

Jesus is more than enough

Luke: Finding Jesus

Luke 9:10-17

Sermon 40

J. Hudson Taylor (**picture**), the great pioneer missionary to China, said these words: “*There are three stages in any great work attempted for God: impossible, difficult, done.*” Are you facing something “impossible” today?

What’s your *impossible*? Every day Satan and the forces of evil are engaged in a mission to cause us as believers to not believe. Yet, if most of us were asked, we’d affirm we believe Jesus is Lord and Savior. We’d affirm He paid the penalty for our sin. We trust Jesus is all He said He is...or do we?

Some of you are fighting a seemingly impossible battle in your soul to believe Jesus is more than enough. That battle is being fought for various reasons. Maybe it’s because you’ve lost something or someone? Your loss has tempted you to question whether Jesus is more than enough because your loss is so heavy, so painful and hurts so badly.

Others are in a battle to believe Jesus is more than enough, not because of what you've lost, but because of what you have. You have a bad marriage, a wayward child or you’re in emotional distress. You wonder is Jesus enough.

Some of you are fighting a battle to believe Jesus is more than enough because of what you don’t have, but what you desire. It’s something, anything, other than Him, other than His kingdom.

Whether you’re fighting a battle to believe Jesus is more than enough because of what you've lost, or because of what you have, or because of what you want, or all that together, the passage in Luke we’re looking at today was written for you. The precise point of this Scripture and the truth God wants us to learn is that Jesus is more than enough. His favorite word is *impossible*.

The cold hard truth is that while most of us affirm Jesus is sufficient for our salvation, we’re just not sure if He’s sufficient for our tomorrow. We trust Him for eternity, we just don’t trust Him with today’s struggles. But how can we really trust Christ with eternity, if we can’t trust Him with life? When life becomes hard, what we truly believe about Jesus comes out. That’s the way it was with the disciples. They struggled to believe Jesus was sufficient, that He was more than enough. Please turn to Luke 9:10-17 (p. 866).

This miracle is the only miracle, other than Jesus’ resurrection, recorded in all four Gospels. Feeding 5,000 men, along with no doubt an equal amount of women and children, a crowd of some 15 to 20,000 was the greatest work of divine creative power since the week of Creation or the restructuring of the earth after the Flood. It’s the high point of Jesus’ ministry. Like all of His miracles, it not only shows His power, it shows His compassion. Jesus power can never be divorced from His love. It’s a wonderful exhibition that nothing in our lives is too insignificant or mundane for God. What’s more basic than lunch? Jesus cares even when we’re hungry.

The disciples face an impossible situation. They can’t even provide for themselves. They can’t solve this problem. We frequently can’t provide for ourselves or solve our own problems.

There’s a message in every miracle. This one reminds us that **Jesus is more than enough**. Dear friend, whatever you’re struggling with **Jesus is more than enough**. As we work through this passage, we want to learn **three important lessons**...

1. Rest is essential for healthy, long term ministry. This scene follows the intense ministry of verses 1-6. The 12 had been sent out by Jesus on an exhausting short-term mission trip. After such a draining experience, it’s normal to seek rest, so Jesus takes them for some R & R. “*On*

their return the apostles told Him all that they had done. And He took them and withdrew apart to a town called Bethsaida...” The other Gospels tell us it was a remote and isolated spot.

Ministry is demanding. You’re often on 24/7. All of us need time alone for physical and spiritual renewal. This is a good reminder in our day of often overly busy and overworked Christian workers, we too need rest.

Rest isn’t valued today. Did you know that if we’d lived in early America and behaved as we do, all of us would have been jailbirds with our arms and feet locked into the stocks (**picture**) in public humiliation? *Why?* Because we work or travel or do things for recreation on Sunday. It was called “Sabbath breaking” and was against the law. Most Christians never think twice about watching ball games, mowing their lawn or doing other things on Sundays.

While Scripture doesn’t prohibit Sunday work or activities, there’s a principle throughout the Bible of rest we ignore to our own detriment. Most of us need to heed it better. We need quiet, even technology free days. We need quiet, intimate times with the Lord. That was the plan in Luke 9:10.

