

27. WHAT A DINNER PARTY! (JOHN 6:1-14) 09/23/12
FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, ATCHISON, PASTOR LEE HENDON

SUPER-SIZE ME, SUPER-SIZE ME, PLEASE! WE LIVE IN A COUNTRY STRUCK BY *SUPER-SIZE-ME MANIA*. WE SUPER-SIZE FRIES, BURGERS, SHAKES & SODAS - **JUST BECAUSE WE CAN!** WHICH IN MANY CASES HAS LED TO SUPER-SIZED PEOPLE & OBESITY IS ON THE RAMPAGE! NEW YORK CITY RECENTLY BECAME THE FIRST CITY IN THE NATION TO BAN SUPER-SIZED SUGARY DRINKS IN RESTAURANTS. MAYOR BLOOMBERG HAS LED THE CHARGE TO FIGHT OBESITY. INTERESTING THAT EIGHT OF NINE BOARD MEMBERS VOTED IN FAVOR OF THIS ORDINANCE, ONE ABSTAINED. THE PRESSURE IS ON BECAUSE **58%** OF NEW YORKERS ARE OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE & NEARLY **40%** OF THE CITY'S PUBLIC SCHOOL CHILDREN ARE OBESE OR OVERWEIGHT. (IT IS EASIER TO TALK ABOUT NEW YORKERS THAN KANSANS, RIGHT?)

CONTRAST THIS IF YOU WILL WITH A TIME & PLACE WHEN FOOD WAS SCARCE & HAVING EVEN ONE MEAL A DAY WAS THE TOP PRIORITY & DESIRE. MANY PEOPLE WENT HUNGRY & FOOD WAS A LUXURY & NOT A GIVEN. A DAY'S WAGE WOULD BUY A MEAL FOR THE FAMILY IF THEY WERE LUCKY. THE TIME WAS JESUS A.D. & THE PLACE WAS GALILEE.

ALREADY JESUS HAD ELECTRIFIED THE PEOPLE BY HEALING THE ILL & DISEASED WITH JUST A TOUCH OR WORD. NO ONE HAD EVER SEEN SUCH THINGS AS JESUS WAS PERFORMING - HIS POWER HAD IGNITED A RELIGIOUS REVIVAL THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY-SIDE & PEOPLE WERE COMING TO JESUS BY THE THOUSANDS! NATIONAL HEALTH CARE LOOMED LARGE EVEN THOUGH THEY KNEW NOT WHAT THAT MIGHT MEAN. BACK THEN BECAUSE OF THE RUDIMENTARY HEALTH CARE PRACTICES WHEN PEOPLE GOT SICK THEY USUALLY DIED. NOT NOW, NOT WITH JESUS IN TOWN! I WANT TO WAKE YOU UP FOR A MOMENT - SLAM BAM - **INSTANT HEALINGS** OF A WIDE VARIETY OF ILLNESSES & DISEASES. I/WE WOULD MARVEL AT THAT EVEN TODAY, WOULD WE NOT?

JESUS WENT TO THE HILLS AS A NATURAL AMPHITHEATER SO THAT HE WOULD BE MORE EASILY SEEN & HEARD BY THE LARGE CROWD. NONE OF THE CITY STREETS COULD HAVE HANDLED THE MOB OF PEOPLE. THERE WERE 5,000 MEN - ONLY THE MEN WERE

COUNTED AS A RULE - BUT THEY TRAVELED AS FAMILY WITH WIVES & CHILDREN. WITH A QUICK COUNT THEN, 5K MEN + 5K WIVES + 8 TO 10K CHILDREN GIVES YOU A CROWD IN EXCESS OF ATCHISON'S POPULATION - ALL AT ONE TIME - GATHERED IN THE COUNTRY - NO STORES OR FACILITIES AT ALL! THEY WERE FOCUSED ON ONE THING - **JESUS!** WE CAN JUST IMAGINE HOW TIME MUST HAVE FLOWN - TO BE IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD'S SON - NO ONE DOZED OFF - EVEN THE CHILDREN WERE CAPTIVATED BY JESUS' PRESENCE & POWER. AS THE DAY FLEW PAST HUNGER SET IN. JESUS WAS SENSITIVE & ALERT TO THE NEEDS OF THIS HUGE GATHERING. THE PASSAGE STATES THAT JESUS LIFTED UP HIS EYES TO SEE THE MULTITUDE & ALERT TO THEIR HUNGER HE ASKED, "HOW ARE WE TO BUY BREAD SO THESE PEOPLE MAY EAT?" THIS WOULD BE THE LEAST REQUIREMENT OF JEWISH HOSPITALITY. WHEN HOSTING GUESTS FOOD MUST BE PROVIDED - THERE IS NO DISCLAIMER FOR THE HUGE NUMBERS INVOLVED. NO DOUBT ABOUT IT, TEN TO TWENTY THOUSAND PEOPLE IS A LOT OF MOUTHS TO FEED - MORE VITTLES THAN OUR LOCAL STORES COULD EVEN PROVIDE ALL AT ONCE! I WANT YOU TO IMAGINE THE MAGNITUDE OF THIS SITUATION - WE ARE USUALLY SO HO-HUM ABOUT THIS EVENT. HEALING PEOPLE OF THEIR ILLNESSES/DISEASES IS AN INDIVIDUAL BY INDIVIDUAL THING - THIS WAS THE SETTING FOR A MIRACLE IN MASSIVE PROPORTIONS.

