

Video #2 Transcript

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That's a doozy of a name, isn't it? Well, my grandmother was a doozy of a woman. As a little girl, she grew up in the Depression, and so she was known for both her spunk and her frugality.

As an adult at one point she spent some time at my house with me. After dinner she was helping clean up. We had had cheesecake that night with blueberry topping, and there was just a little bit of blueberry topping left. So she asked me "Amy, what should I do with this leftover blueberry topping?" Well I said "Oh grandma, that's not very much. It's just a bite. Just go ahead and throw that away." I could tell immediately that that did not sit well at all with her, so she set down the little bite that was left over and continued to move around the kitchen helping me. A few minutes later she asked me again "Amy, what would you like me to do with this bite of blueberry topping?" and once again I said "Oh, just throw it away. There's not even enough left to make a difference." But she didn't. She set it on the counter, moved around for a little while again, and then asked me for a third time: "So, Amy, what would you like me to do with this leftover blueberry topping?"

And I said "Grandma, why don't you put that in a little piece of Tupperware over there and we'll put it in the refrigerator." Well, she smiled ear-to-ear. She took the one bite, she put it in the Tupperware, and stuck it in the refrigerator.

My grandmother is a frugal woman. She didn't waste anything.

You know, sometimes my life has seemed to me just like a bunch of leftovers.

I think about the roles that I've served in my life, roles like *teacher* in a classroom and then in my church, roles like *laundress* for my children and a sometimes *cook* for my husband. I think about the relationships that I've had, my most important one *daughter* of the Most High King, and then *friend*, *neighbor*, and *wife*, and *mother*, those kinds of roles.

And I think about the events in my life, some of them happy, and some of them sad. The happiest days were my wedding day, the day that I stood in front of my classroom for the first time fulfilling the dream that I've had since my little girl days, I think about marrying the man of my dreams and then the birth of my children. I think about some of the sad times, too. A broken engagement in college, watching a friend wither away and eventually die of cancer, going through a period of time when many of my friends' marriages imploded, and a move that - to a new location that left me really, really lonely.

Sometimes I've looked in my life at all these little bits and pieces of things that don't really add up to much and I thought "God, can you use these? Can you use these little pieces? These bits of my life? These leftovers?"

Have you ever asked God the same question?

Maybe you're like me. I really *am* a girl with a glass half full and sunshine in my pockets.

For *you* I can believe anything!

But for *me* it's a little bit harder.

Sometimes it's hard to see how God could use me, or how God could use these things in my life. Sometimes all I can see is the leftovers, and then I go to start to feeling like a leftover. And even treating myself like a leftover.

Have you been in that place?

Well, if you have I want to tell you today for sure that you are not just leftovers. Of all the things that you are *not*, you are *not* just leftovers.

How could I say that for sure? We're gonna take a look at a very familiar and beautiful passage of scripture today, a story that lets us know that we are not just leftovers.

If you have your Bible with you, either on your phone or in your hands, would you turn with me to John 6. We're going to read verses 1 through 12.

"Sometime after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee that is the Sea of Tiberias, and a great crowd of people followed Him because they saw the signs He had performed by healing the sick. Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with His disciples. The Jewish Passover Feast was near. When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Phillip 'Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?' He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what He was going to do. Phillip answered Him 'It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite.' Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up. 'Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish. But how far will they go among so many?' Jesus said 'Have the people sit down.' There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down. About five thousand men were there. Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. When all had had enough to eat, He said to his disciples, 'Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.'"

You know, I just love Jesus. He never missed an opportunity to show us who He was and who His father was.

Here He shows us that He is the Lord of abundance, that He is actually going to be the Passover lamb, the one who had come to feed their hungry souls. And He never wastes the chance to make us more like Him.

Just like with His disciples that day, He has shown Himself in our lives over and over and over again. Hasn't he?

God doesn't waste anything. He uses everything.

Jesus began just with five loaves and two fish, but He had abundant leftovers. I love that last verse where he says "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." He didn't throw the leftovers away. He didn't push them to the back of the refrigerator. He gathered the leftovers that were more than what He started with.

