

Luke 9:11b-17

Jesus spoke to the crowds about the kingdom of God, and He healed those who need to be cured. As the day was drawing to a close, the Twelve approached Him and said, “Dismiss the crowd so that they can go to the surrounding villages and farms and find lodging and provisions; for we are in a deserted place here.”

He said to them, “Give them some food yourselves.” They replied, “Five loaves and two fish are all we have unless we ourselves go and buy food for all these people.” Now the men there numbered about five thousand. Then He said to His disciple, “Have them sit down in group of about fifty.” They did so and made them all sit down.

Then taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He said the blessing over them, broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. They all ate and were satisfied. And when the leftover fragments were picked up, they filled twelve wicker baskets.

The Gospel of the Lord

Reflection Questions

- 1) ***The Context:*** The context for this passage is all of Chapter 9. We see Jesus having “power and authority over all demons and curing diseases, and sending them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal” (9:1-2). Herod and others are perplexed about Jesus’ authority and power and begin to wonder who this is. (9:9). The story of the feeding of the 5,000 is a fulfillment of the Magnificat “He has filled the hungry with good things.” (1:53).

- 2) Jesus takes the disciples aside to have some private time with them presumably to teach them and to pray with them. The crowds find this out and follow. The crowds are equally hungry for the teachings and healings of Jesus and are willing to follow Him to a remote place like Bethsaida in order to be nourished with the word and healed by Him. Is our hunger for Jesus that great? How far are we willing to ‘go’ in order to receive the precious gifts that Christ has to offer? Do we dare to meet Jesus in that remote place (in our lives, our hearts, in time and space)? Do we encourage others to meet Him there?

- 3) The crowd was quite large (5,000 men...not counting women and children which could make it as large as 15,000) the evening was closing in on them. The disciples know that the people need to eat and want Jesus to send them away before night falls so that they will have time to get to the nearest town. This is a very practical and not unreasonable suggestion. But Jesus meets it with a command. “You give them something to eat.” The disciples are probably perplexed wondering how they could ever feed 15,000 people in a remote place. The same concern is openly discussed in John 6:7 when Philip says: ‘Six months wages would not buy enough bread for each to get a little.’(similar to verse 13 of this gospel passage). When has God asked you to do the ‘impossible’ so that He can show His power through that activity?

- 4) The disciples offer the meager means that they have; five loaves and two fish. It seems almost ridiculous. Their first response is incredulity and questioning. The disciples emphasize what they *don't* have more than what they *do* have. (How are we like that?) They wonder how they could ever buy that much for that crowd. They have been with Jesus all this time, have seen hundreds of miracles and still they do not believe that He can do this. How are we like that?
- 5) Even amidst their numerous doubts they still trust Jesus and place in His hands the little that they have. How are our 'small gifts' always multiplied and shared when we place them in Jesus' hands to bless and distribute?
- 6) Jesus takes the bread lifts it to heaven, blesses it, breaks it and shares it; a very deliberate Eucharistic metaphor. He is offering the bread to God first as He takes it and blesses it and then breaks it to share it. Anything blessed by God can satisfy. What is God asking you to place in His hands so that He can bless it, multiply it and share it? How does partaking of the Eucharist make us a shared blessing for others?
- 7) Take a look at 2 Kings 4:42-44 and compare the structure and the plot of Luke's telling of the feeding of the 5,000 and Elisha's feeding of the 100.
- 8) Verse 17 "And all ate and were filled (Greek: echortashthesan) What was left over was gathered up, twelve baskets of broken pieces." (see 2 Kings 4:44). This demonstrates that something miraculous has occurred. All ate and were 'completely satisfied' (had more than enough) and there were twelve baskets of leftovers. This is not a miracle of people sharing what they already had with others. If that were the case, everyone would go away a bit hungry and there probably would be no leftovers. No, instead this is a miracle of heavenly provision which foreshadows the messianic age where all the hungry will be fed (Luke 1:53; 6:21). The twelve baskets of leftovers, like the twelve disciples,

most likely represents the twelve tribes of Israel, implying that Israel will continue to be provided for by God. When have we experienced a miracle of abundance and taken the time to thank God for His generous provision? In what ways are we called to trust the Lord as the disciples did so that others can be fed through us? What stops us? (pride....fear of looking silly if the provision does not appear?)