

Little Lunch Boy

Written by Courtney Lee

Read by Benson

(Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:31-44; Luke 9:12-17; and John 6:1-14)

<https://www.paultripp.com/articles/posts/dont-forget-about-the-boy>

XRef - PP, S1 E2, Joseph Barsabbus's Wife

(running, breathing heavy, door slams)

(yell) MOMMA! (pause) MOOOOOM!

(fast) Momma! There you are! Momma! Guess what?! You know how I left early this morning because I wanted to go see Jesus? And you know how you made me lunch so I wouldn't get hungry because you know I'm always hungry and it was maybe a little too much for me but you thought I could save it for later or maybe I could share it with someone and... WELL, YOU WERE RIGHT AND I DID SHARE AND YOU ARE NEVER GOING TO BELIEVE WHAT HAPPENED!!! (excited noise)

... (long pause)

I think I'm different than most boys my age. (shrug) The other boys like to spend time with each other, playing and goofing off, but (pause) I like to spend time with adults more. I like hanging out in the edges of rooms where discussions about important stuff happen. I don't need to say anything. I just like listening.

I've gotten really good at slipping into places unnoticed and hanging around until someone kicks me out. My favorite place to do this is at the synagogue. I have listened to rabbis and priests and pharisees and scribes. Everyone shoos me away when they do finally see me, telling me that this isn't a place for kids, that I have no business being there, to "go on home now, boy."

But I just keep showing up. (smile)

So I actually knew talk about this Jesus guy before most. (laugh) His name has been spoken in hushed tones for a while now, everyone at the synagogue not

really sure what to do about Him. They discussed His family, saying He was from Nazareth, His mother was Mary, and His late father was Joseph, and His brothers who were pretty well known too. They discussed His teachings, some of their memories going back almost 20 years to when Jesus was twelve, and others just recently getting a peek into what He's been up to. But the hottest topic of all was His miracles. It was my favorite part too! They argued about the validity of Him turning water into wine, healing ailments of both Jews *and* Gentiles, delivering demons out of people who have been bound up for years, and demanding life to those who were already dead. It was fascinating; like they weren't even talking about real life. Could it all be true?

I didn't know.

But I sure wanted to get close enough to find out.

So when I heard He was coming our way, I made a plan to be there. Mama trusted me on my own and mostly just worried about my belly being full. (laugh) Oftentimes my head was so deep in thought, I'd wander off in search of adventure and information and forget to eat all day. So when I told her I was going to the hills, she made sure to pack me a little extra in my basket-- six little barley loaves and two fish. Quite the spread, even for mama! (smile) She gave me a hug and told me she just felt in her soul that today was going to be a special day. She reminded me of my manners, telling me that her packing my lunch was a way to be with me even though she couldn't be there herself. (pause) Her smile looked sad. I hated that she couldn't come with me.

Mama was mostly home-bound. Her legs didn't work quite right and she could only walk around the house with a couple special sticks we made for her. Walking even a short way was really difficult and painful for her so there was no way she could make it up the hills with me. As much as I've talked about this Jesus and His miracles, I wonder if she considered trying to go, seeing if He could do something about her legs... But she just smiled her sad smile and told me to go on and come back and tell her every single detail of the day-- to not forget one single sight, smell, taste, sound, or feeling. I wouldn't forget. I promised. I gave her a big hug and helped her to her chair and brought her sewing, giving her one last look as I left. "Love you mama! Bye!"

My pack felt so heavy with all that food! (laugh) And I was hungry before I even got through town. (laugh) How did mama know that my excitement would turn to hunger before I even reached the hills today? (laugh)

There was so much food, I didn't think it would hurt to eat one loaf. I found a spot under a tree just beyond town with a clear view of both the road and the sea and began to nibble on momma's barley bread. I promised myself that I would find someone else to share the rest with; it would be too selfish to keep it all for myself. And my momma's bread was *the* best. She should sell this stuff! (pause)

Just as I took my last bite, I saw them. (pause)

I swallowed quickly and shoved everything back in my pack, wiping my face with the back of my hand.

