

## **Its what you do with what you got that counts**

Has it ever happened to you that life sometimes just isn't fair- that you are having to solve a problem that you didn't create or in spite of the fact you are a wonderful human being and a faithful Christian that you encounter scarcity of some kind in your life.

The story from the gospel of Matthew this morning showed that happened to Jesus as well. He had just learned that John the Baptist had been killed and Jesus felt the need to be alone and went by boat to a remote place but crowds followed him and when he landed there was a large crowd waiting for him- Great!! 5000 hungry people who wanted spiritual and physical nourishment. If it had been me I probably would have got back in the boat. But what did Jesus do? He took the 5 loaves and 2 fish raised his eyes to heaven and said the blessing- he gave thanks for the meager supply that was available. Well you know the rest of the story – everyone ate what they needed and the collected scraps filled 12 baskets.

I look to the stories in the Bible for inspiration for my everyday life and the story of the loaves and fishes has been one of most influential. For me the point of the story isn't whether this was a miracle or just the collective sharing of food. What inspires me is how Jesus reacted when faced with a hungry crowd in a remote location. He didn't curse, whine or run he did something remarkable – he first thanked God for what they did have. What Jesus was trying to teach us is that whatever we have now, whether it is our health, finances, relationships may appear to be deficient through our eyes. However, if we give thanks for the blessings, the attitude of gratitude, somehow changes us and that begins the process leading to abundance. With God's help and with friends, advisors, health care professionals, family, and our own optimistic and patient determination we can change deficiency so there is enough that we can share. As I was preparing this message I had the funny thought of what would have happened had the story of 5 loaves and 2 fish happened today. Some of the comments might be- Hey has that fish been tested for mercury? is that bread gluten free? Did you wash your hands first? I am a vegan what have you got for me? Are there any GMO ingredients in that?

Dr. David Bardsley is a dental specialist in Vancouver who this year published a book entitled Smarter Next Year. It was Rev Dr Stan Errett who recommended I read this book. Stan and Gayda's daughter, Suzanne Bascom, played in part in helping this book get published. Dr. Bardsley is now a successful and accomplished dentist but David had a troubled childhood. punctuated by years of intensive medical investigation, a period of institutionalization and a misdiagnosis of an intellectual disability by the time he was 9 years old. His parents refused to accept that diagnosis and challenged him to achieve what doctors said would be impossible. He struggled with dysfunctional behavior for nearly 2 decades before a correct diagnosis of Tourette's syndrome and ADHD attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder was made and he went on to earn a BS MS DDS and fellowship in oral and maxillofacial surgery. For me, Dr. Bardsley's story is a manifestation of creating abundance in the face of scarcity. He and his folks refused to accept the diagnosis of intellectual scarcity and through persistence and determination allowed him to create a productive life. In his book Smarter Next Year he describes having a senior moment in a grocery store that provided the stimulus to investigate how he could avoid age related cognitive deterioration. His book offers concrete, practical science based strategies for avoiding the pitfalls of cognitive decline. He offers 8 science based steps to make us smarter. I will quickly mention them to you. Improve sleep, eliminate toxic exposure, manage mental health, assess drugs, eat a good diet, limit alcohol, protect your head, stay active. I am quite sure that most of us over the age of 50 have had at least one "senior moment" whether it be forgetting a name, forgetting why you walked into the kitchen or not remembering where you left your car keys- maybe you put them in the refrigerator. When I bought this book my wife probably thought – gee -if getting this book helps maybe you should have got 3 copies. I told another friend last week about this book and he suggested another book I should read – Younger Next Year.

I look for inspiration from the stories of people who have struggled with overcame adversity or scarcity. The first Canadian to climb Mt. Everest, Laurie Skreslet said "its not what you go through in life that makes you what you are – it is how you react to the world you're going through. Dr. Bardsley in his book says "you are given your genes but what you do with them is up to you."

The human spirit when driven by passion and commitment has accomplished great things. Think for example of Beethoven who wrote his magnificent 9<sup>th</sup> symphony while deaf. Marie Curie winner of 2 Nobel prizes worked not in a modern well-equipped lab but in a damp unheated greenhouse. St Paul wrote some of his most profound work while in a prison in Rome. Victor Hugo wrote his great novel Les Miserables while banished to the island of Guernsey for 20 yr in lonely exile.

I like reading about or meeting people who accept the 5 loaves and 2 fish as sufficient and use faith, courage, optimism and patience to transform those circumstances into abundance. Let me share some of their stories with you. Alvin Law a talented jazz trombonist and drummer, a Calgarian who at one time was considered one of Canadas top 10 jazz trombonists, not too remarkable you might say until I tell you that he was born with no arms. He plays the trombone or the drums with his feet. If we had our projection system running I would show you a video from the internet but you can find his story on the internet. He told us that his family expected him to do his share of work around the house in spite of his physical disability. One day his dad asked Alvin to mow the lawn which Alvin was eager to do. Alvin couldn't start the gas mower because it needed fuel. His dad showed him where the gas was but didn't offer to help him. Alvin told us it took considerable ingenuity and several hours but he did the job. I would not have been as brave as his dad but he helped his son become as independent as he could. Alvin has played a direct role in raising over \$225,000,000.00 for charity.

