

When Jesus Commands the Impossible

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[0 : 00] You could be turning to Luke chapter 9. he'd ministered to all kinds of people.

His popularity had grown. He's now ministering to thousands at a time. We'll see that today. We don't know if today, the passage that we'll read today, we don't know if this is the largest crowd. We know that he has had great crowds and that he has no longer been able to meet in synagogues. He has rather been out meeting in natural amphitheatres out in the wild.

It is towards the end of this chapter, we're going to see that Jesus turns his face and from here travels to Jerusalem. And we will see him spend a lot of time in that time training his 12 disciples, the apostles.

And I'm really convinced after having spent time this past couple weeks in this whole chapter, that that is exactly what Jesus is doing here today.

[1 : 41] He's doing a lot more and we'll talk about that. But he's got his disciples in mind. And I want you to see as we go through this, this is a beautiful picture of our Savior.

He's declaring his glory. He's revealing himself. But he has this heart for the 12. And he teaches them in such a blessed way.

It just speaks of his glory. Speaks of his goodness. Speaks of his kindness. And the way he works with people, we'll see that. So, Jesus is revealing himself more and more.

And you wouldn't have liked it. And I don't think I could physically have done it. But really, we probably should have preached from verse 1 down through the transfiguration of Christ in one shot. because it's all building to a big crescendo. The big thing is Peter's confession. They finally come to learn.

[2 : 54] They finally understand. But we'll see that next time. We talked last week about how, up to this point, the disciples had only been watching and learning.

And now, they have a hands-on training. Jesus has empowered them to go and preach the gospel and to cure people and to cast out demons.

And we looked last time at how they did that. Luke doesn't talk much about, he doesn't mention their reaction when they come back. If you go to the other gospels, and again, please don't do that now, you'll find that they are just bubbling with excitement.

Luke doesn't deal with that at all. They've gone out with this commission. They now have this hands-on training. And as we begin the passage we read today, we're going to find that they're coming back.

And Luke centers on, I think, a particular, two aspects, but a particular aspect that he wanted his disciples to know. And I think something that we can learn much from also as we look at what Jesus does with these 12.

[4 : 17] And before I read it, I will mention, this is the feeding of the 5,000. I haven't talked about that at all, and maybe you haven't looked ahead. This is the only miracle in all four gospels, except for the resurrection of Christ.

And the different gospel writers, they emphasize different things. The big thing is Jesus is God. All four of them do that. But each of them does a particular thing with this miracle. Well, let's look at what God has Luke do as we read Luke 9, 10 to 17.

On their return, the apostles told him all that they had done. And he took them and withdrew apart to a town called Bethsaida. When the crowds learned it, they followed him, and he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God and cured those who had need of healing.

Now the day began to wear away, and the 12 came and said to him, Send the crowd away to go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find lodging and to get provisions, for we are here in a desolate place.

[5 : 38] But he said to them, You give them something to eat. And they said, We have no more than five loaves and two fishes unless we are to go and buy food for all these people.

For there were about 5,000 men. And he said to his disciples, Have them sit down in groups of about 50 each.

And they did so. And taking the 12 loaves, I'm sorry, and they did so and had them all sit down. And taking the 12 loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing over them.

And he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And they all ate and were satisfied.

And what was left over was picked up 12 baskets of broken pieces. Let's pray together. Father, I praise you for this passage.

[6 : 45] I praise you for your spirit's ability to work in hearts because of this passage even these 2,000 years later. I thank you, Father, for the blessing this passage has been to me this week.

And Lord, how it keeps coming back in my ears and reminding me of who you are and what you do. And I pray that you would make plain from your word today who you are and what you do.

And Lord, I pray that your people would be encouraged that we all would see Jesus and the work of God here. And may we have our thoughts of God and of Jesus corrected, built up.

I pray that you would help us to be people who serve you in your strength and Lord, are reminded of the way you help us and the way you empower us.

I pray that you would bless, Father, that those who don't know you today would see the truth of what Christ has done and who he is.

