

Title: You never stop needing the Lord
Text: Luke 9.10-17
Theme: Dependence on the Lord
Series: Luke
Prop Stmt: One experience of success is a huge temptation to self-reliance. God is faithful to teach us how we never outgrow our need of him (and the gospel).

Our text is the famous account of Jesus feeding the 5,000. As we will see, since the 5,000 refers just to the number of men present, there was likely way more than 5,000 were actually fed. This account has been used to illustrate some biblical principles, most notably being, look at what Jesus can do with your little gift. You may think that all you have is 5 loaves and 2 fish, but in the hands of Jesus, this can go way beyond what you could ever imagine. Related to that is the point of sharing. Look at what this little boy did. He was willing to share what he had with Jesus. What a good little boy! Here in Luke's account, he says nothing about the little boy, just that the disciples had come up with 5 loaves and 2 fish, which according to my diet was 2 fish too many. However, before we take this story and turn it into a motivational message for increasing our offerings by giving more to the church so we can do more for others, let's look carefully at the text. It is true that Jesus can do a lot with a little. It is true that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Both of those are taught in Scripture. However, neither one of those are the main point of this text. Once again, why did Luke put this account here? What did he focus on? Because what he focused on helps us know what to focus on so that we don't miss the main point. As I read the text, see if you can see what Luke emphasizes and highlights.

Read text:

We had a men's golf league this year. Since my son-in-law organized it, Cathi thought that I should join it. So, I went from playing one time a year to playing one time a month this season. The problem is that I still look like I play one time a year. If you have ever played this game, you know how humbling, maddening, and frustrating it can be and that is just your first shot. Then, there are those moments when, you actually make a good shot and for a brief moment in time, you have this total sense of delusion as you say to yourself, "*I think I got this figured out.*" Oh no, that is only setting you up for more failure.

1. **Don't be a sophomore.** (10-12)

Sophos is the Greek word for wisdom. You see how it functions in the word philosophy. Philo is a word for love. (Philadelphia – city of brotherly love) Philo-sophos (or philosophy) means one who loves wisdom. So, what does sopho-moore mean? The word moore is related to our word moron. A sophomore is a wise moron. We use it to describe those in their 2nd year of high school or college because after getting one year under their belt, many 2nd year students think that they know way more than they really do. Just because you know somethings doesn't mean that you know everything. But, if you know somethings more than others, then we are all so tempted to think that we are way smarter than what we are. This is on full display by the disciples. They were sent out by Jesus to preach on the kingdom of God and with authority to

cast out demons and to heal. V.10 says that *“On their return the apostles told him all that they had done.”* It sounds like this ministry trip went fairly well. The language of “all that they had done” gives us the clear sense that these guys had been very busy. Since Jesus charged them to go and preach and gave them authority to heal and cast out demons, I think we should assume that he gave them that authority because he knew that they would need it. Therefore, this time of debriefing would be full of stories of some of these events and they had to be challenging and encouraging. And now, the team was back together. They had accomplished what they had been charged with doing.

Notice that in v.10 they are called apostles. That is important. Later in this text they are referred to as “the twelve” and the “disciples”. Since “apostle” means one who is sent with a message, we can see how the disciples of Jesus (followers of Jesus) are being prepared to do more than just listen to him. They are being trained to tell others about him. Here they do it and apparently with a measure of success. However, a little success and experience can be a dangerous thing and a situation arises that reveals just how much they still need to learn. The problem is, they don’t know it.

I remind you that the disciples just returned from this mission. This was not a vacation. They were involved in spiritual warfare, in a number of intense situations, in some physically demanding settings, plus the daily grind of eating, traveling and having to work together with others. Just because a group of you go on a mission’s trip does not mean that you will all get along. You know that! In fact, as the days go on, there are certain people who probably get on your nerves which only contributes to your looking forward to getting this over with. You may not realize that you get on their nerves too. But given the interaction that the disciples were famous for, I have no doubt that some of these tensions were present. These guys were probably spent. So, Jesus *“took them and withdrew apart to a town called Bethsaida.”*

Have you ever said, “I’m peopled out.”? I need some time alone where I don’t have to be on the spot. So, what happens here? Jesus takes the disciples to Bethsaida (northeastern edge of the Sea of Galilee) in an effort to be alone, but the crowds follow them. Jesus welcomes them (v.11). Don’t miss the contrast in v.12. The disciples tell Jesus, *“Send the crowd away.”* Now, we can understand the disciple’s response. They are probably peopled out. But again, Jesus just sent them on a mission to people and now the people are coming to them. That really is the point. However, the disciples have lost sight of what really matters.

