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**Recognize Me? - Podcast 5**

*PLEASE NOTE: These are direct transcripts of spoken sermons.*

{Opening skit}

 “Well that must be it up ahead. North of the parking lot, under the green roof. Okay.”

 “I’m coming, I’m coming. Are we here?”

 “What in the world is that?”

 “What?”

 “The big cooler?”

 “It’s a cooler.”

 “Well I know that, but what’s inside of it? I thought all we had to bring to the picnic were cokes.”

 “Oh, it’s just some other stuff. So, what do you think? Are we in the right spot?”

 “What other stuff? You have never packed a picnic lunch in your life. Getup, let me see what your menu selection is. Oh, you’ve got to be kidding me, Al. This is your laptop and files.”

 “Cindy, you never know.”

 “This is a company picnic, not a planning meeting.”

 “I know that. And that is why I brought all this stuff. You know it would be just like my boss to spring something on me when I least expect it, and I want to be prepared. I need my laptop. And well, the files could come in handy.”

 “Al, you need to relax.”

 “I’ve got all my drafts in here, alphabetized and computerized, compartmentalized and finalized. I am ready for anything he can toss my way today.”

 “The only thing that’s going to be tossed are maybe frisbees or horseshoes.”

 “You don’t know my boss. The man runs that place like a boot camp. Besides you know I take pride in my work. And even at church we’ve been talking about working with excellence.”

 “You’re right, but you’ve gone a little bit too far with this one. This might be the perfect day for you to get an opportunity to get to know your coworkers. And besides it says no work talk today.”

 “Baby, if my boss talks work, we’ll talk work.”

 “Yeah but what if, your boss is trying to change things at Fletcher engineering. I mean look at us, we’re at a company picnic. Al, I want you to read the bottom of this invitation.”

 “P.S. No work talk will be permitted. Company agents will be on the lookout for violators.”

 “See I told you,”

 “There’s going to be spies here! It would be just like that man to have spies here.”

 “Oh, you have got to chill.”

 “You know, if we can’t talk about work, we’re not going to have anything to talk about. Besides, I don’t know if I would recognize half of those people outside of my department. Come to think of it, I’m not sure I would recognize the people in my department outside of their cubicles.”

 “Oh, that is terrible Al.”

 “I know, but you don’t know what it’s like. This is a very competitive business and well, right now we’re really busy. So, I brought all this stuff so I could be on the top of my game and ready for anything.”

 “Hey!”

 “Oh, hi, do I work with you?”

 “No, you probably work with my husband, Al. Are you here for the picnic?”
 “Yeah.”

 “We’re at the right place, can we join you?”

 “…This is Maryland, she’s a coworker of mine. And this is Ross.”

 “Hi, I’m Maryland.”

 “I’m Cindy, and this is my husband, Al.”

 “Hi Maryland, Judy, Ross.”

 “Nice to meet you, my wife’s over there playing softball. She’s the one who works with you guys. So, Al you a Cowboys fan?”

 “Not really, Ross. I’m not much into pro football. But I do remember something about a spy scandal with the New England Patriots a couple of weeks ago.”

 “Spies? In football?”

 “Oh, they’re everywhere.”

 “I heard about that too, you know it amazes me. The lengths people will go to, to get the upper hand.”

 “Yeah, life can be pretty competitive. Sort of like having spies at a company picnic.”

 “Spies at a company picnic? What are you talking about?”
 “Oh, don’t worry. Al’s just a little worried. You know on that invitation did y’all see at the bottom it said no work talk, and they’re going to send out company agents to look out for violators.”

 “You got an invitation to the company picnic? An invitation invitation? In writing?”

 “Yeah, it just said to bring cokes. And well, like Cindy said; no work talk will be permitted and violators will be prosecuted.”

 “Hey, it’s my wife’s company picnic, I never saw an invitation.”

 “Our department didn’t even get invitations. All I saw was that memo on the bulletin board. It just bugs me, I mean there is no consistency between departments.”

 “I totally agree, being new here we definitely need a new communication plan.”

 “Excuse me, ladies. This is all starting to sound a little bit like work talk to me.”

 “Oh, yeah. You’re right.”

 “That’s right, no work talks today.”

 “So...”

 “So, Al. You a Cowboys fan?”