[7 : 59] We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, the setting here, as I mentioned, the disciples have been on assignment, healing, casting out demons, and proclaiming the kingdom of God.

They were sent out and they were in a situation of go-as-you-are. Don't take extra clothes, don't take food, don't take an extra staff, don't take a money bag, just go.

And he sent them out in particular this way to teach them to trust him. And so they went out and God met their needs and God worked through them.

We don't know how long they were gone, but we know that they went to many Jewish cities. And in the course of looking at that last week, we came to Herod, Herod Antipas, who made the statement, who is this?

And talked about how he had heard from people that some said that he was John the Baptist and some said he was Elijah and some said he was one of the other prophets risen from the dead and he wanted to see Jesus.

[9 : 16] And so the question was ringing everywhere, who is this? People have been wondering if Jesus was one of the Old Testament prophets having coming back.

He'd done many of the things that the Old Testament prophets had done. In fact, I'll give this hint away. He is going to do today one of the things that one of the Old Testament prophets did once. And so people had many reasons to think that possibly it was that. But Jesus is different. The Old Testament prophets would either act based on revelation from God or would act coming to the Lord asking for God to do something.

Jesus is different. He did not ask God to do these miracles. He is God. What he had done in raising the dead and healing the sick and casting out demons, he did not do by means of prayer to the Father.

He did because he is God. and he was going in his own authority as the God-man. He did things prophets never did.

[10 : 31] He did them himself. He also, as we saw last time, empowered others to do miracles in his name.

We saw that the twelve went out and God empowered them to do these miracles, to heal and to cast out demons and to preach the gospel and they did.

But you can look at the Old Testament and you can see person after person that God calls to go and he empowers them to do miraculous things.

You can think through the judges, Gideon. You can think about things that Samuel did, things that David did, destroying or killing Goliath and all the things that he did.

You can think then through the prophets and in the kings, the two books of the kings and we saw Elijah come on the scene and the things that he did. Amazing things. God empowered him to do.

[11 : 29] Elisha, double the things what Elijah had done. God empowered him to do that. And on through Daniel and the three Hebrew children, through Ezekiel and Isaiah and Jeremiah and the minor prophets and how God had empowered them to do many things.

God did that. Jesus empowered them to do that. And at the same time as we look at this passage, not only do we see that Jesus empowered people, but here Jesus, the divine son of God, is the God man.

He is in this passage today demonstrating that he is God. and that will be acknowledged plainly. So the disciples come back and our Savior is careful to see and pay attention to what the disciples have gone through.

They give their report. Luke does not mention what they reported. But Luke goes on to show how instruction for those disciples is still going on.

[12 : 52] Jesus says he talks with these disciples, recognizes that they need a rest. You can see this more plainly from other Gospels.

Luke doesn't go into it, but the situation is the same. He took them and drew apart into a place in the town of Bethsaida. Now, these men grew tired.

Jesus grew tired. Jesus was the God man. He recognizes that there's a need for rest. Ministry is tiring.

We saw that Jesus, after having taught and ministered to the crowd in chapter 8, he got into a boat and the first thing he did was to fall asleep. He slept.

He was tired enough that the winds and waves that caused experienced fishermen to realize that they were in peril, he was tired enough. Those didn't even wake him up. several times in the Gospels, Jesus would retire to a quiet place and take his disciples there into that quiet place that they might rest.

[14 : 11] This ministry was difficult. And Jesus, as these men came back, recognized their need for rest. He probably had a need for rest.

He had been dealing with people moment by moment. So Jesus saw that they were tired and decided to withdraw into this quiet place.

I won't take a long time, but I want to remind you that it's not just these disciples that need rest. It's not just Jesus that need rest.

Somehow, we sometimes think that we're people, guilty, that we can run on no rest. Rest is a creation ordinance.

If the God man, while he was on earth, needed rest, so should we take rest and be careful to guard that.