God created the world in six days. He rested on and sanctified the 7th day to instruct us. This pattern of work and rest is His plan for us. It’s not optional. We need weekly rest and worship. We’re created to reflect God’s image and designed to follow His pattern. Most of us need to learn to shut it all down and turn ourselves off periodically. Because we won’t, sometimes for our own spiritual health, the Good Shepherd will “*make us lie down.*”

Unfortunately, the short trip across the lake was the only vacation they got. The crowds saw them leaving and ran to the other side, arriving ahead of them. When the disciples saw the crowds of needy people standing on the shore, they must have thought, “Oh, no! Lord, can we turn the boat around?”

2. Earthly perspectives are often disrespectful to our Heavenly Lord. So Jesus is on an “Us Day” with the disciples. The masses hear about it and follow them. Mark 6:34 says, “*When Jesus went ashore He saw a great crowd, and He had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.*” The word “*compassion*” has the idea of tender mercy. In other words, Jesus is so moved and concerned for the crowd, He has a pit in His stomach. He sees shepherdless sheep, defenseless, lost, unable to even feed themselves. But finally, the disciples have had enough. This was supposed to be “us time.” Yet, the crowds are growing and it’s getting late.

The 12 remind me of a lot of Christians who complain about church growth. Some will complain a church is getting too big. They prefer a more intimate group and actually become irritated by growth. Not Jesus. Jesus always welcomes anyone who comes to Him. He has no limits. He never says there are enough, even when there are thousands.

It’s a conflict of perspectives. “*Now the day began to wear away, and the twelve came and said to Him, ‘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.’*” Have you ever been at church, you’re really caught up in a conversation, maybe you’ve got a heavy burden you’re sharing with a friend, maybe you’re praying about a burden? Or, it’s just so good to be with brothers and sisters, you lose track of time. But the custodian wants to go home to watch the game, so he flicks the lights off and on.

The disciples are tired. They thought they were going to get some R & R. But the crowd interrupted it. Jesus has taught all day. He’s healed so many they’ve lost count.

So you're tired, hangry and it's late. It's time for the last point, for the benediction. They're shuffling from one foot to the other, clearing their throats, tapping sundials. But Jesus doesn't get the hint, so they come right out and tell Him, "*Send the crowd away...*" They're like a bratty kid jerking on Mom's arm, "Mommy, let's go." They don't see ministry needs. They're too self-absorbed. Life is a mirror in which they only see themselves.

Can you imagine going to work tomorrow and telling your boss exactly what he needs to do? That's impertinence. Yet, disrespect seems to be a pattern for the disciples so they tell Jesus what to do.

On a previous occasion, after a long day of ministry, Jesus got up early to spend time in prayer. They go looking for Him, telling Him, "*Everyone is looking for you!*" and I think it was in that tone. It wasn't, "*Hey, everyone is looking for you.*" It's "what's do you think You're doing Jesus. We got the thing started last night. Everyone is looking for you. Let's go!" But Jesus says, "We're out of here. Let's go somewhere else. I have other places where I must preach"

Remember when they were on the boat. Jesus is exhausted, sleeping in the bottom of the boat. They find Him and it's, "Don't you care if we drown Jesus!" That's disrespectful in any language. Later on, they presume to know the mind of Jesus in relationship to children. Getting through them is like getting through Kim Kardashian's security detail. It's "get those brats out of here. The Master doesn't have time for kids." And Jesus has to correct them, saying, "Bring the children to Me for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

Here it's "*Send the crowd away to go...find lodging and get provisions, for we are here in a desolate place.*" It's an earthly perspective. They talk to Jesus like He's an idiot. "Jesus, look at the crowd." "Wow! I didn't notice it was so big." "There's no place to eat." "What? There aren't any McDonald's?" "It's getting late." "Really. Is that what it means when the sun starts going down?" But can we really blame them, they're pragmatists...

a. Pragmatism is a frequent enemy of faith. We know there are 5,000 men. What guy goes to church by himself? Scholars estimate if you add women and children, there were upwards of 20,000. It's a desolate place with no restaurant row. It's late in the day. No street lights. If they don't go now, they'll be walking home in the dark on empty stomachs. And some weren't local. They're going to have to find lodging.

