

# The Miracle(s) of Jesus

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*Main Thing*

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**Bible Text:** Luke 9:1-17

**Preached On:** Sunday, October 15, 2023

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This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the gospel of Luke 9. As you're turning to Luke 9, if you're a guest or visitor with us, or maybe you're worshiping with us for the first time in a long time, I want to welcome you to a very strategic study of the person of Jesus Christ. Now you would think in this context that would be a presumption, however, one of the things that we've discovered throughout our study is that even in our culture, even in our society, and oftentimes even within the church at large, we've relegated Jesus to an ethicist, to a sage, a prophet, a political revolutionary, but what we discover any time we walk through one of the respective gospels, is that for him to be anything less than Messiah, Savior, or Redeemer is to fall woefully short of any analysis and/or belief. And we're walking through the gospel of Luke and if you're new to us, allow me to share with you, we're doing so a tad bit unorthodox. Typically in the gospel of Luke, you would begin at the beginning. There would be the manger scene, what we know as the Christmas story, and you would make your way ultimately to Mount Calvary and the empty tomb. However, in our study in this season of life, we actually begin at the end because you and I have a perspective that the individuals who we're going to speak of today did not have. We have 2,000 years of verified, confirmed time that Jesus Christ has risen from the grave. We know that he is alive. We know that he shed his blood for the sins of humanity and today there's going to be one of the largest crowds that Jesus ever addressed and you can only imagine their curiosity, you can only imagine what they were thinking, was this the one? After what we've seen on this day, what we've heard in days past, could this be the Messiah that has been hoped for for thousands of years? We don't have to question today.

We have confirmation that Jesus Christ is the risen Savior and Redeemer of humanity but today, we go to Luke 9, the most well-written miracle in the life and ministry of Jesus. Now notice I didn't say the most famous. I would put the raising of Lazarus as number one and probably walking on water number two if you can somehow rank the miracles of Jesus, however, today, it's the feeding of the 5,000. This is the only miracle that Jesus performed that is in all four of the respective gospels and the miracle actually begins in verse 10 of Luke 9, but we're going to go back to verse 1. We need to understand it in context because what we're going to see today is that the disciples somehow missed it. They somehow did not grasp what was happening before their very eyes and I want to make sure that we don't miss it alongside of them.

Beginning in verse 1 of 9, it says,

1 Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. 2 And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. 3 And he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece. 4 And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart. 5 And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them. 6 And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where. 7 Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by him: and he was perplexed, because that it was said of some, that John was risen from the dead; 8 And of some, that Elias had appeared; and of others, that one of the old prophets was risen again. 9 And Herod said, John have I beheaded: but who is this, of whom I hear such things? And he desired to see him. 10 And the apostles, when they were returned, told him all that they had done. And he took them, and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida. 11 And the people, when they knew it, followed him: and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing. 12 And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals: for we are here in a desert place. 13 But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people. 14 For they were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company. 15 And they did so, and made them all sit down. 16 Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude. 17 And they did eat, and were all filled: and there was taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets.

Now as I mentioned earlier, this is one of those stories in the life of Jesus that most everybody is, can I say it, too familiar with. We oftentimes know stories like this so well that we often forget or don't notice some of the details of the story that are critical to understanding the story. So today I want to ask a series of expected questions to help us get the grasp and the totality of what's actually happening in one of the most famous stories in the life and ministry of Jesus, the "feeding of the five thousand." And it begins with where, and I want you to notice up in verse 10 where the story takes place. It says it took place in a city that belonged to Bethsaida and then later the disciples say it was a desert place. Now let me put those two ideas together. Bethsaida was a thriving community. In fact, this is where two of the first disciples were called from. This is where Philip and Nathaniel, it was a thriving fishing community. It was, in their

terminology, it was a metropolis. However, this city owned a piece of land on the eastern side of what we know as the Sea of Galilee and when it says it was a desert place, don't think sand dunes and oases. Think a large landmass with nothing there. This is critical to the story. There were no subdivisions in the deserted place. There were no restaurants, no convenience stores, no gas stations to put in our contacts. There was nothing there that could have somehow, someway facilitated what the disciples perceived the need was of the people.