[15 : 14] And so Jesus, knowing their situation, took them for a rest, so they got in a boat. Luke doesn't mention this. The other gospels mention this.

They get in a boat and they cut across the lake to Bethsaida, which is at the very top of the lake. And people that were there, the crowds that were around Jesus, they had grown large.

And they were present when the twelve returned. heard. And when Jesus, knowing the disciples needed a quiet place, they start to go off, but the crowd follows.

So however big the crowd was when Jesus was near Capernaum and decided that they needed a rest, when Jesus left and the crowd made their way around the lake, an eight-mile trek, there were 5,000 people at least there when Jesus got there.

So, picture this. You're exhausted. You need a vacation. You finally take your vacation, only to get there to find that your boss and 3,000 workers met at where you're going on vacation and want more from you.

[16 : 40] And you kind of, as we read through this, get the impression from the disciples, they were peopled out.

But when that large crowd got over to Bethsaida, Jesus welcomed them. Mark, in chapter 6, this is Mark's account of the feeding of the 5,000.

Mark 6, 34 says, when he went ashore, he saw a great crowd. Luke says he welcomed them. Mark says he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

And he began to teach them many things. Luke mentions that they continued most of the rest of the day, Jesus ministering to these people.

And I remind you, Jesus is tired. But Jesus loved these people. That's one of the things that I was greatly impressed with as I went through this.

[17 : 51] Here is Jesus, probably as exhausted as ever, had purpose to go take a break and gets there and doesn't say, stupid crowds followed us here too.

He doesn't say, I haven't had a day off in whatever many days, come back tomorrow. Jesus is not terribly far from the end of his ministry.

Jesus is very close to the end of his ministry in that area. He will soon not see any of these people anymore. And his heart goes out to them. Tired as he is, he's willing to minister to them.

His love for them caused him to be willing to minister even though he was exhausted. And that was the pattern of Jesus' life. Think ahead to the cross.

When Jesus died on the cross, and I don't know exactly, but just in a rough estimate this morning, I was thinking through it. When Jesus died on the cross, he had been awake for at least 30 hours.

[19 : 12] And he had already endured unimaginable stress for his own people. You know, as he's going through the situation in the garden, Father, if there's a different way.

He endured unimaginable physical suffering at that time. And he didn't shun from the responsibility he had.

He loved people enough to go on. During those 30 hours of weariness, Jesus served you and me. Jesus was willing to spend and be spent for those he loved.

What does your tiredness reveal about your love for other people? have you ever said, I'm sorry, I don't mean to be mean, I'm just tired.

And I'm not trying to say you need to legalistically buckle up or buck up and just do it. That's not what I'm getting at here.

[20 : 29] The love of Jesus for his people was so strong that we don't have any record of him praying, but he was willing to seek and depend on his father for strength, to keep going, to serve these people because he loved them.

Does your willingness to serve others stop when you are tired? And as I mentioned, there is a balance. We do need to take rest. And there were times when Jesus, when the crowd assembled, there were times when Jesus said, I need to go on to the next town.

But we need to be careful to be people who do not let tiredness keep us from serving others. You've been awake with sick kids for a week now.

Lord, I need strength to serve my sick children. Or you've had a long day and someone from the church calls you and says, whatever, this broke down or that broke down.

Jesus was willing to serve. Well, back in this situation, Jesus has welcomed these people. They've been around most of the day, probably more than four or five hours at this point, and it's getting late.

[21 : 56] And they're in a desolate place with over 5,000 hungry people. now, if you go to one of the other gospels, you'll see it mentioned that there were women and children there, and that is certainly true.

Scripture mentions it. Some say, well, there's many as 20,000 people there, and there may well have been. I don't know how many women and children were there. But there's this large group of people, and it's getting late in the day.

And there's this problem. Where are these people going to sleep? Where are they going to eat?

And the disciples have a solution.

Send them away. Send the crowds away. Let them go into the surrounding towns and villages to get food and lodging. It just seems logical.

It's the perfect answer to their situation. Send them away. But Jesus has a better solution. He says, you give them something to eat.