Today we'd say the disciples were realists whereas Jesus is a "dreamer." They're practical. So when did Christianity become practical? While they're disrespect is understandable and forgivable, they still don't get who Jesus is. They'd spent a year and a half with Him, seen Him do miracle after miracle. Regardless of the situation, they'd never once seen Jesus unable to meet a need. But somehow it never occurs to them, Jesus can do another miracle.

Remember, too, they're Jews. Hadn't God provided for Israel in another very "desolate" place? Manna in the wilderness (Exodus 16). They knew the Elisha story when God miraculously provided bread for a 100 men (2 Kings 4:42-44). Jesus is greater than Moses or Elijah, but still they doubt.

They'd crunched the numbers. Each time they came to same conclusion. In John's account, Phillip made this statement about feeding the crowd: "*Lord, eight months wages would not be enough to buy everyone just one single bite.*" Maybe Phillip was the CPA of the disciples. I can see him whipping out his handheld abacus. "Let's see. 20,000 times \$1.25 a person, divided by a month's wages..." He had it all figured out.

God's math is a whole another world from our math. Some of you are thinking, "Yes, but we're supposed to use our brains." It's true. We're to think through all things, but we're not to "*lean on our own understanding.*" The Bible says we have to believe in our *hearts*, not our *heads*. Most of

us are so fact and figures, they've forgotten Scripture says, "*the just shall live by faith.*" We replace prayer with pragmatism while God wants to do the miraculous. If He saved you, you're a walking-talking miracle of His grace. We're as dull as they were, though Jesus has provided for us a thousand times a thousand...and can do it a thousand more.

Somehow, though Jesus did a miracle yesterday, we forget He can do another one today. He's more than enough. He loves the word impossible. Pragmatically, their answer made a lot more sense than Jesus' response. Pragmatism always makes sense, but it easily eradicates faith. We foolishly think the need is to solve the problem. The need is for us to grow in faith.

b. God brings problems in our lives to test our faith. John's account tells us, Jesus "*said this to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do*" (6:6). Jesus gave them an impossible dilemma. He's testing their faith. He wants to change the way they think and how they deal with dilemmas. He wants them to see the world from His perspective with eyes of faith.

It's a God-sized assignment, way beyond their capabilities. If the Lord didn't intervene, they'd fall flat on their faces. The word "*crisis*" comes from a word that means "*decision.*" A crisis of belief is a fork in the road demanding a decision. You must decide what you believe about God and how you'll respond to Him. How you respond when you reach this point determines whether you move forward to be involved with Him in something God-sized that only He can do, or whether you'll continue to go your own way and miss the opportunity He's placed before you.

Christian, your faith will be tested continually throughout your life, not to shame you, but to strengthen you. James 1:2-3, "*Count it all joy...when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.*" God tests us to help us grow spiritually. Jesus reminds them human resources are always inadequate for true needs.

3. The Heavenly perspectives sees opportunities for God to be glorified. When NASA (**picture**) began sending astronauts into space, they discovered that pens wouldn't work at zero gravity. Ink won't flow down to the writing surface. To solve this problem, they hired Andersen Consulting. It took ten years and \$12 million, but they finally developed a pen which worked at zero gravity, upside down, underwater, on nearly any surface including crystal at a temperature range from below freezing to over 300 degrees Celsius. And what did the Russians do? They just used a pencil! Too often we focus on problems and fail to see opportunities right in front of us.

Winston Churchill (**picture**) rightly said, "*A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; while an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.*" What Jesus says to His disciples is astounding. It's a **command**, verse 13, "*you give them something to eat.*"

Remember, they've just returned from a short term mission trip where they'd performed many miracles, including casting out demons. Could it be that in the name of Christ, they also had the power to feed the hungry? We'll never know because the disciples never obeyed Jesus' command. Instead, they said they were powerless to help.