 “Hey, I got something. How long you been married?”

 “About five years.”

 “Actually seven.”

 “What? Oh, yeah seven. But you know it’s gone by so fast that it really just feels like five.”

 “Fast comeback.”

 “Hey, so nice day, today isn’t it?”

 “Yeah. The weathers beautiful.”

 “Yeah, not a cloud in the sky.”

 “No rain in the forecast. Sunshine everywhere.”

 “Not even a trace of rain.”

 “So, how long have y’all been at Fletcher engineering?”

 “I don’t work for Fletcher engineering.”

 “So, you’re here with somebody? Does your husband work for Fletcher?”

 “No. I work for Green Wall Technologies.”

 “Yeah, I’ve only been at Green Wall for three months. It was a really tough move for me. But I was so looking forward to this picnic and meeting everybody. This is nice.”

 “So, Al. How long you been at Green wall?”

 “Funny thing, Ross. I actually work for Fletcher Engineering and it is possible that we are at the wrong company picnic.”

 “This is hilarious. We’re at the wrong picnic! Wow, you really don’t know your coworkers, do you?”
 “No,”

 “This is funny, I thought I’d be the only one who didn’t know anybody here because I’m new.”

 “You know, this really is a very big park and I think there’s another company picnic down at the green pavilion.”

 “You mean, we’re not at the green pavilion?”

 “No, Al buddy. You’re at the blue pavilion. The green pavilion is down that way.”

 “Nice, thanks. Let’s go.”

 “Okay.”

 “But it was really nice meeting you!”

 “Nice meeting you.”

 “Oh, yeah it was great meeting all of you. Have a good day.”

 “You too, have a good day.”

 “Why don’t we just go and meet Amy? Play some softball.”

 “Well that was interesting. Maybe now we need to go find the green pavilion?”

 “You know what I’m thinking?”

 “What is that?”

 “Maybe I don’t need all this stuff anyway. Why don’t we go schlep it back to the car and go hang out at the green pavilion?”

 “Oh, I think that’s a great plan.”

 “Unless, those really were company spies and they were just sending me down to the green pavilion just to get me away from the boss so he won’t know how hard I’m working.”

 "That's crazy. You are just making this up."

{End of skit}

 Good morning, what’s the possibility that that can happen to you. Some of you may be elbowing your less relational coworker and saying, “hey honey, do you know the people you’re working with?” I can tell you, not only could it happen to me. It has happened to me before. You know, I work with a lot of people and so from time to time I run into people from various places and I remember I had the family and we were in Kmart and we made it to the sporting goods section. And I was feeling pretty good about myself and we got in there and I saw a guy that looked familiar to me, he smiled at me, we made eye contact, I smiled at him and made eye contact. So, I struck up a conversation, we began to talk. And we talked for a while and I start asking him how his kids were doing, how they were doing in school. He was asking me the same thing, we went back and forth for a while. And finally, I could tell that there was some impatience growing in my family so I bid my adieu and turned toward Cindy and start walking away. And I said, “Cindy, he does go to our church, now doesn’t he?” and she says, “No, he’s the one who checks our groceries at the HEB.” Oh, okay I guess I don’t know everybody. She’s ten times worse than me. I got to tell you the latest. You know when you live with somebody who keeps you entertained that’s a good thing.

 The latest, and if you were in women’s bible study you’ve heard this already, but I just got to tell everybody. We were at a volleyball tournament in Georgetown, and my daughter who’s’ a sophomore had just gotten moved up onto the varsity so we didn’t know anybody there and we’re not much into the club scene so we don’t know all these folks and we just went to this tournament in Georgetown and she was playing varsity now. So as Cindy’s walking through the gym over in Georgetown, she sees this guy and she thinks he looks familiar. And she thinks to herself, you know I really should know him in fact I think I know him really really well. And so, as she’s starting to walk toward him, he’s smiling and grinning at her and she’s smiling and grinning at him. And they’re making eye contact and they’re getting closer and closer to each other and she’s thinking yeah, I know him I know him, I know this guy. I can’t place where I know him from, but I know him really well. And she got to him and all of a sudden, she just felt like she should and she just reached out and gave him a big old hug. And he’s giving her a big old hug back, and right in the middle of the hug she starts thinking, “no, I don’t know him at all. Never seen him before in my life. This is really awkward.” And she walks away from this strange encounter, she’s thinking to herself, “Hey we’re in Georgetown, 40 teams at this tournament, this guy’s probably from someplace in Houston. Never see him again.” Well come to find out his daughter also plays on the Westwood varsity, so we get to see him every week. And every time we do, he smiles at me and just winks.

