

## THE LOAVES AND THE LAD (Jn. 6:9)

What a day the Saviour has had! The crowds have been gathering to listen and see Him. They have stayed with Him, and now it is coming near sunset. It's too late for them to buy food ... and all the Saviour has at His disposal is five barley loaves and two small fish (v.9). ... Such a great need, and if He had divided such a meagre portion among them, they would not have had much more than a crumb each!

The problem was a very difficult one. It was the contrast between the supply and the demand ... How can we, - with apparently so little, - meet the need which is so far beyond our means? **Mt. 9:37** *The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few ...* "Lord, the meagre scraps we have ... **Jn. 6:9** *what are they among so many? ... Let's consider what the Lord was working with! ... <sup>9</sup> There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes ...*

**THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD** How did this young lad come to be there? ... He was there because of the providence of God. We know absolutely nothing about him, - we do not know his name, we are not told who his parents were, we are not told if they were with him, and neither are we told where he came from. We know next-to-nothing about him ... except he was the right young lad in the right place on that day. *God* had him there with those loaves and fish.

In our hymn book (*Christian Hymns*), we have a section entitled *Providence*. Providence is God's activity in the world. It relates to His sovereignty, and how all things work in accordance with His command. In this section there is a hymn by William Cowper ([http://www.kirkcaldy-pathheadbaptist.co.uk/\\_pdf/Hymns/God%20moves%20in%20a%20mysterious%20way%20\(Ps.%20119.27\).pdf](http://www.kirkcaldy-pathheadbaptist.co.uk/_pdf/Hymns/God%20moves%20in%20a%20mysterious%20way%20(Ps.%20119.27).pdf)),

Deep in unfathomable mines of never-failing skill,  
He treasures up His bright designs, and works His sovereign will ...  
Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust Him for His grace;  
Behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face."

William Cowper was plagued with depression and anxiety for most of his life. It affected his career, his friends ... and it especially affected the relationship between him and the woman he loved. He was a great hymnwriter, but behind his hymns was often a very distraught man. ... How could the Lord use someone like William Cowper? ... Yet, He *did*. ... On one of his more desperate occasions, he decided to drown himself. He called for someone to drive him to the Thames River. In the course of the journey, a thick fog came down that night and prevented his driver from finding the river. After driving around lost for a while, they finally stopped, and Cowper got out. ... Where did he get out? ... On one of the bridges overlooking the Thames? No ... To Cowper's surprise, he found himself on his own door-step: even in the fog God kept him!

That is what *providence* is, - it is God's care and watchfulness over His people ... and I'm sure we could all give accounts of how we have experienced His providence. We are precious to Him, **Mt. 10:30** *the very hairs of your head are all numbered.* **31** *Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.* His providence watches over His people, and it also watches over His Church ... and He will never desert either! When the Lord Jesus was speaking about the end times, He warned, **Lk. 21:16** *ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.* **17** *And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.* **18** *But there shall not an hair of your head perish.* ... Such was **the providence of God** which guided the steps of this young lad to Jesus, to meet the need of the hour.

**THE PURPOSE OF GOD** Imagine listening to Jesus imply He and His disciples had an obligation to feed all those people, **Jn. 6:5** *When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? Multiply the five thousand by two ... maybe even three, and you will come closer to the number of the multitude present that day.*

I'm sure the disciples would have been scouring the crowds for anyone with food to spare ... Yes, some boy with five barley loaves and two small fish ... but you would not have looked at him twice! ... It was enough for a child's lunch, but totally inadequate for the needs of all those people ... You might think you have very little to give the Lord ... but that is not how He looks at it. That which you have, it was *He* Who gave it to you ... and how do you think He would feel if you 'looked down your nose' and did not count it as very much! ... The servant who was given the one talent had the same responsibility to his Master as the other two had ... one of them was given *twice* as much, the other was given *five* times as much ... but they all *equally* had responsibility for what the Master had given them!

Here is a relatively obscure young lad, and the Lord brought him out from everyone else when it was necessary! ... Some people are comfortable being at the front, others like to keep in the background ... but when the Lord calls you to do a job, it's a job only you are *called* to do. It might even seem to be something as insignificant this young boy was responsible for ... Whatever it is, God has it there for *you* to do.

