

Finding Rest and Life in Jesus

Luke 9:10-17; 1 Corinthians 10:31

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All that we have in this world has been graciously given to us ON LOAN to use for God's glory. The blessings that we have (such as our food, clothing, jobs, home, health, or family) may be indifferent in themselves, but nothing is indifferent in HOW we use it (1 Corinthians 10:31). Jesus gives us all things to enjoy, but to enjoy in glorifying and honoring Him not to enjoy in excluding Him. How easy it is to live a thankless existence because our food is not miraculously multiplied, but remember every crumb comes as surely from the benevolent hands of a gracious and almighty God.

Let us be reminded that it is Christ who is our Provider and He provides us with all that we need (both physically and spiritually) so that we might glorify Him and enjoy Him. From our text, we shall consider the following main points: (1) The Lord Provides Rest for the Weary (Luke 9:10); (2) The Lord Provides Food for the Hungry (Luke 9:11-17).

I. The Lord Provides Rest for the Weary (Luke 9:10).

A. In Luke 9:1-6, the Lord had commissioned and sent His apostles forth by twos to the cities of the Jews in order to preach concerning His Kingdom and in order to perform miracles by His authority. Now the apostles have returned (Luke 9:10), and they recount to Jesus that which they had both taught and done. Note the following.

1. First, the apostles were accountable to the Head of the Church for their ministry. They were ordained by Jesus and had received His authority to preach and to perform miracles. Now they return to receive His approval as faithful servants entrusted with the priceless treasure of Christ's truth.

a. We must live in light of that great Day of Judgment wherein we must finally give an account as servants of Christ (Matthew 25—Parable of the Talents). We must all give an account of what we have done with that which we were given. Those who use their gifts and resources to promote Christ's kingdom will be rewarded. Those who neglect or hide their gifts and resources from being used in His kingdom will have what they were given taken away and judged. You may not think very highly of the gifts and graces given to you by Christ, but do not despise what He has given to you whether it is deemed great or small in the eyes of the world. Every Christian has been apportioned graces such as faith, love, courage, humility, and self-control (yes some have received greater or lesser proportions of these graces). Jesus does not judge according to the proportion He gave you, but according to the proportion you have used for His glory in promoting His Kingdom. In fact, he who is faithful in little will be given more over which to be faithful.

b. This is especially true of those who lead in the nation, church, and family. Our places of leadership do not let us off the hook, but bring us under greater responsibility for those under us. Leadership is not about power, but about leading in love and in the truth those under us to Jesus. Follow me as I follow Christ.

2. Second, the apostles were invited to rest with Christ after their return from ministry (Mark 6:31). The Lord not only sent them out to minister, but also invited them to a deserted place to be physically and spiritually refreshed. Jesus not only sees the need for His apostles to be active in the work of His kingdom, but also sees their need to be refreshed physically and spiritually. This is an important principle.

a. Mere activity, busyness, and constant movement in the work of Christ's kingdom is not how Jesus blesses His work in the lives of ministers, elders, and deacons. That usually leads to burn out. Dear ones, we must not allow the enormity of the needs of others to outweigh our need to be refreshed in communing with Jesus. If we as church officers do not make time to withdraw from ministerial duties to be

refreshed, we will be overwhelmed through our own physical, spiritual, and emotional exhaustion. In fact, the more exhausted we become, the more we must cast ourselves upon our Savior to be refreshed in His love, care, encouragement, and promises.

b. The same is true for every Christian in general. When life seems to get crazy, what is the first thing to go? Is it your time of spiritual refreshment with the Lord Jesus? No doubt, it is important to refresh the body by breaks, by getting away, or by recreational diversions. But, dear ones, there is nothing so important as spiritual breaks with Jesus. You will literally run yourself into the ground by way of constant activity (much of it being important and necessary) if you do not go into that deserted place to cast your cares upon Him and to learn of Him (Luke 10:38-42). If you do not take the time to be refreshed by Jesus, you will not be able to refresh others (Song of Solomon 1:6).

c. Is this not the very purpose of our weekly Lord's Day—the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11)? The Sabbath is not only a day for physical rest, but more importantly a day for spiritual rest. Just as Jesus pulled the apostles aside from the hustle and bustle of their ministry to spend time with them, so Jesus demonstrates His love for you and desires to do the same with you each Lord's Day. He calls you to set apart one day in seven to find your rest and peace in Him—not in your work or recreations. The Sabbath is the day we get our batteries recharged and ready for another week of work ahead of us. We are not lazy on the Sabbath; it's just that our activity is directed away from worldly activity to kingdom activity of worship, study, meditation, fellowship, deeds of necessity and mercy, and yes, physical rest as well (Matthew 11:28). Cast your sins, your cares, and loved ones upon Jesus.

II. The Lord Provides Food for the Hungry (Luke 9:11-17).

A. As Christ and the apostles made their way to a remote location in order to be refreshed, the multitude saw the direction in which Jesus was headed and set out to find Him. As the multitudes come near, Jesus was overwhelmed with compassion for the needs of the people (Mark 6:34). He could not turn them away even if He had intended to rest with His apostles. To the contrary, their need to be spiritually fed only fueled His mercy and compassion for they were like scattered sheep upon the mountainside that were starving for the Bread of Life (Micah 7:18). They were not a bother to Jesus—they were needy, hungry souls to be fed.

