

From Scarcity to Sufficiency (Matthew 14:13–21) August 2, 2026

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We have all experienced that feeling of **"not enough."** Perhaps we open our refrigerator and look at the nearly empty shelves with a sigh, "There's nothing to eat." Or it is our bank account, especially when a payment due date is approaching, and we say that there is not enough money to pay. We live in a world that constantly teaches us to calculate what is missing. That is exactly where the disciples find themselves in today's Gospel. They stand on a lonely hillside surrounded by more than five thousand hungry people. They have only five loaves and two fish. Their conclusion is simple and logical: "There is not enough."

But what they are about to discover is that our crisis of **"not enough"** is often God's starting point for revealing His **"more than enough."** Today I invite you to journey **from scarcity to sufficiency.**

Before we begin, notice something beautiful about Jesus' ministry. His first public miracle, at the wedding in Cana, also addressed scarcity. When the wine ran out, Jesus transformed ordinary water into overflowing abundance. Now, later in His ministry, He feeds thousands with five loaves and two fish. In both instances, we see that our God is not a God of scarcity, but a God whose grace overflows.

The disciples approach Jesus with what appears to be a practical suggestion. Here, we see how the problem of scarcity is presented: "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late. Send the crowds away." Their proposal makes perfect sense. The disciples saw a problem. They calculated the available resources. They concluded that the only solution was to send people elsewhere. Isn't that exactly what we do? When resources seem limited, our first

instinct is often to pull back. We withdraw. We protect ourselves. We tighten our grip. We begin calculating life without God.

Five loaves plus two fish plus five thousand people equals an impossible situation. Their mathematics was correct. What was missing was not arithmetic. It was Jesus.

Scarcity itself is a real condition. There are times when money is short, strength is gone, and opportunities are few. But scarcity becomes a spiritual trap when it blinds us to the presence of God.

We stop seeing possibilities because we are staring only at our limitations. Then Jesus says something astonishing.

"They need not go away. You give them something to eat."

Imagine hearing those words. Jesus is not being unrealistic. He is exposing something deeper.

Sometimes God deliberately calls us into situations where our own strength is inadequate. We come across assignments bigger than our resources. At these moments God wants us to discover that His strength begins where ours ends.

The disciples respond, "We have **only** five loaves and two fish." I think the most dangerous word in that sentence is not "five." It is "**only**." We complain often: Only a little money or only a little time. Perhaps we may say, "Only a little faith."

These words make us undervalue everything that God has already placed in our hands. This is the typical mindset that expresses scarcity. It paralyzes us.

Jesus doesn't argue with the disciple's mathematics. He simply gives another command.

"Bring them here to me." That is the turning point of the story. The miracle begins not when more bread appears. The miracle begins when the little they have changes hands.

The cure for scarcity is not finding more resources. The cure is placing what we have into the hands of Christ.

Now the story moves from the problem of scarcity to the power of sufficiency. Jesus takes the bread. He looks toward heaven. And before anything has changed, He gives thanks. Gratitude comes before the miracle of multiplication. Perhaps some of us are waiting to thank God after seeing the miracle happen. Jesus teaches us another way. Thank God even for the little, even before any miracle happens.

Then Jesus breaks the bread. The broken bread became multiplied bread.

We do not want anything in our lives to be broken. Sometimes our plans are broken, sometimes our pride, and sometimes our relationships are broken. God often breaks us, not to destroy us, but to enlarge our capacity to bless others.

Then Jesus gives the bread to the disciples, and the disciples give it to the crowd. Here is where the miracle happens. It happens while the disciples are giving. Had they held onto the bread, the miracle would have stopped. God's abundance flows through open hands. This is where I think we often misunderstand the word **sufficiency**.

We usually think sufficiency means, "God gives me enough for myself." But in God's kingdom, sufficiency means something much richer. It means **having enough to become a blessing to others**. God's provision is never merely about our survival. It is about our participation.

Finally, Matthew tells us, "They all ate and were satisfied." Not partially fed or barely surviving but going with satisfaction. Let me now focus on the twelve baskets of leftovers. Does it not correlate with the twelve disciples? I wonder whether each disciple carried home a basket that silently reminded him,

"You doubted me this morning, but now carry home My faithfulness."

Isn't that how God often works? Our greatest doubts become places where His greatest faithfulness is revealed. Dear Congregation, Jesus is not simply teaching us how to trust Him for bread. He is revealing Himself as the Bread of Life. The greatest scarcity in our world is not empty wallets. It is empty souls. Only Christ can fill that emptiness. Only Christ can take fearful people and make them generous. Only Christ can transform anxious hearts into overflowing lives.

So today, let us stop counting what we lack. Let us stop saying, "I only have..."

Instead, let us bring our "only" to Jesus. Let us bring Him our limited strength, our limited resources, our limited faith, our broken dreams, and our tired heart. Because once our "only" enters His hands, heaven's mathematics takes over. The world says scarcity leads to fear. Jesus says surrender leads to abundance.

The world says hold tightly. Jesus says give freely. The world says there is never enough.

Jesus says, "Bring it to Me." And when Christ holds what we offer Him, scarcity becomes sufficiency—not merely enough for us, but enough for us to become a blessing to the world.

May we leave today trusting not in what is in our hands, but in whose hands we have placed our lives.

Amen.