Now the next question we have to ask is when it took place. This is why we went back to verse 1. This story happens right after the disciples are sent by Jesus to preach the kingdom of God and to heal sickness, disease, and in their own very words in verse 6, "even the demons obeyed us." Can I share with you what happened? They had been on their first mission trip. Now, I don't know if you've ever had the opportunity to be on a "mission trip," whether that's here in Lee County or over an ocean respectively, but can I give you a little pastoral secret here? Why is it that pastors like myself, why are we so supportive of these endeavors? Is it because there's lostness everywhere? Of course, but I've heard the argument there's lostness everywhere, including here. Can I share with you why mission trips are so critical to individuals and to local churches? Because on a mission trip, you often see things you've never seen before, hear things you've never heard before, and experience things that you've never experienced before. And here's what typically can happen on somebody's very first mission trip. You ready? They'll go wherever it is. It could be around the corner. It could be around the globe. And they see and experience God move in ways that they've never seen him move before. You know what happens? It sets their heart afire. Honestly, as a pastor, you know why mission trips are so vital to our congregation? It's because of when we come back. When we come back, we desire to see what we saw there, here. We desire to live for the Lord greater in days future than we did days past. These men were just sent on their first mission trip and they missed it. They missed it. They didn't come back hearts ablaze. They didn't come back excited. They didn't come back saying, "We've seen people healed. We've seen demons cast out. What's 5,000 men? Jesus, you got this." What did they do? They questioned, they doubted and they disputed among themselves.

They missed the whole point of why Jesus sent them out in the first place, which leads to the who. Who was it that's actually out in this deserted place at this miracle that's recorded in all four of the gospels? Well, here in what we know as the gospel of Luke as well as the other four, it mentions that there were 5,000 men. Now that means, by the way, just so you know, this was not a men's ministry event. I just want you to know. This wasn't an all call just men and ladies stay at home. No, no, no. This was a situation where Jesus goes out here and it says that the towns just began to fall and you do realize the towns that came out there were the people that had been healed by way of the disciples. They wanted a little bit more. They had told others what Jesus had done in their lives and they began to come.

Now, here's what we typically do because we cannot help but be Westerners and most of us Americans by nature, we look at it like we do through our own lives. You say, what do you mean our own lives? Well, there's a husband, a wife, and 2.4 kids, right? I mean,

after all, that's the statistics in America and so we typically look at the feeding of the 5,000 men and we say, "Well, if you add the wives and the kids, eh, 20 to 25,000." That's an incredible number of people but have you seen the family structure of people in the Middle East lately? They don't have 2.4 kids. They have like 12.4 kids. Now I can prove that biblically. In Jesus' day when he was 12 years of age, the Bible records here in the gospel of Luke a story where they go to the Passover, they celebrate the incredible feast, they're on their way back to Nazareth. Jesus' earthly family is so large that for one complete day they don't know he's missing. Now that says, you know, obviously his mom, supposed dad, Joseph, he's got the brothers, siblings, he's got all these other folks, cousins, nieces, nephews, whoever it may be. It was a large family and he was stereotypical of most families in that day. What I'm getting at is this, if you want to look at it honestly, biblically, there could have been 50,000 people there, 50,000 people whose lives were changed because one boy shared a sack lunch. Think about that.

So how did it happen? This is the key to the miracle. We're going to flush out the what and the why, but the how is important. Look at verse 16. It says, then he took the five loaves. He took the two fishes. He looked up to heaven. He blessed them. Listen to this next part, and he broke them. I think one of the things we need to realize is the feeding of the 5,000 plus, whatever number you want to put, what made it what it was is what Jesus can do with something or specifically somebody who is broken. Now there's biblical evidence of this in Mark 1, going into chapter 2, there is a story of a man who cannot walk. He has been in an infirm condition for years and for decades, and his friends are feeling sorry for him, but they've heard this, Jesus can heal him. They show up to the residence, the address where he's gonna be. They can't get in. There's such a crowd there, they can't get in the door, they can't get through the window, so what do they do? They go up on the roof, and what happens? They broke the roof open and when they broke that roof open, not only were his legs healed, that he ran out of that, but Jesus forgave him of his sins. Later in Mark 14, there's a woman in despair of her life. Jesus is there in the community where she is. She takes an alabaster box that the Bible says is of great value. We don't know how much it was worth, but what did she do? She broke it and when she broke it, her testimony is still being shared today.

What we discover, the how of the feeding of the 5,000, is the breaking. You know after Jesus raises from the dead he takes a journey to Emmaus. There he meets two men. And on the road, you know that these two men tell Jesus about Jesus? Did you know that story? They do. He says, "What's been going on?" He says, "Oh, you've never heard of this Jesus guy." They gave a full testimony of who Jesus was. They talked about his sermons. They talked about his miracles. Can you imagine Jesus' countenance? He's like, "Okay, yeah, you got that right. That one's not quite the way you thought it went. But this one was okay." You know what happens at the end of the story? They go into the home, Jesus takes bread, breaks it, and their eyes are opened. See, the story, the feeding of the 5,000 is more than just a miracle of the quantity of food, it's a testimony of what Jesus can do with somebody or something that is broken.