1. The English word “compassion” means to suffer with (like “sympathy”). Compassion sees the need and is moved to help. Without compassion for people, without a willingness to be inconvenienced for the flock, without a desire to sacrifice one's life for the sheep, a man (no matter how knowledgeable about the Scripture or how big his congregation) is not a shepherd to whom the sheep will be loyal. As sheep, we instinctively follow those whom we know have our best interests at heart and who have compassion for us. We may not always appreciate immediately what a faithful minister or elder may say because it takes us out of our comfort zone. But the truth of Christ administered with love and compassion is true food for the soul.

2. That is also true in the family. The way to have cheerful followers is to lead them with compassion and truth in following the Lord Jesus (Luke 15:20). Compassion begins in your own home. So you see the needs of brethren, but do not see the needs of your own family? Is your compassion a show before others? Compassion does not compromise the truth—it shows mercy while upholding the truth—just as Jesus did.

B. The multitudes continued to listen to the Lord as He taught them and were so spiritually hungry that they lost track of the time. It was drawing near to the end of the day and they did not have food for their evening meal. Their spiritual appetite had conquered their physical appetite. This is the appetite for which hungry sheep ought to strive. **Before the sermon begins**, you are preparing yourself to be fed (through prayer and meditation). **During the sermon**, you are feasting upon the truths of Christ like eating at a banquet table.

After the sermon, you are thanking the Lord, meditating, and looking forward to the next meal.

C. As the day wears on and evening approaches, the disciples realize there is some urgency to send the crowd away (Luke 9:12). Jesus tests them by saying, "Give ye them to eat" (Luke 9:13). They thought He meant they were to go out and buy bread for the multitude, and so they reply in Luke 9:13. They were saying in effect, "Who has that kind of money. Lord, you are asking of us the impossible." And so He was.

1. The reason for asking of them the impossible was to demonstrate that which is impossible with men is possible with God. It was intended to remind them that though they had cast out demons and performed miracles, though they had preached the Kingdom of Christ and had witnessed the power of God in changing lives, they had no power in themselves. The power, the authority, and the life which flowed from them in word and deed came from Jesus. This miracle proved that point.

2. Jesus brings us to the end of our resources so that we may cease our striving and cast ourselves upon His love, compassion, and power.

D. The apostles found a young lad who had brought with him five loaves of bread and two fish for his meal (John 6:9). But what was that among thousands of mouths to feed? Dear ones, even the little that we offer to the Lord to use for His Kingdom will be multiplied to the profit of many if we are but faithful. Put your "little" gifts into the hand of the Lord for His use and let Him multiply them. Is your faith little? Place it in Christ and watch Him multiply it. Is your patience little? Is your courage little? Is your humility little? Are your gifts little? Place them all in the hands of your Almighty Savior, and watch Him multiply them in His time.

E. The Lord then ordered the disciples to seat the multitude in groups on the grassy hillside so that they could all witness the miracle about to be performed before their very eyes. The Lord took the five loaves and two fish in His hand, gave thanks to the Giver of these good gifts, broke the bread into pieces and gave the bread and fish to His disciples to give to the multitude. Whether the bread and the fish multiplied in the hands of the Lord or in the hands of the disciples we are not told. Either way, it must have been absolutely astonishing to see bread and fish created before their very eyes. There was such an abundance of bread and fish that five thousand men (plus women and children) were filled with 12 baskets full of food left over.

1. The Lord miraculously fed Israel in the wilderness with the manna and quail for their earthly sustenance. Likewise, Christ declares by this miracle that He is the same mighty God that fed Israel who now miraculously feeds this multitude with bread and fish created by the very same power of God. He is the same God.

2. This miracle should have the effect of turning us to Christ to satisfy all of our needs. To take nothing for granted. It is not your employer, or the economy, or your bank account that provides for all your needs. It is Jesus who does so. Give Him all praise and thanksgiving for His daily provision. He is the Provider; you are the recipients of His provision. Yes, He uses means. But they are means which He has blessed and apart from His blessing your work would accomplish nothing. We rob God of His glory if we take the spotlight off of the Lord and boast about our own hard work and genius.

3. According to John 6 the Lord Jesus explained that He was the Bread of Life. The loaves and fish which He created only satisfied for a few hours to come. However, they pointed to one who miraculously came down from Heaven to give eternal life to all who eat of Him by faith. Not in some carnal, fleshly sense (as abominably) taught by the Church of Rome. Just as the disciples came to the end of their resources to feed the multitudes so must we as ministers come to the end of our resources in feeding the flock of Christ. We only give ministerially the miraculous bread of life that alone is able to give life to those who are hungering. Christ is our life. This we bear testimony to in the Lord's Supper. Let us eat of Him forevermore and cast away all the rest of the crumbs of this life that man says will satisfy. It is a lie for only Jesus will satisfy. Only Jesus gives you life abundant and eternal. Why will you refuse the Bread of Life?

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