

Luke 9:12-17

*When There's Nothing Left But God*

Overwhelmed. That's how many of us feel with life. School, job, families, bills, traffic, mortgage payments, layoffs, responsibilities, the economy. And if that weren't enough, terrorists and the threat of war. It's easy to feel overwhelmed, isn't it? It's easy to feel like we just can't handle all that life is throwing at us.

Last Sunday churches everywhere were packed. Nationwide, grief counselors and mental health professionals are hearing from tens of thousands of people.

Life with it's trouble, it's disasters, and it's evil has a way of knocking the underpinnings of self-sufficiency we all think we have, right out from under us.

God, in the Bible, makes some great promises to those who feel overwhelmed:

*The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him.*  
Nahum 1:7

*I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.* John 16:33

*Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.* Joshua 1:9

*Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.* Lamentations 3:22, 23

*You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.* Psalms 32:7

God gives us great promises. We love the promises of God. But when we're left with nothing but God's promises to cling to, do we really believe they're true?

Are they just religious words, or do we really believe they're true?

I'd like you to open your Bibles to **Luke chapter 9 this morning. Pg 1002**

Back in December of last year we started a journey through Luke's Gospel. Luke was a medical doctor, a historian, and a missionary who wrote about the life of Jesus. He wrote his account around 60 AD after painstakingly investigating the

facts. He interviewed eye witnesses, compared accounts, and confirmed each detail.

Sir William Ramsay was a skeptical archeologist who studied in Asia minor over a century ago thinking he could show just how inaccurate the Bible was. He was especially interested in Luke's writings in the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts because geographical and historic references.

What Ramsay found was that dig after dig the evidence supported Luke's accounts. Governors mentioned by Luke that many historians never believe existed were confirmed by the evidence excavated by Ramsay's archeological team. Without a single error, Luke was accurate in naming 32 countries, 54 cities, and 9 islands.

Ramsay became so overwhelmed with the evidence he eventually converted to Christianity. This is what he wrote:

*Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy...this author should be placed along with the very greatest historians.*

There's something else important about Luke to. He wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. His words are more than a novel, they are alive and powerful because they are breathed out by God. That's why they're included in our New Testaments.

By the time we get to Luke 9 Jesus is heading into His final year on earth. In our last study we saw that Jesus had sent out His Apostles on a mission to preach about the kingdom of God.

They had just gotten back. Let's go back to Luke chapter 9 and verse 10 to get the flow of events. **Read vs 10 & 11.**

John tells us that this was the Passover season. That means that thousands of Jewish people would be on the roads in transit to Jerusalem. A crowd gathered very quickly as word got out that Jesus was in the area.

### **Read vs 12**

The Bible is a living Book. It's a record of history but it's a lot more. Change the names and the places and we can see ourselves on it's pages very easily.

Times change. Technology changes. But, human nature remains the same.

The day was beginning to wear away. It had been a long one. Everybody's tired, especially the 12. They just got back from their missions trip and don't even have time to catch their breath. The multitude follows and now it's been a jam-packed day as they tried to help Jesus care for the crowd.

Notice what they say to Jesus: "Send these people into town."

According to Mark's account when Jesus saw the large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

I am not so sure that disciples shared this compassion. Mentally and emotionally, I don't think they put out the welcome mat, like Jesus did. I would guess that they were a lot like you and me. They would have sighed, "Oh, no!" at the sight of this crowd, at the very time when they had looked forward to a brief retreat, away from the crowds.

So they say to Jesus, "Send them away and let them find some food and a place to sleep tonight. We're out in the boonies here, so send them away."

Sounds reasonable, right? They had learned a lot traveling with Jesus. They had seen and heard the miraculous.

But I can't imagine that anything had prepared them for what Jesus says next.  
**Read vs 13 - *But He said to them, "You give them something to eat."***

Jesus, who would not command a stone to become bread, to satisfy His own hunger, commands His disciples to feed the people. Jesus, who would not feed Jairus' daughter, but commanded her parents to do it, now tells His disciples to feed this crowd!

The reason that we can feel overwhelmed in life is because in reality *Our Resources are Woefully Inadequate to Meet the Real Demands of Life.*

I can just hear the disciples murmuring among themselves, "Is He kidding? Give them something to eat!"

What was happening was this: The disciples were being put to the test. Jesus Christ Himself was putting them to the test.

John 6:6 *But this He said to test him (meaning specifically Phillip), for He Himself knew what He would do.*

What happened to them happens to us too.

God allows trying situations to come into our lives to build our faith. Sometimes He ordains and arranges the situations, and other times they come as the natural flow of life. How they happen isn't the important element, It's how we respond.

God's purpose isn't to throw us curves to cause us to strike out. He always has the same goal in mind.

He wants us to grow in our faith and trust. He wants us to understand that our resources are woefully inadequate to meet the real demands of life.

So what do we do?

This was a struggle for the disciples. Apparently Philip was the spokesman for the group. In John 6 it's recorded that he said: *"Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little."*

One denarius was an average persons wage for one day's work. Philip looked at the crowd, did a quick calculation and estimated that over 6 months wages wouldn't be enough to feed all these people.

