

2/23/25 The Joy of Sharing: Blessings are Multiplied Luke 9:12-17
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In 1986, American minister and author, Robert Fulghum, published a collection of essays titled, ***All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten***. The title of the book is taken from the first essay in the volume, in which he lists lessons often learned in kindergarten and explains how the world would be improved if adults adhered to the same basic rules as children. The first one is: **share everything**. The importance of sharing is one of the first lessons many of us were taught in life — notice, I said, **taught**, not necessarily **learned**. It seems some people were never taught, or never learned, the value of sharing for building healthy relationships and friendships, for a sense of fairness and justice, and for the joy that comes when we share what we have with others or when they share what they have with us. Ironically, sometimes it can be those who have the most who share the least.

Our Bible story today highlights the joy of sharing, and it's found in *Luke 9*. In that chapter, Jesus had *“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. They departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere. On their return the apostles told Jesus all they had done. He took them with him and withdrew privately to a city called Bethsaida”* (Luke 9:1-2, 6, 10).

Their peaceful retreat, after what had presumably been an exhausting ministry tour, is interrupted by a crowd of people. Jesus welcomed them, spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed to be cured. Often in life, we have our own plans or desires, and then life or God can intervene, and we decide how we'll respond. Jesus responds graciously and generously and models for his followers that we're to do the same.

Luke 9:12-17, “The day was drawing to a close, and the twelve came to him and said, ‘*Send the crowd away, so that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside, to lodge and get provisions; for we are here in a deserted 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.’* They did so and made them all sit down. And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, **and blessed and broke them, and gave them** to the disciples to set before the crowd. **And all ate and were filled.** What was left over was gathered up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.”

It’s hard to overstate the significance of the feeding of the 5,000 in the life of Jesus. It’s one of the few incidents, other than his crucifixion and resurrection, that’s reported in all four gospels. Feeding the crowd echoes the feeding of the people of Israel in Moses’ day, as described in the Book of Exodus. Feeding all these people highlights Jesus’ compassion and especially his concern for the poor and hungry, which have been priorities for his followers and the church ever since. What Jesus says and does is also a foreshadowing of the Lord’s Supper both in the language — **he looked up, blessed, broke, and gave** — and in there being broken pieces gathered up, just as Jesus would later say his body would be broken and given for all. So, the feeding of the 5,000 reminds us of the passion of Jesus, which is the heart of the gospel, and it prepares us to hear Jesus speak of his own death, which he does in the very next verses in *Luke 9:18-22*.

One of the things you notice as you read through one gospel after another is that each one may include a detail or two which is unique to them. This is beneficial to notice and helps us understand that writer’s view. While the feeding of the 5,000 is in all four gospels, only Luke identifies the place as Bethsaida, which, according to *John 1:44*, is the hometown of Peter, Andrew, and Philip. The weary apostles had returned to a place which is home for some of them, after a tiring mission, only to find themselves in the middle of another day of ministry.

One of the profound principles in the Christian faith that the feeding of the 5,000 highlights is that when we give, we don’t lose. Instead, blessings are multiplied. The act of sharing is a divine principle that reflects the heart of God. In *Luke 9:12-17*, we see a miraculous example of how little becomes much in the hands of Jesus. This passage teaches us that **when we share what we have, God multiplies it beyond what we could ever imagine.**

Today, we’ll explore three main truths from this passage:

1. The Call to Share – Our Responsibility

2. The Blessing of Sharing – God's Multiplication

3. The Joy of Sharing – Our Reward

Let's open our hearts to the Holy Spirit as we explore these truths.

I. The Call to Share – Our Responsibility

In verse 12, the disciples recognized a pressing need. The crowd had followed Jesus into a remote place, and the day was coming to an end. The disciples' practical solution was to send the people away to find food and lodging. However, Jesus had a different approach.

1. **Recognizing the Need:** The disciples saw the hunger and weariness of the people. Today, we're also surrounded by people in need — physically, emotionally, and spiritually. The call to share begins with **an awareness of those around us**. Jesus and the disciples have compassion for hungry, tired people. Anyone who is a Christian is to have compassion for those in need.
2. **Jesus' Command – "You Give Them Something to Eat" (v. 13):** Instead of sending the people away, Jesus challenged the disciples to take responsibility. Likewise, God calls us to be the hands and feet of Christ. He wants us to participate in His miracles by stepping out in faith and sharing what we have. Each of us has time, money, spiritual gifts, encouragement and prayers that we can use and give to bless others.
3. **Limited Resources – A Common Excuse:** The disciples responded, "*We have only five loaves of bread and two fish.*" They saw scarcity, but Jesus saw an opportunity. Many times, we hesitate to share because we think we don't have enough or even anything to offer. However, God is not limited by our resources; God's looking for our obedience, trust, and commitment.

We must cultivate a heart that's willing to share. Whether it's our food, time, talents, or treasure, God calls us to share what we have with others. Our effort with Feed My Starving Children this May is a great opportunity for us to do what Jesus is commanding in this passage.

II. The Blessing of Sharing – God's Multiplication

The miracle happened when the little that was available was placed in Jesus' hands. We miss out on the blessing of God when we're selfish, greedy, or fearful that if we share what we have, there won't be enough. Let's examine how God multiplied the blessing.

