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BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH

4200 N. 204TH STREET

ELKHORN, NEBRASKA

NOVEMBER 7, 2004

1 PASTOR MARK FRY: We are going to do this Reality  
2 TG things for a few weeks and you will notice the service  
3 order is flipped a little bit, too.

4 We are going to have communion as the last thing we  
5 are going to do together and you are going to have the  
6 privilege of being served by the children and their families  
7 at the end of my message.

8 So I think you are going to see why here in a few  
9 moments, but if you have your Bible there we are going to  
10 kind of ramp up a little bit.

11 My son is 17 years old and he just is a joy. He's  
12 so refreshing with his attitude and the way he says stuff,  
13 and I think his favorite reality TV is the show called  
14 "Extreme makeover." Raise your hand if you have seen  
15 "Extreme Makeover."

16 There are a couple different versions of it.  
17 There is one where they change over people's houses and then  
18 there is another where they really change people's physical  
19 appearance.

20 And it's amazing when that happens, these people,  
21 you can hardly recognize them at the end of the hour.

22 And the same with the house. The houses are just  
23 totally transformed.

24 So extreme makeover is kind of, I think, the theme  
25 of John's Gospel.

1           So if you want to open up to page 86, we don't  
2 have time to go into the detail of each of these extreme  
3 makeovers, but you need to understand that extreme makeovers  
4 abound in John.

5           They are in every single one of those first five  
6 chapters, and I've written them down here for you.

7           We have the encounter with John the Baptist, and  
8 the gathering of the disciples, that's Chapter 1.

9           In Chapter 2 we have the wedding in Cana where the  
10 extreme makeover is water turning into wine.

11           In John 3 we've got this amazing story of  
12 Nicodemus, who comes to Jesus at night and he is transformed  
13 from a person literally in the dark to a person in the  
14 light. He's extremely made-over.

15           And then in the other parts of that we've got the  
16 Samaritan woman, who is found in the 4th chapter.

17           She's the woman who Jesus asks for a drink and he  
18 says, "Go get your husband?"

19           And she says, "I don't have a husband."

20           And he says, "That's right, you don't, you have had  
21 five of them, and the guy you are with now is not really  
22 your husband."

23           But at the end of the story she's extremely made  
24 over, and she literally becomes betrothed to Jesus, the man  
25 who gives her meaning.

1           So we see at the end of that story she has turned  
2 into a disciple.

3           She has gone from being this woman of questionable  
4 reputation, to say the least, into this person who is just  
5 going out and spreading God's word, extremely made over.

6           And then we see in Chapter 5 there is this really  
7 interesting character, he's a paralyzed man who has been  
8 sitting beside the pool for 38 years.

9           38 years, and he's extremely made-over, and he  
10 literally skips into the future.

11          So what is happening is these characters are so  
12 very real and once they meet Jesus they are made over.

13          Their character is fully disclosed through the  
14 light of Christ.

15          The signs are all over the place for these things  
16 happening.

17          One of John's favorite words that he writes is he  
18 writes about the signs, the signs, the signs, the signs, the  
19 different things that Jesus is doing.

20          And if you are a person who likes to take notes the  
21 word signs is used in, 2:23; 3:2; 4:48; 6:2; 6:26; 7:31;  
22 9:16; 11:47 -- sounds like a football cadence, doesn't it --  
23 12:37 and 20:30.

24          But the point being, John is saying Jesus is doing  
25 all this really cool stuff. Extreme makeovers are all over

1 the place.

2 And the definition of signs are healings and cures  
3 and miracles, feeding of five thousand.

4 I call them extreme makeovers. That's really what  
5 they are.

6 Jesus is the change agent. He comes in and he  
7 stirs it up.

8 And that's exactly what we see. The signs are not  
9 funded by Oprah, nor are they televised by Fox.

10 They are orchestrated by Jesus. He is the change  
11 agent.

12 The signs are Reality TG and they are causes and  
13 invitations for Thanksgiving.

14 And so that kind of leads up to where we are today  
15 in John 6.

16 Because in John 6 we meet probably the smallest of  
17 all the characters, and perhaps the most significant sign,  
18 we read about right away in Chapter 6, Verse 2.

19 "A large crowd kept following him because they saw  
20 the signs that he was doing for the sick."

21 They saw the signs he was doing. The healings; the  
22 cures; the miracles; the feedings, the extreme makeovers.

23 Some people call this the story of the feeding of  
24 the five thousand, and that's exactly what is going to  
25 happen.