[23 : 06] The you is very emphatic there. You give them something to eat. Notice he does not say, I will give them something to eat.

He's directing his command to the disciples. You give them something to eat. And the disciples say, well, we can't.

All we have is five loaves and two fishes. Think hamburger buns made of rye and small fish like lunch meat. This was not five loaves that filled a basket.

Later we'll see that Jesus took all five loaves and the fish in his hand when he asked God's blessing. We only have five loaves and two fish.

And the disciples said, I don't know why they picked this number. But they said seven months of wages would not be enough to buy food for everyone. Now maybe that's what they had in their till.

[24 : 14] I don't know. But they say seven months worth of wages won't be enough to buy food for everyone. Notice something that is not here.

There is no rebuke. There is no, this is the way you should have done it.

This is the way you should have responded. In this section, Jesus is showing that when he calls us or commands us to carry out his work, he enables us to do that work.

And this is where I wish we could have preached this all in one session. Because remember, they had just returned from a missions trip that they were sent on, and they were given power and authority for that missions trip.

here they have come back, and as I mentioned, you can look at other gospels and find that they are just rejoicing. The demons are subjected to us.

[25 : 22] Wow, we are just amazed at what God can do. And now Jesus has commanded them to feed these people. They needed to learn, because it was going to be very important for them in just a few short months.

They would be his representatives. He would be in heaven. And they would be carrying on this ministry. And they needed to learn that when God commands you to do something, there's also this enabling.

He had already given them that enabling. They needed to learn to trust him, to do what he calls them to do. I think this is such an important lesson.

Jesus has called them to be apostles. They will go out into the world to lay the foundation of the church. They will bear witness to the life, the teaching, the death, burial, and resurrection, and the ascension of Jesus.

And they will authenticate their witness by signs and wonders. They needed to be assured that what Jesus had called them to do, he would also empower them to do.

[26 : 36] So in this situation, when they said, there's no way, we don't have enough, send them home, his command was, you feed them.

You feed them. This truth is important to us also. What God calls us to do, he will work through us and empower us to do.

Now, we're not called to cast out demons and do some of the things, heal sicknesses and stuff like that. But nonetheless, what God has called us to do, he has empowered us to do.

We're to go out with the gospel. You say, I don't know all the answers. One of the things that is going on here is that Jesus told them to do this, but he's the power behind it.

He's the one who's really providing bread. And the same thing is true for us. Now, the ministry of this has been passed on through to the Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is with us.

[27 : 44] And the same thing is true. What God calls us to do, he will work through us and empower us to do. We may not say all the words right in evangelism.

We may not remember all the points that we planned on saying, I'm going to say this next time I talk with my neighbor. And we may not remember all those things.

Remember, even in sharing the gospel, it is not you who saved that person, it is God who saves that person. And going out with the gospel is something he empowers his people to do.

He's commanded us to go, he's not thinking that we'll just go on our own strength. If I rub my hands fast enough, maybe sparks will fly and bread will be produced. That was not the case.

Jesus would do that miracle. Or ministering to one another. God has called each of us to minister to one another. I don't know what to say.

[28 : 44] I don't know what God calls you to do. He empowers you. Now there's instructions in the word. There's advice you can get from other people. It's not that we're on our own.

But we're people who are too quick to say the answer is to run or the answer is to just not do it because we don't see how we could possibly do it. Oh, I don't know how I could be a blessing to someone else.

Well, what he's called us to do, he'll help us do it. Or marriage. We've been, many of us are married and we're in these relationships and we go, it's hard.

I have a great marriage. I'm not, I could get in trouble here. But marriage is hard. God puts you there.

As a Christian, God can help you to be the kind of husband or wife that God wants you to be. It's not something that you just give up on because you don't know how to do it.

[29 : 53] Parenting. Do we have that all figured out? No. Every young couple who begins a family has to go through the same things.

And you should not say, well, I'm not having kids because I don't know how to raise them. Part of what God called families to do. God empowers.

