

All We Need

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[0 : 00] Let's pray and let's ask God for his help. Heavenly Father, you say that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from your mouth.

So Father, will you feed us this morning? Will you help us to take what you give us and to inwardly digest it so that we might be spiritually nourished and we might have the energy and the strength to do what you call us to do?

All this we pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Now, it's only early this year that I've come to know about mukbang. I know, I know I'm late to the game, but in case you don't know what that is, mukbang literally means eating show or eating broadcast.

The word itself comes from South Korea. And they are basically these live YouTube shows where someone eats a lot of food while talking about it and chatting with their audience.

Some of them are educational in nature. Others are more about reviewing the food. Still, others are simply about interacting with others over a meal on a virtual platform.

[1 : 07] But they've become a global phenomenon. Some of the more popular ones have thousands of people watching them with the live streamers earning thousands of dollars.

But why are they so popular? Because, it seems, they bring satisfaction. In an age where loneliness is on the increase, they provide a way to feel connected with others.

Food tends to bring people together. And there's a kind of satisfaction in watching people really enjoy their food and having their physical and social needs met.

Well, in today's passage, we get to watch people eat as well. In fact, verse 17, we learn that They, that is not just one individual, but thousands, not only ate, but were satisfied.

They had all they needed and more besides. But there is a difference between the 21st century version of mukbang and this 1st century biblical version.

[2 : 19] In the 21st century version, we are merely spectators. We watch. We are entertained. But in the 1st century version, we participate.

We get involved. Because, notice, end of verse 16, that the disciples are actively distributing the food to the people.

In other words, we actually get to play a part in helping people eat. Not just watch. And be filled.

We actually get to play a part in bringing satisfaction to people. Now, wouldn't you want to be a part of that? To be part of something that blesses people in this way.

Wouldn't that be amazing? And that is what today's passage is inviting us to. So, listen well. But first, we're going to have to backtrack and set this episode in its larger context.

[3 : 20] Let's recall, first of all, what Jesus has been doing so far. And so far, from Luke 4 onwards, what he's been doing is declaring and demonstrating the kingdom of God.

Now, what is the kingdom of God? I'm not sure if I've actually provided a proper definition so far in this sermon series. So, let me give you an eight-word definition now.

The kingdom is God's reign through God's people over God's place. The kingdom is God's reign through God's people over God's place.

To declare the kingdom is to declare God is king and his coming as king to set right what our sin made wrong.

It's to declare he is graciously intervening in our broken world to rescue rebellious sinners and renew his creation. It's to declare that one day, things like sickness and disasters and evil will be no more.

[4 : 29] Now, isn't that what we all want? That's why the kingdom coming is good news. And Jesus' message is that king has arrived.

That new era is on its way. Those desires for such a world can be satisfied if we turn to him, that's what repentance means, and trust him, that's what faith means.

And so, in places like 6 verse 20, we find Jesus teaching what the kingdom of God is like. In 8 verse 1, we find him going from town to town to preach what Luke calls the good news of the kingdom of God.

That is his priority. But Jesus not only declares, but demonstrates the kingdom. In fact, so far in Luke's gospel, it is Jesus and Jesus alone who is said to have such power and authority.

So, back in 4 verse 36, when he casts out an impure spirit in the synagogue, the people are amazed and they say, wow, he has such power and authority.

[5 : 50] Those are the words used. Or look back at 5 verse 17, where Jesus is said to put the power of the Lord on display to heal the sick.

Or 5 verse 24, where he claims the authority to forgive sins. But what about his disciples?

What have they been up to so far? Well, back in 6 verse 12 to 16, Jesus calls these 12 men and says, you're going to be my representatives.

You're going to be my ambassadors. But so far, have you noticed, they haven't really done anything unique?

They've been with Jesus. They've journeyed with him. They've heard him teach and heal. But they themselves have been little more than spectators.

[6 : 48] But now, that's going to change. Because here's the first thing Luke wants to show us today. Following Jesus means participating in his mission.

