

The title of this morning's sermon is, "*You Feed Them.*"

On Sunday mornings we're working our way through Luke's Gospel verse-by-verse and we find ourselves at **Luke 9:12**. Last week we started one of the most familiar accounts in Scripture: "The Feeding of the 20,000." I told you this is a more appropriate title since Jesus fed 5,000 men, which means He probably fed around 20,000 people.

Let's back up to **verse 10** to get the context...

Luke 9:10 On their return the apostles told him all that they had done (this means all they had done when they were sent out). **And he took them and withdrew apart to a town called Bethsaida.**

The Apostles returned from their missionary trip where they were traveling from area-to-area, house-to-house, preaching and healing all day. How do you think they were feeling? Exhausted! You can guess that from Luke's account, but Mark's Gospel makes it clearer...

Mark 6:31 And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place AND REST A WHILE." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure **EVEN TO EAT.**

You know you're busy when you don't even have time to eat!

Jesus knew they needed rest, but look what happened...

Luke 9:11 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.

This introduces an obvious question...

If Jesus wanted the Apostles to rest, why did He **welcome** these people?

The answer is in **Mark 6:34**...

Mark 6:34 When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and HE HAD COMPASSION ON THEM, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things.

Last week we discussed why Jesus did and didn't have compassion on the crowds...

It's common for people to say – including some Bible teachers – that Jesus **had compassion on them** b/c they were hungry: "*Jesus was stirred up with compassion for the people, and it's a beautiful picture of the way He wants to take care of our physical needs, even preventing us from being hungry.*"

Jesus does care about our physical needs, but the problem is that's not what the passage is saying. **Mark 6:34** says...

Mark 6:34 He had compassion on them, BECAUSE THEY WERE LIKE SHEEP WITHOUT A SHEPHERD. AND HE BEGAN TO TEACH THEM MANY THINGS.

Jesus wasn't looking at these people saying, "*Oh I feel bad for them. Their stomachs are probably growling!*"

He wasn't looking at them physically. He was looking at them spiritually:

- They're unsaved.
- They don't know the Lord.

So what did Jesus do? He taught them:

- **Mark 6:34b He began to teach them many things.**
- If you look back at **Luke 9:11** it says **He welcomed them and SPOKE TO THEM OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.**

Before Jesus fed these people physically, He first fed them spiritually.

And this is why He didn't let the Apostles rest. The spiritual needs of the crowd outweighed the physical needs of the Apostles.

And this catches us up to **verse 12**...

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

Jesus taught these people so long the sun started to set. They were so captivated by His teaching they didn't even think of leaving.

So the Apostles came up with a plan: send them away.

The Apostles are known for some foolish moments in their ministry, and this is one of them. There are many reasons they shouldn't have said this...

First, it was foolish to tell Jesus what to do...

- It's like they thought they were in charge and they were His counselors...
- They know what's best...
- They know the situation better than Him...
- They know what should be done...

But you don't get to tell the Lord what to do...even if you're one of the Twelve Apostles.

Second, I don't know if I'd go so far as to say it's a theme in the Gospels, but I will say this isn't the only time the Apostles did something like this:

- Most famously they tried to send away the parents who brought their infants to Jesus. That's pretty bad when you try to keep babies away from the Lord.
- There was also a Canaanite woman whose daughter was **severely oppressed by a demon** and when she approached Jesus **Matt 15:23b** says the **disciples [told Him], "Send her away, for she is crying out after us."**

Too often their slogan was, "Don't bother us and don't bother Jesus."

They had been with Jesus long enough to know this wasn't His way of doing things. In **Matt 11:28** **He said, "COME TO ME, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."**

- Jesus invited people.
- He welcomed people.
- That was His standard operating procedure.

The Apostles should've known sending people away was the opposite of the way Jesus worked.

Last week we discussed the compassionate nature of our Lord, but the Apostles hadn't developed that compassionate nature yet.

