

## “John's Legacy: What Do You See?”

A Sermon Based on John 6:1-15

First Presbyterian Church, Kingwood

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Medical terms. They sure can be confusing. And during the announcements this morning, you heard me say we're going to have a nationally known neuro-surgeon come and talk to us next month. So I thought before Dr. Levy arrives, I should probably refresh my memory on medical terms that might come up during his visit.

So I went to the internet. And I punched the words "medical terms" into a search engine. And here's part of a list I discovered, a list that defines some common medical terms. I'll go through the list in alphabetical order. And I hope you'll pay close attention. You might even want to take some notes on these definitions.

The first word is barium. Definition? What you do after someone dies! You 'barium!'

The second word is benign. Definition? What you want to be when you're 8! You want to be 'benign.'

Got the idea? Good. Now here are some more.

Carpal. What you do when you want to get to work faster!

Chiropractor. An Egyptian doctor!

Dilate. What happens to you if you live to more than 100!

Here are some more. Intibate. What a fisherman is!

Nitrate. What a phone calls costs after 5pm!

And the last word for today? The word is vitamin. Definition? What you do when company comes over!

Actually, after reading John 6 this morning, I think Jesus might have known that last definition. Because that's exactly what he did, didn't he? When he saw a crowd coming to him he decided to "vitamin." So he turned to Philip and asked him a question about how they could do it.

And the fact Jesus asked Philip the question is kind of interesting, for two reasons. Let me explain. It's interesting first because this is one of those places in the Gospel of John where John's telling you a story you already know. But he's telling you more. He's dropping new details into the story. And one of the details is a

little bit of dialogue that takes place Jesus and Philip. John is the only Gospel that mentions it.

Truth is, John's the only Gospel that says much about Philip at all. Oh, the other Gospels mention his name. They tell us he was one of the disciples. But only John tells us more. And what does he tell us? Here's part of it. Philip, John tells us "was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter." And since there were all from the same city and all Jews they probably grew up as friends.

Friends, who knew each other from childhood. Friends who probably ate together, fished together, found Christ together. And now here they were sitting with Jesus on a hill on the far shore of the Sea of Galilee. And a crowd was coming towards them.

So John watches Jesus turn to his friend Philip and Jesus says to him, "Philip, where can we buy enough bread for these people?" And I imagine John probably could have guessed what his friend was going to say. Because John knew Philip was the kind of guy who always shouldered his share of responsibility and more.

Ever known somebody like that, somebody who's always taking on tasks, doing the work they're supposed to do and then doing more? I have. I've seen a lot of them as a pastor over my last thirty years. They do more than just worship and one more thing. They volunteer to clean up, then stay to clean up. They teach Sunday school, then go on mission trips. They're the twenty percent that the eighty percent of the congregation and the pastor depend on.

And from everything we know Philip was someone like them. He was a doer. He responded. He found a way to get the job done. And he usually took on the lion's share of the work himself. That was his strength. All his friends knew it. And Jesus knew it too. But he also knew more. Jesus knew that sometimes the strength of self-starters like Philip can also be a weakness.

So he asked Philip a question, a question that didn't really have a doable answer. So there was nothing Philip could do. This time the task was too big to tackle. But he tried to, didn't he? His mind started to work. He started to break the problem down, analyze it, figure out what needed to get done first. And his analysis was accurate. Before you can think about where to go to buy bread, you've got to think about how much it's going to cost, don't you? Actually, no! You don't!

A few years ago, an American pastor traveled with a group of people from his church. They went to the country of Haiti, the poorest country in the western hemisphere. And while they were there they met another pastor. His name was Jean. And they worshipped in the church he led on a Sunday morning, and then in the afternoon, they walked together through the town.

To the American pastor, the poverty he saw was overwhelming. Most of the homes in the town were makeshift huts. Most of the people were barely dressed. Most of the children were malnourished. But Jean just kept telling him about the way in which the church was reaching out to the community around them, sharing food, sharing clothes, helping people find materials to repair their homes.

And finally the American pastor couldn't hold the question back. He had to ask. So he turned to Jean and said, "I love the heart you have for your community and the I love hearing about the ways you're trying to love them in the name of Christ. But how do you find the money to do it? I worshipped with you this morning and I know your congregation doesn't have a lot."

And Jean turned to the pastor and said to him. "You're right. We don't have a lot. But we have learned a great lesson. We have learned that God will always give us enough to do what He needs us to do."

Wow! "God will always give us enough to do what He needs us to do." Easy to say, tough to put into practice. Especially if you're a responsible person; someone say like Philip. A man who's used to seeing for yourself what needs to be done and then going out and doing it.

But Jesus wanted Philip to see more. And some time later, as John thought back on that day, he realized what Jesus' question to Philip was really all about it. It was a test. But a special sort of test. It wasn't a test designed to see if Philip could imagine what he needed to do. No it was a test designed to see if Philip could possibly imagine what Jesus might do.