Following Jesus means participating in his mission. In verse 1, Jesus calls the 12 together. And verse 2, he sends them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal those who were ill.

Wow. Sounds amazing and scary all at the same time, doesn't it? But don't worry, Jesus says, as I send you, I'm giving you all you need.

Look at verse 1 again. Notice, he gives them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases.

Remember, that's what Jesus already has. Power. Authority. And that's what Jesus has already been doing.

[7 : 59] Healing. Casting out demons. And he now says to his disciples, you will go out to do what I do.

You will go out in my name, with my power, with my authority, and extend my ministry. You see, what does Jesus want?

He wants people to know the good news of the kingdom. So, what is his strategy? He sends his followers out. He's multiplying his ministry.

That's what discipleship is all about. Multiplication. It's about forming disciples of Jesus, who will go on to form more disciples of Jesus, who will go on to form more disciples of Jesus.

Isn't that what Jesus is doing here? Instead of Jesus doing all the work by himself, he now says, hey, you guys can participate too.

[9 : 09] And Luke doesn't mention this, but Matthew tells us Jesus sends them out in pairs. So, instead of just Jesus doing all the work, we now have six other teams of two people each proclaiming the kingdom.

That's how the church is built. That's how God's kingdom grows. That's how more people can learn of the satisfaction available through God's king.

And that has always been the plan of Jesus to include us in his mission. After all, later in chapter 10, we'll see that he includes even more people, not just the 12.

So, that's the first thing Luke wants to show us today. Following Jesus means participating in Jesus' mission. And so, that's why the third core conviction of our church, which can be found in our bulletin on the second page, is focus on growing disciples.

And when I say disciples, I mean disciples of Jesus. So, what does that look like for us? Well, for us, it means we try not just to be about running activities.

[10 : 34] Now, that's a trap that all churches can fall into easily, can't it? Let's run a program for teenagers because isn't that what the other churches down the road are doing?

Keeping the young people out of trouble? Or let's run some social activity for the older folk. And let's just call that fellowship so that it sounds more Christian. But following Jesus is never simply about activities.

It's about helping people know Jesus, find satisfaction in him, and live for him as king. That's the kind of activity we should prioritize.

And where possible, we try to do it in a way that brings about multiplication. So, practically, that means we don't just run events, not just for the sake of it, but we also seek to train people.

Why did we put on an apologetic seminar last week? The reason is to help train and equip people so that they can be a better witness.

[11 : 43] Why is our women's deacon, Sharon, piloting these small women's discipleship groups rather than just throwing some big, splashy afternoon tea? Because she wants to invest in training and multiplying women who can similarly invest in other women.

Now, doing this takes more time, more energy, and probably is more chaotic. After all, it took time for the disciples to get to the point where they can be sent out.

They needed to spend time with Jesus first, to watch him, and to try to absorb his lessons. But, eventually, that's where they got to, to being sent out.

And that's where Jesus wants us. You see, many people seem to believe that you can actually be a Christian without taking on Jesus' priorities.

Many people seem to assume you can choose to identify with Jesus, but not his mission. In other words, you can somehow be a follower who doesn't actually follow.

[13 : 01] How does that make sense? So, let's get involved. For as we do so, we are actually being given the privilege of participating in God's mission to bless others.

Whenever we share Jesus and live for him, we are not practicing religion. We are proclaiming the kingdom. The kingdom that brings ultimate healing and restoration to people's lives.

Now, at this point, I probably need to briefly address one side question. Here in Luke chapter 9, we notice that the apostles are being sent to proclaim and given the authority to perform miracles.

Now, does that mean today we have the exact same mandate? Does that mean that we don't merely speak the gospel, but also speak physical healing into people's lives?

Now, it will probably take an entire sermon in itself to do justice to that question. But, taking into account scripture as a whole, let me just try to make some brief points.

[14 : 15] And the first thing I want to say, of course, is that God obviously can heal, even today. There is nothing in the scriptures, as far as I can see, that says God doesn't act in that way today.

