

A bigger view of salvation

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Preacher: Simon Dowdy

[0 : 00] They set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt.

And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. And the people of Israel said to them, Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full.

For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger. Then the Lord said to Moses, Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not.

On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily. So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, At evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your grumbling against the Lord.

For what are we that you grumble against us? And Moses said, When the Lord gives you in the evening meat to eat, and in the morning bread to the full, because the Lord has heard your grumbling that you grumble against him, what are we?

[1 : 30] Your grumbling is not against us, but against the Lord. Then Moses said to Aaron, Say to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, Come near before the Lord, for he has heard your grumbling.

And as soon as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, they looked towards the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud.

And the Lord said to Moses, I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread.

Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God. In the evening quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning dew lay around the camp. And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground.

When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, What is it? For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat.

[2 : 38] This is what the Lord has commanded. Gather of it, each one of you, as much as he can eat. You shall each take an omer, according to the number of the persons that each of you has in his tent.

And the people of Israel did so. They gathered, some more, some less. But when they measured it with an omer, Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, And whoever gathered little had no lack.

Each of them gathered as much as he could eat. And he called the twelve together, And gave them power and authority, Over all demons, And to cure diseases.

And he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God, And to heal. And he said to them, Take nothing for your journey, No staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money. And do not have two tunics.

And whatever house you enter, Stay there, And from there depart. And wherever they do not receive you, When you leave that town, Shake off the dust from your feet, As a testimony against them.

[3 : 42] And they departed, And went through the villages, Preaching the gospel, And healing everywhere. Now Herod the Tetrarch, Heard heard about all that was happening, And he was perplexed, Because it was said by some, That John had been raised from the dead, By some that

Elijah had appeared, And by others that one of the prophets of old had risen.

Herod said, John I beheaded, But who is this about whom I hear such things? And he sought to see him. On their return, The apostles told him all that they had done, And he took them and withdrew, Apart to a town called Bethsaida.

When the crowds learned it, They followed him, And he welcomed them, And spoke to them of the kingdom of God, And cured those who needed healing. Now the day began to wear away, And the twelve came to him, 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.

But he said to them, You give them something to eat. They said, We have no more than five loaves and two fish, Unless we are to go and buy food for all these people. For there were about five thousand men.

And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down in groups of about fifty each. And they did so, And made them all sit down. And taking the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven and said a blessing over them.

[5 : 06] Then he broke the loaves, And gave them to the disciples, To set before the crowd. And they all ate and were satisfied. And what was left over was picked up, Twelve baskets of broken pieces.

Well, our subject today is the mission of the church. For those who aren't new, We've been working through Luke's gospel Over the last few weeks, Months or so.

And we're picking it up again here in Luke chapter nine. And our subject for today is the mission of the church. What is the mission, The primary mission of the local church, Any local church, Grace Church, Dulwich included.

After all, We're all busy people. We all have limited time, Energy, Limited resources, Limited money. How can we best employ all those resources In the service of the Lord Jesus?

Of course, It may well be that we feel that Different local churches should be free To choose their own mission, And their own priorities, And their own thing. I wonder if you saw the spat That was caused by the National Trust In Cornwall In the run-up to Mother's Day.

[6 : 18] One of their properties, Land Hydro, Posted a picture on Facebook Encouraging people to bring their mothers along And to enjoy a cream tea. And the picture featured a scone With clotted cream on, And then jam on top.

Now, As any self-respecting Cornishman knows, That is simply wrong. And that is how they do things in Devon. In Cornwall, It's jam first, And then cream on top.

Well, The National Trust had to post an apology On their website, And they explained, In great detail, That they deliberately serve Their clotted cream, Their jam and cream, In separate little pots, So that everyone can do their own thing, Whether you're jam first, Or cream first.

Now, I guess that kind of fits with our culture, Doesn't it? We don't like telling people what to do, We're reluctant to say things are wrong, For fear of causing offence, We're very much a, You do your thing, And I'll do my thing, Kind of culture.