One of my most memorable clients was a physiotherapist name Mary. Mary had been born with spina bifida and later became blind. In spite of that she graduated as a physiotherapist and set up her own business. I came to know her because I looked after two of her guide dogs. One day Mary was walking home from work and a fellow backing out of his driveway hit her and her dog and knocked her to the ground. You can imagine how terrible the driver must have felt but Mary in her gracious and forgiving manner scolded him but took no legal action. She declined his offer of a ride home and made her own way home. When she got home the first thing she did was to call me and had her husband Michael drive her to our hospital so she could have her guide dog checked before she herself was checked. In a pet blessing service here at St. David's I asked her to come and speak to us about her guide dog. Mary was a Roman Catholic with a strong faith and we joked about her speaking in a Protestant church. Report from some of her patients suggested that she was a particularly skilled therapist with a remarkable ability to diagnose the problem by feel and perform corrective physical therapy.

I am inspired too by examples from nature. Job said in 1:7 "Ask the beasts and they will teach you; the birds of the air and they will tell you. In my career in veterinary medicine I have marvelled at the resiliency of some of our patients. Tail wagging, face licking behaviour of dogs with a leg amputated the day before. Perhaps you have seen a video of the herding dog on a farm that had front and back legs amputated on the same side. On occasion I have had to surgically remove both eyes from cats and dogs as a result of cancer or glaucoma I am always impressed by their adaptability. These brave humans and critters don't seem to say "O God why me? -they accept what is and get on with life.

I have not yet mentioned time in this discussion. In the 5 loaves and 2 fish story the results happened immediately. Christ demonstrated that the first step in dealing with scarcity is to give thanks for what you have already. That can be very hard to accomplish sometimes. Have you ever been sick? It isn't easy giving thanks for the health you do have when you are ailing. I think miracles in which there is an instant cure or instant solution are rare. I am not saying they don't happen I just haven't experienced one in my life. As a society we all want instant gratification- for the car or the computer or the washing machine to be fixed instantly and if it can't be fixed quickly -manufacturers want us to buy a new one. When we pray for something I think we also expect a quick fix.

"God grant me patience -but please hurry". None of the human stories I shared with you happened overnight.

I absolutely believe that prayer does make a difference but rarely instantly. It depends on what we pray for doesn't it? We often have our own ideas as to what the answer to a prayer should be but if we are praying for the best possible outcome for the person we are praying for sometimes isn't what we have in mind. If you believe in prayer as I do it takes time for outcomes to be accomplished. I remember Rev. Dr. Stan Errett's concept of God working behind the scenes invisible perhaps to our eyes.

With these thoughts in mind let us consider the financial concerns we have at St. David's. Let us begin by thanking God for the many great blessings we have here. I won't list them all because I don't want to miss some but here I some of the blessings we enjoy already. We have 3 talented lady ministers Peggy, Debbie and Allison. We have a hugely talented music minister Brent and choirs. We have loyal and caring support staff.

We have the monthly sacred service groups- thank you July group, we have the PSALT team. We have dedicated and talented people on our committees and hold the folks on our finance committee in special regard for the challenges they face. Colin Outtrim has put many hours with the Edge group exploring future options. We have the ACTS program lead by Rev. Wayne Holst Our children's program is innovative and contemporary our youth drama program is sensational. If I have missed some one or some group forgive me but these are just some of the positives. When we pray let's remember to express our gratitude for these folks and for their faithfulness and let us try to be patient as we anticipate future success. The deficiencies we know about are expenses greater than income and a failing sound system.

God works from the inside out. The world works from the outside in. The world would take people out of the slums God takes the slums out of people and then they take themselves out of the slums

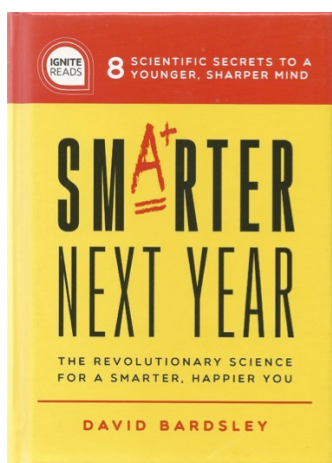
What was the magic formula that Christ used for dealing with scarcity. In the first place he Blessed God and gave thanks for the 5 loaves and 2 fish. 2) he presumed there was enough 3) he shared what they did have.

We brought nothing into this world and we take nothing out. Did you hear the story about Fred who tried to take his money with him when he died. When he knew he was dying he called his 3 best friends, Bob Tim and Ted. He gave them each \$10000 in cash and asked them to place the money in his coffin before he was buried. Tim and Ted carefully each put in an envelope with the cash but Bob put in a cheque for \$10000. Contrast this story with Mahatma Ghandi. This little man who weighed less than 100 pounds whose worldly possessions when he died totalled less than 2\$.

When I lectured to veterinarians about eye disease it was usually on a Sunday. I always tried to leave my audience with a practical applicable take home message something that they could use when they returned to their hospitals on Monday morning. Let me try to do this for us this morning. Each of us probably feels a scarcity in some aspect of our life. Be brave be courageous, and patient and give thanks for what we do have and presume that with faith and the power of prayer we will achieve abundance that we can share. If you are concerned about those senior moments – consider reading Smarter Next Year and incorporating those solutions in your life.

What God has in mind for us is greater than we can imagine.

Bardsley, David , Smarter Next Year. 2019, Sourcebooks. I purchased my copy from Amazon for about \$25.



Richard Christmas July 2019