Resting and recharging is good and can be necessary, but resting and recharging is not the goal. We rest and recharge to be able to serve others well. However, we are very tempted to make it the goal and to make it an idol in the sense that I want this, I deserve this, I demand this and if I don’t get it, I am going to sin.

Parents, has this ever happened to you? You find yourself spiritually renewed, physically rested, mentally refreshed, and you think ok, this would actually be a great time for my kids to have a meltdown, or throw a fit, or get into an argument or be defiant and refuse to eat or take their nap, because I am so ready to help them see how their sin exposes the idols of their hearts and

their desperate need of Jesus. In fact, I welcome the conflict because not only is this a means to helping them but I can see how parenting actually reveals my own heart and my own needs to walk closer to Jesus and I long for that so much that I can say, "bring it on!" Anybody here ever have that happen? Of course not!

What does happen is that you are on your way home from serving in a ministry here (Children, Students, ABF, Security, Music, etc.) when a civil war erupts in your van over who gets to pick the drive-through for lunch and you think, "Are you kidding me?" Is this what I get for serving? Is this how you are going to treat me? You get the point. We know a little, and we serve a little and we are so tempted to think that this entitles us to some respect or to some comfort and when we do that, we fail to see the actual opportunity that is set right in front of us.

"Now the day began to wear away." (v.12) Since "the twelve" come as a group to Jesus, we should assume that the 12 got together while Jesus was teaching and thought that there was going to be a problem. These people were always away from any means to get some food. The teaching of Jesus had kept these people captivated but these people were going to need some food, but Jesus is still teaching. Maybe he will stop. But Jesus apparently showed no sign of slowing down. So, "*the twelve*" came to Jesus (did they interrupt him?, perhaps there was a pause or break) and said to him, "*Send the crowd away to go...find lodging and provisions, for we are here in a desolate place.*" This is what I want you to see. The disciples are telling Jesus what to do. However,...

2. We never know better than Jesus. (12)

We are never in a position where we know more than Jesus and get to tell him what he ought to do. I think that it is very possible that the disciples were concerned about the people. I am not presuming that they were frustrated that their retreat was interrupted by several thousand people, although that could have been the case. I do not want to go beyond Scripture, however, given the stark rebuttal by Jesus in the next verse, it is obvious that Jesus was not oblivious to the need and he certainly did not need the disciples telling him what he was supposed to do.

It does not matter if you have the largest ministry in the world, if you have a wonderful reputation amongst other believers, if you are a gifted musician, teacher, leader, organizer, professor, or in this case, one of the twelve apostles. We never, ever know better than Jesus! Our posture is always to ask questions, not make commands. In Matthew 15.23, the disciples begged Jesus to send a Canaanite woman away because she was making them uncomfortable. Jesus wouldn't have it and in fact answered her request. Later on, when Jesus tells the disciples that he is going to be crucified, Peter corrects him and states that this is not going to happen. Peter thinks he knows better than Jesus and he tells Jesus what is going to happen. Jesus then tells Peter, "Get behind me Satan!" Again, we don't know better than Jesus. Later on than that, Mary, the sister of Lazarus anoints the feet of Jesus with very expensive perfume and Judas Iscariot is angered and tells Jesus that this was wrong. Jesus was wrong to allow this extravagant waste. Judas was claiming that he knew better than Jesus. The pattern is very clear and summarized by Paul in the text we read at the opening of the service.

“For who has known the mind of the Lord?” Answer: No one!

“Who has been his counselor?” Answer: No one!

“Who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” Answer: No one!

God does not answer to us nor is he ever indebted to us. That is why, “For from him and through him and to him are all things.” It is all from him and it is all for him. He has it all under his beautiful and sovereign control. I am never in a position to tell God what to do. Now, I am in a position to ask. Yes! My dependent position puts me in the subservient position where I am dependent on him. I need him. I do not know what he knows and his ways are not my ways. His ways are better. Therefore, there are many times, when what we see does not make perfect sense to us. Our posture of submission to our King means that we ask questions, not give orders.

However, when we have enjoyed a measure of success, we can so quickly forget that and think that we are entitled to something from God or that we really don't need God as much as we used to. That is never the case. We are never in that position. And that, beloved is the primary point of this account. Jesus fed the thousands, yes for their benefit, but the weight of the text makes it clear that Jesus was teaching his disciples that you never outgrow your need to depend on him.