But second of all, we need to consider what the purpose of the miracles in the Gospels are. As I've been showing you in the sermon series so far, they often function as authenticating signs.

They are signposts, identity markers, evidence that Jesus is who he says he is. So they have a unique function.

And they also act as a kind of preview that God is bringing in a new exodus, a better redemption for signs and wonders in the Old Testament was often associated with the exodus event.

So there is a sense in which the mission of the Twelve here must be taken as unique in redemptive history. That is, it can't exactly be replicated.

[15 : 23] Third of all, we need to notice that in the Gospels, the miracles are subservient to the proclamation of the Word. As the New Testament, Don Carson, helpfully observes, when Jesus' intention is stated or his initiative described, almost always his teaching and preaching are in view, not his healings.

In other words, often healings occur because Jesus is at some place teaching and preaching. And an opportunity arises to show compassion to someone.

And actually, without the teaching, the miracles have no significance in themselves. They are just like magic shows. Fourth of all, in the New Testament, there is actually some ambivalence to miracles.

They are not seen as purely good things. Sometimes, as I'm sure you notice, Jesus asks those whom he heals to remain quiet about their healing because he actually sees it as disruptive to his work.

Later on, in Luke 16, Jesus will say that if the Word is not at work, even the miracle of resurrection will not convince people.

[16 : 47] In Luke 11, Jesus condemns those demanding a sign as a wicked and adulterous generation. In Matthew 7, verse 21 to 23, Jesus makes clear that people who perform healings don't necessarily belong in the kingdom of God themselves.

And in 2 Thessalonians 2, verse 9 to 10, Satan is described as capable of performing false signs and wonders which can deceive. So, miraculous signs in themselves are not necessarily works of the kingdom.

And fifth of all, although perhaps this is a little bit more speculative, it seems as if when the gospel enters new territory where the gospel has not previously been proclaimed, their miraculous activity might be more common.

I've put some examples from the book of Acts on your outline. But, when we look at the rest of the New Testament, to help people accept the gospel, Paul tends to stress things other than miracles. For example, he cites the godly lives of Christians in Titus 2, verse 9 to 10, and their response to persecution in 1 Peter 2, verse 11 to 12.

[18:06] But, he never says, do healings so that people may believe. So, putting some of these together, and of course there is more that we could say, more that we could fill in, I think it's fair to say that we can and should pray for healing as part of our overall ministry if there is opportunity to show compassion, to remove potential barriers to the gospel, to deepen faith.

However, they are clearly not central or necessary in the same way as gospel proclamation. And we don't have to feel as if we are second rate or lacking in power if they are absent.

So, our participation in Jesus' mission today isn't exactly identical to the 12 in Luke 9. But let's not forget, whenever people receive the gospel, they do receive healing.

They do experience a miracle because they now have the hope of resurrection life, of a place in the new creation. It is really just a question of when they get healed.

So, that's a bit of a sidetrack, but I thought it was probably worth spending five, six minutes to talk about it. But let's come back to Luke 9. And Jesus now fleshes out what participation in Jesus' mission means.

[19:41] participation in Jesus' mission means depending on God's provision. Participation in Jesus' mission means depending on God's provision.

As Jesus sends the 12 out, he has some instructions for them. Verse 3. Take nothing for the journey, no stuff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shit.

Now, think about that for a minute. During the most recent school holidays, my family and I went to Ipoh. And I think we had the exact opposite attitude.

Did I bring too few shirts? Maybe I should pack another one just in case. Should we bring that toy as well in case our kids really miss them? Or do we need to bring that present to that person we're going to see?

But Jesus says, don't take this and that. Sorry? What? Jesus? Don't take the stuff?

[20:47] The very thing that I might need to protect myself against bandits on the road? Eh? No travel bag? Even if I have 20 kilograms baggage space for my belongings?

No spare shit? Eh, Jesus, we're not rich but we're not that poor. So you see, with these instructions, the disciples become painfully aware of their lack.

And that is exactly where Jesus wants them. He's saying to them, I want you not to depend on those things you normally pack, as if they are what you really need.

