

# You Feed Them

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 25 January 2026

Preacher: Joshua Winters

[ 0 : 00 ] Alright, well, last Sunday we heard about how Jesus gathered the twelve apostles and sent them out for the first time on a ministry trip.! We heard about how he gave them power and authority to heal people of all kinds of sicknesses and diseases and to cast out evil spirits.

And he sent them village to village to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. They were to travel very light, taking nothing with them but the clothes on their back.

And they were to receive the hospitality and lodging and meals of only one house in each town as they traveled. And so out they went and it caused quite a stir in the region.

The big question on everyone's minds was, who is this Jesus sending these men around? How are all these miracles being performed?

Let's jump right back into the story in verse 10 of Luke chapter 9. Luke chapter 9. When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done.

[ 1 : 18 ] Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida. But the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God and healed those who needed healing.

Here's a map of Israel around this time. You can see the various regions on the map. You've got Judea in the south, just west of the Dead Sea. Samaria, kind of in the middle, west of the Jordan River.

And then up in the north you have Galilee. This is the region where Jesus has been doing all this with the disciples. Here's a close up. There's the town of Bethsaida, just on the northeast shore of the Sea of Galilee.

So he's been ministering all in here and now he and his disciples are heading in that direction. The town itself was probably a mile from the shore.

The whole area, very sparsely populated. Not a very fertile land. Not great for growing crops because of the soil. Just kind of a grassy wild land.

[ 2 : 25 ] And Mark actually tells us that Jesus and the disciples traveled there by boat. So we might have wondered how Jesus could ever get away from the crowds.

Well, getting in the boat was one way to do it. And Mark tells us, actually, that many saw Jesus leaving in the boat and they ran on foot and got there ahead of Jesus.

Mark says, when Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them. So in the last chapter we read about how Jesus was being swarmed and smothered to the point where he was almost crushed by the crowds that were following him.

So this is Jesus and his disciples attempting to get away and to get a break, to get some rest. And yet they can't seem to shake the crowd. The boat ride was it.

He barely gets to shore. And there they all are waiting for him. And now to us, this probably would feel annoying. We're kind of used to the quieter pace of life here in Davidson.

[ 3 : 33 ] You go back to your house. You go in. You shut the door. And there's some quiet. Unless you're at my house, of course. Where there's lots of noise all the time.

But Luke says that Jesus welcomed them. He says that Jesus had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

And what did Jesus do with them? Well, the same thing that he's been doing and the same thing the apostles have now been doing. And he says that Jesus spoke to them about the kingdom of God and healed those who needed healing.

Verse 12. Late in the afternoon, the twelve came to him and said, Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging.

Because we're in a remote place here. And this reply, I mean, think about this from the perspective of the disciples for a second.

[ 4 : 44 ] It's late in the afternoon. It's getting towards supper time and sundown. They're thinking, you know, we need to start thinking about the basic needs of all these people for food and shelter.

This is a remote place. They're probably not right in the town of Bethsaida but still down on the shore if we look at the various accounts and compare them with each other. So Jesus, what are we going to do?

Let's maybe send them away so that they can get the provisions they need. Evening's coming fast. And this reply of Jesus is something else. Verse 13.

Jesus replied, you give them something to eat. This is one of those moments where I imagine myself laughing out loud if I had been there.

Skip down quickly to verse 14. About 5,000 men were there. 5,000 men. And Matthew tells us in his gospel that this didn't include, this number didn't include the women and the children.

[ 5 : 48 ] What brings out this size of this group even more is what Jesus tells them to do next. He says, have them sit down in groups of 50 each. So imagine a group of 50 people.

I'm not sure if we're quite 50 this morning. A little bit more than this here. Now imagine a hundred of those groups. This is a massive crowd of people.

And so we have to laugh. Don't we? When Jesus looks at Peter and James and John and the others and says, you give them something to eat. Has anyone here ever prepared a meal for 500 people?

Maybe a camp or... Not quite. Even if you did, it would need to be a group effort. You would need more than one person.

