When Jesus looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, 
From where are we to buy bread for all these people to eat? He said this to test him, for 
he himself knew what he was going to do.

Have you ever felt truly tested? I congratulate all the 1st Class Midshipmen 
here today, for you have just completed a four-year period of testing, and I am sure 
it has been very challenging for many of you.

Four years by the bay... you surely must feel a measure of relief and during 
this week, enormous joy for your time here is coming to an end. It is your week to graduate! Truly what a joyous and happy time it is for you. Congratulations!

But you must also feel a measure of anxiety... for you know that this marks 
only the beginning of your service to our country. You still are not yet fully tested. 
You have much yet to do.

You may feel overwhelmed at what is before you, the task that all those who serve in 
the military face – the enormity of the issues our country faces – threats of global war & terrorism.

But it is probably something closer to home that weighs heavy on your 
mind... the challenges of your upcoming training.

Maybe you are anxious about reporting to your first ship; how will you fit in? Will 
you be successful in your evolutions and learning your new job, standing the watch, 
leading your people?

Maybe you are anxious about the enormity of the task set before you in going 
through Nuke Power School... are you ready? Can you take the academic strain? The 
pressure of a job that has horrific consequences if you get it wrong... not just for you but the world!

Maybe you are anxious about the testing you will face in TBS... will you stand up to 
that pressure? Will you measure up to being a Marine?

Maybe you are anxious about the enormity of the task of going to flight school? To 
memorize all the emergency procedures, limitations, flight parameters... will you be 
a good pilot of NFO?

I know when I graduated I was excited about finally going to Pensacola, but I 
was anxious. I had a tough time memorizing random bits of information, and to 
memorize a whole book... NATOPS... it seemed an impossible task... I wondered how 
I could be successful with such an enormous undertaking before me!

I sympathize with Philip, when he saw that large crowd coming he must have felt 
overwhelmed by his Lord's request: Where should we buy enough bread for all 
these people to eat? I understand Philip's answer: Six months' wages would not buy 
enough bread for each of them to get a little.

How often when the church tries to build community, to gain a vision for its 
town, for its people, do we get the answer How much will it cost, as soon as we see 
the enormity of the task.
I remember when I was in seminary, a penniless student, I was under care of my local church and had been assigned the young singles group. Melissa invited them all over for thanksgiving one year… and my response to her was How are we to feed all these people! It would take over $100 to cook them a Thanksgiving meal!

Melissa tried to comfort me and ask us to pray that God would provide. The next day a letter came in the mail from my mother for $100 and written on it was For Thanksgiving. We all sometimes doubt and need God to encourage our faith.

Andrew arrives on the scene and presents a boy who offers up his lunch. You can imagine his mom packing his bag for him in the morning, five small barley loaves and two small fish. I am sure it was packed with love.

But in the time of Christ wheat bread was more common, barley loaves were fed to the poor, and the word for loaves here is diminutive, they were but small dinner rolls fit only for a poor and meager table.

The fish were no different. They are described in the original text as double diminutives, really small fish, and the word used to describe them implied they were a type of fish that was dried and preserved, often with salt and oil. Think two sardines or even anchovies.

I grew up in Ft Lauderdale and I spent a lot of time fishing in the many canals and at the beach from piers. We would first collect small bait fish with tiny gold hooks or casting nets. We would never think of eating them, they were just for bait. We wanted the bigger fish that were located at the end of the pier. I caught a lot of rays and baby sharks, nothing really significant.

From the canals we caught small bluegill with bread, and sometimes mullet. I took one home to eat and my mother cooked it, and of course after all that work she did for me, I had to eat it. It was oily, boney, and tasted like the muddy water from which it came. It wasn’t the striped bass that you get in restaurants here in Annapolis, or the other fancy fish, grouper, sword fish, and mahi mahi, that are served in the fancy tables in Ft Lauderdale. No my fish was not suitable for those tables. I gave up bringing fish home that day and adopted catch and release policy.

The meal that this boy presented was a humble meal. The meal he presented was not a meal fit for a king. It was a cheap lunch of a poor boy that had not much to offer the King of Kings, but it was more than enough for Jesus.

Philip Said, We can’t afford it! But the poorest in the kingdom said, This ain’t much, but I will give it to you Lord.

And Jesus took those small loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the small fish, as much as they wanted. And they were completely satisfied.

Those diminutive rolls, that salty oily meager fish, and they were completely satisfied. Stuffed like at a thanksgiving meal.

I am reminded of Israel in the wilderness, Numbers 11
Moses protested to God and said, *The people I am with number six hundred thousand on foot; and you say, 'I will give them meat, that they may eat for a whole month'! Are there enough flocks and herds to slaughter for them? Are there enough fish in the sea to catch for them?* The Lord said to Moses, *Is the Lord’s power limited? Now you shall see whether my word will come true for you or not.* (11:21-23)

It is at these times of testing that we see the power of the Lord in our lives... Do not be anxious about the enormity of the task that lies before you.

Here in John 6 Jesus proves he is the one who provides, it is he who fed the Israelites in the desert, it is he who fed the 5000 in the wilderness near Galilee, and it is he who calls us to be faithful, he too will provide for you when you are in need, when you are anxious, when you are in fear. Is his power limited? He says to us to be faithful as this young boy. What we have to offer him may only be a cheap lunch, a humble service, a meager meal, but for Christ, he makes it a feast to feed thousands.

Maybe you are anxious about the enormity of the task set before you, you commission, your service to our country, the training and testing which you will yet endure. But God asks you only to be faithful, and to trust him.

Today as you dedicate you Commissions to God, you offer your service to him as that small boy did with his humble meal. But dedicating your commissions to God is not about words spoken or placing your signatures in a book. It is about dedicating your service to him, for his Glory and for his Kingdom.

And in submitting to God in this way, God calls you to serve, as Christ served us, self sacrificially. For Christ came not to be served, but to serve, and give himself as a ransom for many. He came to serve the outcast, the downtrodden, and those without hope.

He calls you to have the same attitude of service as Christ exhibited in his life, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. He calls us to do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. But rather, in humility value those you lead above yourselves.

So in your leadership, in your service, humble yourself just as Christ humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross! And in humbling yourself in this way, the Gospel will shine through, the truth of your faith be known to those you serve beside. And when we humble ourselves in this way we change the world for the Gospel.

But Christ calls you to present your service to him, however meager it is, and he will make it sufficient. As Paul says:

*I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*

*(Philippians 4:12-13)*