1. **JESUS SAW THE OPPORTUNITY OF THE SITUATION** - HE ALREADY KNEW WHAT HE WOULD DO. LOOK FOR THE OPPORTUN-ITY WHEN FACED BY OVERWHELMING ODDS. OF COURSE, JESUS WAS NO ORDINARY MAN - MUCH GREATER RESOURCES AT HIS DISPOSAL AS GOD'S SON - WHICH IS EXACTLY THE POINT OF THIS MIRACLE. THE MIRACLES OF JESUS WITNESSED TO HIS POWER & GLORY AS THE SON OF GOD. THIS IS MEANT TO CAUSE US TO PAUSE & CONSIDER "WHO IS THIS MAN?" ANSWER BEING, THE SON OF GOD.

2. **THE DISCIPLES SAW THE PROBLEM** NOT THE OPPORTUN-ITY BUT THE PROBLEM & PRESENTED THE HOPELESSNESS OF THE SITUATION TO JESUS. TWO HUNDRED DENARII (\$40) WHICH WAS A GREAT SUM OF MONEY FOR THEN WOULD NOT EVEN BEGIN TO FEED THE HUGE GATHERING. THIS MUST HAVE BEEN THE SUM OF MONEY AT THEIR DISPOSAL AT THAT MOMENT - MANY TIMES THE OPPORTUNITIES AT HAND SEEM TO OVERWHELM OUR AVAILABLE

\$\$\$. WHEN MONEY IS YOUR GOD THAT PRETTY MUCH ENDS THE DISCUSSION & PLANNING. THE PROBLEM LOOMS INSURMOUNTABLE WHEN THE \$ RUNS OUT - OR IS IT? MONEY IS NOT OUR GREATEST RESOURCE - THEN OR NOW. JESUS WAS A NON-ANXIOUS PRESENCE & DID NOT EVEN PICK UP ON THE MONEY ISSUES AT HAND.

ANOTHER DISCIPLE SAW THE PROBLEM AS NOT ENOUGH RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO FIX THE PROBLEM - ONLY 5 LOAVES + 2 FISH. THAT APPEARS AS A RHETORICAL JOKE - THE RESOURCES AT HAND NO WAY MATCHED UP WITH THE HUGE DEMAND. GAME - MATCH - OVER. TAKE YOUR LOSSES & MOVE ON. THE DISCIPLE SAID, "WHAT ARE THEY AMONG SO MANY?" THE FRUSTRATION WOULD BE TO NOT EVEN TRY BECAUSE IT APPEARED TO BE BUT WASTED EFFORT. WHAT THE DISCIPLES WERE SAYING WAS THAT THERE WAS **NO HUMAN WAY** FOR THIS PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED. I SEE THAT HAPPEN FROM TIME TO TIME IN THE CHURCH - NO HUMAN WAY WE CAN MAKE THIS HAPPEN. WHICH IS REALLY JESUS' POINT, EXACTLY, GRASSHOPPERS, THAT IS WHY YOU REQUIRE & HAVE A SAVIOR - BY THE WAY - THAT SAVIOR IS JESUS!

I AM SURE EACH OF US HAVE HAD THOSE MOMENTS IN LIFE WHEN IT JUST SEEMED THAT WE WERE UP AGAINST THE WALL WITH INSURMOUNTABLE OBSTACLES ALL AROUND - **NO HUMAN WAY OUT** - PROBLEMS & DIFFICULTIES GALORE - NO WAY OUT APPEARING ON THE HORIZON. THAT IS WHY WE REQUIRE & NEED A SAVIOR - BY THE WAY - THAT SAVIOR IS JESUS!

IMPORTANT STEPS WERE GIVEN BY JESUS:

1. **SIT DOWN** - SIMPLY SIT DOWN - COLLECT YOURSELVES - IT IS A WAY TO TURN AWAY FROM ANXIOUS PACING & FRETTEING TO A CALMING POSTURE. NO STRIVING, NO CLIMBING THE WALLS, NO RACING HEART BEAT - TAKE A LOAD OFF, SIT DOWN, BE CALM, COOL & COLLECTED. THIS WAS COMMANDED OF THEM/US BY A SAVIOR WHO HAS THE POWER & AUTHORITY TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE SITUATION - TURN IT FROM PROBLEM TO OPPORTUNITY. I LIKE THE DIRECTION THIS IS GOING....DON'T YOU?
2. **JESUS TOOK WHAT THEY HAD**, WHAT THEY MADE AVAILABLE - REQUIRED IT ALL - TOOK IT - GAVE **THANKS** FOR IT. HARD TO BE THANKFUL IN THE LITTLE THINGS WHEN THE PROBLEMS SEEM TO BE SO LARGE! UNTIL WE ARE THANKFUL IN THE LITTLE THINGS WE HAVE NOT PREPARED GOD TO GIVE US GREATER THINGS.

JESUS CAN TAKE WHATEVER WE HAVE, TRUST HIM WITH IT, IT IS ALL THAT IS REQUIRED OF US, BUT ALL OF IT IS REQUIRED. JESUS GAVE THANKS...IN GIVING THANKS...MIRACULOUSLY IT BECAME MULTIPLIED...THE SMALL THING BECAME GREAT...THEY ALL ATE THEIR FILL...AS MUCH AS THEY WANTED. JESUS STARTED WITH SOMETHING & SOMEHOW MADE IT ENOUGH FOR EVERYONE. AT FIRST GLANCE, THE PROSPECTS LOOKED GRIME & LIMITED BUT IN THE HANDS OF JESUS IT WAS MORE THAN ENOUGH - THE LEFT-OVERS EXCEEDED THE FIRST OFFERING. JESUS WILL MEET & EXCEED OUR NEEDS. WHEN CONFRONTED, THERE ARE NO PROBLEMS, ONLY OPPORTUNITIES FOR ME & YOU & OUR SAVIOR. NO MATTER WHAT, NO MATTER WHAT.....