Think about what it would take. Or how about for 1,000? This is 5,000 plus women and children. How many men does it take to prepare a meal?

[ 7 : 00 ] Well, lots. Because we're not very good at it sometimes, right? How could 13 men who just got off a fishing boat feed supper to a group this size?

A hundred groups of 50 people. It's impossible. This is a remote place. There's no kitchen here on the hillside by the shore. And yet Jesus says, you give them something to eat.

John's gospel tells us that Jesus said this only to test them. Why did they need a test? Now this is speculation, but I can't help but wonder, is there a connection to what Jesus has just sent the disciples out to do in this moment here?

Maybe the disciples were on a bit of a high. We now have power to heal people. And we've been, you know, can you imagine them sharing all the stories of the things that they did as they take this boat ride?

And now we come to this moment and Jesus says, you give them something to eat. Well, one thought is that maybe he's giving them the opportunity to do the miracle.

[ 8 : 17 ] Something even bigger and wilder than they've ever done using the power and authority that he's given them. On another occasion, Jesus will tell them that even a tiny bit of faith is enough to move mountains.

On the other hand, John, in his gospel, lets us know that Jesus already had in mind what he was going to do here. And so maybe this isn't an invitation for them to try performing the miracle. But a reminder of who really gives them the authority and the power to do what they've been doing. Maybe something like, you know, you've just been out doing all kinds of miracles of healing and exorcisms.

Things you thought impossible. But now, here's another impossible thing. Feeding this massive crowd supper out here in the middle of nowhere. Can you do this?

Here's where I'm going to remind you from whom the power you have really comes. I'm going to do this. Well, we don't know exactly whether that was what Jesus was thinking or not.

[ 9 : 29 ] Or what it would mean for the disciples to pass the test. All we know is that they seem to have failed the test. Rather than believing and trusting and looking to Jesus for a miracle, what do they start doing?

They start counting and doing math. Well, we have only five loaves of bread and two fish.

Unless we go and buy food for all this crowd. They start doing math. They start counting. They start tallying up what they have, which is meager.

They rule that out. Can't feed them out of our own supplies. And then they very quickly rule out the insane idea of going to some nearby town and trying to buy enough food to feed the crowd because of the cost.

And I love the extra details that Mark includes. They say, that would take more than half a year's wages. Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?

[10:42] Or Philip's response, which John includes, It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite.

Again, we can't help but laugh at the thought. Can you imagine someone spending half their annual salary on bread for one meal for a massive group of people?

And still being only enough for each person to have just one bite. 5,000 people is a lot of people.

Now, I know they ate different kind of bread back then than we eat today.

But just to get a sense of this in my head, I imagine a loaf of Wonder Bread. There's about 15 slices or so in a good loaf of Wonder Bread. Not that that's my favorite kind of bread, but we all know what it is, right?

Chop up, eat... What's that? I wonder if it's bread. Yeah, I wonder if it's bread. That's true. Yeah, especially if it's the white loaf. All right, well, chop each of those slices, of those 15 slices, up into four pieces.

[11:52] So that would be about, you know, one bite for each person, each piece. Four bites out of one slice.

Well, you factor in the women and the children, and we're still talking about over 250 loaves of bread. Just to get everyone one bite.

Even if we could afford it. How are we going to carry all that here? Do we rent a cart? And again, it's just one bite each. And yet Jesus says, you give them something to eat.

Well, after having them all sit down in about 100 groups of 50 each, Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, Jesus gave thanks and broke them.

Then he gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. They all ate and were satisfied. And the disciples picked up 12 basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

[13:06] Amazing. Every time I read this, I can't help but think, how did Jesus do this? How could five loaves and two fish become so much?

I know it's a miracle. But even knowing that, I can't even imagine what this miracle looked like. Like, did Jesus just begin breaking pieces off of the bread and the fish, and as his hand goes to put it in the basket, it regrows and more is there, and then it just keeps going?

Or did he have the basket in his hand, and did it just start overflowing from the bottom of the basket with bread and fish?