1           Notice that Jesus in Verses 1 through 6 does not  
2 just automatically impose his will upon the people.

3           I read Verse 2. Verse 3, "Jesus went up the  
4 mountain and he sat down with his disciples. Now the  
5 Passover, the Festival of the Jews, was near. When he  
6 looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus  
7 said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people  
8 to eat?"

9           Jesus's posture is usually to ask questions, isn't  
10 it?

11           And when he asks questions, it's just kind of like  
12 what he did in the previous chapter, when the man who had  
13 been laying there for 38 years beside the pool there in  
14 Chapter 5, Verse 6, when Jesus saw him lying there and he  
15 knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, "Do  
16 you want to be made well?"

17           Jesus asks such great questions.

18           "Do you want to be made well?"

19           And then what he says shortly thereafter is, "Then  
20 stand up, take your mat and walk."

21           Jesus asks such great questions. "Do you want to  
22 be made well?"

23           It sounds like a stupid question, but I know people  
24 who have been miserable for 38 years and they don't want to  
25 change.

1           Do you really want to be made well? Then be  
2           accountable, stand up, take your mat and walk he says.

3           Jesus asks such great questions. Do you want to be  
4           made well?

5           And then in our chapter, Chapter 6, he says, "Where  
6           are we to buy food for these people to eat?"

7           The disciples, they miss his sense of humor,  
8           because the answer is there's not enough time or money to  
9           get enough, where are we going to buy enough food to give?

10          He already knows. It says he said this to test,  
11          but such bread cannot be bought with money.

12          Of course the paralyzed man wanted to walk, didn't  
13          he?

14          Not necessarily. Not everybody wants to be fed.  
15          Not everybody wants to be healed. Not everybody wants to  
16          see the signs.

17          Some people just want to eat, and that's one of the  
18          points within the subtext of the story.

19          Jesus knows that so many people would rather stay  
20          the same than change.

21          There's comfort in sameness. There is fun in the  
22          status quo.

23          For you see, change is a challenge and change is so  
24          often a choice.

25          Most people would prefer fast food to food that

1 well last.

2           They would just as soon have a full belly and then  
3 not have to think about it anymore.

4           But Jesus seems to be saying that such a meal could  
5 only be received as the gift it was.

6           You can't pay for it; you can't buy it; it has to  
7 just be received and given free of charge. It cannot be  
8 purchased at any cost.

9           The key to the story, I think, is found in Verse 9.  
10 That's why we chose this text for today, because we are  
11 honoring our preschool and our mom's day out and kids' day  
12 out participants.

13           There is a little boy here it says in Chapter 6,  
14 Verse 9.

15           Let's look at that little guy. In his hands lay  
16 the future.

17           In his hands lay the possibility of a full stomach,  
18 satisfaction, and so much more.

19           If we just stop at the satisfaction, then we miss  
20 the meaning of the little boy and what he offers.

21           Look at him in Verse 9. There is a little boy here  
22 who had five barley loaves and two fish.

23           It doesn't sound like very much, but it's enough.  
24 For you see, the boy was willing to give what he had.

25           He probably didn't even have pockets, this little

1       guy. He may have had a rucksack.

2               I wonder if maybe his mother or possibly his  
3 grandmother packed his lunch for him.

4               And then again maybe he didn't have a mother or a  
5 grandmother.

6               Maybe he begged for the five loaves and the two  
7 fish that he did have. We really didn't know.

8               He doesn't look like much and his lunch doesn't  
9 really impress anybody, five loaves and two fish.

10              It's reminiscent of the book of Isaiah where it  
11 says a little child shall lead them, Isaiah 11:6.

12              What Jesus is saying is a small child shall feed  
13 them. This little boy, Verse 9.

14              Jesus, has said the same thing to Delaney, who was  
15 just baptized, let the little children come to me, don't  
16 stop them, for it's to such as these that the kingdom of  
17 heaven belongs.

18              In other words, these little ones, the little ones  
19 are going to feed this world. Not the big ones; the little  
20 ones.

21              For you see Jesus builds with faith the size of a  
22 mustard seed and he feeds with the little boy's borrowed  
23 lunch.

24              It's a fascinating story. He teaches us to give  
25 and not ask questions.

1           He teaches us to let go and give it over to the  
2 change agent and see the signs.

3           The relationship of a child is really kind of what  
4 the Bible is all about.

5           It always talks about little children, and how  
6 Jesus spoke to his Heavenly Father, it was that trusting  
7 relationship, or vulnerability, like Delaney walking down  
8 the middle aisle, just trusting and laying back, being  
9 welcomed into a new future.