One other reason they showed a lack of compassion is it was so late:

- This wasn't the time to have 20,000 people walk to the closest town all looking for food and lodging at the same time.
- Plus many of them probably had children with them.

Third – and I'll make this point more loosely than the others b/c we can't tell for sure – but it seems like they just didn't want to take care of this huge, hungry crowd:

- We know the Apostles were exhausted...
- They probably thought this had already gone on too long...
- It's starting to get dark...

So they tell Jesus, "*Get the people out of here.*"

If someone asked me for an example in Scripture of people shirking their responsibilities, this account would probably come to mind. And before you think I'm being too harsh, I think Jesus' response to the Apostles demonstrates what I'm saying. Look at the beginning of **verse 13**...

13a But he said to them, "You give them something to eat."

Go ahead and stop right here. We'll cover the rest of **verse 13** next week. I thought this statement from Jesus was too important to rush through.

The words "**You give them something to eat**" are an order. Jesus commanded them to do this.

I tried to make a mental note of this account, because I hope I remember it if I ever teach at a pastor's conference: "*You give them something to eat*" could be a great message for pastors.

It reminded me of what Jesus said to Peter...

Peter denied Jesus three times, and then after the resurrection, three times Jesus asked Peter, “Do you love Me?” The three questions corresponded to the three denials. Each time Peter answered that he loved Jesus, Jesus told him, “Feed my sheep,”...or in other words, **“You give them something to eat.”**

It’s a good reminder for pastors:

- **Eph 4:12** says pastors are supposed to **equip the saints for the work of ministry.**
- **2 Tim 3:16 and 17** says **All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.**

So if pastors are supposed to equip the saints, and Scripture is what the saints are equipped with, it only makes sense that pastors feed God’s Word to their flocks.

But then it occurred to me that the Lord could just as easily say this to many people. Here’s what I picture when I read this account...

When the Apostles told Jesus to send the crowds away to get something to eat, I think of children telling their parents to do something, but the parents say, *“Why don’t you do it!”*

- The parents turn it around and put it back on the children.
- That’s pretty much what happened here.

And this brings us to Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: “YOU GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO EAT” IS SOMETHING JESUS COULD SAY TO (PART I) HUSBANDS.

If you’re a husband the Lord would tell you, “You give her – your wife – something to eat!”

Marriage is a picture of Christ’s relationship to the church, and as husbands we have the responsibility toward our brides that Christ has toward His bride...

Eph 5:25 **Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.**

In **verse 25** God commands husbands to love their wives, and then in **verse 26** He tells us what that looks like. To God a loving husband is a husband who feeds his wife with the word, or **sanctifies and cleanses her by the washing of water with the word.**

If you’re a husband, in **Luke 9:13** you might even circle the words **“You give them something to eat”** and draw a line to write, *“My responsibility toward my wife.”*

There are many ways husbands can feed their wives the Word of God:

1. First, take your family to church consistently. It saddens me when I see husbands who forsake worshiping with their wives – or families – on the Lord’s Day.
2. Second, there are plenty of church activities – whether it’s Bible studies or home fellowships – that put couples in places to hear God’s Word and have it wash over them.
3. Third, you can play sermons or Christian stations or simply listen to audio recordings of the Bible.
4. Fourth – and I’d say most obviously – read the Word w/ your wife:
 - a. This is one of the most foundational ways for husbands to sanctify and cleanse their wives w/ the Word.
 - b. I’ve heard a number of men tell me they don’t know if they can read the Word with their wives, and I’d say if you can read, you can read the Word with your wife.
 - c. Pastor Doug creates the Family Worship Guide each week:
 - i. The bar isn’t too high.
 - ii. It’s three days of verses to read and there are even questions to discuss.

The next part of Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: “YOU GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO EAT” IS SOMETHING JESUS COULD SAY TO (PART II) PARENTS.

We feed our children physically, but are we feeding them spiritually?