And so I guess it's not surprising, Is it, That when we come to think about this whole question, Of what is the mission of the local church, What should local churches, Any local church be doing, Well, It's not surprising, There are countless options to choose from, And so as we, Finish this first half of Luke's gospel, Which is where we'll get to, At the end of the first half of Luke's gospel, By the end of chapter nine, My prayer is that we'll be thrilled, To see, So clearly, The identity of Jesus, The mission of Jesus, And the implications of that, For those who follow him, And for local churches, So you'll see there's an outline, On the back of the service sheet, So you might like to have that, In front of you next to the open Bible, As we look at Luke nine together, First of all, The mission of Jesus, Because I wonder how you'd sum up, The mission of Jesus in one word, Or perhaps a phrase, A soundbite,

[8 : 28] That is really memorable, A slogan, The kind of thing you might see, On an advertising board, Something that would, Capture the imagination, Like the Conservatives, Famous, Labour isn't working, Slogan of 1979, Or, New Labour, New Britain, From 1997, Or more recently, Make America Great Again, And, I guess depending on your politics, Those slogans, They don't just capture an idea, Do they?

They get your pulse racing, It's something you get passionate about, Well, In first century Palestine, Jesus could have used just one word, To summarise his mission, Exodus, I think that's the point

here, Of the feeding of the 5,000, It's the only miracle, Apart from the resurrection of Jesus, To be recorded, In all four gospels, Its significance lies, Not so much in the miracle itself, Although of course, It is an amazing miracle, Isn't it?

Being able to feed 5,000 men, Add in the women and children, Say 20, 25,000 people, And I guess we'd do well, Wouldn't we, To ask the question, Well, Who can do something like that, But God alone?

Who but the creator, Can create stuff, Matter, Food, Out of nothing, But the real significance, Of the miracle lies, In the big picture, Of the whole bible story, Which is why we had that, First reading read, From Exodus, Chapter 16, Because at the beginning, Of the book of Exodus, God's people were enslaved, In Egypt, Under Pharaoh, And yet God had blessed them, They'd grown in number, They'd become a great nation, And through Moses, God promised, I'll bring you out from Egypt, I will rescue you, I'll bring you, Into a land, Of blessing, Where you'll be my people, Where I'll be your God, And one of the great highlights, Of that journey, As God took them, To the promised land, Was the feeding, Of that great multitude, In the wilderness, In the desert, Now I guess the equivalent, Of the Exodus, In the sort of history,

And imagination, Of God's people, Would be something like, Bastille Day, In France, Today, So celebrate on the 14th of July, It's the French National Day, It's France's most important, Public holiday, It marks the day, In 1789, When the Bastille prison, In Paris, Was stormed, By protesters, And when the king, When King Louis XVI, Asked a duke, If it was a revolt, The duke replied by saying, No sir, It is a revolution, It marked the birth of a nation, With its revolutionary principles, Of equality, Fraternity, And liberty, Well in the same way, The Exodus from Egypt, Marked the birth of a nation, And yet once they were, In the promised lands, So tragically, They rejected God's rule over them, They worshipped the gods, Of the surrounding nations, And the result, Exile,

[11 : 47] Away from the lands, It's where we've been, Isn't it? In the book of Daniel, In our recent talks, Before Easter, And yet through the prophet Isaiah, And others, God promised that one day, There would be, A far greater rescue, Than that rescue, From Egypt, Rescue, Not from slavery, To Pharaoh, But from sin, And from the consequences, Of sin, Taking his people, Not to the promised lands, But to the new creation, That's what we'll be seeing, More of, In our big picture course, In growth groups, This term, And it's all summed up, In this one word, Exodus, And so it's no wonder, Is it, That as Luke gets to the end, Of the first half, Of his gospel, It's no wonder, That he records Jesus, Feeding a multitude of people, In a desolate place, Because it's so, It's so evocative, It captures the mission of Jesus, In a nutshell,

In fact, At the transfiguration, Luke makes the connection, With the exodus, Explicit, Have a look, At chapter 9, Verses 30, And 31, We'll be here, In two weeks time, But verse 30, And behold, Two men were talking, With Jesus, Moses and Elijah, Who appeared in glory, And spoke of his departure, And if you look, At the little footnote there, You'll see that in the Greek, The literal word, For departure, Is exodus, His departure, His exodus, Which he was about to accomplish, At Jerusalem, You see, What is Luke wanting us to be certain about?