So what actually happened? When Jesus broke the bread and they were fed, we discover that God is a God of provision. Not only did he provide food that day that was not

accessible in the community or the desert place that they were in, but back in verse 1 and 2 of chapter 9 it says that the gospel was preached, people were healed, demons were cast out. We discover that when we are broken, it doesn't matter if we've got a physical problem or a spiritual problem, he can address any and all issues in our brokenness. But here's the picture, the disciples. They were a picture of unbelief. They were a picture of doubt. They are the ones who came to Jesus and said, "This isn't going to work out very well." But yet he is the one who provided for their "mission trip," don't you think he can provide for this day?

It's a picture of their unbelief but it's also prophetic. Do you realize these same men who "missed it" here in Luke 9, they eventually got it, and maybe today you're somebody who's "missed it." Let me show what happens when you "get it." We go through the life, the ministry of Jesus. He makes his way to Mount Calvary. He sheds his blood for the sins of humanity. Three days later he raises from the dead. He raises from the dead, for 40 days he teaches the disciples. In Acts 1, he ascends into the heavens. Chapter 2 is Pentecost. You do realize that Pentecost was the fulfillment of their brokenness. You say, well, how do you know that they were broken? Because according to chapter 1, it says they were in the upper room for seven days waiting and praying. Outside of that room, both Jews and Romans wanted to end their life. Last time I checked, when there are people who are hunting you down, you get broken real quick, do you not? And then in Acts 3, they're walking in the greatness of the Pentecost event. A man shows up who's begging on the side of the road. He says, "Could you spare some silver? Could you spare some change?" Do you remember what these same men said? "Silver and gold have I none but in the name of Jesus, get up and walk." And they do.

You know why it is so prophetic? Not just in what happened in their lives, but what happens in all of our lives. Can I bring the illustration to home for just a moment? When we talk about brokenness, there's physical brokenness. Some of your bodies right now are broken. You feel like that man. You would give anything just to be able to walk without pain, get up without hurting, whatever the story may be. Some of you are walking through emotional pain, the loss of a loved one, a relationship gone sideways, the absence of a relationship, whatever it may be. And then there's spiritual brokenness where you feel like you cry out to God and get nothing but a dial tone. But what happened? Let me ask you this. It's a rhetorical question because you know the answer. Just put yourself in that situation of Acts 3, this man who physically needed a touch, needed money, needed healing. Imagine somebody comes up to you, whatever your issue is, it doesn't matter if it's physical, emotional, spirit, whatever it may be, what if somebody came up to you today right now and said, "Here's the deal, I'm gonna make you a deal. Either A, I'll write you a check for whatever amount you want or B, whatever the issue is, it'll be solved." You know what you'd pick, right? The issue. Every single time because that loved one who's no longer here is worth more money than a check can write, and that illness that keeps you hurting 24/7, to be without pain one single day would be worth all the money in the world. They finally got it. They realized that the presence and the power of Jesus was worth more than any circumstance or struggle they could see, they could hear, or they could feel.

So why? Why is this story important for you and I? It's because we serve a God of provision and let me share this insight with you: these individuals, did they ever come to Jesus and say, "We're hungry"? Is there anywhere in the story where they're starting to grumble? Now remember, they've been there all day long. There's no grocery stores. There's no convenience stores. There's no restaurants. There's no homes. And none of them are complaining. What does Jesus say? Jesus says, "When they go home, they're gonna start getting hungry so we need to take care of them." What's the lesson that you and I learn? In the presence of Jesus, there's never hunger. There's never doubt. There's never question. There's never death. In other words, what it shares with us that's so critical is when these struggles, when these issues come up, you cannot be in the presence of Jesus enough. He is the one that provides whatever the struggle may be.

But can I show you the picture? Look at the end of verse 17. I love what Jesus does. It says, and they ate, they were all filled, there was taken up fragments that remain, twelve baskets. Basically, Jesus gives a basket of leftovers to the disciples. Now, do you find that a little bit backwards? What about the 50,000 people that have got a journey halfway across the Sea of Galilee? They weren't the ones struggling. The disciples were. So, what did he do? He gave them a whole basket of broken stuff. Have you thought about that? It didn't say he gave them a dinner. He gave them fragments. See, they missed the power of brokenness and he said, "You know what? I'm going to give you a to-go that for the rest of this day and tomorrow you can see with your own eyes what you just missed."

You know, it's prophetic. I mentioned this is the only miracle that's in all four of the gospels. It's very prophetic because all the way back in the book of Numbers, there was a group of individuals, the Israelites, who wandered in the wilderness for about 40 years. I'm sure you know their story well. Through the hand and the miracle-working of God, he made a way. He had the 10 plagues that came upon Pharaoh, the Egyptians. They go through what we know as the Red Sea on dry land. They get to the other side. It should have been about a two-week journey that took 40 years. Why? They doubted. They questioned. They complained. You know the story. For 40 years, they would begin the very slow process of their dreams, their hopes, and their desires dying in their own lives in their very life. The Promised Land, the place that they'd always hoped to be, would not be for them.