Now at this point we might be tempted to be critical of Philip and the others. I mean, hadn't they seen a whole string of miracles from Jesus changing the water into wine to the raising of the dead? Why didn't Philip say, "Master, you're equal to any situation. You feed them"?

I honestly believe it was the magnitude of the situation that overwhelmed Philip.

The Bible commentator, Arthur Pink writes: How surprising was this failure of the faith of Philip. one would have supposed that after all the disciples had witnessed of the Lord's wonder-working power they had learned by this time that all fulness dwelt in Him. We should have supposed their faith was strong and their hearts were calm and confident. Ah- should we? Would not our own God-dishonoring unbelief check such expectations?

Have we not discovered how weak our faith is! How obtuse our understanding! How earthly our minds and hearts! In vain does the Lord look within us sometimes

for even a ray of faith which glorifies Him. Instead of counting on the Lord, we, like Philip, are occupied with nature's resources. Beware, then, of condemning the unbelief of Philip, lest you be found condemning yourself.

How often have we seen God at work in our own life, or the lives of others, and really sensed a confidence in God. Our faith is genuinely strengthened. And then along comes some situation that's beyond our control and we fall flat on our face!

The Bible tells us how hard it is for us to honestly evaluate ourselves. It says *The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?* It says: *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*

It's keeping our eyes on Jesus Christ and His promises that sees us through day by day.

First we realize *Our Resources are Woefully Inadequate to Meet the Real Demands of Life.*

*II. We Take Inventory and Bring the Resources We Have To Jesus. **Read vs 13 b***

Again we look to John to give us more detail. *One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?"*

The barley "loaves" were actually small rolls. Barley bread was the cheapest of all bread and was used by the poorest of the poor.

In the Jewish commentary on the Scriptures called the Mishnah there was a regulation concerning the offering that a woman who committed adultery was to bring. She had to bring a trespass offering, ordinarily made of wheat flour, oil, and wine.

The Mishnah said that in the case of adultery the flour could be barley because barley is the food of the beasts and the woman's sin was the sin of a beast.

The fishes were also very tiny. About the size of sardines. Pickled fish from Galilee were known all over the Roman empire. So the boy had little pickled fish to help the dry barley bread go down.

This wasn't much more than a snack for the boy let alone a meal for thousands.  
**Read vs 14a For there were about five thousand men.**

This is the only miracle performed by Jesus that's mentioned in all 4 gospels. We normally refer to it as the feeding of the 5000 but Luke doesn't say there were 5000. He says 5000 men. Matthew adds the explanation: *Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.*

There could have been anywhere from 8 to 10,000 people in this crowd. No wonder the disciples were overwhelmed!

First we realize *Our Resources are Woefully Inadequate to Meet the Real Demands of Life.*  
Next *We Take Inventory and Bring the Resources We Have To Jesus.*  
Third *We Place Our Resources In God's Hands To Do What He Wishes With Them, And In The Process, We Give Control To Him.*

### **Read vs 14b & 15**

Up until this point all the disciples could see was the difficulties. To them it was a hopeless situation.

How often we can't see God for the difficulties. we're blinded from His care and His power by the situation that overwhelms us. We sing "Great is Thy Faithfulness" but we're not so sure He's faithful.

What I want you to see here is how Jesus has orchestrated this whole thing:

- 1st He led his disciples into an overwhelming situation
- 2nd He asked them how to handle it
- 3rd He caused them to realize that there was nothing which they could do to solve the problem with their resources
- 5th He had them bring what they had as small and despised as that might be

How thankful we should be that God's blessings are dispensed according to the riches of His grace, and not according to the poverty of our faith.

Once again we're seeing how Jesus' own disciples had to just obey even when they couldn't figure out what was happening.

Jesus command was very simple and straightforward. *Make them sit down in groups of fifty.*

He didn't rebuke His disciples for not understanding or having enough faith. He just called them to obey.

Of course, they probably wondered what was the point of making a hungry multitude sit down in an orderly fashion when there was nothing to feed them. But the Master had spoken. They were under clear direction. So even though they lacked the perceptive faith to look to Jesus to solve the problem they still obeyed.

Have you ever struggled with a weak faith? Have you ever thought, "I wish I could just believe God. I need more faith."

Let me give you a Biblical key to seeing your faith grow. Obey what you know. Simply obey what God has said. I guarantee as you obey what God has said you will see the fulfillment of God's promises.

**Turn to John 15 pg 1044 Read vs 10**

All of us have trouble really believing that promise, don't we? We say things like, "Hey, I think the way to joy is to be rich and have lots of money. And just to make sure I have lots of money I invested in the stock market."

Or we might say. "I think the way I'll really be happy in life is if I do whatever I want to do. I'll set the rules. I'll determine what's right and wrong for me."

Those things may sound good on the surface, but in the end they leave us empty.

The truth is that when we follow Jesus Christ and His commands we experience real joy. We experience the result of our obedience and our faith is strengthened to believe God's promises.