He's wanting us to be certain about, Jesus' core mission, Why he came, And his complete commitment, To this mission, It's already been announced, By Zachariah, At the beginning of Luke's gospel, Chapter 1, Verse 77, The birth of one, Who would give, Give knowledge of salvation, To his people, In the forgiveness, Of their sins, It's been declared, It's been declared by the angels, Chapter 2, Verse 11, For unto you, Is born this day, In the city of David, A saviour, Held it by Simeon, Chapter 2, Verse 30, My eyes have seen your salvation, Preached by John the Baptist, Chapter 3, Verse 6, All flesh shall see, The salvation of God, And Jesus says, This is the very heart, In a nutshell, Of why I have come, It shows of course, That you and I can be absolutely confident, And certain, About the big storyline,

Of the whole Bible, And the whole direction, That our world is going in, The direction that world history, Is going in, The whole Bible, Is about God's rescue from sin, And the consequences of sin, It's the problem in the Garden of Eden, At the beginning, It's why Jesus came, As a rescuer, It's how the Bible finishes, With a new forgiven people, With God, Enjoying his blessings, In the new creation, And yes, It's been 2,000 years, Since Jesus stood on this earth, But you see, God's promises, Are not like, Watching England, In the world cup, Where we know, That at some stage, The whole thing is going to unravel, And I'm sorry, If you haven't yet worked that out, Then I'm sorry to disappoint you, But it will, No says Jesus, This is the project, Which I am committed to, This is what is going to happen, And it's why next week, We'll see Jesus saying, He must suffer,

And be killed, So firstly, The mission of Jesus, Secondly, The mission of Jesus, Is foundational, To the mission, Of the apostles, Have a look, At chapter 9, Verses 1 and 2, And Jesus called the 12 together, And gave them power, And authority over all demons, And to cure diseases, And he sent them out, To proclaim the kingdom of God, And to heal, Now this is the big moment in a sense, This is the first time, That Jesus sends the apostles out, On their own, I still remember the first time, I drove a car on my own, I think I just passed my driving test, My mother asked me to go, And do an errand for her, And she said, Take the car, And I couldn't quite believe it, And immediately I was kind of gripped, With this extraordinary sense of excitement, And terror, You know, Was it going to come back in one piece?

[16 : 30] It did, At least on that occasion, And immediately, Of course, You know, I was absolutely gripped, And just as I guess, The 12 disciples here, Were, You know, A great sort of mixture, Perhaps of terror, But excitement, And yet it seems to me, The key thing to grasp, Is that their mission, Is the same as Jesus' mission, Notice will you verse 2 again, What's he do?

He sends them out, To proclaim the kingdom of God, And to heal, In verse 6, When they go, What do they do? They preach the gospel, And heal, It is just what Jesus does, Verse 11, He speaks to people, Of the kingdom of God, And cured those, Who needed healing, Do you see? Same thing, And of course, What Jesus is doing here, In verse 11, It echoes the last two chapters, It echoes what we've seen, In Luke chapters 7 and 8, Where Jesus healed, The centurion's servant, He brought the widow's dead son, Back to life, He healed a woman, With an incurable illness, He calmed a storm, He drove out demons, He raised Jairus' daughter to life, Partly, Yet of course, To say he can do those things, He must be God alone, But more than that, To give us a visual aid, A demonstration, This is what the new creation, Will be like, A whole new world, Where sin, And the effects of sin, Have been completely overcome, Evil overcome, No more illness, No more death, No more disease, And therefore, You see, Jesus is calling the apostles, Those original 12 disciples, To be engaged, In the same work, That he is doing, And I think you get the same thing, In the feeding of the 5,000, But just so we can, Check that, Why don't you just turn to your neighbor, For a minute or so, And just ask each other the question, Who actually feeds the crowds, Okay, So Luke 9, Verses 10 to 17, Have a look at those verses, Together, In little groups of 2 and 3, And just ask the question, Who is it who actually feeds the crowds, Now I wonder if you noticed, What the apostles do, And what it is that Jesus does, So verse 13, Jesus tells the apostles, To feed the crowds, Now they obviously can't do that, Verse 14, It's the apostles, Who then make the people, Sit down in groups, In verse 16, It's the apostles, Who distribute the food, To the people, And yet of course, In verse 16, It's Jesus who actually, Does the miracle, They give the food, To the people, And yet they are, Completely dependent upon him, To provide the food, For them, So that they can do, The work he's given them to do, I guess rather like a,