10           That's really the relationship of a child. Notice  
11 how in the story the character in the story who does the  
12 most says the least.

13           The silent character in the story really says the  
14 most by his actions.

15           The crowd, you can only imagine, five thousand  
16 people, that's a good sized basketball crowd, how noisy  
17 would they have been?

18           They would have been sitting down, mingling about,  
19 they were fed, and the text says in Verse 12 they were  
20 satisfied.

21           My premise is not only were they satisfied, but I  
22 bet they were satisfied and they probably they never even  
23 took time to say thank you to Jesus or the little boy.

24           Five thousand people. If my math is correct, I'll  
25 bet probably about four thousand of them just ate their fill

1 and went on their merry way looking for the next meal.

2           Maybe there's that old 80-20 rule; that 20 percent  
3 of the people are going to do 80 percent of the work; 20  
4 percent of the people are going to say most of the thanks;  
5 the 80 percent, the four thousand, probably just wandered  
6 back into oblivion.

7           But this little boy, he walks on into eternity,  
8 because he gave what he had.

9           It was more than just a meal. Jesus says it's a  
10 sign. It's an extreme makeover.

11           Do you see it? Most people don't.

12           My favorite theologian is a guy named Dietrich  
13 Bonhoeffer.

14           Bonhoeffer was a Lutheran pastor during World War  
15 II in Germany and Adolph Hitler had him killed about three  
16 days before World War II was over.

17           He was imprisoned because he was involved with a  
18 plot to have Hitler eliminated from the scene.

19           His name was on some documents, there was a bomb  
20 that went off on July 20, 1944, and Bonhoeffer and his  
21 family were involved.

22           While he was in prison he wrote this great quote.  
23 He says, "God cannot endure the unfestive mirthless  
24 attitude of ours in which we eat our bread in sorrow with  
25 pretentious busy haste or even with shame. Through our

1 daily meals he's calling us to rejoice, to keep holiday in  
2 the midst of our working day."

3 He wrote this from prison as the only food he was  
4 getting was basically bread and a water and a little bit of  
5 bad coffee and whatever else the guards could smuggle in  
6 through his family's meager gifts.

7 The bread oftentimes had been soaked in human  
8 urine, it had been rancid, filled with mold, and he said  
9 it's not acceptable to eat your food in sorrow.

10 Amazing way to look at the way we get our daily  
11 bread.

12 That's a point also that I think the Gospel of John  
13 is making.

14 Faith based on just eating the meal is temporary  
15 and fleeting.

16 We read right across the column in Chapter 6,  
17 Verses 26 and 27.

18 Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, you are  
19 looking for me not because you saw signs, but because you  
20 ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that  
21 perishes."

22 In other words, don't just go from full tank to  
23 full tank, "but for the food that endures for eternal life,  
24 which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that  
25 God the Father has set his seal."

1           When we have communion today you're going to get it  
2 from a little person.

3           It's going to be a small amount; but not really.  
4 It's just a wafer of bread and you can dip it either into  
5 the cup that contains wine or grape juice.

6           It's not very much; it's all that you need.

7           It's interesting that Jesus gave them as much as  
8 they wanted, not as much as they needed, and you can bet in  
9 a group of five thousand people there were a bunch of  
10 gluttons in the group.

11           I'll bet most of those people had more than the  
12 little boy offered in the first place; five loaves, two  
13 fish, one little guy's lunch.

14           You can bet there were guys in the back that said,  
15 "Give me ten more of those loaves. Give me five more fish,"  
16 the 80-20 rule.

17           Notice not only that that's a God of abundance, who  
18 gives them not only what they need, but what they wanted,  
19 that's an amazing little sideline of the whole story, but  
20 look how much is left over.

21           Twelve baskets full of leftovers. What is the  
22 significance of twelve?

23           Well, they are twelve tribes of Israel. There are  
24 twelve disciples, which means you disciples who have eaten,  
25 you now have a responsibility to give away what you have

1 left over.

2 Get out there and feed the world. Get out there  
3 and lead the world.

4 Get out there and through your simplicity live a  
5 life of abundance.

6 The sound of thousands being fed is not a quiet  
7 story. It's a very noisy story.

8 You can almost hear people sitting in the back,  
9 "When are they going to get to me?"

10 "Where did they get the food?"

11 "Should we walk into town?"

12 "Is it worth the wait?"

13 It's worth the wait. Willingly letting Jesus into  
14 our hearts and our wallets is a sign, you see; it's not just  
15 something.