 If you were asked to explain something about the people that you encounter on a regular basis in your work life and you couldn’t describe anything related to performance, job responsibilities, skill sets, you could only comment on their person. What you know about them as a person, would you be able to have something to say about the people you work with? Now when we’re talking about work life, remember we defined work life as something that you do. In other words, if you get paid to do, you’re in some kind of business, some kind of sales. You teach, maybe you work in the medical profession, that would be your work life. But it can also include those people who are stay at home parents, and that’s what they do, that’s what they put their time into. Students, you’re going to school full time. Athletes that’s what you do, that’s your profession. Whatever it is, what do you do is your work life. {Job Seekers Network defines your work life as your *current job search and then future employment or current job/employer.}* As we begin to look at work life we begin to understand that God cares a lot about your work life. He is very interested not just on what happens on Sunday morning, not just what happens at home. He’s very interested in what takes place, while you’re doing your thing. While you’re doing your work, he’s very interested in that. And God has a plan for our work life and that plan includes our four E’s that we would come to work and perform with excellence, that we would be ethical in our work and the third E that we’re going to look at today is that we would be engaged. Now what does it mean to be engaged? If you’ll look at our notes, I’ve got a definition there. You’ll find your notes in your bulletin. But if you look at your notes find a definition of what it means to be engaged. And here’s what it means, it me**ans to recognize the people in my work life and connect them to God’s divine resources.** It’s to recognize the people in my work life and connect them to God’s divine resources. **In other words, do I know people and am I somehow in my work life engaged with them in a way that I’m connecting God’s resources into their life in the way I do my work and the way I relate to people in my work.**

 Now I need to ask you a question because this is the premise for this, do you believe that God is sovereign over the affairs of your life? Do you believe that God really is in control of what takes place in your life? And as a component of that, do you believe that God is interested in the details of your life? God is sovereign over your life and he’s interested in the details. Because **if you believe that God is sovereign over your life and he’s interested in the details, you also have to understand and believe that God has placed the people in your work life in that place for a very important reason.** God's placed the people around you for a very important purpose. Now think about your work life, who are those people? As you begin to think about it, who do you work with? Who are the people in your work life? Who are the teachers and people that you’re studying under, who are the coaches that you’re working with? Who are the people that live around you and that are also taking care of raising their kids together? Who are the people that you call upon as customers? {Job Seekers Network would ask you who are your fellow job seekers and coaches?} Who are those folks? God in his sovereignty has placed those people in your life. He hasn’t placed them in my life, haven’t placed them in other people’s life. He’s placed them in your life.

 Now as you think about who those people are the fact that God has placed them in your life, you think about the possibilities of why they’re there. You know God has placed some people in your life to bug you to death. You say well how do you know that? Well James tells us in James chapter one, “Consider all joy whenever you face trials of various kinds, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance and let endurance have its perfect work that you might be complete, mature, lacking in nothing.” In other words, God has sovereignly ordained that there will be people in your life that would create the kind of friction that would force you into dependency of him. And you just thought they were there to irritate you.

 God’s got those people there, God’s got people in your life to teach you things. God’s got people in your life to encourage you, God’s got people in your life to point you to higher and more noble things. God’s got people in your life because God wants you to teach them things, God wants you to help them. God places people in your work life for a very specific reason. The question is in the business of your work life, is it all business as usual or are you finding ways to engage people in meaningful ways? As we think about that, I want us to look at a passage of scripture this morning found in Mark chapter 6. Turn to Mark chapter 6, now the passage we’re going to look at is a miracle that’s recorded in all 4 of the gospels. Its recorded in all 4 of the gospels, in other words this is one that God wanted us all to get and understand. And I think the reason he wanted us all to get it is it really clearly shows us how Jesus interacted with people. But it also really clearly pointed out our tendency, how we tend to interact with people and this is a powerful story. I believe that God brought you here today because there’s something going on in your work life, there’s someone in your work life that you need to hear these truths because God wants you to be engaged with them and even this week. So, listen carefully to what Jesus is saying.