A parent perhaps, Preparing their son or daughter, For the day when they're going to leave home, Perhaps for work or study, They need to learn how to cook, They need to learn how to do the laundry, How to budget, To look after money sensibly, And the wise parents, Is not going to do everything, For them, They're going to show them what to do, But then, So that they can then do it, Themselves, Anticipating the day, When their parents, Will no longer be around, All the time, To ask, In other words, What Luke is doing here, He is giving us a visual aid, Of what's going to happen, When Jesus is no longer, Physically present, With his disciples, After, His resurrection, Just keep a finger, In Luke 9, And turn to the end, Of Luke's gospel, Page 1067, To Luke 24, And notice will you, How Jesus commissions, These same apostles, After his resurrection,

[20 : 20] Luke 24, Verses 46 to 49, He said to them, Thus it is written, That the Christ should suffer, And on the third day, Rise from the dead, And that repentance, And forgiveness of sins, Should be proclaimed, In his name, To all nations, Beginning from Jerusalem, You are witnesses, Of these things, And behold, I am sending, The promise of my father, Upon you, But stay in the city, Until you are clothed, With power, From on high, They're going to be, Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Just as back in, Luke chapter 9, Verse 1, Jesus gave the apostles, Power and authority, In other words, The apostles, Are not going to be, After Jesus' resurrection, Ascension, They're not going to be, Free agents, Just doing their own thing, Rather, They're going to be, Under orders, Just as a soldier, Is under the orders, Of their commanding officer, They don't have liberty, To kind of reinterpret, The mission, And just do their own thing,

So back in Luke 9, What is it that Luke wants us to be, Certain about? Why is it that the mission, Of the apostles, Is built on the foundations, Of the mission of Jesus, Indeed confidence, In the work of

the apostles, Is one of the hallmarks, Of those who genuinely, Belong to Jesus Christ, That's why we can have confidence in them, Because their mission and ministry, Is a continuation of Jesus, Mission and ministry, They don't have their own agenda, And just do their own thing, As we see the apostles, Preaching in Acts, They do so, With the full authority, And power, Of the Holy Spirit, As they oversee the writing, Of the New Testament, They do so, With the full authority, And power, Of the Holy Spirit, The apostles don't sit down, At the beginning of Acts, And hold a committee meeting, To work out, What their mission plan should be, Because they are under orders, Which means of course,

That you and I, Can never pit, The teaching of Jesus, Against the teaching, Of the apostles, That's the caricature, Isn't it, That we sometimes hear, You know, Jesus spoke of peace and love, But the apostles, Including the apostle Paul, Why they speak of fire and brimstone, You know, As if the teaching, Of mission of Jesus, Was distorted, And changed, By the apostles, That could not be further, From the truth, We read the gospels, And we hear Jesus speaking, About the reality of judgment, The reality of hell, More than anyone else, In the bible, Look at his parables, So often they speak, About those final day events, And we read the letters, Of the apostle Paul, And we see his deep compassion, And even his tears, What the apostles say, And write, Are the words of Jesus, You cannot get a cigarette paper, Between the ministry of Jesus, And the ministry and mission,

