

## **Message of the Evangelists: The Ministry of Jesus Luke 9:10-17**

Intro: The Man. Luke begins his gospel account this way: “Since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught” (Luke 1:3-4).

Luke is a Gentile believer and a physician. He anchors his account of the Lord Jesus in the words of eyewitnesses.

The poor, the sick, the women, and the Gentiles are prominent in Luke’s Gospel as is the humanity of Jesus.

In Luke, Jesus is the Son of Man.

The feeding of the 5,000 comes right after the mission of the 12 when they were sent out with no provisions for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money.

The feeding of the 5,000 also is imbedded in the events surrounding the death of John the Baptist and the speculation of Herod that in Jesus John had returned from the dead.

This question about the identity of Jesus follows the feeding story. Jesus asks the Twelve who the crowds say he is. Then he asks them who they say he is. Peter responds, “The Christ of God.”

The mission of the Twelve and the identity of Jesus are active elements of the narrative as Luke gives this account. Let’s answer the question of Jesus’ identity on the basis of this feeding event.

**I. Jesus is your Teacher and Healer**—*He welcomed them (the crowds) and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing (9:11).*

A. You are learning the cost of discipleship recounted later in Luke 9:23-27. The reason that the crowds are trapped far from resources is that they have come to be with Jesus. Many people in that crowd will miss much more than a meal for Jesus’ sake. That is why, in hunger far from home, “He welcomed them.”

B. You are learning the nature of the kingdom. Jesus is always speaking about the kingdom of God. In its simplest form, the kingdom is the rule of God. People participate in the rule of God by submitting to the kingship of God in their personal lives.

C. You are learning the healing power of Christ. Jesus is the master healer.

1. Healing power is moral power. It is the victory of good over evil. The Beloved Physician, Luke, records (6:19): and the people all tried to touch him, because power (virtue) was coming from him and healing them all. The King James Version translates “power” as “virtue” here. The word *dunamis* can refer to moral power. You may treat disease as a simple scientific fact until it afflicts you. Then it becomes evil in your life. Jesus does not use a scalpel or a pill. He heals through the goodness that God pours through him to a world that is afflicted with evil.

When Peter and John heal the lame man at the gate they are questioned by the religious authorities who ask, “By what power or what name did you do this?” (Acts 4:7). They answer that it is by the name of Jesus, and that there is salvation in no other. They link salvation with this healing name.

2. The healing power of Jesus is a stumbling block for some modern-day skeptics. They like his teaching and the way he interacts with people, but they are skeptical about the power to heal. They don't really know what to do with that when they read it. Put simply, they don't believe in the power of God's goodness. Paul says (1 Cor. 4:20): For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power (moral authority).

3. The teaching of Jesus is compelling and life-changing. But it was not mainly his words that drew the great crowds. People came to see Jesus because of his healing. They carried their crippled friends to the meetings. They led their demented children. They pushed through the crowds to touch the hem of his garment.

They lowered their friend on a cot through a hole in the roof. The man was paralyzed. His friends were primarily interested, not in what Jesus would say, but what he would do.

4. The power to heal is an important part—an essential part--of the ministry of Jesus--How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and power, who went about doing good and healing all who were afflicted by the devil, for the Lord was with him (Luke 10:38).

5. His healing power is what draws us to him still today. We come to him because we find in Jesus an authority over evil and a hope for our future no matter how we have been injured. Virtue flows out of him that touches us.

D. But there is a caveat: the HEALING of Jesus is part of his TEACHING. His great healing events are living parables about his own mission, work, and identity.

Think of the paralytic dropped in front of Jesus in the house where he was teaching. What is he to do? He forgives the man's sins. That is what he does. The friends on the roof are probably startled and maybe a little disappointed. The religious leaders on the front row are flabbergasted and insulted.

Jesus turns the entire event into a teaching about who he is. “Which is easier to say, “Your sins are forgiven” or “Rise up and walk.” Then, “That you may know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins,” he turns to the paralytic and tells him to “Get up, take his cot and go home.” And he does.

What has happened here? A paralyzed man walked out of the room. Astonishing. But more than that, Jesus of Nazareth has demonstrated his authority over sin. What has happened here is a “sign” of the new order that God is introducing through Jesus.

**II. Jesus is your Provider:** Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to set before the people (9:16).

A. Jesus wants to care for the people. This is a remarkable event, not the usual thing in the Gospels. Only two such feeding miracles are recorded, this one and another of 4,000 people.

1. These people could go hungry tonight. Or they could make a long journey to get to a place to buy food for themselves.
2. But Jesus wants to meet this need himself. He has compassion and love for all people.

B. This feeding miracle is a sign—a pointer to the true identity of Jesus, to help them know who he really is.

1. Jesus exercises faith in the Father to whom he looked: looking up to heaven, he gave thanks (v16).
2. He expresses gratitude to the Father even before the bread and fish were multiplied.
3. The crowds concluded that Jesus is the “Prophet who is to come into the world,” and they want to force him to be king (John 6:14-15). Jesus withdrew to prevent this abortive attempt to establish his kingship. It actually conforms to the temptation to turn the stones into bread. This was a temptation to achieve the exalted position among the people, not by suffering and death, but by becoming the Great Feeder of the masses, the One who solves the hunger problem on the planet.
4. Jesus will use this event of the feeding to emphasize that he himself is the One sent from the Father. He will encourage them not to seek for food that spoils but to find the “food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval” (John 6:27). Ultimately, he will tell them, “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35).

### **III. Jesus is Your Commissioner:** You give them something to eat (Luke 9:13).

A. The mission of the Twelve came right before this event. They went through the towns preaching the Kingdom, healing the sick, and casting out demons. Later on in this chapter the disciples will be asked to help a boy with an evil spirit, and they will be unable to do so (Luke 9:40).

1. Jesus is trying to pass the mantle to the Twelve. He knows that his death is coming. He will be out of the picture. He knows that the success of his own mission will be measured by the success of his successors—the Twelve he has chosen.
2. He wants them to feed the 5,000. He challenges them to do so. They reply, as they always do, “We can’t do it.” They have not learned to operate in faith. They are still captured by unbelief. They think that God can use Jesus, but God cannot use them.

B. The Twelve will carry the fish and bread to the 5,000. They are the intermediaries Jesus chooses. This is their priesthood.

1. It illustrates the Priesthood of the Believer, a cherished doctrine among us. We believe that all followers of Jesus have the responsibility to go to God on behalf of the hungry and go to the hungry on behalf of the Great Provider.

C. Jesus is still saying, "You feed them." He is pointing out to us that the "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he will send workers into his harvest field" (Matthew 9:37-38).

1. We remain the servants of Jesus who carry the bread and fish from his hands to the multitudes. That is our job and calling.
2. We are enabled by the Holy Spirit to do this work. "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you" (Act 1:8).
3. Jesus is Your Provider especially when the goods are not for you but for others.