

October 25, 2015

Six Decisions

The Decision to Respond

John 6:1-13

Opening words: According to some, the average person makes more than 35,000 decisions in a single day. Most of them are rather simple: where to sit, what to eat for breakfast, what lane to drive in, should I have another cup of coffee, etc. These decisions are easily made and have very few consequences. Other decisions are more serious, with long-lasting effects. Some decisions have an eternal influence. It is those decisions that we are looking at in this sermon series, *Six Decisions*. Today's message is called *The Decision to Respond*. Our scripture lesson is John 6:1-13.

John 6:1-13 ¹Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), ² and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick. ³ Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. ⁴ The Jewish Passover Festival was near. ⁵ When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" ⁶ He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. ⁷ Philip answered him, "It would take more than half a year's wages^[a] to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" ⁸ Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, ⁹ "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" ¹⁰ Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). ¹¹ Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. ¹² When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." ¹³ So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

Today, we find ourselves in the sixth chapter of John. Jesus had gathered a big crowd. The reason is simple. They had seen or heard about the miracles. Jesus had brought wholeness and health to the limited and the sick. Listen to what I am about to say. They had seen the miracles, but Jesus wanted them to experience more. The Master went to a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. From that high elevation, he saw the great number that were following him. Wanting to challenge the disciples, he looked at Phillip and said, "Where shall we buy bread for all these people to eat?" Phillip does the math and admits the funds are not available. It would take eight months wages to buy enough bread. He was right, yet he was wrong. Money was only one option. By the end of the day, everyone was satisfied and the power of God was obvious.

This story reminds us of two things. First, with God all things are possible. How else can you explain how Jesus took five barley loaves and two small fish and fed 5,000 people? It must be from God. Second, it reminds us that Jesus cared not just about the spiritual needs of people, the Master cared for their physical needs as well. He could have sent them away hungry and no one would have cared. This is the question I have for you today: how concerned are you about the physical needs of our world? Our world is crying out in pain; are you going to respond? If that question makes you think, say, "**Amen!**" The choice is yours. Are you going to respond?

Never forget, we are in the disciple making business. That means you are supposed to be a little more like Jesus every day. Are you striving to be like Jesus, or are you happy with yourself? Do you care about the needy of this world, or are you just preoccupied with yourself? Let me ask you these three questions. I will warn you up front, they may make you a little uncomfortable.

Do you see others like Jesus? When Jesus looked out and saw the multitude surrounding him, he saw their need. They were hungry. Jesus knew they had to be fed because they didn't have resources to feed themselves. Jesus didn't just care about their spiritual needs, Jesus cared about their physical needs. He responded to their need. Do you see the needs of others, or do you look the other way? Would anyone here have said, "They are fools! They should have known better, they should have packed their own lunch!" Do you see things like Jesus? If that question makes you think, say, "**Amen!**"

Do you feel other people's pain like Jesus? One of the things we struggle with is the humanity of Jesus. We are much more comfortable with his divine side. In Matthew 9:36, it says Jesus had compassion on the crowd because they were harassed and helpless. Jesus had compassion on this crowd because they were hungry. Never underestimate the compassion of Jesus. Wikipedia, the online dictionary and encyclopedia, defines compassion as the response to the suffering of others that motivates to help. Do you feel other people's pain like Jesus? Perhaps this is a better question, how compassionate are you? Do you worry about your family pet, or human beings? Do you look at people, or do you look through people? If that question makes you think, say, "**Amen!**"

Do you do things like Jesus? The Master had the power to feed 5,000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish. Jesus used his power to respond to their need. We do not have the power to feed 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish. However, we do have the power to do something. What are you doing to help others? What is the Holy Spirit calling you to do? Do you do things like Jesus? If that question makes you think, say, "**Amen!**"

It is one of the most famous cases in the history of American sociology. I remember studying it in college. Her name was Kitty Genovese. In 1964, she lived in Kew Gardens,

Queens, New York City. In March 13 of that year, Winston Moseley stabbed her to death. As shocking as that crime was, the reaction, or the lack of reaction, of her neighbors was even worse. Many heard her cry out for help but no one responded. Her neighbors were guilty of a sin of omission. They knew there was a problem but did nothing to prevent or stop it. In the science of sociology it has been called the *by-standers effect* or *diffusion of responsibility*. I would like to say it is an isolated case but it happens all the time. Can I state the obvious?

Our world is crying out for help but very few are responding. Our world is filled with problems and the victims are crying out. It is not a matter of physical deafness. It is a matter of lack of caring. Do you care about the needy in our world, or are you too preoccupied with yourself? Jesus cared and responded. You must care and respond because you are a disciple of Jesus Christ. It is your choice. Are you going to respond, or do nothing at all?

Will you pray with me?