As parents we should be praying for our children’s salvation and asking the Lord to work in their hearts, but at the same time, I could imagine the Lord saying, “You still need to **give them something to eat!**”

If you’re a parent, you might circle these words in **Luke 9:13** and draw a line to write, “*My responsibility toward my children.*”

Also, I see a parallel between the way the Apostles wanted to treat the crowd and the way we as parents can be tempted to treat our children. Here’s what I mean:

- The Apostles wanted to send the people away:
 - They didn’t want to deal with them.
 - They thought they were someone else’s responsibility.
- As Christian parents we can be tempted to do this with our children:
 - We want to send our children away.
 - We want someone else to deal with them.
 - We think they’re someone else’s responsibility.

Christian parents will say:

- I’ll send my children to Sunday School, and that’s where they’ll be fed...
- I’ll send my children to youth group, and that’s where they’ll be fed...
- I’ll take my children to our home fellowship, and that’s where they’ll be fed...

- I'll take my children to church, and that's where they'll be fed...

This isn't a commentary on churches, Sunday Schools, or home fellowships – as you can guess I'm a fan of these – but it is a commentary on our responsibility toward our children:

- I'm all for the church supporting and coming alongside parents in the spiritual training of their children.
- But I'm not in favor of the church taking the place of parents. The reason is God has squarely put the responsibility to raise children on the parents' shoulders and not the church.

We hear terrible statistics about the number of young people leaving the church after they graduate high school. I hope at some point Christian parents will say, "Maybe part of the problem is we're expecting the church to spiritually raise our children...but God wants parents to do that."

Consider these verses, and ask yourself who the "you" is that keeps being mentioned...

Deut 6:6 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 7 YOU shall teach them diligently to YOUR children, and shall talk of them when YOU sit in your house, and when YOU walk by the way, and when YOU lie down, and when YOU rise. 8 YOU shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 YOU shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

The **you** in the verses is not:

- Pastors...
- Elders...
- Home fellowship leaders...
- Sunday School teachers...

It's parents!

God looks right at parents and says, "These are YOUR children. I have given them to YOU. **YOU give them something to eat.**"

And I'd be a little remiss if I didn't mention this...

It seems to me that while this responsibility rests on both parents' shoulders, it rests even more on the father's shoulders. I say this based on **Eph 6:4** where Paul says, "**Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but BRING THEM UP IN THE DISCIPLINE AND INSTRUCTION OF THE LORD.**"

Mothers often have more time with the children, but God still gives fathers this command.

If I could briefly address the fathers, I'd say...

- I know you're tired...
- You get to the end of the day and you feel exhausted like the Apostles were exhausted...
- But our families need us spiritually.

- It's great that you work hard to take care of your family physically and financially, but you need to take care of them spiritually too.

My hope is the words of Christ will ring in your ears: **“You give them something to eat!”**

Let me share two closing thoughts on this lesson, based on questions I've received before...

First, if you're a mother and you're married to an unbeliever, or you're married to a spiritually immature man who doesn't lead his home, then guess what the Lord might say to you?

- **“You give them something to eat.”**
- It's a difficult situation you're in and one I wouldn't wish on other mothers, but at least the children have one parent that's taking their role seriously.

So it's even more important that you give them something to eat, because if you don't, then who will?

Second, if you're a young person and you're attending church without your parents, first let me say I'm proud of you. It's commendable to attend church with your parents, but it's even more commendable to attend church when they won't attend with you.

The encouragement I'd give you is to trust God to provide the spiritual parents – or mentors – you need through the body of Christ. At WCC we've seen God be faithful to do this each time it's been needed in the seven years I've been here.

Now maybe some of you feel like you're off the hook b/c you haven't fit into any of the categories I've described previously. Here's the last part of Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: “YOU GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO EAT” IS SOMETHING JESUS COULD SAY TO (PART III) ANY CHRISTIANS.

There's evangelistic application that goes beyond our homes to our workplaces, schools, neighborhoods, you name it.

There could be people in our lives – coworkers, students, bosses, employees, neighbors – and we want to see them saved. Let's say...

