. For this can be as simple as being a part of someone else life, or even being a brief passer-by.

St. Gregory of Narek prays it best in his Book of Lamentations:

"My wayward body, easy prey for this Predator, sowing thorns among the wheat, endlessly wavering on any excuse, so often only you can keep track. And then comes the pitiful wail, which follows the sinning, hopeless and tormented, hear me sighing, "alas" as I come before you, Lord, with pleas for mercy and wretched groans, written with tears, humbled by pangs of guilt caused by the distress of boundless evil...For with you there is no darkness, and without you no goodness, and yours is the glory forever."
(Prayer 30 A, E)