

Luke 9B

- As we ended last week, Jesus had reassembled his apostles after having sent them out to perform miracles and proclaim the kingdom of God in the surrounding area
 - As we studied, the disciples had been somewhat successful, and they had managed to bring back crowds with them
 - Jesus and disciples try to retreat to a town nearby called Bethesda – city of fish – but the people follow and Jesus responds compassionately by teaching them and healing them
 - So here is this huge crowd was gathered around Jesus and the men, and there must have been a growing sense of helplessness in the moment for the disciples
 - How were they going to accommodate so many people? They may have even tried to send them away, but it became obvious they weren't going to leave as they hoped they would receive healing
- So the disciples turn to Jesus for help

[Luke 9:12](#) ¶ Now the day was ending, and the twelve came and said to Him, “Send the crowd away, that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside and find lodging and get something to eat; for here we are in a desolate place.”

[Luke 9:13](#) But He said to them, “You give them *something* to eat!” And they said, “We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless perhaps we go and buy food for all these people.”

[Luke 9:14](#) (For there were about five thousand men.) And He said to His disciples, “Have them sit down *to eat* in groups of about fifty each.”

[Luke 9:15](#) They did so, and had them all sit down.

[Luke 9:16](#) Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them, and broke *them*, and kept giving *them* to the disciples to set before the people.

[Luke 9:17](#) And they all ate and were satisfied; and the broken pieces which they had left over were picked up, twelve baskets *full*.

- This is probably the most famous miracle Jesus performs
 - It's the only miracle recorded in all four gospels

- Because of that, we can gain wonderful insight about this event by comparing the four gospels
- Start with some simple observation
 - The text tells us 5 thousand men were gathered, but the other gospels tell us that there were women and children present and they ate as well
 - So it's likely that the actual number of people was 10,000 or more
 - This is a huge crowd
 - Obviously, Jesus' ministry is now really starting to attract attention
 - Imagine if you are the authorities in the Jesus day – whether the Romans or the Jewish leaders
 - Either way, you're going to start feeling threatened by such large gatherings
 - If the crowds get big enough and devoted enough, you have an army
- The second thing we note from the text is it's late in the day, and the people are without food or shelter
- This is a concern for probably a couple of reasons
 - First, travel at night was dangerous and they rolled the street up at night
 - So out of concern for the people, the apostles wanted the people to leave while they still had a chance to find a place to stay and eat
- Secondly, the crowds are not only growing big, their growing more restless and nationalistic
 - When you look at the account in John after Jesus feeds the crowd, John tell us this

[John 6:15](#) ¶ So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.

- John also tells us that verse 4:

[John 6:4](#) Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near.

- The time of the Passover was a very nationalistic time for the Jewish nation
 - All the years that they were under Roman rule, the Roman authorities were always most concerned about the Passover time of year
 - Remember what the Passover meant to the Jews
 - It was the a remembrance of how the Jews were freed from bondage under and oppressor – the Egyptians
 - So every year as Passover approached, the Jews were primed and waiting for something or someone who might be the one to be a new Moses, someone who would free them from their oppressor
 - And here’s Jesus, a man who seems to be the one God promised – the one who might have the power to defeat the Roman enemy and drive it out of the Jewish homeland
- So, John tells us that this was, in fact, the sentiment within this growing crowd
 - But clearly Jesus didn’t want them to think of Him in that way
 - There was a plan to carry out, and it didn’t include His sitting in the seat of David on this coming – that would wait for another time
- But at this point, the disciples have no clue about the larger plan
 - They’re just getting a little nervous at the sight of this large, nationalistic crowd rising up in fervor over Jesus hoping to place Him on the throne
 - And if there’s one thing worse than a large nationalistic crowd of Jews, it’s a large nationalistic crowd of hungry Jews
 - So the disciples want to see them fed and seeing no way to do that, they beg Jesus to send them away
- So they ask Jesus to send them away
 - He replies feed them

- Now before we try to understand what Jesus was expecting the disciples to do, John adds this detail:

[John 6:5](#) Therefore Jesus, lifting up His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him, *said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?”