- You're a student on a college campus, and you have some friends that you'd like to see read the Word...
- Or maybe you're at your workplace and you have some coworkers, and you're thinking, “If I could just get them to come to church...”
- Or maybe there's a neighbor, student, boss, friend, family member – you name it – and you're thinking, “If I could just get them to hear this sermon...”

What do you think the Lord might say to you?

“You give them something to eat!”

You shouldn't think that God wants the people in your life to hear from...

- Some pastor...
- Or home fellowship leader...
- Or Sunday School teacher...
- Or elder...

If the person is in your life, YOU could be the one God wants them to hear from. Maybe God put them in your life so you could be the one to feed them!

There's a spiritually starving world out there and Jesus wants it to receive the Gospel:

- In **Luke 9** the Apostles wanted to deprive these people of the food they needed, and we want to make sure we don't make this same mistake.
- We want to make sure we don't deprive the people in our lives of the spiritual food – the Bread of Life – that they need.

Just like Jesus wanted the Apostles to see themselves responsible with feeding these crowds, we need to see ourselves responsible with feeding the people in our lives.

Now I know what you might be saying at this point...

You might be saying the same thing the Apostles said after Jesus told them, **“You give them something to eat.”** You might be saying:

- *How?*
- *I don't know if I can?*
- *What am I supposed to give them?*

Please turn to **Mark 6:36** so I can show you what Jesus said to the Apostles...which is what He might also say to us...

Mark 6:36 (The Apostles said) **Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.”** 37 **But he answered them, “You give them something to eat.”** (Look at their response...) **And they said to him, “Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat”** 38 **And he said to them, “How many loaves do you have? Go and see.”** **And when they had found out, they said, “Five, and two fish.”**

Basically, the Apostles had no idea how they were going to feed these people.

If you consider everything they said, they made a LOT of excuses...and they sound like the same excuses we can make:

1. They said, **“Send the crowd away to the surrounding villages.”** We say, *“Let someone else handle them. They'll probably run into other people who will share the Gospel with them.”*
2. They said, **“[They can] find [their own] lodging and get provisions.”** We say, *“They can take care of themselves. They'll learn the Gospel on their own.”*
3. They said, **“The hour is now late.”** We say, *“I don't have the time. I'm too busy with too many other things.”*

4. They said, **“We are in a desolate place.”** We say, *“This isn’t the right place. I’m at work or I’m at the store. We only talk about this stuff at church.”*
5. They said, **“It would cost two hundred denarii to feed all of them.”** We say, *“I don’t have the money. I can’t afford to do this.”* As if it costs a lot of money to tell people what the Bible says.
6. They said, **“We only have five loaves and two fish.”** We say, *“We don’t have the resources. I don’t know the Bible that well. I haven’t been a Christian long enough.”*

Don’t have the resources. Don’t have the time. Wrong place. Wrong time. Someone else will do it.

We can make all these excuses too, but the Lord would still say, **“You give them something to eat.”**

So let me ask you...

- How are you doing feeding those around you?
- Are you making any of these excuses?

Now with that said, let me provide some balance...

At times we can have legitimate...

- Questions...
- Doubts
- Concerns.

When we feel like the Lord wants us to do something, we can wonder how we’re going to do what He wants with what we have.

Let me get you to notice a few words that are particularly encouraging to me. In **verse 38** Jesus said....

“How many loaves do you have?”

And this brings us to Lesson 2...

LESSON 2: THE LORD WANTS TO USE WHAT WE HAVE AVAILABLE.

Jesus might say to us, **“You give them something to eat. What do you have available?”** Jesus wants us to feed the people in our lives, and He wants us to use what we have available to do it.

And the Apostles are a great example: they didn’t have much, but that’s what Jesus wanted to use.

Something fascinating is the parallel account in **John 6:5** says...

John 6:5 [Jesus saw] a large crowd coming toward him, [and He] said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?” 6 [Jesus] said this to test him, for (listen to this...) HE HIMSELF KNEW WHAT HE WOULD DO.