Don't let the limitations of what you know of a situation or what you know about yourself keep you from obeying the commands that God has given you.

And I love this. The picture of Jesus is beautiful here because here the disciples say, send them home. Jesus says, no, you feed them.

And they say, there's no way we have just five loaves and two fish. If we spent seven months worth of money, we couldn't buy enough and it's just impossible. Jesus doesn't rebuke them. He leads them by the hand through this miracle.

[31 : 04] He's there teaching them. He sent them out. They've seen God do amazing things. I'm sure there were times they failed, but they've seen some amazing things. They've seen Jesus do amazing things and now they come back and Jesus throws this challenge at them and they're like, whoa, I don't know how to do this.

And Jesus leads them through it. He teaches them by leading them through it. Teaches them to obey his command. He says, have them sit down in groups of 50.

So the disciples get them to sit down in groups of 50. And Jesus takes the five loaves in his hands and he gives thanks for them. Now, I am absolutely, positively convinced that that moment a train load of bread didn't magically appear.

Absolutely convinced of it. Because at that point it says that Jesus was breaking, after he said the prayer, he was breaking the bread and giving it to the disciples.

And they said it before the crowd. Where was the bread being multiplied? there were five loaves and two fishes.

[32 : 24] How many disciples were there? Twelve. Ooh, we don't even have enough to give a half a hamburger bun to every disciple. So Jesus had to multiply the bread.

And he broke the bread and he gave it to the disciples. Breaking the bread for feeding 5,000 people or more than 5,000 people would have taken a long time.

Multiplying the bread in the disciples' hands was still something that Jesus was enabling them to do. I think as he broke the bread and gave it to the disciples and they took it and broke it to others, I think it kept, I think that runs in the theme of him sending, giving them authority and power.

And here when he says you feed them, he doesn't give up and say, I'll just do it anyway. He teaches them through the process. He breaks the bread and they see God is doing something amazing and the disciple walks with this piece of bread and as he begins to give it to the person, to the person, to the person, God is enabling that bread to be multiplied in his hands.

And I think the same thing is true with us. The miracle that's in the disciples' hands is not the disciples' miracle. It's still Jesus' miracle. But as Jesus sends us out, he's the one that's enabling.

[33 : 57] Sure, he broke the bread and gave it to the disciples. But as the bread's being broken, as you and I are serving and we're endeavoring to give the word of God, we're not multiplying it to them.

He is. But it's in our hands for that bit of time. And God is using us. We need to be willing to be people who are, we need to be people who say, yes, okay Lord.

Maybe we need to say, God, I don't know how to do this. Help me to understand how to do this.

Maybe we've learned. And we do it, but we still need to be these people who are trusting the Lord that he does through us what he's called us to do.

Now, excuse me, one of the things that I've been learning is to always look for references in a passage to the Old Testament.

And it was interesting because in this passage there's an allusion to the Old Testament. It's an allusion. You pick it up by a phrase that's the same.

[35 : 14] I didn't find it myself. I looked in a book, so I mean, not that smart. But there's this phrase that's the same here as a phrase in the Old Testament.

Let me read this account from 2 Kings 4, verses 42 to 44. A man came from Baal Shoshana, bringing the man of God bread of the first fruits, 20 loaves of barley, and fresh ears of grain in his sack.

And Elisha said, give to the men that they may eat. But let me stop here. If you were to read before this, you will find that this is part of the section of 2 Kings where Elisha has been ministering with and through and training other prophets.

And this comes off from the heels of them having made a pot of stew with gourds that ended up being poisonous. And Elisha put something in and it was healed.

And this comes right after that. So this man brings 20 loaves of bread and his first ears of grain and gives it to Elisha. And Elisha says, give to the men that they may eat.

[36 : 28] But his servant said, how can I set this before a hundred men? So he, Elijah, repeated, give them to the men that they may eat.

For thus says the Lord, they shall eat and have some left. That's the phrase that's repeated. They shall eat and have some left.