This miracle doesn't just demonstrate Jesus' power. It shows His love and compassion. Pastor, teacher, Warren Wiersbe (**picture**) writes: "*Our Lord was not the kind of person who could teach the Word and then say to hungry people, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled' (James 2:16). The disciples were only too eager to see the crowd leave...They had not yet caught the compassion of Christ and the burden He had for the multitudes, but one day they would...The miracle was more than an act of mercy for hungry people, though that was important. It was also a sign of our Lord's messiahship and an illustration of God's gracious provision for man's salvation.*"

Just the timing of this illustrates His compassion. He'd planned time with His disciples but Jesus changes His plans. It's the end of the day. He's been preaching and doing miracles all day. If the disciples were tired, Jesus was exhausted. Yet, He welcomes the crowds, meeting their needs because there's never a bad time for Jesus.

It's a model for us. Even when we're tired, needing a break, those are often the times God's power is poured through us, when we can share the Gospel and truly make a difference ministering to someone for Jesus' sake. I wonder how many opportunities you and I miss seeing God work "because we're too tired" to partner with Him. This miracle has some wonderful lessons...

a. God uses our gifts to serve His Kingdom and be a blessing. We know from the other Gospels Jesus used a boy's lunch of five loaves and two fish (**Hold it up**). But Jesus didn't just use a kid's lunch, He used His disciples.

Couldn't Jesus have called down manna from heaven? It would have fit the situation, been easier on the twelve and much more efficient. Jesus could have spoken a word and a loaf of bread would have miraculously appeared in each person's hand. Everyone would have been more awed at Jesus' power than they were with the quiet way this miracle was done. He could even have had angels take bread from His hand and flown directly to each person, giving them their own Happy Meal. People would have been amazed, talking about it the rest of their lives. But how did Jesus do it?

He used 12 ordinary men to distribute the food. He did it this way to teach His disciples His method for meeting the needs of a lost world is through people. Jesus always meets the needs of people through people. What kind of people? Inadequate ones! Jesus uses tired, emotionally drained people. And then, Jesus uses busy people. They didn't even have time to rest or eat because of all the people coming and going. Invariably, the Lord doesn't use people with extra time on their hands. He uses those who are already busy and He keeps them busy. They didn't have time to eat until the whole crowd was served. And Jesus uses people who lack resources. The disciples didn't have the food or funds. They were ridiculously lacking in the resources to meet Jesus' demand to feed the multitude.

How many times do we say, "I'll serve Jesus someday when my schedule slows down...I'm too busy and stressed to get involved now"? Or, "I'll give generously to the Lord's work when I get my finances in better shape. Right now I can't afford to give much." When we do that, we're making the mistake of thinking that serving Christ is something we volunteer to do when we have adequate time, energy and financial resources. Jesus doesn't work through people who have adequate time or resources. He loves to use our inadequacy to cause us to depend on Him so He gets all the glory. The insufficient becomes more than sufficient when surrendered to Christ!

b. God's gifts must always be accepted with gratitude. Okay, it's church so let's be honest – Does it bother you when you're invited to a wedding, you take the time to get just the right gift but never receive a "thank you" note?

It's inconsiderate. Yet, we're often inconsiderate with God. Verse 16, "*And taking the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven and said a blessing over them.*"

Christians used to always ask the blessing over the food before eating. That spiritual habit has been lost by many. While Scripture never commands it, it shouldn't be just a formality or empty tradition. It's a good reminder that everything we have comes from God. It's a good example for our children.

Just a side note, if you ask the blessing before a meal in a restaurant, leave a good tip, because the wait staff is watching. We don't want them to think God is cheap, just because some of His children are.

Thanksgiving shows dependence and gratitude to God. Most of us spend more time asking God for *more* rather than thanking Him for what He's already given us. 17th century, Dutch artist, Nicolaes Maes painted a picture entitled "Old Woman Praying" (**picture**). It's a simple woman sitting alone at her table praying over half a loaf of bread and a small bowl of soup. You can tell from the surroundings she's poor. Her rough hands show evidence of many years of hard, manual labor.

Maes was inspired to paint this after visiting with this woman. She invited him to join her for the meager meal. After asking the blessing, she looked up with a smile said, "*All this and Jesus, too!*" Her words inspired that beautiful painting. Some of us need to go home, look around and start thanking God for all we already have, instead of complaining or begging Him for more?

c. When we trust Him, God often provides more than we need. This isn't just an act of compassion and grace. It illustrates the very nature and blessings of the Kingdom of God. "*And they all ate and were satisfied. And what was left over was picked up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.*" (**basket**).