16 I close with a little deal I did a couple of years  
17 ago.

18 I had the honor a couple years back right around  
19 New Years, I had the privilege of doing a wedding in  
20 Minneapolis.

21 And Kyle and Julie were married at a beautiful big  
22 church in downtown Minneapolis and it was one of the  
23 highlights of my ministry.

24 It was really fun. We got to fly up there and do  
25 this wonderful wedding, and Kyle is a special kid, and Julie

1 is just a wonderful young woman.

2 And we did the wedding on Saturday and I needed to  
3 fly back to Omaha on Sunday morning.

4 I wasn't going to get here in time for worship, but  
5 I was going to leave at about 11:00 o'clock on Sunday  
6 morning. I had to be at the airport in Minneapolis.

7 But I knew there was a church in Minneapolis I  
8 always wanted to worship at, and it's called Spirit Garage,  
9 and their motto is we are the church that has the really big  
10 door, because they welcome absolutely everybody.

11 They have a very strong ministry with the  
12 prostitutes and drug addicts on Hennepin Avenue and they  
13 meet in this old beat up school that has a really big door.

14 So I had always wanted to go there. On Sunday  
15 morning I got up, put on my travel clothes, and I had a  
16 bunch of stuff, I had to dress up for the wedding and so I  
17 had a suit bag and a suitcase, and I'm ready to go.

18 So I have the cab guy bring me down to Hennepin  
19 Avenue where Spirit Garage was and I went in and worshipped  
20 with them.

21 I go in, and I told the cab be back in about an  
22 hour and you can pick me up and take me to the airport. The  
23 guy said all right.

24 It's below zero. It's freezing out. I go inside  
25 and some guy immediately says, "Can I take your bag?"

1 I'm like these people aren't my people and I said  
2 "No, I think I'll keep it right by me."

3 And I took it with me and sat down right on the  
4 aisle, which is usually where I am uncomfortable, I like to  
5 have an escape route, it's a Lutheran church, by the way, I  
6 sat there and during the service the minister of music does  
7 not look like Gene.

8 His name is Smitty and he looks like Marlyn Manson.  
9 He has piercings and he has black hair, black eyeliner, and  
10 we sang together and he led this fabulous worship service.

11 Pastor Pam got up to preach and at the end of her  
12 sermon she invited everybody to take everything out of their  
13 pockets and bring them up and put it on the altar.

14 I had one travel check left. I had my wallet. My  
15 car keys.

16 But take a moment and think about what you've got  
17 in your pocket.

18 I got my stuff out today, I'm like Captain  
19 Kangaroo, I have so much junk in my pockets.

20 But I have a handkerchief here because as I've  
21 gotten older my tear glands have gotten a lot closer to the  
22 surface, so I keep this thing handy, and it also reminds me  
23 of my grandfather, who was a farmer, who always had a  
24 handkerchief.

25 I also have a little Swiss Army card thing here

1 which allows me to get into my battery if I need it, if I  
2 start fading and Brad starts giving me the sign, I have a  
3 battery here, nine volt battery.

4 I have some lip balm. I've got my little prayer  
5 rock that is from my other grandfather, he was a rock hound,  
6 and that's a little polished stone.

7 And I've got one of those little God loves you  
8 crosses that a lot of us like to have in our pockets.

9 I've got a couple of cough drops so that you don't  
10 have to smell my bad breath on Sunday morning when we  
11 possibly have a cup of coffee or shake hands or talk.

12 Then I've got my keys. Then I've got my wallet.  
13 But Pastor Pam was talking about, you can tell a lot by what  
14 people have in their pockets.

15 And so what she did, she invited us to let go of  
16 all that stuff, put it on the altar and say a prayer over  
17 it.

18 It's tempting when a prayer is like that to have  
19 your eyes open, because I thought maybe Smitty was helping  
20 himself.

21 (Laughter)

22 But, you see, the little boy didn't question  
23 letting go of all he had, five loaves and two fish.

24 He didn't have pockets, but what he did is he let  
25 go, and he let God multiply and literally change the world.

1           So would you envision the things that you have in  
2 your pocket as I pray a prayer here before we have communion  
3 together?

4           Oh, gracious God, you give us so much. You give us  
5 pockets. You give us checkbooks, wallets, lip balm, finger  
6 clippers, mints, little crosses, signs of your gracious  
7 love.

8           Lord, would you teach us, please, to give wisely?  
9 Would you please enter into those checkbooks and those car  
10 keys and all those things that we have and work your wonder,  
11 for they are signs of your gracious love.

12           Receive them for the sake of him who gave himself  
13 for us. Jesus the Christ. Amen.

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