And they ate and had some left. what am I getting at? Elisha had already done the same miracle that Jesus was commanding the disciples to do.

And how did Elisha, how could Elisha feel confident to say what he said? Because the Lord had said this would be the case.

How could the disciples feel confident that bread would be provided for over 5,000 people?

Because the Lord had said, you give them bread to eat.

[37 : 43] The disciples should have already, I understand, we're all weak, we all get older, we don't remember everything, but there is an obvious connection there that it would have been right for the disciples to have put two and two together.

They should have learned from Elisha's example. Jesus does a lot more with a lot less in this situation.

And it goes on to say that all were satisfied. There were 12 baskets left over. Jesus Elisha provided. Jesus abundantly provided. It shows the great ability of Christ. But I think also, as many have made comments, a reminder to each of the 12 of their need to trust in Christ, not just that he will provide food for his people.

I think it's a reminder for them to trust in Christ, to enable them to do what he calls and commands them to do.

[39 : 01] And I think we should too. God enables us to do what he commands.

So in conclusion, who is this? It's the question that's been ringing in ears, and it will ring in the next message in such a glorious way. But it's been obvious, who is this?

The crowd, they saw a man who does the things that God can do. A man who heals our diseases and casts out demons.

And for some, you remember the sinner woman? For some, who is this? This is the man who forgives my sins. This is the man who makes me whole.

This is the man I love as my savior, and would give everything and anything for. Who is this?

[40 : 07] What the disciples saw was a man who does what only God can do. But they're seeing a much clearer picture.

And as I mentioned next time, we'll see how Peter confesses thou art the Christ. who is this? The disciples saw one whose love for people was a love that saw them as sheep having no shepherd, and was willing to serve when he was exhausted.

They saw a savior who loved people and willing to give himself for them. They saw a savior who commands heaven and earth to meet the needs of his people.

We don't know how much the crowd saw the breaking of the bread. We don't know how much they saw of the actual miracle. I think they saw enough of it to know it was miraculous.

But the disciples, up close and personal, saw, wow, I just can't quit. It just never stops. God keeps meeting everyone's need.

[41 : 29] He is the one who commands heaven and earth to meet the needs of his people. And I think they also saw one who was willing to patiently teach, instruct them in the things they needed to know.

They'd gone out and seen miraculous things happen. And they came back and they were challenged and they were fearful. And Jesus says, okay, let me walk you through this.

Do this. And I'll do this. And I'll enable that. You'll be able to obey my command as you rest and trust in me.

What should we do? We should worship and serve this glorious son of God. we need to repent of our lack of faith and dependence on Christ.

How often do you, you would not believe how often I have to repent and say, God, I can't do this.

Well, I'm called to this.

[42 : 33] Parenting. Being a good husband. Being a pastor. Being friends to people. I can't do this, Lord.

Well, let me walk you through it. And I will certainly help because that's the only way you've been able to do it in the first place. Repent of our lack of faith and dependence on Christ.

He can meet our needs. He can enable us to do that. And lastly, I would just say, there were people here who began to see Jesus for who he was. He's a person who had compassion on them.

People who were lost in sin. Jesus was there to meet their needs. Jesus welcomes you to come to himself. He's already provided for man's greatest need, salvation.

And that provision is abundant. And he offers it to you. Trust in him and his payment for your sins.

Let's pray. Father, I thank you for your word.

[43 : 37] And I praise you. Lord, may we never get over the fact that you are able to multiply bread to feed thousands, tens of thousands.

You fed Israel for 40 years. Nobody saw a thing except you provide the manna every day. Lord, may we be full of worship towards you.

May we be full of faith towards you. May we repent of where we lack faith. And Lord, may we go ahead and obey your command to do that which seemingly we have no ability to do.

And pray that you would be with us. Be with us as we sing in worship of you as we close. In Jesus name. Amen. We're going to sing 165, ye servants of God, your master proclaim.

A good response to a God who does such things for his people. Number 165. 165.