



The twelve came to him and said, “Send the crowd away...”

But he said to them, “You give them something to eat.”

They said, “We have no more than five loaves and two fish—

unless we are to go and buy food for all these people.” For

there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, “Make

them sit down in groups of about fifty each.” They did so and made them

all sit down. And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to

heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set

before the crowd. And all ate and were filled.

—Luke 9:12-17

I’m in Jane’s single-room house that is divided by a hanging blanket into a place for sitting and sleeping. Without light, it is difficult to make out the dishes and an open fire area in the corner that is her kitchen. She lives in this dusty space with her two children and three siblings, and she pays school fees for all of them.

Jane is exceptionally fortunate. The local community in her informal settlement selected her as a girl at risk, and she was accepted into a nine-month training program for hairdressing. Jane, like millions of women around the world, beams with entrepreneurial dreams. While I’m overwhelmed with the need, the systemic barriers and numbers at risk, she’s looking for a loan to buy a blow dryer.

Through her, I try to listen to Jesus, who does not panic at the crowds, entreats God’s involvement and creates abundance with what is at hand. The story and his words, “make them sit down in groups,” work on my paralysis and push me to ask what I see. Do I see need and despair or assets and opportunities? If I see through Jesus’ eyes, what is possible?

—Jackie VanderBrug