I can't even imagine what this miracle looked like. Did the disciples see the food multiplying and materializing out of thin air before their very eyes?

And then to feed a crowd this size, it would have been multiple trips back and forth from Jesus to the people, to each of these groups of 50.

[14:12] Can you imagine them going back and forth with the basket only to find another basket full of bread and fish, waiting for them to take? Like, where is this all coming from?

There can be no natural explanation to this. I know people have tried, and I didn't even put this in my sermon, but, you know, oh, they caught all these fish in the nets and dragged it with them behind the boat, and now it's just, or they were all sitting on their lunches, impossible.

Bread is, it's not like some, you know, chemical reaction, where if you combine small amounts of certain chemicals, bam, you've got lots of a crystal or a solid.

No, these are loaves of bread. Making it takes time. It's a process. There's work that goes into it with certain ingredients, and then it would have to be baked.

And then there's the fish. This is meat. This is the flesh of a living creature, now dead, but not dead so long that it's rotting.

[15:20] You can't just whip that out of thin air. And then there's this detail. They all ate and were satisfied.

Another of the gospels speaks of them having their fill. Each of them had their fill. In other words, they didn't just each get one little bite of fish and one crumb of bread.

Each of them ate as much as they wanted. It was like one of those all-you-can-eat places where they just keep coming around with the platter. Would you like some more? Until you finally put up

the hand and say, Nope, I'm good.

I've had lots. And it just keeps coming. It keeps coming. It keeps coming. Until they all ate and were satisfied. Jesus just keeps passing it out from seemingly nowhere.

I got thinking about this. How many slices of bread would you eat if the only two things in the meal were bread and fish? At least two.

[16:29] Okay. That's kind of what I settled on to. How about fish? How many pieces of fish would you eat in a meal if the only other thing in the meal was bread? Depends on your appetite.

I'd say one to two. Yeah. At least one minimum. If not two. Depends on the size of the fish and the fillet. If I'm cooking a good-sized walleye for supper just for my family of seven, two adults, five kids, we usually eat at least three or four good-sized walleye along with the other stuff in the meal.

So how many fish and loaves would Jesus have to make in order to feed all of these 5,000 people plus women and children until they all ate and were satisfied? Let's just say that it was two slices of bread each.

Of that 15-slice wonder bread loaf and one fillet of fish, one half of the fish. We're still talking about 1,300 loaves of bread and 5,000 fish.

There is no other explanation for this but the power of Almighty God working through this man, Jesus. And then I love the final situation at the end of this meal.

[17:49] The disciples picked up 12 basketfuls of the leftover pieces of bread and fish. I'll be honest. If I had been there and had I seen that there was only five little loaves of bread and two fish, probably the first thing going on in my mind when Jesus says, you feed them is, I'm not going to get anything to eat for supper tonight.

We're going to start divvying this up for the crowd. It'll be gone and we're going hungry tonight. Even if we slice them real thin.

But at the end of the meal, after everyone had eaten and was satisfied, there were 12 basketfuls of bread and fish pieces left over. Enough for each of the disciples themselves to have a whole basket of bread and fish.

Even the leftovers of the meal were far more than they started with. But what are we to make of all this?

I think there's at least three different ways we can be encouraged from this and probably more. First of all, there's a great and deep symbolism and meaning to this particular miracle.

[19:15] And Jesus explains what this miracle points to in John chapter 6, verse 25 to 59. It is a sign that points back to what God did to sustain Israel in the wilderness with manna from heaven.

And Jesus, in John chapter 6, we read, he explains that this miracle points to a wonderful, great truth that Jesus himself is the bread of life that has come down from heaven to give life to his people.

If you've never heard that before but would like to go deeper into that, I did preach a whole series of messages on that passage from John 6 back in October and November of 2020.

And you can find those on the church website. This is a miracle about how God is our sustainer and our life. And it's not about bread, but about Jesus, the one through whom God gives life and sustains.

Second, there's a powerful principle bound up in this miracle. The whole thing, the way that Jesus tests the disciples to how Jesus feeds them to the leftovers, the whole thing is a massive demonstration of how God is powerful and capable and compassionate to provide all that we need and even more.

