



Key Scripture: Luke 9:10-17 NIV

INTRO

Hello, friends! I'm glad you're here today.

[Teacher Note: This intro is a great place to tell a quick story about the best meal you've ever had.]

There are a lot of stories about great meals in the Bible, and one meal in particular has become one of the most iconic moments in the life and ministry of Jesus. I have to think that if there were newspapers or online headlines back then, we might have seen this headline: **“Jesus Feeds 5,000”**

Let's take a look at how the Gospel of Luke tells the story.

SCRIPTURE – Luke 9:10-17 NIV

¹⁰ When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida, ¹¹ 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.

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 are in a remote place here.”

¹³ He replied, “You give them something to eat.”

They answered, “We have only five loaves of bread and two fish—unless we go and buy food for all this crowd.” ¹⁴ (About five thousand men were there.)

But he said to his disciples, “Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each.” ¹⁵ The disciples did so, and everyone sat down. ¹⁶ 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 distribute to the

people. ¹⁷ They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

This story has become so legendary that many of us, even without reading it, have the details embedded in our minds: five loaves, two fish, twelve baskets, 5,000+ people!

But what if I told you that the big miracle, the big headline that “Jesus Feeds 5,000” is only part of the story?

You see, I think when it comes to what we can learn from this story – what we can apply to our lives – some of the best stuff comes from what is happening on the periphery of this big miracle.

Let’s take a closer look.

^{10a} When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done.

What’s this all about?

In the opening paragraph of Luke 9, we’re told that Jesus sent his twelve disciples “to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.” So now they’re back, and they are sharing with Jesus (and one another) about how it went.

^{10b} Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida,

If you pay attention, you’ll notice that this idea of withdrawal or retreat or seclusion is a familiar rhythm in the life of Jesus. Amid the growing popularity of His ministry, Jesus consistently creates time and space to slow down and pray and rest.

[Teacher Note: I gave a quick plug here for a book by John Mark Comer called [“The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry”](#).]

So knowing what we know about Jesus, it makes sense that when the twelve disciples returned from this first foray out on their own, He would want to get away to a quiet place so they could share and reflect and rest.

But that's not what happens, is it?

11^a but the crowds learned about it and followed him.

The word is getting out about this Jesus guy, and the crowds of people prevent Jesus and the disciples from sneaking away, but I want you to notice how Jesus responds.

11^b He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.

What does Jesus do?

He **WELCOMES** them. He **TEACHES** them. He **HEALS** them.

First of all, please notice that speaking to them about the kingdom of God and healing the sick is EXACTLY what Jesus sent His disciples out to do earlier in the chapter. He's asking them to do the same thing He's doing.

And don't miss this: Jesus welcomed them.

Did you know that this is one of a handful of stories that appears in all four Gospels? Jesus Feeds 5,000 in Matthew 14, Mark 6, Luke 9, and John 6.

I always find it interesting to note any of the small differences between the Gospel accounts, and in this story, Matthew and Mark tell us that Jesus "had compassion" for the crowd, but Luke tells us that Jesus *welcomed* them.

Jesus is trying to get away, but the crowds interrupt that plan. He feels compassion for them, and He welcomes them. There's a difference between *feeling* compassion and *showing* hospitality. We haven't even gotten to the meal portion of the story yet, but I think it's important that we recognize that **at the table of Jesus, all are welcome.**

Jesus doesn't turn His back on the people who interrupt His plans. He welcomes them. He tells them about the good news of the kingdom of God, and he heals them.

And then the story takes a bit of a wild turn.

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