

Jesus: The Bread and Breadwinner (Luke 9:10-17)

1. The Pressure from Jesus' Disciples and the Crowds (v.10-11)

- This account marks the apex of Jesus' ministry in Galilee. From here, Jesus will move along to Tyre, Sidon, Caesarea Philippi, Transjordan, and finally to Judea and Jerusalem.
- The apostles have completed their "internship" in the programmatic unveiling of the mission of the incarnate YHWH, Jesus of Nazareth, as God's servant who liberates the captives (Lk. 4:16-17; Isa. 61). They may have carried out two "mission trips" (Mk. 6:8; Lk. 9:3).
- Mark informs us in his parallel account that the disciples cannot even "eat" because the crowds are harassing them. In response, they went on a boat northward to a remote region (wilderness) close to Bethsaida, where the disciples could "rest" (Mk. 6:31).
- Bethsaida means "the house of the fisher," a name derived from its chief industry, and is presumably the point where the Jordan River empties into the Sea of Galilee. Three of Jesus' disciples came from Bethsaida: Philip, Andrew, and Peter (Jn. 1:44; 12:21).
- As they enter the boat to enjoy their retreat from the crowds, people notice them and begin to tell others where they are going. Apparently, they guessed the right location, as many were already in the wilderness close to Bethsaida, awaiting Jesus and His disciples. Many were "running on foot" to follow their boat in the Sea of Galilee (Mk. 6:32; Lk. 9:11).
- Despite the disciples' desire to be refreshed, Jesus spoke to them about the kingdom of God and cured those who needed healing (v.12).

2. The Problem of Jesus' Disciples and the Crowds (v.12-13)

- As evening set, the disciples told Jesus to "send the crowds away" to the surrounding villages to find *lodging* and *provisions*.
 - The need for lodging reveals how people traveled, mainly on foot, to see Jesus, sit under his teachings, and be healed.
- The disciples' words to Jesus are unprecedented as they tell Him what to do.
- Their attitude toward the crowd is calculated, as Philip noted that it would cost 200 denarii (Jn. 6:7) to feed all these people (equivalent to 9 months of wages).
- In response, Jesus tells the disciples, "You give them something to eat" (v.13).

What is Jesus' attitude toward them, and what is He saying?

- A. Canvass the crowd and organize a "communal sharing" of food so people can eat.
 - B. Remind them of their bankruptcy and utter lack of resources so that they trust in Jesus.
 - C. He directed them to perform this miracle, and they didn't (either unbelief or ignorance).
- The Twelve return from participating in the same power and authority over demons, disease, and presumably death (Acts 20:7-12). Is Jesus giving them the power and jurisdiction to perform a miracle?
 - The irony is that the disciples will not accept the burdens of hosting those who have come to participate in the message of the kingdom of God, yet they were the recipients of others who opened their houses to receive them (v.4).
 - The disciples' short-term mission trip (v.3) has not taught them enough. God has provided for them. Is Jesus' command a test of faith (v.2-3)?
 - This question will remain unanswered since they had no response other than the five loaves, two fish (v.13), and a calculated impossibility concerning available resources (Jn. 6:7).

3. The Provisions for Jesus' Disciples and the Crowds (v.14-17)

- John's Gospel informs us of a boy with five loaves of bread and two fish (Jn. 6:8). We are not told why the boy is there or how the disciples acquired his food.
- Luke specifies how many men there were: 5,000. The number of women and children included may have totaled around 20,000 people.
- Jesus commanded His disciples to divide the crowd into groups of fifty.
 - The number "fifty" may be an allusion to the account in 1 Kings 17-18 of Obadiah informing Elijah that he had supplied food and water to a hundred prophets of the Lord in groups of "fifty" during the famine throughout the land in the reign of Ahab and Jezebel.
- Jesus commanded His disciples, after grouping them in numbers of fifties, to have them sit down. At this moment, Jesus assumes all responsibilities as the host (v.15).
- Additionally, Jesus now undermines the kosher food laws and traditions that require food to be washed and prepared with the proper utensils. Additionally, unclean people were not welcome at the dinner table within homes.
 - Jesus has already subverted the Eretz Israel as He commanded His disciples to treat Jews as Gentiles if they reject the message of the kingdom and gospel (Matt. 10:5; Lk. 9:3). He is now violating the traditions of kosher laws.
 - At Jesus' table (picnic), where He is the host, kosher is abandoned, as everyone hungry is invited to participate.
- Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, said a blessing over it, broke them, and handed off to the disciples for distribution among the crowd (v.16):
 - The "blessing" may have been the traditional blessing from the Mishnah before every meal: "Blessed be the Lord our God, king of the world, who causes the bread to come forth from the earth" (Berachot 6:1).
- How could Jesus have fed the multitudes with five loaves and two fish? Three supposed "natural" explanations:
 - The women (8:1-3) who were wealthy provided the bread and fish (not mentioned in the text).
 - The people shared the food they brought with them.
 - The nearby cave was "stashed" with bread and fish (which functioned as a storehouse for perishable items) transported by boats stationed in Bethsaida.
- This account has no "natural" explanations, for science cannot prove a miracle. All science can do is explain "what is," not "how" or "why."
- The same God that created in Genesis 1:1 is before their eyes. Do they even recognize it?
 - The process and imagery of filling the twelve baskets, who was involved, and Jesus' involvement beyond the blessing and breaking is unknown.
- Just as Mary had prophesied and Jesus had taught, the hungry are satisfied and filled (1:53; 6:21).
- The disciples and Torah-observing Jews may have been familiar with the miracle of manna and quail in the wilderness (Ex. 16; Num. 11) and Elisha's miracle of 2 Kgs. 4:42-44).
- After Jesus performed this miracle, the people asked Him about the miracle in the wilderness (Jn. 6:31), making the connection. The crowd sometimes appears to know more about Jesus than His disciples.
- John informs us that this account happened during Passover, as the feast of the Jews was at hand (Jn. 6:4). Fourteen hundred years earlier, as the nation entered the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua, the manna ceased (Josh. 5:10-12).
- Jesus provides bread for the multitudes in the wilderness. Not only does He supply the bread, but He is the bread (Jn. 6:48) that will be broken (22:19-20).
- Twelve baskets of broken bread remained (v.17) after everyone was "filled."