Of the apostles, To dismiss the teaching of the apostles, As sadly some do, Is to dismiss the teaching of Jesus, So, Firstly, The mission of Jesus, Secondly, The mission of Jesus, Is foundational to the mission, Of the apostles, Thirdly, The mission of the apostles, Is foundational to the mission, Of the local church, Back to Luke chapter 9, It's clear isn't it, That I take it, That the details of, For example, Chapter 9 verse 3, Not to take a bag or money, I take it, They were peculiar, To this particular situation, So I put Luke 22, 36 there, On the outline, Where on another occasion, Jesus says, Exactly the opposite, That you should take money, And so on, So this is not, We haven't got here in Luke 9, A sort of blueprints, For how to do missions today, You know when we sent, Helen Sheridan off to Ireland, We didn't send her, Without any suitcases or money, Nor of course, Are we apostles, They were unique,

The proclamation, The proclamation, The proclamation, The message of God's kingdom today, Doesn't include, The healing of everyone, Who comes to hear, Now, Of course, That doesn't mean, That God can't heal today, He can, But those visual aids, Of God's kingdom, Are no longer part, Of authentic gospel proclamation, As they were, Through the gospels, And yet, The Lord Jesus, Commanded, That until he returns, Luke chapter 24, Verse 47, Still stands, Repentance and forgiveness of sins, Should be proclaimed, In his name, To all nations, It's how Luke finishes, His second volume, With the apostle Paul, In Acts 28, In Rome, In the very, The very heart, The very center, Of, The Roman empire, What are we told he's doing?

[25 : 19] Proclaiming the kingdom of God, And teaching about, The Lord Jesus Christ, Now I take it, That gives us great clarity, About the mission, Of the church today, Every local church, Because like the apostles, We are not free agents, We are under orders, From the Lord Jesus, Our commanding officer, The responsibility, Of the local church, Is not to sit around, And stretch our hands, And ask, What should our mission be?

It is to continue, The mission of the apostles, The proclamation, Of the message, Of repentance, And forgiveness of sins, In the Lord Jesus, Through his death, On the cross, Just as, We might perhaps, Have interviewed, Some of the British athletes, At the beginning of the, Commonwealth games, And ask them, You know, What are you hoping to achieve, As you compete, As you're here, In Australia, You're rather odd, Wouldn't it, If they'd come up, With different answers, You know, If one of them, Would say, Well, You know, I'm just here, To see the sights, Or someone else, Well, You know, We're fed up, With the British weather, It's all a bit gloomy, We've come for the sunshine, If someone else, If someone else, If someone else, If someone else, If someone else, If someone else, Well, I'm here to win, No, You'd expect all of them, To say, We are here, To win, We're going, For gold, All there, For the same, Reason, And every local church, Should have the same, Core, Mission, Now, Of course, Lots of stuff, Is going to differ, So, Different buildings, Some in a building, Like this, Some in buildings, That look more like churches, Church buildings, Different in social makeup, Differ in the kind of songs, That are sung, Which reflect that social makeup, But the same, Core, Mission, It's why our mission statement, To the grace church, Is to make disciples, Of Jesus Christ, And yet, I suspect, That the

temptation, Is for us, To feel that is rather narrow, And rather inadequate, Do you feel, Do you feel that?

Do you feel the, The pull of that temptation? Sometimes you'll hear the suggestion, That the gospel, With its focus on repentance, And the forgiveness of sins, And the promise of the new creation, Is too small a gospel, Too narrow a gospel, That churches should be, Ambitious about transforming, Their communities, About social justice, About transforming our city, And of course, As we hear about, Rising knife crime in London, Then who wouldn't want those things?

But actually, That would be to have, Too small a vision, Too narrow a vision, Because the reality is, The mission of Jesus, Is far, Far bigger, Far greater, Than making this world, A better place, It's about the forgiveness of sins, A completely new, Human nature, A new humanity, Being at peace with God, Yes, In this life, But ultimately, In the new creation, Nothing can be more important, Nothing can be more wonderful, Nothing can be more glorious, And yes, Living out that new life, In the here and now, May well have an impact, On our communities, And places of work, And so on, But in the new creation, We will see the one, New community, That is truly, Worth living for.