So what did God do? He fed them. Have you ever thought about that? Notice what he said, "This generation will pass out." He didn't say you're going to starve to death. He gave them manna. They woke up every morning. It was something that my wife loves to say about when we eat here at church on Wednesday night, "I don't have to cook it and I don't have to clean it. It's great." They got up, it was cooked, and they didn't have to clean it because they ate it all. And if they didn't eat it all, it just faded away. It was a great deal. How and why did God feed them? Because they were broken. Can you imagine everything that you'd always hoped for just gone. Never see the Promised Land, never experience, never be a part of it. They were a broken people and when you're broken, God feeds you what you need to get through the journey.

It's not just in the book of Numbers, you know it's also in the book of Revelation. The book of Revelation 12 talks about these same people, thousands of years later, who we know as the Jewish people, we're going to talk more about this tonight at 6 o'clock, so I'm giving you kind of a little heads up here. You know what the Bible says about these Jewish people? It says there's a day coming in the future. where they will experience the same thing they experienced in the wilderness except for 40 years it's going to be for three and a half, and instead of because of their own disbelief according to Revelation 12 it's because they're running for their lives from an individual who the Bible calls the Antichrist. You want to talk about being broken? These are the same people that according to Daniel 9, they entered into a covenant with somebody they thought was their friend they found out it was their foe. They believed that this was the answer and they found out it was not. So what does Revelation 12 say? They went on the run for their very lives and what did God do for three and a half years? You guessed it, he fed them supernaturally. Can you imagine the brokenness that's going to happen at that event? Can you imagine the brokenness of realizing that you were tricked? The brokenness of realizing you fell for the scam? The brokenness of realizing that you thought you knew the answers and you didn't?

What you discover here is that in all three stories, in Numbers, in Luke, and in Revelation, the key to the provision was brokenness. The disciples missed it but we shouldn't. What we discover today is that when we are broken before God, that's when he provides. When we are broken before God, when we come, can I say it in our language, when we come to the end of our proverbial rope, we discover that he is able not to just help us hang on, he's able to reach down and to place us in the palm of his hand and the question is, are we still trying to fight the battles ourselves or are we allowing ourselves to be broken and let God provide for us?

Let's pray with our heads bowed, our eyes closed. Today as we come to this time in our service, you may be that individual who's heard that story more than one time in your life and never realized that it was about your brokenness. And the ultimate question today is have you ever come to that place and time in your life where you've been broken over your sin, you've been broken over your life that is contrary to the will, the way, and the word of God? The Bible says, whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Do you know why that verse is so tough? It's because to do it, you've got to be broken. You've got to realize that you can't save yourself. You've got to realize there's nothing you're ever going to do or say or acquire that somehow will solve your sin problem. So maybe today's the day for the first time you allow yourself to be broken before God. Maybe today's the day you call out and ask him to forgive you and to save you. If today's that day, let me encourage you to do so. It's not about reading a script. It's not about saying a certain set of words in the right order. It's about your heart's cry, admitting your broken condition of sin that only Jesus can fix. Today, if that's you, just call out to him. You don't have to do it out loud. You don't have to say what I or somebody else would say. Just allow it to be your heart's cry. But maybe today it will go something like this. "God, today, I'm broken. I realize I can't put my life back together. I can't put the pieces back on my own. I need Jesus. God, I need him because I'm broken with sin. God, I've been places I should have never been. Done things I should have never done. God, you

know the words I've spoken, the thoughts I've had and your Bible says the wages, the result of my sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. God, today I believe. I believe I've got a sin problem only Jesus can fix. God, today I believe. I believe Jesus loved me so much. that he came, he lived, he died, and he rose again to solve my broken sin problem. So God, I'm asking you to forgive me, I'm asking you to save me, in the best way I know how, I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed, our eyes still closed, maybe today's the first time you allowed yourself to be broken before the Lord, maybe today's the first time that you called on Jesus to forgive you. If so, in a moment, I'm going to pray. We're going to stand and sing together wherever you're seated, I just want to encourage you just to step out and step forward. I'll be here. We've got a team set aside. We would love the privilege of hearing your story and praying with you and praying for you. But maybe today you say, "Pastor, I've already got that covered, but like that young man today, I need to follow in believers' baptism." We'd love to have that conversation. Or maybe you say, "I need to talk to somebody about becoming a part of this incredible church." We'd love to sit down and share with you. Or maybe today, you're just hurting, you're in a bad place, you need somebody to pray with you, pray for you, whatever it may be, we'd love the privilege.

*Lord Jesus, as we come to this time of decision, God, thank you. Thank you that you take what the world discards and you make something greater of it than we could ever imagine, our brokenness. So God, today, may we come with our broken bodies, may we come with our broken souls, may we come with our broken spirits, God, may we come with all those broken pieces and just simply allow you to put us back together. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.*