Notice that the scripture says "small loaves and small fishes." He started with small pieces, just like the small pieces of our life, and then He turned them into a feast.

I've seen this myself.

He used my broken heart and that broken engagement to give me a new compassion for the brokenhearted.

He used the loss of my friend and her glorious life to show me what it looked like to live by faith through a season of tremendous suffering.

He used a move where I was so, so lonely to show that He can provide for all my needs, including companionship.

See, God doesn't waste anything. He uses everything. Now, this is not like me. This is not like me at all. Can I confess I never used my grandmother's leftover? No, I shoved that little piece of blueberry, that little bite of blueberry that was left back to the back of the refrigerator until one day I found it again and it looked like a science experiment.

Have you ever done that, where everything that was beautiful and yummy and fresh at one point is now moldy and mildew-y and old and yucky and it just goes into the trash?

But God uses life experiences. He doesn't let them molder away in the back of the refrigerator. He uses them, and He turns them into a feast. He can use unwanted singleness. A cranky boss. He can use challenging children. He can use scrubbing toilets. He can use the loss of a job, He can use the death of someone that we love. He uses financial struggles and even rocky times in our marriages.

Where we look and see leftovers, God creates a feast. Because God doesn't waste anything. He uses everything.

And when we're in a community, it's even more. It creates an even greater feast. See, I live here in the south - you might have noticed through my accent - and we have something in our rural churches or older rural churches called homecoming. That's a weekend every year where generations will come back to the church - even if they don't attend there anymore. They gather to worship and sing and pray together and afterwards, afterwards, there's the biggest feast you've ever seen.

See, people bring their little bits and pieces, whatever they have, they bring things from their gardens and their refrigerator - and if they're like me they might bring something from the grocery store bakery - but they bring all kinds of things and when they put their little bits and pieces together, it creates something yummier and bigger than any of us could ever imagine on our own. All put together, it's amazing.

Now look around the room at your small group - this is the same phenomenon that can happen with you and your sisters there, that you all bring your little bits and pieces - it might feel like leftovers, but in community and in God's hands, we are never just leftovers.

We are not just leftovers.

We are a feast.

So how can we turn around our way of thinking? How can we find a new script that helps us to move from feeling like and even treating ourselves like leftovers to seeing ourselves in God's eyes by the feast - our lives is the feast - that they actually are? Well, I'll tell you how. And it starts with a change of perspective. A change of focus from the bits and pieces of our lives to who God Himself is.

See, **God is the feast.**

He Himself is the feast, just like Jesus was the lamb that was going to feed those hungry people's souls. He's the lamb that has saved our souls, so we have to think about him as the feast and then we feast on His goodness.

When the circumstances of our lives are not good, when they're hard and painful, we can change our script and our focus from looking at the hard and painful things of our lives and gazing on the **goodness of God**. We say "Because God is good, He doesn't waste anything. He uses everything."

We feast on His goodness and we feast on **His sufficiency**. When our lives don't seem like enough, when there's not enough money, enough love, enough patience, we can feast on God's sufficiency and say to ourselves: God is enough. Because He never wastes anything. He uses everything.

And finally, we feast on **His redemption**. When it feels like there's no hope left, when there feels like there's nothing good that's happening in our lives at all, we remind ourselves and we change our script. We say to ourselves "God is the Redeemer." Because He never wastes anything, He uses everything.

Have you felt like a leftover? Have you treated yourself like a leftover? Have you let others treat you like a leftover?

I want to tell you today, to look straight in your eyes, into your beautiful face, and say to you that you are not a leftover. You are not a leftover because of Jesus Himself.

Jesus is the Lord of the leftovers and He's the Father of the feast and because He is Lord and Father of our lives, He can turn our lives into a feast as well.

No matter what you're going through, I want to encourage you to trust God to take the leftovers of your life and turn them into a feast.

God doesn't waste anything, He uses everything.

Now I want you to turn to the women around you, to have to think a little bit first, and then discuss what part of your life have you seen as just a leftover that might contribute to a community feast?

Have a little homecoming of your own in the next few minutes.