

GOD NEEDS YOUR EXCESS CAPACITY!

Today's Text: Lk 5: 1- 11

Extracts:

So it was, as the multitude pressed about [Jesus] to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets. Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat. When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless, at Your word I will let down the net." And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking [Lk. 5: 1-6]

According to Forbes Magazine, there are 403 billionaires in the United States of America.¹ Recently, 40 of them pledged to give away at least half of their wealth to charity either during their lifetime or after death. The list included investor Warren Buffett, Microsoft founder Bill Gates, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg and CNN founder Ted Turner. The pledge was out of "moral commitment," not "legal obligation." That is, rather than give it away as a tax-avoidance gimmick, they want to spend it where they believe it is more pressing- on the needy.

What do those billionaires share in common? They have excess capacity of money! For example, in 2006, Buffett pledged 99% of his money to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Yet, in March 2010, Forbes Magazine estimated Buffett's wealth at \$47 billion! How about you? You may not have money but you have something in excess that others need or that you can give to God. For example, you may be unemployed or underemployed, which means excess time capacity. You may have production facilities or talents that you are not using in full because of a business slow down or sheer laziness. Your Father in heaven has need of them. In this week's study, Peter allowed Jesus to preach from his idle fishing boat and his life was not the same thereafter. Do you know what awaits you if you try something similar? Let us find out!

¹ Story is based on the following sources: "US billionaires pledge 50% of their wealth to charity," <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-10870361>; and "40 US billionaires pledge to donate to charity," 2010-08-05; <http://www.mid-day.com/news/2010/aug/050810-40-US-billionaires-pledge-donate-charity.htm>

1. Background: Peter allows Jesus to preach from his idle boat

In December 1987, I used the opportunity of attending a professional conference in Tel Aviv to visit some holy sites in Israel. At Tiberias, on the south-west shore of the Sea of Galilee, they served a delicious meal in which the main course is a local favourite fish called *St. Peter's fish*. The fish has been named to commemorate the event that took place on that spot two thousand years ago. That was where the story of this week's Bible study took place. Therefore, we are dealing in facts, not folklore!

Before becoming a full-time disciple of Jesus, Peter (then known as Simon) was a fisherman. He was a business partner of James and John, the sons of Zebedee [Lk. 5: 10], and they also had hired servants that we may now call employees [Mk. 1: 20]. Peter and his partners "had toiled all night and caught nothing" [Lk. 5: 5]. So by the morning of the following day, they had no fish to sell. The fishermen left their two boats by the Sea of Galilee also called the Lake of Gennesaret [v. 1] or the Sea of Tiberias [Jn. 21: 1] and went to wash their nets in the sea [Lk. 5: 2]. In other words, the whole business was in a lull- with workers and facilities having nothing to do.

In business parlance, *excess capacity arises when an enterprise does not have enough activities to keep its available resources (human and non-human) fully utilized*. It could be due to a variety of factors. For example, it could be due to problems in the market place (such as a fall in demand) or from suppliers (such as delayed delivery of inputs or supply of inferior materials) or from within the enterprise itself (such as workers' strike or equipment breakdown). *The net effect is that there is idle capacity which is not being utilized.*

Somewhere in your life right now, you may be in a similar situation. For example, you may have recently lost your job. While searching for a new one, you are now idle finding what you can do with your enormous skills and experience. Or you may have recently retired after over forty years of working and you are wondering how to fill up the idle time now at your disposal. Or your children have married and left you and your spouse a big empty nest, and you are beginning to wonder what to do with the huge empty space.

As Peter peered into the blurred blue waters of the Sea of Galilee that morning, tired from a sleepless night that brought him and his colleagues nothing to cheer about, he could have been too troubled in spirit to sleep. He had no products to sell. He was stuck with idle boats and workers but bills (such as wages and utilities) still had to be paid. That was when Jesus came in. Let us follow the story from there:

- a) *Jesus asked to use Peter's idle boat*

As Jesus stood by the lake, “multitudes pressed about Him to hear the word of God.” He saw two idle boats standing by the lake but their owners had gone to wash their nets. Jesus got into the boat that belonged to Peter and “asked him to put out a little from the land.” Then, Jesus sat down and taught the multitudes from that boat [Lk. 5: 1-3]. Jesus had need of Peter’s excess capacity!