[John 6:6](#) This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do.

- OK, so John tells us that Jesus was already preparing to feed the crowd
 - He knew that it would require a miracle and, in fact, it was a part of the Father’s plan that a miracle take place
 - So why doesn’t Jesus say to the disciples, stand back, watch me feed five thousand...
- Jesus was clearly using this moment to pose a test for the disciples
 - But kind of what test?
 - Is Jesus expecting the disciples to produce food for this huge crowd?
 - Again, the answer is obvious – no
 - John himself says that the purpose of Jesus’ question was not to actually make the disciples feed the flock – Jesus was already expecting to feed them
 - The purpose was a bit deeper
- For a religious man in the day of Jesus, ministry didn’t look anything like it does today for you and me
 - The religious leaders of Jesus’ day didn’t see themselves as shepherds
 - They weren’t typically men who watched over their flock with an eye toward caring for them, helping them,
 - Rather, they were trained to be experts in the law and to hold that over the heads of the people
 - To be more like the assistance principal rather than the school nurse
- And Jesus is trying to help the disciples see the world a little differently

- Unlike those who came before them, the disciples were going to learn a new manner of ministry
 - Rather than be on the top of the people, lording over them
 - Jesus was going to call upon the disciples to be under the people, serving them and supporting them
 - Here was a perfect opportunity to show them how that looks
- Jesus wanted the disciples to know that the people He brings them they would need to care for
 - Ministry in other words was about meeting people's needs – and not just their spiritual needs
 - Probably the best place to see this in scripture is in the Book of James

[James 2:15](#) If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, [James 2:16](#) and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that? [James 2:17](#) Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself.

- James' point is really quite simple
 - If our faith motivates to do nothing more than merely speak words of comfort, then it's no faith at all
 - True faith bears fruit in the life of the individual in the form of love, mercy, forgiveness and charity
 - The fruit of the Spirit that Gal 5:22 gives us
 - e.g., love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control
 - These will be the hallmark of a Christian, and Jesus is working even at this early point to teach them that caring for people in ministry is not easy
 - it's not a matter of convenience,
 - it's not dependent on our own personal abilities

- God will routinely give us greater demands than we can meet in our own power – that’s how He gains glory through us
 - We must understand and accept that as God gifts us and calls us to minister to others, that calling brings the burden of caring for others
 - I’m not talking about ministry in the capital M sense – pastors, ministers
 - I also talking about the kind of ministry most of us experience – ministry to friends and relatives in need
 - Teaching, counseling, prayer, encouragement, visitations, etc.
 - just as others will care for us in the Body of Christ
 - The disciples didn’t understand this – they just assume that its time to send these people away
- Now Jesus says to the disciples, what do you have for food?
 - And the gospel of John tells us that Andrew finds a young boy selling fish and bread (5 loaves and two fish
 - Clearly not enough food for the disciples, much less 10,000+ people
 - But Jesus tells them to assemble the crowd in groups of fifty
 - He orchestrates an orderly, calm process for distributing food
 - The grouping of people is simply good sense
 - It avoids riots over the food and helps makes the process of distribution efficient
 - It’s like how we feed people at the Flying W ranch – wait until your table is called
 - At the end, there is enough left over so that each disciple had his share of the leftovers – 12 baskets full
- I often wonder how this actually looked
 - Jesus probably divided the apostles into pairs, each pair received either a fish or a loaf of bread, with one left over, perhaps to remain with Jesus