What if this young boy had his name included in this story? What if every time he walked down the street people said, "There's the young lad who provided the food for the multitudes"? ... That young boy could have started his own business, and been an overnight success. ... But no, **the purpose of God** for his life was to be privileged in God's plan for that day ... *for Jesus to take all the glory.* ... **The Providence of God ... The Purpose of God ...**

**THE PROVISION OF GOD**

Who would ever have thought those loaves and fishes would have fared so well! ... *What are they among so many?* ... Imagine the young fellow standing there listening to these adult men! ... They should have been there for him to look up to ... He was willing to give all he had, - which wasn't much, - but it was all he had ... and it belonged to Jesus, if He wanted it! ... "It's not much, but here You are, Lord, You can have all that's mine". In fact, the young fellow was willing to go hungry, for he was not to know what Jesus was about to do!

But as far as the disciples were concerned, - and the young boy was standing there, - "What use is five loaves and two fish to anybody!" ... How careless they were in front of that child! ... They were 'running down' what the little boy had brought ... It reminds us how careful we need in encouraging young folk ... How are they supposed to grow in the faith, if they cannot see our faith at work? ... How are they supposed to grow in the faith if we don't encourage them? ... "Sorry, young fellow ... toddle away over back to where you came from, and you enjoy your mingy loaves and fishes" ... If someone from a larger church came along to ours, and started to run down our efforts ... how would you like someone to say to us, we are past it, and we are of no use to the Lord any longer?

No, the Lord works with people others would not take a second glance at! ... Remember the church in Philadelphia, in the Book of Revelation, He said to them, **Rev. 3:8** *behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.* ... Far better having a 'little strength' in the Lord, than having a mighty strength without Him! ...

All that I am I owe to Thee,  
Thy wisdom, Lord, has fashioned me;  
I give my Maker thankful praise,  
Whose wondrous works my soul amaze.

Ere into being I was brought,  
Thine eye did see, and in Thy thought  
My life in all its perfect plan  
Was ordered ere my days began."

On the other hand, the devil trembles when God uses weak vessels because Satan knows what the Lord can do with the 'small loaves and the small fish'. They don't look much to anyone else, but the devil knows what the Lord can do with them! It is so often the case, the things God will honour are the very things men despise and look down on. ... Look at how they despised His Son. Look at how they despised His prophets and apostles. Look at how they have despised His people down through every age ... and yet, He promises, **1 Sam. 2:30** *them that honour me I will honour.*

Consider how this young boy was not forced to give what he had, - the disciples would not have wrestled him to the ground and took it from him, - he freely and willingly offered it to the Master. ... You know what it is like when a child comes to you, and they offer you one of their sweets, or some of their crisps, - you might not want any, but you take one because they are so kind as to offer it to you ... This young boy offered all he had to Jesus. *What an example that boy was!*

It is a lesson to young people ... to put Jesus first. The modern emphasis is to get as much for yourself, but this young boy teaches all young people, - and older people too, - to put Christ first and you will never lack anything you need. ... When the Lord changed the young boy's lunch into a feast to feed all those thousands, the young boy did not have to worry about his supper that night ... *because he was full too ... and it was the Lord who filled him!*

**The Providence of God ... The Purpose of God ... The Provision of God ...** Now look what happened ... Jesus took the loaves and the fish from the young boy and, next, we see ...

**THE POWER OF GOD** Jesus accepted what belonged to this lad and He worked a miracle, to the glory of God! None of those disciples could have done what Jesus did. That young boy stood and watched as Jesus took his bread ... and took his fish ... and he watched as Jesus looked towards Heaven and gave thanks. ... *It had belonged to the boy, but now all he had belonged to Jesus.*

His love has no limit, His grace has no measure,  
His power has no boundary known unto men;  
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus,  
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again".

The young boy did not say to Jesus, when He had worked the miracle, "All that bread is mine. I give it to You it, and now I want it *all* back so I can sell it and make a profit". ... No, when you hand your life over to Jesus, all you are and have become His,

Take my life, and let it be  
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.

Take my moments and my days ... Take my hands, ... Take my voice ...  
Take my lips ... Take my silver and my gold ... Take my intellect ...  
Take my will ... Take my heart ... Take my love ...  
Take myself, and I will be Ever, only, all for Thee".

Is it just a hymn ... or does the Lord know you mean the words you sing? I reckon if that young boy had fifty loaves and twenty fishes he would have given them all to the Lord ... because the Lord had already worked in that boy's heart a miracle even before He made the food to feed all those thousands! ... And if the boy had given the five loaves and two fishes to the disciples they might not have accepted them ("what use are these?!") ... but Jesus accepted them! That young boy's lunch was *dedicated* to Jesus, and Jesus *consecrated* them in His service and for His glory!

