

Message #39

Luke 9:10-17

Many years ago, when we were just getting into ministry, we received a call one Friday night from some people who were going to be in our area on Saturday and they wanted to know if they could stay with us and go to services on Sunday. We told them they were welcome to stay and we would love to see them, but we had absolutely no idea how we were going to feed them.

At that time we had no savings account so we could go get some money and buy groceries. We had enough food for ourselves until payday, but we had literally nothing extra. We figured we could feed them Saturday night, but we had no idea what we would feed them on Sunday.

We decided to call the boys into the living room and tell them the situation and simply pray and ask God to supply what we needed to take care of these people. We all agreed we would tell no one but God.

Well the people arrived mid-afternoon on Saturday and the woman said isn't there a very famous grocery store that is near here. The store was south of Chicago and we told her that it was about 40 minutes away. She asked if we would be willing to take her there. She said she had always wanted to see it.

When we got to the store, the woman took a cart and began walking around the store and she started to put things into her cart and when she was done, she paid for it and then said to us, you can have it all.

Much to our amazement, she had not only picked things we needed, but she actually picked the very brands we typically used. What they didn't know is that those groceries were used in part to feed them.

When they left, we called the boys back together and we thanked God for what He had done and we learned an important lesson—when you use what you have to minister to people, God will abundantly bless and provide for you.

That very lesson is what Jesus taught His disciples right here. They didn't have much, but if they were willing to use what they did have for God, God would multiply it and bless it. What we see here is:

GOD DOES GREAT THINGS WITH AND FOR HIS PEOPLE WHEN THEY ARE WILLING TO OBEY HIM AND USE WHATEVER THEY HAVE TO MINISTER TO FOR HIM.

The believer who uses his house for the glory of God will see God pour out His blessings. The believer who uses his money for the glory of God will see God pour out His blessings. The believer who uses his food for the glory of God will see God pour out His blessings. God will prosper and bless those who use what they have to minister to His people.

If we are willing to use what we have for the work of God, we will discover that “little can become much.”

Now there are two parts to Luke’s narrative:

PART #1 – Luke presents the circumstances that led to seeing God do great things. **9:10-12**

If we were to orchestrate the circumstances that would lead to seeing God do something amazing, it probably would not be this. There are three circumstances that are specifically brought out:

Circumstance #1 - The Apostles had just returned from public ministry. **9:10a**

This really had been the first attempt of these disciples at public ministry (9:1, 2, 10). The stress is on the twelve, who were the Apostles because He had given them special Apostolic authority over all demons and diseases. The average believer did not get this power, these twelve did. It had undoubtedly been an exciting time and exhausting time. It had been an intense effort that included both preaching (9:2a) and healing (9:2b).

These disciples had been actively and intimately involved in the lives of people and they had just returned and were reporting all of these things to Jesus Christ.

Even though they had been actively and obediently serving God, Christ was about to teach them that ministry never stops and when a tired disciple is willing to minister, great blessings will come.

Circumstance #2 - The Apostles were given a break. **9:10b**

Jesus Christ knew His apostles needed a break from the public pressure. In fact, Mark makes it clear that these disciples were in need of rest, relaxation and recuperation (Mark 6:31). Sometimes disciples who are on the front line of proclaiming truth need a break. Christ took them with Him and then He withdrew to Bethsaida. He, Himself needed a break.

Dr. William Hendricksen said that a minister who never takes a break or never backs away from the heavy load of ministry will never make it.

Dr. Chuck Swindoll said if you take a good bow and leave the tension on it all of the time and never let up, you will ruin the bow. His point was there are times when a minister needs a break or the pressure will ruin him.

Obviously these Apostles needed a break and our Lord gave them one. He took them away privately. There is nothing unspiritual about getting away for a while from the pressures of ministry. It is Biblical. All need times when they can relax and recuperate.

Circumstance #3 - The crowds were in need of ministry. **9:11**

Bethsaida was located on the N.E. tip of the Sea of Galilee. Matthew, Mark and John say that the disciples were in a boat and the crowd was following them. By the time they got near the shore, there was a throng of 5,000 men, plus the additional women and children (Matt. 14:21).

Even though the disciples needed a break, the crowd needed ministry. This circumstance sets the stage for one of the greatest miracles in the entire Bible.

PART #2 – Luke describes how Jesus Christ reacts to the crowd. **9:11**

Jesus Christ reacted to the crowd in three ways:

Reaction #1 - Jesus welcomed them. **9:11a**

This is tough to do when you are exhausted. Jesus did not reject the crowd, He welcomed them. The Greek word Luke uses for “welcome” carries with it the idea of joyful reception. Jesus Christ was very positive toward this crowd and made them feel welcome.

There are two ways we can relate to people. First, we may make them feel welcome and wanted or we may make them feel unwelcome and unwanted. We may make people feel special or we may make them feel like an intruder. Years ago I traveled with a music group and spoke at services. After the service we would be invited to go to people’s homes and you could immediately sense if you were wanted or not.