You can imagine what just happened. We are not told that Jesus negotiated a deal with Peter to use his boat or that Peter hesitated to part with it. Jesus simply went into the boat and asked the owner to put it out a little into the sea and he obliged! In like manner, if you are waiting for God to come and beg you to make your excess capacity available for His use, you may wait forever. The earth is His and all the fullness thereof [Ps. 24: 1]. For example, when Jesus was about to make a triumphal entry into Jerusalem, He sent two of His disciples to go into the village opposite them where they would find a colt tied. They should loose it and bring it to Him. If anyone challenged them, they should say, “The Lord has need of it!” That was exactly what happened [Lk. 19: 29-34]. The Lord has need of your idle time, space and talents. You will do well to let Him have them because it will be for your own good!

b) *Peter received an unexpected reward!*

After the Lord had finished speaking with the multitudes, He said to Peter, “Launch out *into the deep* and let down your nets for a catch.” Peter reminded Him that they had toiled all night and caught nothing but “At Your word, I will let down the net.” After doing as commanded, Peter “caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking.” So, he had to invite his partners to bring the other boat. They filled both boats so much so that they began to sink [Lk. 5: 4-7]! Examine that carefully. Jesus asked them to launch nets but only one net caught fish and it was Peter’s! He was the one who gave Jesus his idle boat.

When expertise defers to faith, miracles are bound to follow.² Even when Peter knew that he and his partners had virtually mined the whole of the Sea of Galilee all that night and caught nothing, he obeyed the command of Jesus to launch “into the deep.” By obeying, Peter received more than he could ever have bargained for. First, he received a bigger payoff than if he had negotiated a boat rental fee with Jesus. Second, he caught more fish than ever before, such that he had overnight moved from excess capacity to *inadequate* capacity!

Recall what happened when David planned to bring up the ark of God from Baale Judah to Jerusalem. On the way, the oxen carrying it stumbled

² “If You Think Faith Is So Hard, Try Expertise!” *Weekly Bible Study Series*, Vol. 2 No 8: 18 March 2001; http://www.bibleresourcecentre.com/Volume_2/PDFs/Ifyouthinkfaithishardtryexpertise.pdf

and, in an attempt to prevent the ark from falling, Uzzah touched it. God was angry with him and struck him dead. David became afraid to transport the ark farther. Nearby was Obed-Edom the Gittite's house. The king took the ark aside into Obed-Edom's house where it stayed for three months, "and the Lord blessed [his] house ... and all that belong[ed] to him because of the ark of God" [2 Sam. 6: 1-11]. Obed-Edom had excess space in his house and the Lord had need of it. For giving God his excess capacity, he and his household received in three months the blessing of a life time!

c) *Peter moved from a small business to a global conglomerate!*

When Peter saw what had happened, he fell down at the feet of Jesus and said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" He and his partners were astonished by what they had seen. Jesus said to him, "Do not be afraid. **From now on you will catch men.**" As soon as they had brought the boats ashore, Peter and his business partners, James and John, "forsook all and followed [Jesus]" [Lk. 5: 8-11]. Peter moved from being the little fisherman by the Sea of Galilee to ultimately lead Christ's early church to fish for men into the kingdom of God. He had grown from a small enterprise to a global conglomerate.

From the forgoing, it is clear that it is for your own good to hand over your excess capacity to God because He has need of it. If you do not do so, Satan will find work to fill up the space! For example, when Moses went into the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments from God, the people waited for him. They had idle time on their hands. What did they do with it? They put pressure on Aaron to make them a god to worship and he gave them the golden calf made from the golden earrings that their women had got from the Egyptians. When Aaron finished the work, he said to the children of Israel, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!" For doing that, about three thousand men of the people who had participated in the debauchery died in one day [Ex. 32: 1-28].

2. Identifying your excess capacity

Put yourself in the place of the business enterprise (featured above) and imagine how much excess capacity exists in you when the opportunities, blessings and talents which God has made available to you are not fully utilized. Remember, the whole duty of man on earth is to fear God and keep all His commandments [Eccl. 12: 13]. As we approach end-times, God has a sense of urgency because "the harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few" [Matt. 9: 37]. God needs more harvesters right now and, so, believers have no reason for excess capacity!