In fact, there is a very simple word in the Greek, - so simple you would miss it, - and yet it adds something more beautiful to what happened here. ... In English, our version begins with the word 'and', so the Greek word should be και (v.11), but instead, it is the word δέ, - another very simple and ordinary word that is usually translated '*therefore*' ... *Therefore* Jesus took the loaves that were so willingly brought to Him, and so freely presented. ... Simple as they were, He had need of them ... and that was why, - in the providence of God, - that was what that young boy was '*there for*'. ... And he watched as the Lord Jesus blessed his 'ordinary' gift, - in the grand scheme of things, they were nothing ... and yet Jesus knew what He could make out of them. Augustine put it very simply, "God loves us, for what we are becoming".

What you give to God, He will bless you with more than you can imagine. Preachers often talk about how we need to give Him our money, and that is very true, - His work needs it ... But also think about something else ... Maybe you are very busy during the week, - you have hardly a couple of hours to yourself. ... Well, your time and your energies are a gift from God and He expects you to spend it in His company and in the company of His people. ... What if you can give your time elsewhere, and you cannot give time to Him? ... How do you think He feels? The psalmist implored the Lord, **Ps. 90:12** *teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.*

As believers, you and I are the people God depends upon. Like this young boy, we have been blessed ... There are thousands of people in Kirkcaldy who are spiritually starving, and they don't know where to find the food that satisfies ... and they pass us every day, but it would never cross their minds to ask us about the 'food' we have. And that is why we must take the opportunity when it arises.

Before Jesus worked any miracle on the loaves and the fish, He prayed ... Miracles are the consequence of sincere prayer coming from God's people. Any church is only as good and as powerful as its prayer meeting ... Jesus prayed first, and then the miracle happened! ... Spurgeon likened himself to this young lad, "When I had a letter sent to me by the deacons of the church at New Park Street, to come up to London to preach, I sent it back by the next post, telling them that they had made a mistake, that I was a lad of nineteen years of age, happy among a very poor and

lowly people in Cambridgeshire, who loved me, and that I did not imagine that they could mean that I was to preach in London. But they returned it to me, and said that they knew all about it, and I must come. Ah, what a story it has been since then, of the goodness and lovingkindness of the Lord!”

But, the miracle comes to its climax not in only when the baskets became full to overflowing ... the miracle comes to its pinnacle when Christ was glorified (v.14). Everything else faded into the background, **Jn. 3:30 He must increase, but I must decrease.** ... And you will also notice how every last fragment of those loaves was gathered and brought back to the Saviour (v.12), - nothing went to waste ... and how many baskets were there? *Twelve* ... each disciple had their own basket to bring back to the Saviour! Every one of them had a purpose in His will.

Does it not speak of the role each of us has to play in Pathhead Baptist Church? ... On the face of it, we only have a few loaves and a couple of fish, - “what is that among so many?!” ... I haven’t given up, and I trust you haven’t either, but does it not remind us how we have a responsibility for which He will one day call us to account? ... I even believe that we don’t have to wait until that day, because the Lord expects us to pick up on the opportunities today ... and if we don’t, what use are we?! We might as well be quit!

**CONCLUSION** Yes, it is all about God, - His **Providence**, His **Purpose**, His **Provision**, and His **Power** ... And there is just one final simple thought. ... In the Song of Solomon, we read about the banqueting table (1:12), in II Sam. 9:13 we read about Mephibosheth sitting at King David’s table, ... we read about many great feasts in the Word of God, including the final feast of all, - the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9) ... and included amongst the great feasts is this record of a feast that began with a young boy handing over to Jesus five barley loaves and two small fishes. Yes, “Little is much when *God* is in it!”

One of the older men who did not think his church could ‘run without him’ was trying to impress the young man who was there for the first time, “I have been a member of this church now for over forty years. I am a father in Israel.” The young man responded, “How many children have you? How many have you brought to Christ?” “Well,” the man said, “I do not know that I ever brought anybody to Christ.” The young fellow was not for giving up, “You call yourself a father in Israel, and yet you have no children!”

Don’t you see the point? Where are the loaves and the fish? ... The Lord needs all we have ... and all we have is what He has given to us in His service, and for His glory. Amen.