 First, when we look at the situation I want us to start by, kind of at the beginning of the chapter. Let’s look back starting at the beginning around verse six, in fact let’s start in the second half of verse six. It says, “then Jesus went around teaching village to village. Calling the 12 to him he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits. So, he’s given these guys a new job, now some of them were fishermen, some of them were tax gathers, tax collectors. They all had different employment, Jesus calls them to work for him. And he calls them to work for him and he gives them an assignment, you’re supposed to go out two by two, you’re supposed to go out into the surrounding villages and as you go into the surrounding villages your job is to teach the gospel and to have authority to do miraculous things to vindicate or validate the gospel when you go out. And then he gives them basically the resources he wants them to have.

 He says, these were his instructions, “Take nothing for the journey except a staff. No bread, no bag, no money in your belt. Wear sandals but not an extra tunic. Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave as a testimony against them.” Now this to me seems like a really hard job, so they’re going to go two by two into the city with no provisions. They got no expense account, they got no hotel arranged in advance, there’s no rental car. In fact, as they go into the town what they’re supposed to go do is go into the town square and begin to proclaim their message to teach and hopefully somebody’s going to show up that’s interested in listening, interested enough that they will take them and provide lodging for them, take them and provide food for them, take them and meet all of their needs. Now, there’s no advanced contacts, they don’t have a client list to work, or potential customers to connect with. These guys are just going out, into the town beginning to proclaim the message, and hopefully somebody’s going to come along and want them and take them in and lodge them and feed them. Anybody ever sell encyclopedias for a summer job? Door to door, if you ever did that to pay your way through school, some of you are nodding. That’s kind of what this work is like. You know, go and make something happen. So, they go out and he says, if you go into a town and nobody takes you in and nobody helps you and nobody listens, then you just leave that town and go on to the next one. And that’s their assignment, you talk about a tough job, Jesus gave these guys a tough job.

 So, with that in mind we go onto the passage it says verse 12, “they went out and preached the people should repent and they drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them” unless you just think that this whole movement is rosy, the very next thing that happens is John the Baptist is executed. And so, this next section shows that there’s a lot of opposition, this is not easy work. In verse 30 we pick back up with the apostles, it says “the apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all that they had done and taught, then because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat. He said to them, come with me by yourselves to a quiet place to get some rest.” These guys are doing so much ministry, so many people are coming, so many people are listening that they don’t even have time for a lunch break. They don’t have time for dinner, they’re just working full time. And so, Jesus tells them, hey guys, it’s time for some rest. We’re going to take much needed vacation, we’re going to take some time off. That’s important to note. That’s important to note. It’s important to understand there’s a time to really work hard, to really put your nose to the grind stone, get after it, push hard, push yourself, do your best, really work hard. And there’s a time to go down, take some down time. To get away, to rest. Jesus recognizes that, notice that Jesus says to them that he is going to take them to a quiet place to rest.

 Now let me just challenge something in our culture, most of our resting places are noisy places. Are they not? We tend to go out into people when we need time off, instead of away from people. What do we do when we need time off? We go to a movie, we go to a concert, we go out to eat in a public place. Or on the flip side, often times we come home and we turn on the big 52-inch screen with surround sound and fil our quiet time up with noise. And some of us wonder why we feel tired all the time. What about just some quiet moments? That’s how you get rest. Getting away from the noise, having some down time with some people you care about. Connecting relationally, talking, spending time with God. Jesus is going to take them away to get some rest.

 Some of us are just dog tired, and our companies are providing vacations that we’re not taking. Why are we not taking it? Because there’s too much to do. There’s a time for work and there’s a time for rest. So, Jesus is going to give these guys the rest that they need, or at least that’s what it appears to be, at the time. Notice what happens, verse 32, “so they went away by themselves into a boat to a solitary place. But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got ahead of them. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd so he began teaching them many things.” People find out that they’re going to the other side of the lake so they begin to make their treck around and they’re gathering people as they go, every town they go into, “Jesus is going to the other side of the lake.” So, they’re making their way around the lake and when Jesus shows up the disciples are thinking solitary quiet rest, and there’s a whole bunch of people there. Now watch how Jesus deals with people. How does Jesus deal with people? How does he engage? In three ways.