3. **You never outgrow your need of Jesus.** (13-17)

If you have struggled with a particular sin you know that the battle to expose that, confess that, address that, correct that, think differently and live differently. On our own, we are no match for sin. But if you have had a season of victory over that sin what happens? You are tempted to assume that you are okay now. Jesus took the wheel and got you back in the lane and now you can take over driving your life again. That is a perfect recipe for going right back into your sin. I need Jesus every day. I never outgrow my need of Jesus. The Christian life is never on autopilot.

The disciples had experienced some measure of success on their trip. They thought they could tell Jesus now what he should do with the crowd, so Jesus responds to their command with his own. “You give them something to eat.” This was not a suggestion or an idea to be discussed. This was a direct command. They were in no position to tell Jesus what to do. Jesus tells them what to do but in so doing, he exposed their limitations.

a. **God displays our limitations to humble us.** (13)

The very position that we so desperately want to avoid is the very position that is so good for our souls. We spend so much of our lives trying to provide for ourselves and be prepared for what comes our way. Fear of the unknown drives a good bit of the insurance industry. Car insurance, house insurance, renters' insurance, trip insurance, life insurance, jewelry insurance, and of course, the big one - health insurance. We can certainly do those things in order to be responsible, but we can also try to build a life where we have provided for every contingency so

that we don't need God. That is never the case, and God is kind to put us in positions where we don't have the answers to the problem. He wants us to know in our hearts that we need him. We depend on him at all times. The disciples needed the power and authority of Jesus for their trip, now they still need Jesus.

b. God exposes our limitations to help us listen. (14-15)

The disciples admitted that what they had was not sufficient and there was no practical way for them to go and buy food for this many because there were about 5,000 men. They don't have the answer and they needed to know that they did not have the answer. But now they are in a position to listen.

c. God displays his authority to keep building our trust. (16-17a)

Jesus takes the 5 loaves and the 2 fish. He looks to heaven and says a blessing over them. This is one of the reasons why it is very common for believers to pray before eating a meal. There isn't a command to do it, but thanking God for our daily bread seems to be the right thing to do since we are commanded to ask God for our daily bread. If we ask God for daily bread and he then provides it, then we should thank him for it. Sometimes people will refer to the prayer before the meal as the blessing and you may hear someone say, "Would someone like to bless the food?" Or, "Would you bless the food?" When you think about it, we can't bless the food. We can ask God to bless this, that is use this food as a means of grace to sustain our bodies, encourage us, even give us joy and pleasure from it. God is one who blesses, we are on the receiving end of the blessing. Here, Jesus said a blessing. He blesses the food because he not only is God, but his blessing creates provision that is unexplainable. He then divides the bread and the fish and hands it to the disciples.

How did this actually happen? No one knows. There is no earthly explanation for how 5 loaves and 2 fish multiplied until there was enough to feed everybody. This was one of those rare times when you did not have to worry if there was going to be enough food. I'm sure some did, but it wasn't necessary. "They all ate and were satisfied." No one went away hungry. They did not run out even though there were upwards of 10-20,000 mouths to feed. When Jesus feeds you, you are full. It was obvious that something extraordinary just happened. Of course, for the disciples the message was loud and clear. Jesus is in charge. He gives orders and he does what no one else can do. We are never in a position to inform him, or direct him. And when we witness what he does, our response is simply to yield and trust.

Beloved, these accounts are in the Bible because God wants you to know how much we can trust Christ. Jesus is so patient and persistent to build the trust of his disciples as well as us. Learn from these accounts. Learn from these disciples and just trust in the Lord and embrace the reality that he knows way more than you, and is able to do way more than you. He leverages that for your good. In fact...

d. God displays his provision to satisfy us and assure us that he will take care of us. (17b)

“And what was left over was picked up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.” There was food leftover. It is rather uncommon for every miracle of Christ to be recorded by all 4 gospels. This one is. When you read them all, you find out that Jesus ordered the disciples to go and collect the leftovers. When it was collected it was enough to fill 12 baskets. There has been a lot of speculation about the significance of 12 baskets. Coincidental? Absolutely not. Jesus ordered them to get it, and this was more than just making sure that food didn't go to waste. 12 baskets is specifically mentioned in the accounts. The point is very clear and reinforces why we know that while this miracle was a blessing to many, it was directly pointed at the disciples. Jesus is making it so clear that if you follow him, he will satisfy you with everything that you need and he will take care of you until it is time for you to come home. Who else can you trust to provide for you like that?