

## POWERFUL PROVIDER

Is your pantry stocked? Maybe you'll run out of something this week. Jesus' disciples found themselves in short supply in Luke 9:10-17. They were in a desolate place with multitudes of people. Jesus had just taught them to trust God's provision while they were on mission for Him.

"Those critical of the trustworthiness of the Bible," RC Sproul observes, "are embarrassed by the unified testimony of the most well-attested eyewitness account of any miracle Jesus performed in His earthly ministry." It's also in Matthew 14:12-21, Mark 6:30-44, and John 6:1-15.

**NEEDY PEOPLE** - Jesus underscores His lesson in a dramatic way. First, He withdrew with His disciples to debrief after their apostolic mission. Ministry takes a toll, physically, spiritually, emotionally, mentally. They were "peopled out" and Jesus wisely gave them rest.

They sailed away in a boat, but the people figured they were going to Bethsaida, and off went the crowds. Luke says Jesus "*welcomed them, spoke of the kingdom of God, and cured those who had need of healing.*" Mark says Jesus had compassion on the great crowd, because they were "*like sheep without a shepherd,*" and He began to teach them many things.

**YOUR PEOPLE** - What about the people around you? Statistics say that in any given community only around ten percent are in church any Sunday. Are that many even doing "home church"? People around you have great spiritual needs as well as physical and emotional anxieties.

As the good shepherd, Jesus knew the needs of the sheep. RK Hughes notes that He taught with Old Testament exposition, original parables, and brilliant reasoning as He heralded the kingdom, talking about kingdom living and entering the kingdom in humility, with repentance and faith.

**HUNGRY PEOPLE** - Luke says the day began to wear away and the twelve came to Jesus and said, "*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.*" It was Passover and crops weren't ripe.

There were more than five thousand men in the crowds. The disciples had reached the end of themselves. They were already tired before they came here, and they've had enough. They wanted to just send the people away. Like us, they began to tell God what He should do.

**DO SOMETHING** - Jesus' reply must have startled them. He said, "*You give them something to eat.*" JC Ryle notes, "Christ's disciples are appointed to set before men the provision He has made for their souls." But they seem to have forgotten to trust in God's providence.

What, they ask, were they supposed to do, "*go and buy food for all these people?*" John says Jesus asked Philip, who was from Bethsaida, where they would go to buy bread, to test him. Philip answered, "*two hundred days' wages would not be enough for each one to get a little.*"

Peter's brother Andrew said, "*there is a boy here with five loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?*" Jesus told the disciples to feed the people, and they reply to the Lord "we don't have enough stuff." Of course Jesus already knew what He was going to do.

**GOD PROVIDES** - "It is often our God-given duty to attempt tasks to which we are conspicuously inadequate," notes Alexander Maclaren, "in the confidence that He who gives them has laid them on us to drive us to Himself, and there to find sufficiency."

Why didn't the disciples think even of Psalm 23 in this crowd of sheep without a shepherd. They themselves had just experienced God's provision on their mission. But right now they were most aware of their own inadequacy and need. Instead of trusting God, they trusted their own abilities.

**GOD'S POWER** - When we recognize our own limitations we are ready for Jesus' empowerment. His command, "*you give them something to eat*" was an allusion to 2Kings 4:42. The prophet Elisha had told his servant to feed 100 men with twenty loaves and ears of grain. How?

"*The Lord says they shall eat and have some left.*" The servant obeyed, the men were filled, and had leftovers. In Luke 9 there were five thousand men, at least ten thousand people. Jesus told the disciples to have them sit down in groups of about fifty. God likes order, not confusion.

"Jesus had highlighted the disciples' inadequacy and now points them to His divine sufficiency," notes Hughes. How will Jesus provide your impossible needs this week? ☐