 First of all, he saw them. **He saw them**. It’s very important to understand that when Jesus Christ gets off the boat and **he sees the multitude, he doesn’t see a problem. He doesn’t see a crowd. He doesn’t see an imposition, and he doesn’t see an interruption.** They had plans in place, but when he sees the people, he sees them for who they are. He looks into their eyes and he sees real people. Are you a person who **notices the people that are around you?** Could you tell me who they are? Do you see them? When someone is walking by in your work life and they’re downcast. Do you even notice that? Would you see that? Someone stressed out in a meeting, someone struggling to get there on time, or to follow through. Do you see people in your world? You see, Jesus sees these people and Jesus is interruptible. And it’s strange that often times interruptions are opportunities in disguise. These guys are going to get their rest but not quite yet because there are people and Jesus sees them.

 Second thing Jesus does is he feels. **He feels their needs**. Jesus felt their needs. Notice how it says it in verse 34, “when Jesus landed and saw a large crowd he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.” The word compassion is a word that starts with an emotion in the gut. It is this feeling, this heaviness, this weightiness over the needs of someone else and it works its way up into the hands. **Compassion is something that starts with a feeling and ends up with an action or activity that actually helps.** Jesus sees them and he sees them as sheep without a shepherd. What do we know happens to sheep when they don’t have a shepherd? They don’t have anybody to protect them, they’re basically at the mercy of the wolves and the weather. They don’t have anybody to take care of them. And what Jesus sees is he looks out onto these people and he sees their needs.

 I wonder, do you see, do you feel the needs of the people around you? When you’re sitting in that meeting and you’re looking around at all the faces, do you see the single mom? Do you realize that when you get home there may be somebody there to actually help out with you? And maybe there’s a meal started, or at least somebody to help you with that meal, to feed the kids and somebody to help you go through their homework and make sure that its getting done and make sure their baths are being taken. There’s someone there to make sure that the place gets cleaned up and at least participate with you and work with you and there’s someone there to talk to you, and process the decisions. And she’s going to go home, and she’s going to put whatever food on the table. She’s going to figure out how to get that there, and she’s got to go through all the assignments that the teachers gave, and she’s got to make sure everybody brushes their teeth before they go to bed. And she’s got to make sure that everybody gets tucked in, that everybody gets cared for and then after that she’s by herself for what little she has left. And when she comes in a little bit late the next morning, a little frazzled along the way, do you feel that? The guy that goes home every weekend, and drinks himself silly because he doesn’t have anything else, do you feel that? The student that show up in the classroom, doesn’t know what’s going to happen with mom and dad. But if what keeps happening between mom and dad keeps happening he knows his family is not going to survive long. And yet, he’s got to go to math class, and so he walks in the door and puts his head down on his desk. Jesus looked out and he could see people, and he could feel what was going on in their life. And there are people that are working in our work life all around us that are like sheep without a shepherd. And who cares about them? Who sees them? Who feels them?

 Finally, Jesus touches them. **Jesus touched their lives**, notice what he does when he sees them as sheep without a shepherd he begins teaching them many things. Jesus begins to bring God’s truth into their life, he begins to **communicate to them the truth of God so that they can understand how the specific issues in their life can be addressed by the power of God.** Jesus meets their intellectual needs. He meets their emotional needs. He meets their spiritual needs. And later on, in the passage we’re going to find out he even meets their physical needs. Jesus is now bringing something to the table to help these people that God has placed around him in his work life context. But first you got to know people, you got to recognize them and see that God wants to speak and work through you.