Instead, trust that I'm going to give you all you need. Because my friends, even with so little, are you able to do what I'm calling you to do?

The answer is yes. Wow. God, it's hard to trust Jesus like that, isn't it?

[21:59] Because we're so used to providing insurance for ourselves. We're so used to saying, just in case, better take that thing. We're so used to trying to control things so much so that we end up failing to depend on Jesus.

But Jesus says the most essential thing we need is himself. So that brings up the question, are they things we are depending on other than Jesus to live for him and fulfill his mission?

Am I depending on anything other than God himself to do his work? is it so often we think, if I can just find that fool proof strategy, that fool proof method, that fool proof technique that can help my evangelism or my spiritual life or whatever other area of life, only then I'll go all out for him.

But since I can't find that thing yet, I will wait. I'll take my time. I won't take risks because I don't have that thing I hope I can depend on, whatever it is.

But Jesus says, I've given you all you need. I'm all that you need. So what are you waiting for?

[23:27] Because participating in Jesus' mission means depending on Jesus' provision. And if you are able to depend on him in that way, then you can cultivate contentment even amidst potential

rejection.

That's what we see in verses 4 to 6. In verse 4, Jesus says, whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave the town.

Now, here's what Jesus is getting at. Village hospitality meant that whenever the disciples stop at a kampong, someone would usually invite them to makan and to rest with them.

house. But what some people did was to go from house to house until they found a house that looked more like a Hilton. And if the disciples did that, that would actually undermine the mission since it gave the impression you're more interested in personal comfort and you are merely using the gospel to that end.

man. But Jesus says, stay in one spot. Be content with the place God has given you. If where you are seems modest, if it doesn't seem like God is giving you lots of stuff or doing spectacular things where you are, it doesn't matter.

[24 : 53] What God simply wants is your faithfulness. And if you are depending on Jesus' provision, you can cultivate contentment.

You have what you need for where you are. And if you know you have what you need, you won't be upset by potential rejection because there will be rejection.

And Jesus says, verse 5, if people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them. Now, usually a Jewish person having travelled in foreign lands, when they come home would shake the dust off their feet, so as not to bring home gentile dirt and defilement, so to speak.

So to shake the dust here is a stinging rebuke because you are now declaring that these villages are no better than Gentiles who reject the one true God.

You see, Jesus knows that as we participate in his mission, sometimes there will be doors that will be closed. When we seek to help people know Christ more, but they persistently reject us, sometimes the limitations of time and energy means that we leave them to God and move on.

[26 : 27] Now, to be fair, remember that the disciples are on a short-term mission trip here. So this call to move on probably doesn't quite apply to people in close proximity to us, like family, people whom we have a lifelong and ongoing relationship with.

But there will be others whom we don't have that kind of close relationship with where this might be appropriate. We move on from them.

And we shouldn't see this as failure. We shouldn't see this as God not providing all we need. For God has not called us to be the saviour. He simply called us to be faithful to testifying to his kingdom in word and deed.

And so that's what the disciples did, verse 6, as they moved from village to village, fulfilling Jesus' mission. So Jesus says, depend on him as we participate in his mission.

But let's be honest, easier said than done, isn't it? In our heads, we know that's what we should be doing, but so often our hands and our feet do otherwise.

[27 : 50] So often, we fail. And actually, over these three weeks that we'll be spending in Luke chapter 9, we'll see that that's what the disciples of Jesus are like too.

They're slow, they're faithless, they still don't get it a lot of the time. And that's what I'm like so much of the time as well. So what can help?

Here is Luke's answer. He says, perseverance in Jesus' mission requires the right perception of Jesus.

That is, we can depend on Jesus as we participate in his mission if we have eyes to see he is all we need.

And that's what the remainder of this passage is all about. In verses 7 to 9, we get this somewhat odd interruption in the narrative. Luke suddenly takes us briefly to Herod.

[28 : 54] And he shows us that Herod is perplexed. Verse 7, he's heard about Jesus and his disciples, he knows the various theories out there, but he simply cannot figure out who this Jesus is.

