

### 3.27.2022 Lent 4 (John 6:1-14)

Take a moment to consider these facts. You are one of the 7.8 billion people on earth. Earth is one small planet orbiting one of the roughly 200 billion stars in the Milky Way Galaxy. The Milky Way Galaxy, which if you could travel at the speed of light would take 100,000 years to cross, is just one of about 2 trillion galaxies in the observable universe, and the distance from planet earth to the edge of the observable universe is about 46.5 billion light-years in any direction.

Commenting on such facts, Astronomer and Author Carl Sagan wrote, “Who are we? We find that we live on an insignificant planet of a humdrum star lost in galaxy tucked away in some forgotten corner of a universe in which there are far more galaxies than people.” The celebrity TV science educator Bill Nye seems to agree with Sagan’s point of view. At an award ceremony several years ago, he told the audience, “I’m insignificant... I am just another speck of sand. And the earth really in the cosmic scheme of things is another speck. And the sun an unremarkable star... And the galaxy is a speck. I’m a speck, on a speck, orbiting a speck, among other specks...”

The fact that earth and its 7.8 billion people are not even a speck of dust on the immeasurable canvas that is our universe can lead some people to conclude that we are extremely insignificant and entirely unimportant, but is that the truth? Not according to the word of God. In fact, the Bible tells us the opposite is true. When you read Holy Scripture in its entirety, what you find in the beginning is God, who made heaven and earth vast beyond our comprehension, created humanity in a personal and distinctly different way, in His own *image* and *likeness* (Genesis 1:26). The book of Genesis tells us over and over again that creation is *good*, but when God makes man and woman in His own image, suddenly Genesis describes creation as “*very good*” (Genesis 1:31).

Carl Sagan may be correct in thinking of earth as an “insignificant planet of a humdrum star,” but his opinion as an astronomer has no bearing on our value, because in the created order, we are distinct from everything else that God brings into existence. What the astronomer views through a telescope or the scientist sees through a microscope is *good*, but let’s be honest about what we

all know and have experienced, the world as God created it is *good*, but we who bear the image of God belong to a different category, we are *very good*. For example, the Hubble Space Telescope can see, what is *good*, to a distance of about 10-15 billion light years, but it cannot see what is *very good*, the human minds that created it. An electron microscope can view what is *good*, a single atom, the basic building block of matter, but it cannot detect what is *very good*, the immaterial and individual essence of a human being, our soul.

God is the giver of “*every good and perfect gift*” (James 1:17), and He has gifted the *very good*, those who bear His image, with what theologians call His communicable attributes. God alone is Omnipotent, Omnipresent, and Transcendent, but we, who are made in His image, possess other attributes that He communicates to humanity alone, attributes such as love, wisdom, and personhood.

The pages of Holy Scripture not only speak of our significance and importance to God by describing our *very good*, “*fearfully and wonderfully*” (Psalm 139:14) unique position in the created order, the word of God also reveals our immeasurable value to Him, by revealing the unimaginable miracle that God the Son, by whom “*all things were created*” (Colossians 1:16), so loves the world (John 3:16) that He chose to enter His creation in pursuit of you. Our Savior Christ took on human flesh, He lived and died and rose to new life for your redemption, not because you are *good*, but because you are *very good*.

The almost infinitely small position we occupy in the vast universe may lead us to feel insignificant and unimportant, but God tells us the opposite is true, and the passage we read from the Gospel today provides us with an illustration of another person who must have felt very insignificant, but was in fact of great importance to God. Today we read an account of the only miracle, apart from the Resurrection, that is recorded in all four Gospels, The Feeding of the 5,000. A crowd of five thousand is large, but it’s important to note, when we hear that number, as St. John stated, “*the men sat down, in number about five thousand*” (John 6:10). Many Bible scholars believe the actual number of people in the “*great multitude*” following Jesus could have been 15,000 or even 20,000 people.

This is a familiar story, and as you know, the disciples came to Jesus in the evening and told Him to “*send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves*” (Matthew 14:15). The disciples didn’t want the crowd to go hungry, and neither did our Lord, but He had a better idea. He said to Philip, “*Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?*” Philip answered Him, “*Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little.*” One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to Him, “*There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?*” (John 6:5,7-9).

Among this great crowd, St. Andrew informs Jesus, is a boy and his lunch, but what good is that? Bill Nye would say this boy is “insignificant,” he’s nothing more than a “speck of sand,” and his meager lunch, what he has in relation to a crowd of thousands is worthless, but is that the truth? Not according to the word of God, and most definitely not, when this boy places all he has in the hands of God, because Jesus received what the boy gave to Him, multiplied that tiny offering, and provided for the people “*as much as they wanted*” (John 6:11). With what this boy offered to God, our Lord not only met the need of thousands, He provided for them so generously that when this feast was over they filled “*twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish*” (Mark 6:43).

The Milky Way Galaxy is one of about 2 trillion galaxies in the observable universe. Earth is one small planet orbiting one of the roughly 200 billion stars in this galaxy. You are one of the 7.8 billion people on earth, and the One True God, who made you in His image, has blessed you with five loaves and two fish. There will be days, perhaps a lot of days, when that doesn’t seem like enough, but don’t ever fall into the trap of looking at what God has placed in your hands and thinking, what good is this “*for so many,*” because the way our Lord chose to work through a boy and his lunch to provide so abundantly for thousands who followed Him is evidence that God loves to take the humble, seemingly insignificant person and use the gifts they offer to Him in ways we can’t even begin to imagine.

The boy in this Gospel wasn’t a speck in the crowd without a thing to offer, and no matter how we may sometimes feel, neither are we. We are not good, we are *very good*, we bear the image of God, we were made in His *likeness*,

and no Carl Sagan, we are not “tucked away in some forgotten corner of a universe...” God knows exactly where we are, what He has placed in our hands, and how He intends to use those gifts for His glory, and for the good of the world He gave His life to save.

*“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen”*  
(Ephesians 3:20-21).