 There’s an article in Forbes magazine a few months back, talking about Christ in the work place. And this was pretty interesting for a Forbes magazine article, but the article talks about a woman named Nancy. And Nancy worked for a significant period of time as a nurse. And she shares one of her most significant moments as a nurse, listen to what she says. She says, “it was about 10:30 pm, the room was a mess. I was finishing up some work on the chart before going home. The doctor whom I loved working with was debriefing a new doctor who had done a very respectable, competent job, telling him that what he’d done well and what he could’ve done differently. Then he put his hand on the young doctor’s shoulder and said, ‘When you finished, did you notice the young man from housekeeping that came in to clean the room?’ there was a complete blank look on the young doctor’s face. The older doctor said, ‘His name is Carlos. He’s been here for three years, he does a fabulous job. When he comes in he gets the room turned around so fast that you and I can get to our next patient quickly. His wife’s name is Mariah. They have four children.’ Then he named each of the children and the child’s age. The older doctor went on to say, ‘He lives in a rented house about three blocks from here in Santa Ana. His name is Carlos.’ He repeated, then he said, ‘Next week I would like you to tell me something about Carlos that I don’t already know. Okay? Now let’s go check on the rest of the patients. I remember standing there writing my nursing notes, stunned and thinking I have just witnessed breathtaking leadership. Breathtaking leadership.” Is there anybody that would see your connection, your engagement with the people God has sovereignly placed in your work life as breathtaking? Because you know them, you feel what’s going on, and you’ve got something to bring to the table that’s going to help.

 Now, I don’t know about you but for me I can come up with all kinds of objections as to why that doesn’t make sense. That would never work, that’s just one of those deals that you read it in the Bible, and those people could pull that off. Jesus could pull that off, but not me. In fact, I think that the disciples were feeling the same way and that brings us to a couple principles about how we tend to approach people. And I want you to see what happens in the passage.

 Jesus is teaching these guys and gals and he’s working with their families and so forth and it says in verse 35, “By this time it was late in the day so the disciples came to him, ‘This is a remote place’ they said to him. ‘It’s already late, send the people away so they can go to the surrounding country side and villages and buy themselves something to eat.’” What are they saying? They’re saying, “Hey listen Jesus, we’ve got a whole bunch of people out here and they’ve got some issues that they need to get resolved, most importantly dinner. Now they need to take care of themselves. Send them back into the villages. Let them buy their own food.” In other words, what they’re saying is they look at the opportunity before them, they look at the multitude before them as the same thing that I say frequently and I’m sure you probably say it too, and that is, **“I’m not responsible for the people in my work life.”** I mean, what were they thinking? Running from all the villages, interrupting our down time, our vacation, we were going to get some time away. We’ve done them a service just by being here and helping them as much as we have. They should have thought about their lunch in advance. It’s not our responsibility to help everybody out. How can we help everybody out? We can’t do this for them. It’s their deal. In other words, what the disciples were saying is, and what we have a tendency to say is we do not own their problem. This is not our deal. This is their deal.

 Okay, the guy that drinks every weekend, he’s the one who got himself into that situation. The single mom, it probably was something that was her fault. That kid in class, what can I do for him? There’s just a myriad of other kids just like him, I can’t solve people’s problems. I can’t take care of their needs. I’ve got enough on my own plate, I’ve got to keep up with my job, I’ve got to keep up with clan, I’ve got to keep up with my responsibilities, I’ve got to have my down time. I am not responsible for the needs of the people in my office. I’m not responsible for the needs of the people in my work life. That’s what I feel, do you ever feel that way? I’m not responsible, I can’t do it. That’s what the disciples are saying and that’s what they’re feeling.

 In the middle of all this look at Jesus’ response. Jesus responds in verse 37, “You give them something to eat.” Jesus, you think this is our deal? We’re responsible for this? We’re supposed to make this happen? Yeah, I put you there. I’m expecting you to do it. When I feel this, I go immediately to the second response. I’ll just be honest with you, I go immediately to the second response. And look at the second response that they give to Jesus, they ask a question, they say to him, “That would take 8 months of a man’s wage. Are we to go and spend that much money on bread and give it to them to eat?” Here’s what they’re saying, they’re saying, **“I’m not capable to meet the needs of the people in my work life.”** I’m not capable. I don’t have the ability.

 Hey, that couple that’s struggling, that guy that comes in and tells me about his marriage, I’m not a marriage counselor. I don’t know how to solve that guy’s problem. I can’t fix it, I don’t know how to do that. I don’t know how to engage with these people. I can’t solve their problems, I got enough on my own and I don’t have the capability, I’m not able to meet their needs. Once you see people, you see what going on with them you start thinking, “Well what am I supposed to do?” you know take ten hours a week of my time that I’m at work and just invest that and count that for counseling people, and investing, and helping people. What am I supposed to do? I can’t do that. And that’s what the disciples are saying to Jesus. They’re saying, 8 months of wages is that really what you’re thinking Jesus?