[20:46] Maybe you find yourself this morning wondering where the money is going to come from for something. A certain thing you need.

Maybe there's been some frustration or some anxiety this past week as you felt limited and constrained by your finances. Maybe there's things that you would have liked to have done or bought or maybe even something you wish you could have just given to somebody.

But for one reason or another, the money just isn't there. And some of you maybe have never known this, but it's tough when the bills are coming due, add on a few major expenses or repairs to the vehicle.

Maybe the emergency fund just had to be used up. And last Friday's paycheck is already gone. And you're just a few good hits away from getting told at the checkout that your card is declined.

Insufficient funds. Boy, that can weigh heavy on the heart throughout the week. That anxiety and fear of not having enough or of running out.

[ 22 : 03 ] Meanwhile, others are counting on you. Well, this miracle, this sign, is a beacon of hope and light in that kind of darkness.

If Jesus can feed 5,000 people in the middle of nowhere out of almost nothing, can he not provide what we need for today and for tomorrow?

On another occasion, Jesus said this, he said, are not two sparrows sold for a penny and yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your father's care?

God is more than able to provide what we need for every day and through every season and through every trial of life.

all we need to do is look to him. Look to Jesus. Even if it seems impossible, all we need to do is put our trust in him, our faith in him and ask.

[ 23 : 19 ] And he will provide. Now, of course, we have to be careful with this too. It's not an excuse to be unwise or undisciplined with our finances or to spend out of control on things we don't need.

Greed and the love of money and the desire for all the stuff of this world, whether possessions or expensive experiences, that can still be our undoing.

God doesn't promise to give us all we want in this world and in this life, but he provides what we need so that we can eat and be satisfied. I think back to those words that Jesus taught his disciples to pray.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread. Give us today our daily bread. Paul said this to Timothy.

[ 24 : 31 ] Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.

Jesus said, do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and vermin destroy and where thieves break in and steal.

But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moth and vermin do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

And so we're back to this question. If Jesus can feed 5,000 people in the middle of nowhere out of almost nothing, can he not provide what we need for today and for tomorrow?

He is more than capable to give us what we lack to meet our needs in each season of life no matter what trials we face.

[ 25 : 47 ] And so I just want to encourage us this morning, let's look to Jesus and let's trust him for that provision. Finally, there's one more way that this miracle I think is meant to impact us.

I don't think it's a coincidence that on either side of this account Luke emphasizes the big question of who Jesus is. It was the question that they were pondering in the region.

Herod was wondering about it. Is it John the Baptist come back to life from the dead? Who is this? And then after this miracle, look at what comes after in verse 18 to 20.

Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, who do the crowds say I am? They replied, some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and still others that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life.

But what about you? Jesus asked. Who do you say I am? Peter answered, God's Messiah.

[ 26 : 54 ] Christ of God. The Christ of God. The Christ of God. The great King promised and chosen and anointed and sent by God to rule over his people in his kingdom.

Jesus' miraculous meal for the 5,000 is a sign of who Jesus is that he isn't just any ordinary man he is the king whom God has chosen for humanity's greatest and final kingdom the kingdom of God what about you?

who do you say that Jesus is? have you made that good confession that he is God's king for you? I imagine that Peter and the other disciples were astonished at the things they were now able to do healing, casting out demons but they knew that their new powers were given to them by Jesus miracles like this feeding of the 5,000 reminded them that Jesus was still far greater than they let's pray Lord Jesus as we look at this and see this even from a distance over time we make that confession that Peter made you are God's Messiah you are the king chosen by him for us and so we bow before you we pledge allegiance to you we ask that you would rule and reign in our lives and we anticipate and we look forward to with great hope and joy your return when you set up your

throne and bring in that great kingdom that's promised all through the pages of your Bible thank you that we can look to you for all of our needs and we pray that we wouldn't be filled with doubt and anxiety this week help us to trust and to walk by faith for your name amen as you as you