This means Jesus already had a plan:

- He knew what He wanted to do.
- When He told the Apostles to feed the people, He knew they only had five loaves and two fish to do it.

The application for us is when the Lord wants us to do something, we need to remember He already knows what we have available!

- We don't surprise Him by how little we have to offer.
- He doesn't look down and say, "*That's it? That's all you have? That's terrible!*"

When our resources seem small and our responsibilities seem large, it's good to remember two things:

1. God has a plan for the situation.
2. He knows what we have available.

We should remember this account with the Apostles:

- They couldn't give the Lord what they didn't have. They could only give Him what they did have.
- And the same is true with us:
 - We can't give the Lord what we don't have.
 - We can only give Him what we do have.

And this is far from the only place in Scripture that teaches this. It's actually a theme...

In recent sermons I told you the OT prefigures the NT, so I don't want to spend much time on this, but briefly:

- Much of what's in the OT foreshadows what takes place in the NT.
- There are many accounts in the OT that look forward to accounts in the NT.

And perhaps b/c of the significance of this miracle – that it's the only miracle besides the Resurrection that's recorded in all four Gospels – a number of miracles in the OT prefigured this miracle. And in each case, there's a little that the Lord uses to provide much:

1. **1 Kin 17:12** [The widow at Zarephath said], "**As the LORD lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour and oil, [and] I am [preparing] it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die.**" Elijah ended up multiplying this woman's flour to keep her and her son alive. She had very little, but God made much of it.
2. In **2 Kings** there was a widow who had two sons and creditors were going to take them: **2 Kin 4:2** Elisha said to her, "**What [do] you have in the house?**" And she said, "**[I have] nothing except a jar of oil.**" This oil was multiplied to keep her and her sons alive and pay off the creditors. Again, very little, but God was able to use it.
3. **2 Kin 4:42** says Elisha only had **twenty loaves** to feed 100 men. The bread was multiplied and all the men were fed.

In each of these accounts the people simply gave Elijah and Elisha the little they had and God made it become much.

The important question is this...

What application do these miracles have for us?

- Is the application that if we have a little flour the Lord will supernaturally multiply it for us?
- If we have some oil, will God turn it into a lot of oil?
- If we have 20 loaves will God multiply it to feed 100 men?

No.

The application is if you know what the Lord wants you to do, and you give Him the little you have, He'll make it work.

What does this look like practically?

- You're exhausted in your marriage. You would say you have very little to give. Then that's what you give the Lord.
- You're parenting. You feel like you have very little...probably very little patience. That's what you bring to the Lord in prayer.
- You're finances. You feel like you have very little money. I'm definitely NOT saying God is going to multiply the money you have, but I am saying if you bring that money before the Lord, He can give you the wisdom to manage it well. If you've been unwise, then that probably means giving you the wisdom to repent and make some wiser decisions.

Basically, you take what you have to the Lord and say, *"This is all I have. This is all I can give you."* And then you trust God to do His work with it.

Here's the main focus of the account that I'd like you to notice...

The focus is not on how little the Apostles had to give to Christ. The focus is on how much Christ could do with the little they had. The same is true with us...

- It's not about how little we have to offer, but it is about how much the Lord can do with it.
- Don't focus on your little offering. Focus on the King who's able to do much with it.

Let me close with this...

Maybe you don't have much faith. You feel like you only have a little. Sometimes, you might even wonder if you have enough to be saved...

In **Matt 17:20** Jesus told the disciples they had **"little faith."** Then He said, **"Truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed (that's very little faith), you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you."**

Jesus' words aren't meant literally. He's not saying you can move a mountain w/ your words. But He is saying that even if you only have a little faith...

- God can still use that...
- He can still accomplish much with it...
- He can still do something great.

"Little is much when God is in it."

If you need prayer or you feel like you have very little to give, Pastor Doug and I will be up front after service and we'd consider it a privilege to be able to pray with you regarding the Lord doing much with little you might have.

Let's pray.