 Jesus’ response to them is very important for us to get and he says to them, “How many loaves do you have?” he asks them, “Go and see.” They went out and they said 5 and 2 fish. Do you think they were chuckling when they said that? I’m sure they were chuckling, like “yeah okay, Jesus know it all. Like, you think we can pull this off? Yeah okay, we got 5 little cakes, we got 2 little sardines. This is the best we can do.” And what Jesus says to that is, “fine**,** let me take the best that you can do and combine it with what I can do and you’re going to see the power of God.” And that’s the principal before us. The principal before us is God is not asking us to do what we cannot do, he’s simply asking us to do what we can do. And if we’re willing to do what we can do, he will take that and multiply it in miraculous ways. Miraculous ways. Look at the rest of the story, “Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups in the green grass. So, they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Taking the 5 loaves and the 2 fish, he looked up to heaven, he gave thanks and he broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all, they all ate and they were all satisfied. And the disciples picked up 12 baskets full of broken pieces of bread and fish and the number of men who had eaten was five thousand." What Jesus is doing here is he’s saying, “listen guys, what you perceived to be a big investment, where we’d have gone out to take 8 months wages, 75% of my annual salary and spend it on such a little return. One meal, for one group of people.” And what Jesus says is “No, what I’m expecting you to do is bring me what you’ve got, 5 loaves and 2 fish. Such a small investment and when you put it in my hands, I’m going to turn it into a great return. Not only so that the people that I’m going to touch through you are benefited, but you’re going to pick up 12 baskets in the process. You’re going to be blessed in the process.” And here’s the challenge to trust, if I were to engage with the people in my work life by just bringing what little I have, I mean I might not know how to do marriage counseling, but maybe I can just tell them what I know. Just share what little I know, I may not be capable of solving somebody’s major problem, but maybe I just need to pray for them and let them know, “I’m going to pray for you.” Maybe I’m not capable of raising a single mother’s son but we’ve got an activity on Saturday and maybe I can go by once every few months and take that boy someplace where he can experience what it feels like to be around a man. I don’t know, but what little thing you have, if you would just bring that to the table Jesus says, “I’m going to take that and I’m going to do miraculous things, things that will blow your mind. Things that will bless the person and will bless you in the process.” That’s the way Jesus works. Now I want you to see someone who’s doing that, let’s take a look at Amy Buetler and hear her story.

(video clip)

 “My name is Amy Buetler and I work at Dell Financial Services, and I handle all the customer service and fraud prevention for our online retail channels. As I was living out my work life and my spiritual life it became apparent to others around, that they would ask me to pray for them or I would tell them I pray for them. And eventually it got to the point that those ladies and gentlemen would come to me and say, ‘I have this prayer request, can we go in on a team room and pray about it?’ Well sure. And eventually I started to realize that there was a need there for a bible study, so I asked the girls if they were interested in doing a bible study. The exciting thing in regard to the whole bible study is just seeing how the group has grown. The group has grown spiritually, just in their daily life, in their work life. It is so exciting. One of the gals who was coming to our group, who was not attending church at the time is now attending her church, is now serving, her daughter is serving. It’s exciting, they go to bible studies weekly because I encourage them to get accountability partners or be in a bible study, kind of exactly what we’re doing. Our running partners and things that Tim tells us, I go and tell those girls and it’s just exciting to see the fruit. It’s kind of amazing as I think about it, there are challenges that I’ve faced in living out my faith at work. You know sometimes people are having fun and kind of goofing off, you know and having a good old time and I don’t feel like its appropriate something that I should be doing, or why I was hired and it is hard to kind of sit back and be that person on the outside and not being a part of all that fun. But at the same time, I know that God called me to excellence and to do that in my work place and my environment and I know that he will bless me for my obedience. It’s kind of one of those, again I just continually pray about and the Holy Spirit will reveal to me when I can participate in some of those things. Because some of those things are just comradery with your peers, you need to do that. You can’t just be a sit in my cube, I’m not going to talk to anybody and I’m going to blah, blah blah. You can’t do that. But it’s kind of deciding and praying about what’s the appropriate time and what’s not. And also think that overall my teammates and my peers and my bosses respect that. As I see all these women gather around their cubes, talking about scripture, praying for each other and just being excited about God and what’s he doing in their lives, I’ve discovered God at work.”

