A fictitious but realistic town called Anytown has a crisis. It is an agriculturally based town, and all the farmer’s crops have been lost to blight. Five thousand people in the town have no food to eat. Their crops are gone, and they had no savings. The crisis has gone on for so long that the food pantry shelves are bare.

The imaginary Episcopal church in this fictional town is called St. Swythen’s. Let’s eavesdrop on a few conversations at St. Swythen’s during this time of crisis.

Suzy, the head of the outreach committee, goes to the vestry and finance committee. Suzy says, “People are hungry in Anytown. We must feed them.”

The finance committee says, “I understand there are 5,000 of them. We can’t support our own church. We have no money to feed them. We only budgeted $200 for outreach this year. You can have that, but what good will it do among 5,000 people.”

Suzy then goes to the Christian education and discipleship committee and asks to give a program and raise money to feed the people. Still, this committee is busy planning an Advent series. “We don’t have enough time to worry about this now.” They tell her to come back later.

Not to be deterred, Suzy decides to partner with other churches and the business community, and together the group raises enough money to provide one bag of food for each person. The collaborative group decides that St. Swythen’s has the best facility to distribute the food because they have ample grounds and can set up outside.

But when Suzy mentions this at church, the Buildings and Grounds committee expresses that many people trapping across the lawn will spoil the landscaping. Food recipients also might park on the grass if someone isn’t available to monitor the situation and there aren’t enough committee members to do this.

St. Swythen’s isn’t an uncaring church. They are just approaching their ministry from a perspective that resources are scarce and that we have to preserve them. After all, a little won’t do much, they think. They are a lot like Phillip, who tells Jesus that six month’s wages wouldn’t be adequate to feed all the 5,000 hungry people in front of him.

Phillip was one of the 12 apostles. He’d seen Jesus perform all sorts of miracles. But, somehow, he’s still stuck in believing that life is about scarcities and not about the abundance that Jesus offers. He’s not willing to recognize that when Jesus comes into the equation, the numbers add up differently.

A little boy, however, has offered Andrew his lunch. The little boy doesn’t think that his little lunch is so inadequate it’s not worth offering. He truly believes that with Jesus there, the little bit he has will be multiplied so that everyone’s hunger is satisfied.

When we truly put Jesus into the situation, the little bit we give will be multiplied, too. We’re not sure how Jesus will accomplish this. Perhaps, the Holy Spirit will change hearts and encourage others to donate. Possibly, money will materialize when we don’t expect it. Perhaps, we’ll partner with other ministries, and the synergies will make our joint gift more significant than the sum of its parts. But, when we genuinely allow Jesus into the situation and offer up what we have – no matter how small – something special will happen.

We see that, in John’s Gospel, the story includes more than just the feeding. It consists of the disciples getting in a boat to go back home to Capernaum. They see Jesus walking on water. At first, they are afraid, but then they realize who He is and take him into the boat with them. Interestingly enough, as soon as they take him into the boat, they immediately reach their destination.

So, let’s take a look at St. Swythen’s again, now that they’ve really invited Jesus into their deliberations and meditated on God’s abundance instead of being stuck in a scarcity mentality.

Suzy says, “People are hungry in Anytown. We must feed them.” The vestry and finance committee says, “We’ve budgeted $200 for outreach, and we can find $200 more. Let’s ask our members if they can give and partner with other churches so that our gifts will multiply. We have terrific grounds, and we are willing to serve as the host site. We’ll get help from others so we can monitor the parking.”

What a difference in St. Swythen’s attitude. They invited Jesus and the abundant, rich blessings He brings into their deliberations. They were willing to abandon their pattern of thinking in scarcity. And, immediately, they reached their destination. They fed the people. They made the impact God called them to make.