

I will begin today... by asking a question that we find in our text... which REALLY is a question that every believer needs to thoughtfully ask. ... You have probably already answered it... and perhaps you may think: “*It’s settled. I’ve dealt with it. I don’t need to answer it again...*” But you could hardly be more wrong!

For me to pose this question to you today... you might have an automatic answer to it... and think it is unnecessary. ... But God has a way of bringing it up again and again... as we continue to follow Christ. ... In fact – if you want to grow in your faith... you should expect that He will bring you back to it - on many occasions. ... The more we meticulously reflect on it... the closer we will want to be with the Lord and serve Him. ... Ignore the question and its answer – by passing it off as one that you have already answered and no longer need to concern yourself with... and your motivation to draw near to Christ will diminish.

(Now) the question we are dealing with today... was actually asked in our passage of study LAST week. We saw Herod had asked it. ... (AND) it is very fitting that our passage today immediately follows... because Jesus’ 12 disciples needed to ask it. ... So let’s begin today by looking back at verse 9... of chapter 9... I’ll say a few important words about it... and then we will cross the bridge of verses 10 and 11... and into today’s verses.

Luke 9:9

Last week I said that this verse shows how successful the mission was – of Jesus sending His disciples out (two-by-two) on their own – all around the region of Galilee. The mission got people asking “*Who, then, is this Jesus?!*” The mission was so successful that even Herod was asking it.

That is the question that draws people to Christ. “*Who, then, is this Jesus?!*” ... We **want** people to be asking it. (And, my friend)... it is the question that will keep drawing *you and I* closer and closer to Christ. “*Who, then, is this Jesus?!*” ... The longer we serve Christ – the more we must come back to this question.

For as long as we walk this earth... we will never know Him completely. And the moment we think that we have answered that question sufficiently... we will stop trying to know Him better.

(LISTEN!) Knowing Christ better is the key to anyone’s **loving** Him more. Knowing Christ better is the key to anyone’s **serving** Him better. ... Don’t make your HIGHEST aim *to love and obey Jesus more*. Make your highest aim *to KNOW Him better*... and those (other) things will follow. The result of knowing Christ better – is always a stronger love and obedience to Him. It cannot **NOT** happen! It is inevitable.

Ask God to give you a sense of wonder... and to keep thoughtfully asking: “*Who, then, is this Jesus?!*” ... Now lets see how Jesus brought His disciples to ponder this... and how He often has **us** ponder it.

Luke 9:10-17

We just read Luke’s account. He only tells of this happening **ONCE**. ... But two of the other Gospel writers (Matthew and Mark) make it clear... in their very next chapter... that Jesus *repeated* this same miracle on a different occasion. The second time had a few variations (such as Jesus multiplied **7** loaves of bread... they had **7** baskets of left-overs... and the crowd was **4** thousand men.)

Jesus TWICE – in the exact same way – brought His disciples to ponder this very important question: “*Who, then, is this Jesus?!*”

How like us they were. We remain dull to Christ and his ways... though He has provided for us a thousand times. ... Jesus does a miracle for us... and yet not much later we find ourselves in a tight spot... and not only do we think God is not adequate for our needs... but we have the audacity to try to tell Him what to do!

Oh... if only we could keep the vast sufficiency of Christ before us!

*Yesterday, God helped me,
Today He'll do the same.
How long will this continue?
Forever—praise his name.*

May God deliver us from our souls' sinful amnesia! ... **[P A U S E]** ...

One more thing before we dive deeper into today's verses. ... Did you know that there is only ONE miracle that all four Gospel writers – wrote about? All four tell the story of Christ by presenting different things about His ministry... and this is the only miracle (besides His resurrection)... that they all thought was important enough to include. ... Yeah... it is an important miracle – that contains a VITAL lesson for you and I to contemplate: “*Who, then, is this Jesus?!*”

Luke's brief introduction to the context of the miracle in verses 10-11... only seems to give us the bare facts. ... Mark's account (however) is more graphic... telling us that when the Twelve returned from their preaching mission... “*The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them,*

‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest’” (Mark 6:30-31). But the retreat was short-lived. During their debriefing with Jesus... the apostles were being “peopled to death” by those who kept chasing them. The press was so great that they could not find time for a snack... much less a meal! ... This was wonderful - but also draining on the exhausted Twelve. ... Ministry can be like that.

Before we get to today’s verses we come to a place for us to ask: “*Who, then, is this Jesus?!*” ... Jesus graciously received the crowd of disciples. ... After all... **ministry is rarely convenient**. ... There is no such thing as “convenient Christianity.” ... And after a long day of teaching and healing... the crowd needed provisions. ... This was a teachable moment that Jesus was not about to waste.