 Isn’t that awesome? Started out with a simple, “I’ll pray for you.” And it turned into a whole environment now where people are supporting each other, encouraging each other in the work place. And sometimes all it takes is just to bring a little bit to the table, just bring what you’ve got to the table in various situations and let the spirit guide you. And what’s going to transpire is so incredibly powerful that you’re going to be amazed. See here’s the principal that Amy’s operating under, here’s the principal that we’re bringing to you. It’s on your outline there, **God wants us to recognize what he can bring through us to those in our work life**. God wants us to recognize what he can bring through us to those in our work life. And that’s the power of this thing. When you in the name of God bring what resources you have, you don’t have all kinds of time, you don’t have every weekend free, some of you do, most of you do. You don’t have all the expertise, you don’t have all the answers, you don’t have all the spiritual insight, you don’t have everything. But what you’ve got if you’d just allow God to take that and use that, he’ll multiple it, he’ll do things through you that will blow your mind, bless that person and bless you too.

 So, it’s time to take the work life challenge. Ask you to reach into your bulletin and pull out your work life challenge, if you don’t have one I encourage you to just raise your hand, we’ve got ushers that just are roaming around. Raise your hand, wave it around, take our work life challenge. Time to open the envelope, here’s your work life challenge if you chose to accept it. Here’s your mission for the week. There’s two challenges, you just need to do one of them, unless you’re type A you might want to do both of them but here’s the first one. Letter A, invite a coworker you don’t know well or the newest person in your workplace to lunch, and here’s the hard part, on you, and get to know them better. Not to talk about work, but to talk about them. Some of you who are extreme introverts, you deal with bits and bites all day. You may actually have to get a 3 by 5, ask somebody’s who’s relational to give you a list of questions, you could pull out and look at from time to time, you know. Tell them your name, where you grew up, stuff like that. Get a list of those questions. But try it, identify somebody, the Carlos in your work place. And just invite them to lunch, go spend some time with them, get to know them and find out what God may be doing through you into their life. That’s the first one. Second one, start identifying and recording things of interest about your coworkers or others you come in contact with, such as their family makeup, hobbies, spiritual views, and abilities. Ask God to help you think of ways to help connect to people through these insights. So just take some time, you may even actually end up writing some things down, now don’t get caught spying. But you may actually end up writing some things down about the people you’re working with to try to kind of form a mental composite of the relational network that God has put around you, to give you an opportunity to connect with these folks. Who are they? What’s happened in their life? What’re they going through right now? What’re they dealing with? What do they like? What do they dislike? What do they believe? What’s important to them? What’s a priority to them? Through those kinds of challenges, you begin to engage, and connect with people in very powerful ways. Now next week when we come back together, to wrap up our series and to look at our final E, we’re going to have a chance to come before God and just allow God to tell us, am I willing to commit to this, am I dedicated to live out my work life, to be salt and light on a daily basis. And then we’re going to have huge Work Life expo, we’re going to have tents set up, we’re going to have people who do the same kinds of things that you do, can get together. We’re going to have some resources available to you. We’ll do that between the services and after second hour. So that’ll all be available to you, we’ll keep your kids a few extra minutes longer, to give you a chance to do that. That’s taking place next week. Now let me leave you with one final thought, today as we leave, I want you to think about how much God recognizes, sees you, feels you, knows what’s going on in your life, and reaches out to touch you, the God of the universe is intimately concerned about you. He knows your name, he knows your pain, he knows your joys, he knows everything about you. As you think about how great it is to know that God knows you, every hair on your head, every day of your life. Think how great it would be if the people in your work life began to experience that God, an intimate personal God because they felt him through you. Let’s bow our heads for prayer, Father in heaven remind us again how great it is to be loved, how great it is to be recognized, to be known, to be cared for. How important it is to experience the love that you have for us. My prayer is for each person here and for all of us that we would be excited about allowing that love to flow from us into the people around us, as we engage in those around us. For we pray this in Jesus name, Amen.