Reaction #2 - Jesus taught them. **9:11b**

Jesus Christ took advantage of every public situation to teach and preach. A mandatory prerequisite of a Christ-like ministry is to proclaim the truth of God. People need to hear the Word of God and Jesus Christ, by His own example, teaches us that (5:17; 6:6, 17; 9:2).

He was teaching them truth about the Kingdom of God and certainly one of the things He communicated is that you do not have the righteousness necessary to get into that Kingdom.

Reaction #3 - Jesus healed them. **9:11c**

Jesus Christ proved to thousands that He was the God/Savior/Messiah/King by curing those who had need of healing. He did not leave out one person. There was no disease He could not cure.

PART #3 – Luke describes how the Apostles react to the crowd. **9:12**

Now the day was moving forward and ending, and the Apostles were watching this and they were shot and they realized there were three problems:

Problem #1 - There was no place for these people to sleep (9:12a); **Problem #2** - There was nothing for these people to eat (9:12b); **Problem #3** - There was not enough money (John 6:5-6), about 200 denarii is all they had.

A denarius was about a day's wage (Matt. 20:2). So 200 denarius is major money, but not enough to provide for this crowd.

These Apostles were so tired they apparently forgot who they were with and what they had been doing themselves. They had just returned from a trip of doing miracles and healing people. Instead of them saying we are traveling with Jesus, who is God, so this won't be a problem, they were thinking we need to send this crowd away.

PART #4 – Luke describes that Jesus performs an amazing provisionary miracle for His Apostles and the people. **9:13-17**

When we are faced with seemingly insurmountable circumstances, if we will focus on obeying the Word of God, we will see God do some amazing things.

There are two phases to what Jesus did here:

Phase #1 - He commanded that His Apostles give them something to eat. **9:13-14a**

The pronoun “you” is emphatic. Jesus Christ wanted His Apostles to feed this crowd. Now the response of the Apostles is “we don't have enough food to do that.” All we have are five loaves and two fish. Maybe we can take our money and go buy the people some food.

Now these Apostles miss a couple of points here. First, Jesus gave us miraculous power to do things and Second, we are traveling with Jesus, who is God, who can do anything He wants.

What the Apostles should have said is if Jesus Christ is commanding us to do something, He will enable us to do it. God's callings and God's assignments are God's enablements. We do not want to fall into the trap of making excuses as to why we cannot do something.

Phase #2 - He commanded that His Apostles set the people down in rows of 50. **9:14b**

God's true work will always be systematic and orderly. He expects things to operate in an organized way. Paul said that is exactly what God expects in the church (I Cor. 14:40).

Now since there were 5,000 men plus women and children, we may assume that there were 8,000-10,000 people. So if the Apostles were setting them down in rows of 50, they were looking at somewhere between 100-200 rows of people.

There is something significant to see here about the environment in which He will work. He expects that His people will be fed and He expects that there will be order and organization. The church that takes this seriously will see God do some wonderful things.

Churches that are unorganized and unstructured and do not feed their people miss out on seeing God do powerful things.

After the Apostles had organized the people, Jesus had them “all” sit down (**9:15**).

There are five specific actions that Luke describes pertaining to what Christ did:

(Action #1) - He took what they had. **9:16a**

Five loaves and two fish may not have looked like much, but when it is given to Jesus Christ, He can do great things with it.

Our lives may not look like much. They may look small, insignificant and meaningless, but turn that life over to Jesus Christ and He will do great things with it.

(Action #2) - He looked up to heaven. **9:16b**

Christ is personally demonstrating that the power and strength to change something meager into something powerful comes from heaven.

This kind of power does not come from this world, it comes from God.

(Action #3) - He blessed what they had. **9:16c**

If we are not thankful for what God has given us, He won't likely give us more. Before Christ fed the people, He prayed and blessed God.

(Action #4) - He broke what they had. **9:16d**

Christ divided what was available so each person could eat. Jesus Christ is able to meet the needs of every person.

(Action #5) - He gave what they had. **9:16e**

The Greek verb tenses are intriguing because they indicate that He was able to keep giving and giving food to people. In other words, the five loaves and two fishes kept multiplying and never ran out.

According to **verse 17**, not only did the people eat until they were full and satisfied, but they had twelve baskets left over. When a believer desires to feed God's people, he will never run out.

PRACTICAL LESSONS:

- 1) When we are tired, we may have a tendency to forget all we have seen God do.**
- 2) When we are tired, we may neglect to take advantage of ministry opportunities.**
- 3) Jesus Christ has the power to meet every single need, every single time.**
- 4) Jesus Christ is not limited by any of our circumstances.**
- 5) When we obey the Word of God, we will see God do great things.**
- 6) No one will ever end up disappointed if they personally go to Jesus Christ.**