- It's no coincidence that the total number adds to seven, of course – God's perfect number signifying that it was God providing the food
- But as the apostles received their allotted portion, what do you think was going through their minds?
 - They must have glanced at the basket and the measly loaf of bread or fish, and then looked up at the huge crowd and thought this is ridiculous
- That's often how ministry appears to us
 - The tasks God will give us seem all but impossible
 - We look at what we have to bring to the task and then consider the enormity of the work ahead, and are tempted to give up before we start
- But did you also notice how God works through us
 - Did Jesus sit the disciples down ahead of time and say here's what will happen...explain the details of how He would provide?
 - No...he expected them to take a step of faith in serving Him
 - Just like Abraham did when He followed God
 - Just like Moses did when He went to talk to Pharaoh, the most powerful man in the world
 - Just like Esther when she approached the king for the sake of her people
 - Each took a step of faith, without knowing where it would lead, but they trusted God to direct their steps and multiply their efforts
 - And each earlier step of faith gave them confidence to take the next
 - Just like the disciples, who took an earlier step of faith in going out to heal and cast out demons at the beginning of chapter 9

[2Cor. 9:10](#) Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness;

[2Cor. 9:11](#) you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.

- God is the one who provides our seed for sowing, which makes sense since it is His word that we are sowing – He provides that to us
 - And it is God who increases the harvest of righteousness that follows
 - And as we are personally enriched through our service –
 - Obviously, the first and most important way we can expect to be enriched is spiritually – by gaining the satisfaction and spiritual maturity that comes from sacrifice and service to others in the name of the Lord
 - Secondly, God will take care of those in service for their physical needs – 12 baskets for disciples
 - and as others come to the Lord by our efforts to spread the Word, He receives thanksgiving as He should
 - Don't let the appearance of impossible odds or lack of immediate success discourage you from serving in the ways God calls
 - The next time you see an impossible task, just remember what the disciples would have been thinking when Jesus told them to go feed 10,000 people with a picnic basket of food...

[Luke 9:18](#) ¶ And it happened that while He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him, and He questioned them, saying, “Who do the people say that I am?”

[Luke 9:19](#) They answered and said, “John the Baptist, and others say Elijah; but others, that one of the prophets of old has risen again.”

[Luke 9:20](#) And He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” And Peter answered and said, “The Christ of God.”

[Luke 9:21](#) But He warned them and instructed *them* not to tell this to anyone,

[Luke 9:22](#) saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day.”

- The events of these verses most likely followed soon after the feeding of the 5 thousand, although there is no reason to assume it was the same moment
 - But throughout this chapter, Jesus identity is an issue
 - The time has come in His ministry for Jesus to begin revealing Himself to the disciples and the world for Who He truly is

- Remember earlier in this chapter, we heard Herod trying to understand who this man was
- Herod eventually concluded it must be John back from the dead, Mark tells us
- So Luke is beginning to allude the growing controversy over Jesus' identity
- By the way, this is why Jesus asks the question the way He does
 - He knows that rumors are flying
 - By crossing referencing Luke with John, many scholars estimate that the events we're studying today occurred in the last year of Jesus' ministry
 - So by then, He was well known and the suspense over who He was and why He had come was probably intense
- So finally, Jesus wants to know what His disciples have concluded
 - They've no doubt heard the rumors...
 - When they would go into towns to buy food or get water, they probably heard people talking about Jesus
 - They would have had their own ideas
 - But it's easy to carry around assumptions and ideas and play with them in our heads
 - It's another thing entirely to take a stand, to come to a decision and make a confession
 - That's what' Jesus is doing here...it's time for the disciples to take a stand
- Jesus says who do others say I am
 - And the disciples give the usual answers – John, Elijah, some other prophet
 - It's interesting that no one says that Jesus is being called the Messiah
 - No one mentions to Jesus that the rumors include Him being the one promised by God

- Maybe they were afraid to suggest it
- Maybe they wanted to Jesus to say it first
- Instead, Jesus asks them directly
 - What do you think...who am I?
 - And Peter speaks up and says you are the Messiah, the Son of God
 - Peter isn't merely stating that Jesus is the promised deliverer, the Messiah
 - It's far more significant that Peter says you are the Son of God
 - This was not a general understanding of the Messiah
 - The Jewish understanding of the Messiah did not necessarily include the idea that Christ would be God Himself.
 - Yet Peter has somehow come to that conclusion
 - This is a remarkable statement, even from someone who has been with Jesus for some time
- In Matt's gospel we see how Peter came to know this important detail