There He was. (pause) Wow. (pause, like Jesus is walking right in front of him)

Apparently, I wasn't the only one wanting in on this action. (whistle) The whole town plus some came right behind! Word must've traveled quickly. We moved up the hills and each found a spot to sit. I used my skills of finding my way into the choicest of locations and wound up right near His disciple group, not only able to hear Jesus but the discussions between the large group traveling with Him.

He was amazing. (pause) Of all the things I'd ever listened to, His was obviously the best. He taught about the Kingdom of God in a way I'd never heard before. It was commanding without being authoritative like other religious leaders I've experienced. It was loving like my momma but a deeper level of care than even she could provide. And He told the best stories! Ahhh! I loved His stories. I wish He never would have stopped. But He eventually did...

His disciples took advantage of the break and turned and quietly told Him to send us all away because the sun was well behind us now and some were getting restless in the large crowd. He smiled, quickly catching my eye and told them that *they* should feed us all and then He began to move through the crowd, stopping every so often to sit with someone in prayer or in healing.

I watched as His nurturing touch restored and replenished many in the crowd. I couldn't believe I got to be here to witness this. (pause) And as beautiful as it was, my heart also ached for my mama; oh how I wish she were here to experience His touch, for Him to restore her legs to working order. I felt a tear coming to my eye and just as I reached to wipe it away, I felt a tap on my shoulder.

It was one of the disciples. I think his name was Andrew. He asked me if I had any food in that pack of mine...

"Yes, of course, sir. I have six bar--, no, five barley loaves of bread, oops, ate one on the way here (nervous laugh, quick pause) and I also have two fish. Please, take it all. I'd love to share."

Andrew thanked me and I watched as all the other disciples turned up empty handed. Oh dear. My mama was the only one who had thought to pack a lunch today?!? Wow. She was gonna get a kick out of that! (laugh) But how were we all going to eat with just my little lunch to share?

That's exactly what the disciples were asking Jesus as well. (laugh) He caught my eye again as He took my basket from Andrew, giving me a nod and a wink. (pause) Was Jesus really holding *my* little lunch?! He looked up toward heaven and prayed a quick prayer of blessing on the food. Afterward, He kept breaking the loaves into pieces and giving the bread and fish to the disciples to give to the people. I don't know how long it took but I never once took my eyes off Jesus as He kept breaking pieces off those five barley loaves and two fish, **more coming from where there was none**. When He finished, He grabbed a couple portions and came and sat by me, handing me some of the miracle food just as my stomach growled as loud as a bear coming out of hibernation. (laugh) We both laughed. (laugh) Still laughing, He put His arm around my shoulders and pulled me in for a hug and then? (shrug) We ate... side by side, shoulder-to-shoulder, not saying anything at all, just enjoying the Presence, and we watched the sun set over the Sea and behind the mountain, me trying to memorize every detail to tell mama when I got home.

What a perfect day.

Absolutely perfect.

Before I left for home, a woman came and gave me a basket full of leftovers, brimming with bread and fish. The sparkle in her eye said she knew it was me who first handed over my lunch to share. She told me to tell my mama thank you for the generous lunch she provided today, going on to say it was usually her having to prepare all the food. It was a nice break, she expressed. "Best barley bread I've ever had in my life!" (smile, nod) I agreed.

... (long pause)

"And the only thing I wish were different, momma, is that you were there... (sad) He would have healed you. I saw Him do it. He could have. If only you were there..."

She shushed me outright, telling me she didn't need to be on a hill in the presence of Jesus to be healed, that if He wanted her legs to work, He would make it so. She explained that Jehovah *may* remove our sufferings, but if not, He would certainly use it. There's deeper healing in letting God mold and make us into His image, into people who are willing to trust Him, in little boys being willing to give up all they have so He might be able to feed 5000. "That's worth more than a couple of legs that work right, son."

(pause, imagining a moment between them)

"They loved your barley bread mama. Said it was the best they've ever had..." (smile, soft) Thanks...