

God's Math

Moment of Manna

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My father used to like going fishing every chance he got. Unfortunately, with seven kids and three jobs, he didn't get as many chances as he would have liked. There was one place in particular that he loved to put the boat in. He usually would only get the opportunity to fish there once a year. It was a large lake in a small town in Maine. That town became famous because of the quality of the fish in that lake. People came from all over the country to fish there. The fishing was slow, but when you caught one, you really caught one. The lake had Brook Trout, Salmon, and Togue. The fish had vibrant color, substance, quality and integrity; every one was a trophy fish. I remember one trip when he came home with a thirty-seven inch Togue. A beautiful specimen. Every fish was worthy of being stuffed and mounted, and hung on the wall. He didn't mind the fishing being slow. He knew it was worth the wait.

Some people are a bit more impatient than others. They would rather have constant action than to wait for the trophy fish. They'd rather catch many than wait for the one with substance. They're more concerned with numbers than with quality. One day, or I should say one night, a man or men decided to do something about it. In the darkness White Perch were released into that pristine lake. Now, White Perch are not pretty. They don't grow to trophy size. But they do grow fast and multiply. They get to the food faster than the Trout and the Salmon and the Togue. The White Perch take over the lake, and the Trout and the Salmon and the Togue die out and disappear. And the people stopped coming from all over the country. And the town, like the lake, began to die out. The White Perch did not have the quality and integrity of the Trout and the Salmon and the Togue, and the attraction was gone.

When this happens to a lake; when it becomes overrun with fish of no real substance, there are few options available to overcome the problem; to bring new life to the lake. The only real option is to put chemicals in the lake to kill all life that is in it. Then it takes two to four years for the water to purify and replenish itself so that it can sustain life again. Then you have to reintroduce small Trout and Salmon and Togue into the lake and make sure you don't release any other species. It takes another four to six years for these fish to mature and begin to multiply and regenerate the fish population in the lake, hoping that the town can survive until

the lake is back to what it once was. All because someone was more concerned about numbers than about substance, believing that growth is determined by how many instead of by how good. They never did find out who released the White Perch. Whoever it was, I don't think they intentionally set out to destroy that lake, or that town. I think they just lost sight of their purpose and the part that lake played in the survival of that town.

We are all called to be fishers of men. We should look forward to any and every opportunity we have before us to go out and fish. We should take our time; be patient, and wait for that trophy to come along...that Trout, that Salmon, that Togue, that Peter, or Paul, or Stephen, or Mary; common people who came to do uncommon things. That's how we stock our lake...our church. That's how churches are started; by fishers of men going for those with substance; by patient fishers of men waiting on God's command and letting Him grow the church. By willing fishers of men; willing to wait, willing to build, willing to obey. Then people will come from all over to fish in that lake, to visit that trophy room, to help build that church. I don't think it's intentional, but occasionally some will get impatient and lose sight of the purpose in being here. They begin to measure growth and success only by the numbers. They begin to develop programs just to get the numbers. They think up gimmicks just to get the numbers. There's nothing wrong with getting the numbers as long as getting the numbers doesn't take precedence over keeping the substance. When we have the numbers over the substance, those numbers will choke the life out of the substance, and the lake will die. We will have introduced White Perch into our lake. We can't let ourselves lose sight of our purpose. We are fishers of men. We are responsible for the substance. Acts 2:27 says "The Lord added to the church daily those who would be saved." The Lord added! When WE do the numbers, we add to the church daily those who would show up, and end up stocking White Perch into our lake. We need to use God's math. He is responsible for the numbers. We should not get discouraged because the numbers aren't what WE think they should be. In God's math, He takes care of the addition, the subtraction, and the multiplication. We're usually the ones who bring about the division. Let's remember the substance, not the numbers, and keep our lake healthy for the Trout, the Salmon, and the Togue; the kind of growth that reflects God's math...growth in substance; uncommon growth by common people and not by the numbers. Don't be concerned if the fishing is slow. It's worth the wait.