Jesus didn’t use this teachable moment to turn the Twelve into “**holy workaholics**”. ... Remember that **IT WAS JESUS** Who led them away for this retreat! He understood the need for ministers to retreat from ministry. ... Jesus (Himself) regularly pulled away from the crowds to pray... and He savored Sabbath rest each week as God had intended. ... Nevertheless... the burden of ministry never sleeps. ... So... we need to rest when God leads us to rest... and to minister when God leads us to minister. God was at work in this case – intending to teach His ministers a very important lesson about who this Jesus is. ... (You know)... Rest is important – But keep in mind (*a/so*) that God often is orchestrating something BIG behind the inconveniences that we try to avoid.

Luke 9:12

The Twelve see a pressing predicament and tell the Lord to send the people away so the crowds can go into town and get food and shelter. That was their plan. The word “**send**” is in the imperative tense which means it was a command. They were not asking Jesus to do this. They were telling Him to send them away into town. Getting rid of the people would mean they would be getting rid of a pressing problem.

It was impertinence – they way the disciples came to Jesus. It wasn’t with advice or a suggestion. ... Possibly their heady experience of power in their preaching tour had made them think they could give Jesus orders.

Such impertinence was understandable and forgivable... but it demonstrated just how inadequate their ideas **still** were of the person of Christ. They had been with Him for over a year... and had seen repeated miracles. (Regardless of the situation... they had never seen Him unable to meet the need.) ... Yet... even though they had witnessed many miracles... it never (even) occurred to them that Christ would do another one this time.

“*Who, then, is this Jesus?!*” Does He really need our advice – or even worse - our commands...? ... No.

You may say: “*The disciples should have never told the Lord what to do.*” And you would be right. But perhaps we should not be real quick to condemn the disciples... How many times do we do the same thing with the Lord? ... How many times do we tell the God what we are going to do or what we are NOT going to do? ... We are not much different than the disciples in this... are we? ... If you start dictating to the Lord (what you will or will not do)... then don’t be surprised when you find yourself in a very

pressing predicament for sure. He will bring you to ask: “*Who, then, is this Jesus?!*”

We may come into a situation... that... in a nutshell... the disciples basically saw a hopeless situation... and felt that nothing could be done. They felt that the problem was too big!

Has Jesus ever brought you there? ... Have you ever felt this way? We can limit what God does in us by assuming what is and what is not possible.

Is there any impossible task you want God to do... or that He wants you to do? ... Don't underestimate His power... intervention... ability... or His strength in helping you. ... Trust Him to do the impossible and watch Him use you to conquer overwhelming opportunities that will bring glory to Him and great joy and satisfaction to you.

When we consider what all four Gospel writers wrote about this feeding of the five thousand... we can fill-in many details that Luke did not present. For example... Jesus first asked Philip where they could buy enough bread to feed such a crowd. John says that Jesus was testing Philip - *for He Himself knew what He was intending to do*” (John 6:6). ... In the crisis that you face in your life... (when your resources are low and your responsibilities are great)... it is good to remember that **God already has the problem solved.**

I LOVE how Jesus responds to His disciples. (Although ... I'm not all that THRILLED when He does the same to me...) ... Christ's response to the disciples' presumptuous advice... was to give them a challenge about the supplying of food.

Luke 9:13-14a

Jesus throws a huge curve ball at them and tells them: “*You guys feed them!*” ... I can tell you right now they were **not** expecting that from the Lord. ... They probably did not see that one coming... and their jaws must have dropped. ... This command would shock the disciples and would seem incredible to them.... But there are two important things for us to recognize here.

#1. They must learn (as we must learn) that He always commands the impossible. Did you catch that...? Let me say it again: God always commands the impossible. (Now) There is a reason for that – which I will tell you. The answer is contained in this next principle.

#2. They must learn (as we must learn) that when God commands... God enables. ... When God commands... God enables.

“*Who, then, is this Jesus?!*” He is a God Who inconveniences us by commanding us to do the impossible... so that we can experience His enablement... and RELATIONALLY be drawn closer to Him. ... “*Who, then, is this Jesus?!*” He is the God Whose delight it is ... to involve you and I in doing the impossible!

But there were other things that Jesus wanted His disciples to learn. “*You give them something to eat...*” Do not be so quick to shake off responsibility and compassion.

As the Gospels picture these men... they were often ready to do this very thing... and to say: “Send the people away”; “Send her [the Syrophenician woman] away” (Matt. 15:23). ... They even “rebuked” those who brought little children to Jesus that He might touch them. ... “*Don’t bother the*

Master and don't bother us"... was too often their slogan. I think that it is safe to say... that Jesus wants to remind these men of the fact... that simply trying to get rid of people in need... is (often) **not** the solution.