[Matt. 16:17](#) And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

- Jesus says that Peter's answer was proof that God had blessed Peter, because only by the power of the Holy Spirit could Peter come to this understanding
 - That it was one thing to know that Jesus had come by God's direction, but it was something else that Peter knew Jesus to be God – that insight required God Himself to provide it
 - This is the same for you and I today
 - In our own power and effort, it's possible to know about Jesus

- It's possible to believe He was a man of God, a prophet, a messenger, a teacher, and all the rest
- But to truly believe that He was the Son of God requires that God Himself reveal that truth to a person
- And by our confession that Jesus is the Son of God, and therefore that He is God Himself, we are demonstrating that we have been blessed by God – that we have been given the faith that Paul calls a gift in Eph 2:8
- this is the only way a man may be saved
- Luke then adds on additional interesting detail
 - He records Jesus telling the apostles not tell anyone of what they know of Him
 - And then He says why: because Jesus must be rejected and die
 - In other words, don't try to interrupt God's plan for His Son – that the Messiah would have to die
 - By holding back what they knew, they were working in God's will to do His plan
 - They were essentially preventing widespread acceptance of the Messiah and helping ensure His rejection by the people
- It's interesting to note looking at Matt's account that this is where Peter steps forward to rebuke Jesus
 - I guess after having been complimented a moment earlier by Jesus over his correct confession, he thinks he can take charge
 - But as you know, Jesus rebukes him sternly
 - He says,

[Matt. 16:22](#) Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid *it*, Lord! This shall never happen to You."

[Matt. 16:23](#) But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

- Don't you just love Peter?

- The scripture says he takes Jesus aside and rebukes Him
- You get the sense that Peter has gone to assume that he knows what's best now and wants to convince Jesus
- But consider what Peter just said a few moments earlier
- He said that Jesus was the Son of God – that Jesus was God Himself
- But now he's ready to rebuke Him
- Now either Peter doesn't have this God thing completely worked out or he's just plain stupid
 - It makes me wonder a bit about whether Peter even knew what he was saying a moment earlier
- Or perhaps it's a good reminder to all of us of how easily we can say in the one moment that Jesus is Lord and then in the next, we act like we're in control
 - Jesus calls it for what it is when He responds
 - He says that Peter has his mind on the things of men rather than on the things of God
 - And that's often our problem too
 - When we ever we think that God's plan isn't the best for us, and we replace it with our own, we have aligned with the devil
 - That's why Jesus called Peter Satan – it wasn't an insult, it wasn't hyperbole
 - Jesus truly meant that in speaking those words, Peter was aligning with Satan, because when we work any plan other than God's we are working according to the enemy's desire
- It was God's plan to destroy His only Son
 - The Jews didn't kill Jesus
 - The Romans didn't kill Jesus
 - Satan didn't kill Jesus
 - The Father did – for us

- One thing scripture will not let us forget is that the Father is sovereign over every event in His creation, including the plan that His Son would come to the Earth but He must be rejected and killed
 - And the Father and Jesus Himself made sure that would happen, just as Isaiah foretold

[Is. 53:6](#) All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him.

[Is. 53:7](#) He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He did not open His mouth;
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,
So He did not open His mouth.

[Is. 53:8](#) By oppression and judgment He was taken away;
And as for His generation, who considered
That He was cut off out of the land of the living
For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke *was due*?

[Is. 53:9](#) His grave was assigned with wicked men,
Yet He was with a rich man in His death,
Because He had done no violence,
Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.

[Is. 53:10](#) But the LORD was pleased
To crush Him, putting *Him* to grief;
If He would render Himself *as* a guilt offering,
He will see *His* offspring,
He will prolong *His* days,
And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.

[Is. 53:11](#) As a result of the anguish of His soul,
He will see *it and* be satisfied;
By His knowledge the Righteous One,
My Servant, will justify the many,
As He will bear their iniquities.