

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 9:7-17

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. We continue to read Luke chapter 9. Today, we will read verses 7-17.

Previously we read that Jesus sent His disciples out two by two. As a result, they went through the towns and villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere, and very quickly they spread the fame of Jesus. The effectiveness of their work even shook the kingdom of Satan.

Verses 7–8: “Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by Him; and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the old prophets had risen again.”

When the kingdom of God begins to expand, the first to feel fear is Satan and those who belong to him. Herod was the ruler over the region of Galilee. When the fame of Jesus spread, people began to say, “John has risen from the dead,” others said, “Elijah has appeared,” and still others said, “One of the old prophets has risen again.” When these rumors reached Herod's ears, he must have been greatly afraid.

Verse 9: “Herod said, ‘John I have beheaded, but who is this of whom I hear such things?’ So he sought to see Him.”

Of course, his desire to see Jesus was not with good intentions. The time for Jesus' earthly ministry to end had not yet come, so Jesus chose to withdraw quietly. Often, when the church's work prospers—because the church testifies of and proclaims the kingdom of God to this crooked and perverse generation—the ruler of this

world becomes alarmed. How should we respond? Jesus' choice at that time was to withdraw.

Verse 10: "And the apostles, when they had returned, told Him all that they had done. Then He took them and went aside privately into a deserted place belonging to the city called Bethsaida."

At that time, the center of Jesus' ministry was Capernaum, on the west side of the Sea of Galilee. Bethsaida was on the north side of the Sea of Galilee. After the disciples were sent out and returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Those who are sent should properly report back to the One who sent them.

What is remarkable is this: their work must have been very successful—they did many things—yet the Bible does not record a single detail. It does not mention what diseases were healed, what demons were cast out, or how many were saved. These statistics did not seem to concern Jesus at all. What concerned Him was His disciples.

He sent them out to work, to have practical training, to expand God's kingdom in the field. But when they returned, what Jesus considered more was the need of each one of them. Therefore, He quietly took them to a deserted place, where there could be more speaking, more equipping, and more perfecting.

Their reporting back to Jesus was truly beautiful. They had been sent by Him, so they reported only to Him. In the process of reporting, Scripture records no achievements and no statistics. This seems different from how churches today send missionaries, who then return to report their work. Such reports often include many exciting stories and impressive statistics: how many were baptized, how many were saved, how many offered themselves for God's kingdom. These things are good and can stir the hearts of the saints. Yet Jesus did none of this.

We must remember that we are fallen people. Once missionary work becomes centered on statistics and visible results, it is almost inevitable that church resources will be allocated according to effectiveness. This is fallen reasoning from

fallen minds. In God's view, perhaps the work that appears least effective may actually need the most resources. Overemphasizing results easily leads to competition and utilitarian thinking in distributing resources.

God's kingdom is not utilitarian; it is a matter of life. What shakes Satan's kingdom is the authority and power given by God. What the church needs to discern is whether a work is God's calling, whether it is God's will, and whether the worker has been sent by God according to His vision. If so, the church should fully cooperate.

William Carey, often called the father of modern missions, was sent to India. For many years not a single person was saved. Yet when the time came, God used him to establish a beautiful work in India. Thus, what the church truly needs to care for is the needs of every missionary it sends—their spiritual needs, their psychological needs, and their physical needs. Just as when Jesus sent out His disciples, what He truly cared about was them. After they reported, He led them quietly away to Bethsaida.

Verse 11: “But when the multitudes knew it, they followed Him; and He received them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who had need of healing.”

Although Jesus desired to bring the disciples into a deserted place for personal training, perfecting, and equipping—because He knew that after His earthly ministry ended, they would continue His work—when the multitudes came and their needs were presented before Him, He spoke to them about the kingdom of God and healed those who needed healing. Soon the day passed.

Verse 12: “When the day began to wear away, the twelve came and said to Him, ‘Send the multitude away, that they may go into the surrounding towns and country, and lodge and get provisions; for we are in a deserted place here.’”

