

Youthful Stories in the Bible You Haven't Heard Since Sunday School  
"The Lad and His Lunch" John 6:1-14  
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Sometimes the things that children do teach lessons to a nation of people. Last week I was watching the news. As often happens, the national news outlets like to throw in a human-interest story. This story I am about to tell was about something that happened at a ball game this past week. CBS News reported the story:

Major League Baseball's play of the week happened in Detroit Tuesday night. But it wasn't on the field; it happened in the stands. A routine foul ball at the Detroit Tigers game became anything but when 10-year-old Travis Blackwell decided to give the ball to an even younger fan, 7-year-old Michael Ogden. "I said, 'Can I give this ball to that kid down there because it's his birthday today,'" Travis said.

But, that's not the end of the story:

"But the boys weren't done spreading happiness," the reporter continues.

"A ball came over the net and the guy gave it to me," Michael said. "Then this little girl was sitting behind us, and I gave the ball to her, and it was her first baseball she has ever had."

Travis called it a "line of awesomeness." A line of awesomeness that became a home run in a lesson on civility.<sup>1</sup> In some ways John's story of the lad and his lunch became its own home run complete with a lesson we need to hear.

It's that "line of awesomeness" that describes the way that children demonstrate their innocence. The impact is so phenomenal sometimes that it can affect a nation—or in the case of our story today about the little boy who shared his food with Jesus only to see it distributed to 5000 plus people. And his story bears telling even today for people who revisit it. It is a line of awesomeness that is led by a kid holding up a vision for the world—whether it was bread and fish in a valley in Palestine, or a little boy in the stands catching a foul ball and then passing it on to another kid, who in turn passes it to another kid. The story really fits well

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/boy-shares-foul-ball-with-another-young-fan-at-detroit-tigers-game/> (accessed August 16, 2018).

in the old proverb about what a better world it would be if everyone lit just one little candle.

It is apparent to me that the other gospel writers were not as thoughtful about the story of the lad as John the Apostle was. Matthew, Mark, and Luke do not choose to include it in their narratives. Yet, the feeding of the five thousand can be found in each. There were reasons—maybe their purpose—the kingdom of God is like the resources God can and does provide for those in the kingdom, or Mark who wrote so quickly with brevity he left it out, or Luke who was all about getting the stories lined up along Gentile interest lines—but John? He retold this story as much as 60 years after it happened. In addition, he included Simon Peter’s little brother Andrew as the guy who asked Jesus to consider the resources of the lad for the multitude. It’s hard to know how old Andrew was but he was always the inclusive one in the gospel stories and may have been middle to late teens.

Commentators generally frame the story in the context of John 5, where Moses is the subject, often referring to this as a re-visiting of the Exodus-Passover story. Some of them also leave out the story of the lad and his lunch. emphasize the bread as cheap and the fish as small. Those who choose that route are attempting to focus on how spectacular Jesus’s miracle was with little reference to the reason for the child in story in the first place.

Nevertheless, the lad’s story is important. Had he known the phrase “line of awesomeness” we might have seen it in the John’s own gospel words. The great preacher C. H. Spurgeon has a great paragraph that back’s up this idea. He said: “We will begin by saying that **THESE LOAVES AND FISHES HAD A PREVIOUS HISTORY**. . . . We do not know his name; we are not told anything concerning his parentage. Was he a little pedlar, (*sic*) who thought that he could make some money by selling a few loaves and fishes, and had he nearly sold out? Or was he a boy that the apostles had employed to carry this slender provision for the use of Jesus and his friends? We do not know much about him; but he was the right boy in the right place that day. Be his name what it might, it did not matter; he had the barley loaves and fishes upon which the people were to be fed. . . .”<sup>2</sup>

It was clear to me that the boy in Detroit came prepared with his glove all ready for the catch of lifetime. First, other fans missed a foul ball and then like magic it bounced straight into the glove he brought with him to the park. We never know, but he was right there ready, just in case. God is already working in our lives to have us in the right place at the right time to do the right thing for the right reasons

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.biblebb.com/files/spurgeon/2216.htm> (accessed August 16, 2018).

for the glory of God. We are called to many things, but I can't think of any better story that others might tell about us, now or in the future, but that we were always present when it came time for a "line of awesomeness."