And then... of course... was an important lesson about where our focus needs to be... as followers of Jesus. The trouble with these disciples was that they concentrated all their attention on the vast... hungry crowd. They were forgetting about Jesus - His power and love. This forgetfulness on their part was inexcusable. ... And so is ours!

Oh... how we remain dull to Christ and His ways... though He has provided for us a thousand times. ... Jesus does a miracle for us... and yet not much later we find ourselves in a tight spot... and not only do we think God is not adequate for our needs... but we have the audacity to try to tell Him what to do!

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Christ seems to simply ignore the excuses of the disciples. Instead... He returns a command to **THEM**...

Luke 9:14b-16

“Make them sit down.” There may be several reasons for this command. **1)** People will eat better sitting down than standing up. **2)** They will also eat more... and the more they eat the greater the miracle and thus greater the honor for Christ. ... Furthermore... **3)** it would be much better feeding the people when they were sitting down than if they were standing up milling around... pushing and shoving to get food. ... So in the *positioning* of the people... (*“Make them sit down by fifties in a company”*) it would help make the distribution of the food more efficient.

(And) please try to picture the scene with me. It metaphorically illustrates a deeper truth. ... As the 12 disciples made dozens of trips (carrying baskets of food from Jesus to the multitude)... their paradigm of ministry undoubtedly changed. (Here is what it graphically illustrates...) They had indeed received power and authority from the Messiah to carry out His ministry... but only as they continually came to Him for provision. ... The disciples power to proclaim... to heal... and to cast out demons could never be separated from ongoing dependence upon their Master. ... (Now) this formula remains sound to this day: Jesus is the supply; His followers (which include you and I)... are the channel... through which His provision flows.

Luke 9:17

God’s blessings satisfy. The world does not satisfy... but Jesus Christ does. ... **[P A U S E]** ...

As the requests for food dwindled to nothing... Jesus completed the ministry lesson with a final task. The Twelve gathered the leftover pieces of bread and fish the Lord had broken... presumably those that remained after all the people were full. ... Each of the disciples gathered enough to fill

(what is called in the Greek) a *kophinos*. ... This was a wicker basket used by travelers to carry enough provision for a journey of two or three days. ... The amount of leftovers showed the greatness of this miracle. Thousands were fed from five loaves and two fishes and there were twelve baskets of food leftover. This is a good example of the text in Ephesians which says:

Ephesians 3:20 (ESV)

²⁰ *Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,*

Jesus taught the men to embrace their inadequacies as an opportunity to let the power of God flow through them and accomplish the impossible. He taught His apprentice ministers (the future leaders of God's kingdom) to lead with empty... upturned hands. ... He taught the apostles to face with complete abandon the impossible tasks they would soon encounter... admitting their own inadequacies in order to receive the Lord's overabundant supply.

"Who, then, is this Jesus?!" He is the God Whose delight it is ... to involve you and I in doing the impossible! ... **[P A U S E]** ...

As we get ready to close... I would like to encourage you to think (for just a moment) about the little boy that gave his lunch for something even he would know to be impossible. This little fella teaches all of us some important lessons.

1. The Lesson of the Ability of God

He shows us how much Jesus can do for so many with so little. Little is much when God is in it. The Lord has a knack for using little things. A baby moved the heart of Pharaoh's daughter. God used a shepherd's rod in the

hand of Moses. In David's hands He used a sling and a stone to defeat the enemies of Israel. He used a little maid to get the attention of General Naaman and direct him to Elijah.

You might think that what you have is too little for God. (My friend... that isn't true.) We are to bring to Him what we have... and let Him multiply it for His glory.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 (ESV)

²⁶ For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

2. The Lesson of Age

He shows us that age is no barrier to Christ. He uses a willing child to perform a spectacular miracle.

3. The Lesson of Availability

The little lad demonstrates the importance of availability. He was not picked because of his exclusiveness... but because of his willingness and availability. This is why God used him.

The battlefield of availability is where most Christians wage their war against the Lord. Many believers have lost the joy of their salvation and their effectiveness for Christ because they are unavailable to Christ to be used by Him. ... (LISTEN!)... your faithful... godly consistency could be used to win someone to Christ. ... Your study of the Word of God may help

give counsel to someone in need. ... Be faithful in the every day... menial responsibilities that you have to perform.

After Jesus returned to heaven... the disciples must often have been encouraged by remembering this miracle.

May we ask ourselves over and over again: "*Who, then, is this Jesus?!*"

... ..

He is the God *Whose delight it is* ... to involve you and I in doing the impossible!