The more we walk in the light of God's word the more our faith will be strengthened because we'll see God in action.

That's what happened to Jesus' disciples.

Jesus was tired and weary. That's was part of the reason He took His disciples to a solitary place. Mark tells us Jesus had said to them, "*Come aside by yourselves to a*

*deserted place and rest a while." For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.*

He needed rest but the crowd followed Him. And instead of doing what he felt like doing, resting and sending them all away, Jesus spent the day serving people.

In John 6 all of this leads to one of Jesus' great "I am" declarations. *"I am the bread of life."*

*"I'm the one who meets needs. I'm the one who supplies the blessings. I'm the one who will use your poor, despised resources and multiply them to overflowing blessing."*

*Make them sit down in groups of fifty. Mark writes: Then He commanded them to make them all sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in ranks, in hundreds and in fifties.*

The word translated "ranks" literally means "garden beds."

It must have been quite a sight to see. A vast multitude dressed in bright oriental garments reclining under the blue sky on the green grass with the sea of Galilee not far away.

What were they all expecting? I don't know. What they saw was a miracle and yet it took place with astounding simplicity.

Remember, We always lack the means to do what God requires of us, and yet He commands us to obey because He is always faithful to provide the means to do His commands.

We're tempted to say things like, "I can't treat my wife the way God commands me because I didn't have a dad around when I was growing up," or "I have low blood sugar so I can't control my temper," or "My husband is overbearing so I can't be a godly wife and mother," or "I have low self esteem so I can't ever teach or help with a Sunday school class."

When we excuse ourselves from obedience to His commands because we say we can't do what He's asking us to do, we use our deficiencies as an excuse for sin, rather than as an occasion for faith.

**Back to Luke 9**



- *Our Resources are Woefully Inadequate to Meet the Real Demands of Life.*
  - *We Take Inventory and Bring the Resources We Have To Jesus.*
  - *We Place Our Resources In God's Hands to Do What He Wishes With Them, And In The Process, We Give Control to Him.*
- IV. God Then Blesses Them and Places Them Back In Our Hands, Multiplied and More Powerful Than We Could Have Imagined.*

### **Read vs 16**

Each of the gospel writers states what happened almost matter of factly. Very simply.

Jesus wave His hands, and in a flash of light and puff of smoke make bread and fish. He didn't come into the world to be spectacular but to offer people the bread of life.

If anything is a mark of Jesus deity, it's the way He carried out His miracles. Any mere human being would have wanted to make a great show of power in a miracle like this. Any man who wanted to draw attention to himself would have made a big announcement and made sure all eyes were on him.

But Jesus simply blesses the food, gives some to each of His disciples to pass out.

### **Read vs 17**

The bread was sufficient for all. What a picture of Jesus, "The bread of life." That bread illustrated a beautiful truth. Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life, is sufficient.

Whether it's forgiveness of sins, meaning and purpose in life, or the ability to face life's overwhelming circumstances, Jesus is sufficient for everyone. When we partake from the bread of life there's no less bread than before.

This wasn't an illusion. This wasn't a mass hallucination. The people ate until they were filled and there were 12 basketfuls left over. This miracle was designed to show the disciples, and us, what God has for us in Jesus Christ.

Do you know what it is to be filled from the hand of Jesus Christ? Filled with peace and joy and strength?

It starts by realizing that God sees us as we really are. He sees our heart. God

knows our sinful rebellion down deep inside. He knows the jealousy, bitterness, lack of forgiveness and all the other stuff that we carry around.

The Bible calls those things sin. And it tells us that God says, *your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you...*

A little girl was once looking out her farm house window at a sheep eating grass. She thought how white it looked against the green background. But later it began to snow. As she looked out the window again she thought, "that sheep looks dirty against the white snow!" It was the same sheep, but with a different background.

When we compare ourselves to the background of this world's standard we look pretty clean, but when we compare ourselves to the pure righteousness of God's standards we don't look so good.

The Bible says *The wages of sin is death*. The judgment of God on sinners is eternal death. Separation from Him for ever.

But the Bible also says God loves the world. How can God show love to a world of guilty sinners?

**Turn to John 3 pg 1027 Read vs 16**

Jesus' main reason for coming to this world wasn't to do miracles. It wasn't to feed multitudes. It was to die as payment for our sins. The miracles were important teaching tools but the cross was His main focal point.

The Bible says: *Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; ...he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:*

Why did Jesus who was perfect, without sin, have to die a torturous horrible death with the weight of the sins of the world being judged on His shoulders?....there was no other way!

Jesus took our punishment for us and bought our freedom with His life and offers it to us as a gift. We can't earn it!...It is a gift!

*"For by Grace you have been saved thru faith, and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, not of works that no one should boast."* Ephesians 2:8

Faith in Jesus and the work that He did for us (the completed finished work) is the only to salvation and to eternal life with God!

Have you trusted Him for forgiveness? Not only is He our hope for dealing with the events of this life but He's our only hope for the life to come.