1. **Jesus Used What Was Given (v. 16):** The five loaves and two fish were brought to Jesus. This is a key principle: **what we surrender to God, the Lord blesses**. If we cling to what we have, it remains small, but in God's hands, it multiplies.
2. **Jesus Blessed and Broke the Bread: Gratitude precedes multiplication.** Jesus gave thanks before the miracle happened. Often, we wait to be grateful until we see abundance, but faith teaches us to **be thankful in advance**.
3. **Distribution by the Disciples:** Notice that Jesus didn't personally distribute the food. Instead, He gave it to the disciples to share with the people. This shows that God works through His people to meet the needs of others. The miracle occurred as they stepped out in faith. It also made the experience tangible for the disciples and seared this experience into their memories.
4. **Everyone Was Satisfied (v. 17):** Not only was there enough, but there was more than enough! This is the principle of abundance in God's Kingdom. What seemed insignificant became more than sufficient to meet the needs of thousands. It's like the first church potluck supper — everyone brings a little, and there's more than enough for everyone.

We may hesitate to give because we fear lack or not having enough. But God is in the business of multiplication. When we give, we're not diminished; we become conduits of God's blessings.

III. The Joy of Sharing – Our Reward

The story doesn't end with the feeding of the crowd; it concludes with an abundance of leftovers. There were twelve baskets full of broken pieces symbolizing the overflowing nature of God's provision, one for each of the disciples to carry, and symbolically the same number as the tribes of Israel. This teaches us several truths.

1. **God Provides Beyond Our Needs:** When we give, we experience firsthand the generosity of God. I hope you've experienced this in your life. The

disciples collected more than they started with, demonstrating that God's blessings exceed our expectations. We experienced this just a couple of years ago when we received an offering for Dr. Bill and Ann Clemmer, who serve in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In a difficult time in that country, our gift has provided much needed shelter for children and staff.

2. **Joy Comes Through Participation:** Imagine the joy the disciples must have felt as they saw the miracle unfold before their eyes. This was shown in a lovely way in the series "The Chosen" and those who saw that episode will remember it. The disciples started with doubt, but ended with awe. Likewise, when we participate in acts of giving, we witness God's power in action, and it strengthens our faith.
3. **A Lasting Lesson:** This miracle became a lifelong lesson for the disciples. They learned that in God's economy, **giving leads to abundance, and withholding leads to lack.**

When we live generously, we experience the joy of seeing lives transformed. Whether through financial giving, acts of kindness, or sharing the Gospel, our participation in God's work brings eternal rewards.

The feeding of the 5,000 is more than a miracle; it's a model for how God wants us to live. The joy of sharing is rooted in the truth that blessings are multiplied when we place what we have in God's hands. What can we do to carry on the spirit of this amazing experience in our own time?

1. **Recognize the need** — Open your eyes to those who need help.
2. **Offer what you have** — Even if it seems small, trust God with it.
3. **Watch God multiply it** — God will use it beyond what you can imagine.

As we go forward this week, let's embrace the joy of sharing. Whether through acts of service, financial generosity, or simply encouraging someone, let's trust that God will take what we offer and multiply it for His glory. The miracle of Jesus feeding the 5,000 teaches us that blessings are multiplied when we share what we have in faith. It reminds us that true joy comes from giving, not accumulating.

As we reflect on this passage, let's embrace the joy of sharing and trust in God's power to multiply what we offer. May we be inspired to live lives of generosity, trusting that God will always provide more than enough. Let's pray for the courage to step out in

faith and experience the joy that comes from sharing our blessings with others. May we all experience the abundant blessings of a life lived in faith and generosity.

Prayer: Generous and Compassionate God, we thank You for the example of Jesus feeding the 5,000. Help us to trust in Your provision and to live lives of generosity. May we experience the joy of sharing and see Your blessings multiplied in our lives. Guide us to be instruments of Your love and provision to those around us. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. **Recognizing Needs Around Us:** In *Luke 9:12*, the disciples noticed the crowd's hunger and suggested sending them away. How can we become more aware of the needs in our community today? What practical steps can we take to identify and address these needs?
2. **Overcoming Feelings of Inadequacy:** The disciples felt their resources were insufficient, stating they had only five loaves and two fish. Have you ever felt that what you have to offer is too little? How can we trust God to use our seemingly small contributions for greater purposes?
3. **The Act of Surrendering to God:** Jesus took the loaves and fish, gave thanks, and then distributed them. What does this teach us about the importance of surrendering our resources and talents to God? How can we practice this surrender in our daily lives?
4. **Experiencing God's Multiplication:** After everyone ate, twelve baskets of leftovers were collected. Can you share a personal experience where you witnessed God multiplying your efforts or resources beyond your expectations?
5. **Finding Joy in Sharing:** The sermon emphasizes that joy comes through participation in God's work. How have you experienced joy through acts of generosity or service? What barriers might prevent us from sharing, and how can we overcome them?
6. **Reflecting on God's Abundance:** The miracle resulted in an abundance, with leftovers exceeding the initial offering. What does this tell us about God's nature?

and provision? How can this perspective influence our attitude towards giving and generosity?

7. **Applying the Lesson Today:** What specific actions can we take as individuals, a group, or church to share our resources and talents with others? How can we encourage each other to live out the joy of sharing in our community?