When people find their homes cluttered, they send for decluttering experts to help them to identify their excesses.³ In like manner, here are a few tips that can lead you to identify your own excess capacity:

a) *Declare a state of emergency!*

Some people may never know what idle capacities they have until they are faced with an emergency, that is, a situation when existing solutions cannot help or may even hinder. If you want to survive or overcome the new obstacle, you will have to do something. In the process, you may discover talents and strengths that have been dormant all these years.

Take the example of Saeed Amidi. In the 1970's his family fled from the Iranian revolution and settled in Palo Alto in the Silicon Valley, California, USA.⁴ Having lost their high class privileges, his father told him that he had to start working for a living. So, after college, Amidi started his own business in real estate, investment and a water company. Then he bought an unremarkable place, a low-rise suite of offices in downtown Palo Alto with the address, 165 University Avenue. On the door of the premises, he saw the name, "Google," the recent tenant there. As he dug into its past, he discovered that Logitech had also been there. That building was the breeding ground for successful entrepreneurs. So, when Paypal, an Internet payments company came along, Amidi asked for a small stake in the company (instead of a security deposit) plus the rent. In 2002, less than two years later, the small unknown Paypal had blossomed into a public company that was sold on eBay for \$1.5 billion! If Amidi's father had not asked him to contribute to the family's budget, the young man might have wasted his free time on unfruitful pastimes. He might never have known that he had marketable talents that have now turned him into a silent millionaire!

You are much more capable than you may know. You do not have to wait until an emergency (such as a fire or flood or loss of privileges) to know that. Declare one! Each morning, when you pray, you should tell God like the prophet Isaiah, "Here I am! Send me" [Is. 6: 8]. The Psalmist affirms, "The Lord my God will enlighten my darkness, for by [Him] I can run against a troop; ***by my God I can leap over a wall***" [Ps. 18: 28-29].

b) *Audit your use of material blessings/natural talents*

³ See, for example, "17 Easy Decluttering Solutions from the Experts," <http://lifestyle.msn.com/your-home/cleaning-organizing/staticslideshowb.aspx?cp-documentid=25010997>1=32001> ; 4 Sept, 2010.

⁴ Story is based on the following sources: Peter Day, "165 University Ave. Silicon Valley's 'lucky building,'" 27 Aug. 2010; <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-10944196> and "Paypal creator recalls early days," 27 Aug. 2010; <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-11036924>

Some people have excellent natural talents or enormous material blessings which they have misused or squandered. For example, drugs are quite expensive. So, it is the rich and the famous that have the means to do so that indulge in drugs and alcohol since they soon discover that material wealth cannot buy them peace of mind. The bulk of addicts that are caught and jailed may be the poor because they are unable to buy their way out of trouble with the law enforcement officers.

Take the case of King Solomon. In addition to wisdom, God blessed him with so much material wealth and honour “so that there [was not] anyone like [him] among the kings all [his] days” [1 Kgs 3: 12-13]. He became so rich that he “made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones” [1 Kgs 10: 27]. However, he squandered his enormous talents and blessings on women, especially foreign wives that turned him away from God. He had 700 wives and 300 concubines [1 Kgs. 11: 1-3]. When you realize that there are 365 days in a normal year, he had at his disposal three wives per night! That is enormous excess capacity. It is, therefore, not surprising that at the end of his life, he lamented, “Vanities upon vanities, all is vanity” [Eccl. 1: 2].

3. Conclusion: Let go and let God!

From the forgoing study, we can draw the following conclusions to guide you in channeling your excess capacity:

- ***Do a regular stress test on your physical, emotional and spiritual capacities in the dimensions of time, space and attitudes.*** For example, how much of your free time do you spend on the word of God instead of *Sudoku* or sexual immorality or idolatry? Why should you lease your free apartment to brothel operators? Do you know that some Nobel Prize winners are fools? A fool is the person who says in his/her heart that there is no God [Ps. 14: 1].
- ***Willingly offer your excess capacity to God to use to win souls for His kingdom.*** It was for that purpose He had endowed you in the first place [Deut. 8: 17-18]
- ***Then sit back and enjoy the benefits that God will give you in return,*** for “everyone who has left houses [or family] or lands [for the Lord’s] sake shall receive sevenfold, and inherit eternal life” [Matt. 19: 29].

To those who know to do good and do not, to them it is sin [Jam. 6: 17]. To knowingly know and misuse/misapply your excess capacity is sin. So, let go and let God.

God needs your excess capacity!