And if you stop and think about it, Jesus' question shows you that. For when Jesus asked Philip his question he didn't say "you," he said "we." In other words, Jesus isn't asking, "Philip, where can *you* buy enough bread to feed this crowd?" He asking him "Where can *we* buy it?" And when he asks the question that way, Jesus is really hoping Philip will notice something. For this is not a question Philip can answer by himself. To answer the question he's going to have ask himself more

than just his usual question, "how can I do this?" He's going to ask himself, "what's Jesus really saying to me, how does he want me to partner with him?"

And the real test is to see if Philip will ask himself that question. "How does Jesus want me to partner with Him?" In verse 6 John tells us Jesus asked his question only to test Philip, "for he already had in mind what he was going to do." So the only question in Jesus' mind was this. Would Philip take the time to find out what Jesus was planning to do? Or would he just be "old reliable Philip," a guy who finds a way to get the job done every time. Except this time.

And Philip answered, "It would take almost a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" And let me just ask you. When has God taken you there in your life? Because I haven't met many Christians who haven't been there. I haven't met many followers of Jesus who haven't been overwhelmed at some point by a problem that goes way beyond them. Ever looked at a problem that went way beyond your ability? Ever faced a situation knowing what needs to get done and knowing you can't do much about it?

And you're right. You can't. Unless you realize that you're not being asked to handle it alone. Jesus is just waiting for you to stop looking at the situation with your eyes on yourself and start looking at it with your eyes on Him. For the truth is Jesus already knows what He's going to do. He knows what needs to be done. But he doesn't want to do it alone. He wants to do it with you. He just needs you to figure out how to partner with Him instead of trying to do it all by yourself.

Kyle Idleman's someone who's figured that out. Here's how. "When I started a new church," he writes, "I found that I was overwhelmed with pressure and stress. I was working more than seventy hours a week. My wife would ask me to take a day off, and I'd say, 'I can't.' I wasn't sleeping at night, and I started to take sleeping pills.

When the church was about a year old, I woke up in the night, and I had this strange sense that God was laughing at me. As I lay in bed, I wondered, *Why? Why is God laughing at me?* It would take five years before I finally got an answer to that question. Here's how it happened.

When we moved into our current house, I saved the heaviest piece of furniture for last: the desk from my office. As I was pushing and pulling the desk with all my might, my four-year-old son came over and asked if he could help me. I said, 'Sure,' And together we started sliding the desk across the floor. He was pushing and grunting and we were inching our way along.

After a few minutes, my son stopped pushing, looked up at me, and said, 'Dad, you're in my way.' Then he tried to push the desk by himself. Of course it didn't budge. And when I realized that he thought he was actually doing all the work, instead of me. I couldn't help it. I laughed.

But the moment I started laughing, I remembered that middle-of-the-night moment five years before. And I realized clearly why God was laughing at me that night. I thought I was pushing the desk. I know it's sounds ridiculous. But somehow instead of trying to figure out God wanted me to work with Him, I started to think He asking me to do all the work as if everything depended on me."

But it doesn't, does it? I think by now most of you know we're in our fall stewardship season. And recently I had someone come up to me and worry with me a little bit. They were worried they said about how stewardship was going to turn out this year. They were worried it had been a tough year; a tough year for workers, a tough year for investors and on top of it all a tough year for our church.

"Now I'm willing," this person said, "to raise my pledge in a tough year. But I'm really worried it won't be enough." And as they said that it occurred to me that I was really hearing this person say something like what Philip said to Jesus. So I hope you'll let me try one more time to get across to all of us here in Kingwood the same truth Jesus was trying to help Philip discover that day in Galilee.

God will always give this church enough to do what He wants us to do. I'm not worried about that. I hope you aren't either. But what I do worry about is this. I worry that maybe, in the midst of a tough time, some of us will feel overwhelmed and we won't see it. Because that's what happened to Philip. He got overwhelmed. And he didn't see it.

But Andrew did. He saw a boy walking towards him who had five barley loaves and two fish. And unlike Philip, Andrew didn't see what he didn't have. He saw what he had. And he brought what he had to Jesus. And Jesus, John says, took it in His hands. And he blessed it, and broke it, did what He wanted to do with it. And it was enough. In fact it was more than enough to do what Christ wanted to do that day.

So this stewardship season, I hope we'll learn a lesson from the legacy of John's Gospel. I hope we'll see what John saw. I hope we'll look at one man named

Philip who looked at himself. He saw a problem. He saw what he didn't have, what he couldn't do, and he was overwhelmed.

And then I hope we'll look at another man named Andrew. Somehow with faith and imagination and maybe a memory (because remember, by this time Andrew had already seen Jesus turn water into wine at a wedding), but somehow Andrew looked not at himself but at Jesus. And when he looked at Jesus he didn't see what he didn't have. He saw what he had. And he brought everything he had to Jesus. And he dared to believe it would be enough. And it was.

So I hope you'll join me in praying this stewardship season that we have more Andrews among us than Philips, people who see possibilities instead of problems and people who are looking at what Jesus wants to do here instead of what we don't think we can do by ourselves.

Let's pray ...