

God Provides Extravagantly

"They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish." Mark 6:42-43

This passage comes from a very familiar Bible account: Jesus feeding the five thousand. I happened to reread Mark's description of this miraculous meal at an anxious time in my life. I was wondering if certain needs would be met. Maybe you have had the same experience: the checking account is empty and there are bills left to pay, or an illness is plaguing you or a loved one. Maybe the needs are emotional: loneliness, lack of friends or support, or a feeling of exhaustion with no relief in sight.

Mark tells us that Jesus and the twelve disciples had slipped into a boat, intending to get away from the crowds for a little while. However, as they sailed to their destination, a remote place likely off the Sea of Galilee, the crowds followed Jesus and the disciples on foot. They were so eager to be near Jesus that many walked five to ten miles! After walking all that distance, then listening to Jesus teach until late in the day, the multitude was hungry. Jesus saw their hunger. And he provided food. This great crowd of people, 5,000 men plus women and children, ate and ate and ate until they were completely satisfied. And there were leftovers—basketfuls of them!

On rereading this account, the question arose in my mind: Why did Jesus provide so much extra? Why 12 basketfuls more than the crowd could even eat?

As I reflected on those 12 baskets of extra food, I could only acknowledge in awe that we have an extravagant God. He delights in providing generously. It is pure joy for him to give extravagantly. He satisfies our needs, then lavishes us with even more. We may see this extravagant provision in our material blessings from God: our homes, our vehicles, our clothes, our food. We may look at our parents, our spouses, our children, our grandchildren, and say, "Yes, I am extravagantly blessed." And every one of us certainly can say that we have received extravagant spiritual provision. God did not only remove our sins from us—as incredible as it is that he took care of this our greatest need. He also continues to do even more! He abundantly provides spiritual gifts like wisdom for daily life, power to persevere, and his own constant companionship. Truly he lavishes us with extravagant grace. As St. Paul says, God "is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us." (Ephesians 3:20)

And why? Why so much extra? Because he can, and because he loves us.

Thinking about those 12 baskets of leftovers, I was reminded of a line from I Am Jesus' Little Lamb: "For my Shepherd gently guides me/knows my needs and well provides me." Our God sees our needs, just as surely as he saw the needs of the great crowd gathered to hear him on that hillside in Galilee. And our God provides. He provides well. Yes, he provides extravagantly.

Prayer:

Dear Jesus, I thank and praise you for seeing my needs and providing so well for me. Please forgive me for my failures to trust you. I turn over to you a need in my life, trusting you will provide: _____ . Amen

Further Reading: Mark 6: 30-44

This devotion was written by Mollie Schairer and reviewed by Pastor Joel Gerlach.