He tries to see him because actually he is still in the dark regarding Jesus' true identity. And so he asks, notice, that all important question, who is this guy?

The question that we've kept hearing all throughout Luke 7 and 8, so we know the answer. But the reason Luke tells us about Herod's reaction is because he wants us to know.

You can be on mission for Jesus, but be in the same position as Herod. That is, you can do things for Jesus, but you wouldn't last if you're still in the dark about who Jesus really is.

But Luke says, come, let me show you who Jesus is one more time. And so we come to this familiar story of the feeding of the 5,000. Notice when this takes place, verse 20.

[30 : 07] When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. And so it seems what has just happened is that the apostles have more or less done what Jesus sent them to do.

It sounds like a positive report. Their mission has generally been a success. And so verse 11, Jesus says, time for some rest. Let's head to Bethsaida.

But Jesus cannot escape the crowds who chase after him. And if I was in Jesus' shoes, what might I have said when the crowds came to pester me?

Aya, could we have some downtime, please? We need the rest. Could you just leave us alone for a few hours? But not Jesus. He welcomed them, and once again he does what he always does.

He spoke to them about the kingdom of God and healed those who needed healing. But now a problem arises. Verse 12, the crowds have gathered around Jesus in a remote place.

[31 : 14] Now this remote place is literally the desert. It's getting late, and the people are getting hungry. And so the disciples come up with a practical solution. Send them away, they say.

Let them go. Let's, you know, divert the problem to someone else. That's interesting, isn't it?

Remember earlier that Jesus sends the disciples to go proclaim the kingdom to people?

But now the disciples want to send the people away from Jesus, the king of the kingdom. That's not exactly how you fulfill the mission, is it? And so Jesus says, verse 13, you know what, guys?

That's not the way to do things. Instead, why don't you give them something to eat? Now, how do the disciples respond? They've obviously done the calculations.

They answered, we only have five loaves of bread and two fish unless we go and buy food for all this crowd. And then Luke reminds us that there are 5,000 men present, not even accounting for the women and children.

[32 : 27] So basically this is what the disciples are saying. Look, Jesus, this is crazy. We give them something to eat? That's too many people.

We don't have enough food or money. Now, isn't that interesting? Come back with me to chapter 9 verse 3 for a minute.

When Jesus sends them out, what does he tell them not to pack? He says, don't bring money and don't bring food.

Why? Because I will provide all you need. But here, down in verse 13, the disciples don't seem to have absorbed that lesson at all.

They have no money and no food and no faith. Notice what they didn't do. At no point did they ever depend on Jesus.

[33 : 32] At no point did they ever turn to ask Jesus for help. They failed to see Jesus for who he is. They're actually in the same position as Herod.

God. But Jesus now sees us on this moment as a teaching opportunity. He is gentle with his followers.

He knows that the disciples, factually speaking, are right. There really is not enough food or money. But he wants them and us to learn that insufficient resources have never stopped God.

Just look at Exodus 16 where God feeds his people manna in the desert. Or 2 Kings 4 where God used the prophet Elisha to multiply 20 loaves of bread to feed 100 people.

The truth is our resources are always insufficient for the task at hand. We are never skillful enough or competent enough or knowledgeable enough or dedicated enough to do what we are called to do.

[34 : 43] But Jesus says, with me, you have all you need. And so he gets the people to sit in groups of 50 each, takes what is available, prays to the Father, and then just like God in the Old Testament did, he provides and satisfies all.

And notice the details. Look at how Jesus involves his disciples every step of the way. We already saw that he said, you give them something to eat.

And then notice, Jesus doesn't tell the crowds himself how to divide themselves. Instead, end of verse 14, he asks his disciples to do so.

and he doesn't distribute the food himself. Instead, end of verse 16, he asks his disciples to do so. Once again, he is getting them to participate.

And I want you to notice something else. The crowds don't necessarily know that a miracle has occurred. They all just received the food from the apostles.