Jesus is the Lord of creation. This miracle wasn't *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) but it might as well have been. Material creation flowed from Jesus' hands, just as the universe itself had. Most Christians have heard this story so many times, we forget how utterly amazed the crowd and disciples must have been.

p Jesus provided more food than this huge crowd could eat. One can imagine them, as dusk fell, overcome with sleepy satisfaction, ready for a snooze under the stars. There are 12 huge baskets of leftovers (**basket**), one for each disciple. All 12 took home an object lesson. Jesus didn't want them to forget who He was and who they could trust. The grand point of it all is the utter sufficiency of Christ for all the needs of life. He's more than enough!

By the way, if you need a miracle, this is a good pattern to follow. Take the resources you have, even if they're embarrassingly small, like the boy's lunch—and offer them up to God. See what He does. Maybe your marriage is hanging by a thread. Give that thread to God. He'll strengthen it and multiply it. He can take the feelings you have for your spouse, even if they're not much and multiply them until you have a love you never imagined.

Are your finances in a mess? Give God your mess and you'll see He's infinitely more skilled than any CPA when it comes to balancing your checkbook. Facing challenges in school...at work as you seek to do God's will? Take what you have to God and ask for His help. He'll give it. God is a God of miracles. He has the power to multiply whatever we give to Him. He still heals broken marriages, broken families, broken lives, wounded hearts...whatever. When you feel the situation is hopeless, God can and will help. Jesus is more than enough!

Conclusion: God often puts us in situations where we're doomed to failure to force us to depend totally on Him. That way when the miracle comes, He alone gets the credit. It's a divine strategy repeated over and over again in Scripture and in our own experiences. We often find ourselves in desperate straits with no way out, no good options, and no human way of remedying our situation. God allows this to happen so we'll cry out to him. And when the deliverance comes, we are obliged to give God the total credit.

But our worst situation, we put ourselves in. We're sinners. We can't ever fix it. Jesus' death on the Cross is more than enough! No matter what you have done, no matter how repulsive your sins are, Christ is sufficient. You must simply believe and personally accept His gift of salvation.

Let's wrap this up with **three take homes**. Sooner or later, we all come to the end of ourselves. When it happens, we discover what we really believe. You'll discover what you actually believe when crisis comes home and Jesus says to you, "Give them something to eat." Remember, *"There are three stages in any great work attempted for God: impossible, difficult, done."*

Take Home #1: The fact something is impossible is no excuse for not trying to do it. Too often we conclude something can't be done so we don't bother even trying. If Moses had taken that attitude, the Jews would still be in Egypt. If David had adopted that opinion, Goliath would still be terrorizing the Israelites. You never know in advance what God may do, so never rule out the possibility of a miracle coming your way.

Lesson #2: God asks us to do the impossible and then He gives whatever we need to obey His command. Jesus often told people to do impossible things. To a lame man he said, "Rise, pick up your bed, and walk." To a dead man, He cried out, "Lazarus, come forth." There's a sense in which every command of God is impossible for us to obey. We always lack what we need to obey God's commands. But God is faithful to give us whatever we need when we ask him. What God demands, He supplies. If He "bids us fly, He will give us wings."

Lesson #3: When we offer our meager resources to God, we discover that the impossible isn't. God used J. Hudson Taylor, a great man of faith, to open China to the Gospel. Over and over again he saw God do amazing things in the face of hopeless circumstances. Reflecting on his experiences, he shared our quote, *"there are three stages in any work attempted for God: Impossible, Difficult, Done."* That should encourage us! There are many moments when we all seem to be stuck in the "impossible" stage of life. Cheer up, you never know but your impossibility may simply be "Stage 1" of a mighty miracle God will perform on your behalf.

There's no question of God's power to provide for us. The only question is: Do you believe that? Do you believe Jesus is more than enough? Christians today and through the ages can testify that we know He is. The key question is have you trusted Him? Have you experienced that? Do you believe Jesus is more than enough? Because He really is