Jesus had brought the disciples to a deserted place hoping for some private time. But because the multitudes followed Him, He quickly began to fulfill His ministry. Time passed until evening. The disciples told Jesus that the people should be sent away, for there was not enough food or lodging for such a large crowd.

Verse 13: “But He said to them, ‘You give them something to eat.’ And they said, ‘We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we go and buy food for all these people.’”

Jesus’ response was striking. When they asked Him to send the crowd away, He said, “You give them something to eat.”

The miracle of the five loaves and two fish is recorded in all four Gospels. Each Gospel includes different details according to its particular emphasis. Luke’s account is very concise. After this event, he quickly moves to what happened months later at Caesarea Philippi, where Peter recognized that Jesus is the Christ. Luke deliberately places these two events side by side, and both accounts are concise. It seems he wants us to see a particular meaning.

For now, let us not focus on where the five loaves and two fish came from, or how much it would cost to feed so many. The disciples’ response was that they had only five loaves and two fish and could not meet such a vast need.

Verse 14: “For there were about five thousand men. Then He said to His disciples, ‘Make them sit down in groups of fifty.’”

To meet such a great need, the first requirement is order. Without order, it would be impossible to properly satisfy each person according to their need.

Verse 15: “And they did so, and made them all sit down.”

Five thousand men, arranged in groups of fifty, would form one hundred groups. The other Gospels tell us that the five thousand referred only to men; including women and children, the number likely exceeded ten thousand.

Verses 16–17: “Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the multitude. So they all ate and were filled, and twelve baskets of the leftover fragments were taken up by them.”

This process is very meaningful. The disciples placed the five loaves and two fish into Jesus’ hands. In their hands it was only five loaves and two fish. In Jesus’ hands, He first added blessing, then broke them, then returned them to the disciples, and through the disciples’ hands they were distributed to the multitude. All ate and were filled. Afterward, the fragments were gathered, filling twelve baskets. If we connect this with what follows in verse 18 and beyond—where Jesus is recognized as the Christ, the coming Messiah—we may infer that Luke intends to show us that the five loaves and two fish represent Christ Himself.

Bread comes from plant life, from wheat. Jesus is the grain of wheat that fell into the ground and died, bearing much fruit. That grain is ground into flour and made into bread to supply the needs of many. There were five loaves. Five signifies responsibility—creation (four) plus God (one). When God and man cooperate, spiritual food can be supplied to every needy person.

Fish come from animal life, which typifies redemption. Jesus Himself is the redeeming Lamb who died for all and redeemed them from sin. Two signifies testimony—God and man together testifying to the value of Jesus’ redemption.

The five loaves and two fish were first given to Jesus from the disciples’ hands. In the same way, in our lives, what we experience of Jesus Christ as our redemption and as our supply may seem small—only five loaves and two fish. But if we place

them in Christ's hands, after His blessing and breaking, and then pass them on through our hands to others, they can supply the needs of five thousand. Not only that—after sharing, twelve baskets were filled. Twelve is a number of completeness. God's riches increase through sharing. Originally there were only five loaves and two fish; after sharing, there were twelve baskets full.

In our lives, there may be times of famine, times when we feel the spiritual supply is insufficient. At such times, the question is whether we have twelve baskets stored up. During times of abundance in church life, have we stored up sufficiently?

Luke does not dwell on the details. Instead, he quickly leads us to the great revelation that Jesus is the Christ. Therefore, we interpret this miracle from the perspective that Christ Himself is the five loaves and two fish offered up. Thank the Lord. May He bless His word, that each of us today may find His riches in the Scriptures. May God also give us such a heart—that we would not keep for ourselves what we have seen and known, but willingly place it into Christ's hands, allow it to be broken, and pass it on, so that it may meet the needs of many.

Let us pray together: Lord, You are rich. In Your riches, You supply our needs. We ask that You would also enable us to place what we have into Your hands, so that it may satisfy the needs of others. Bless my life today to be a life of sharing, a life that is broken, a life that supplies others. Thank You for blessing me. We pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.