



With Morgan

'Sufficiently
Insufficient'

Luke 9: 10 - 17
27/09/26

As we look at Luke 9:10-17 I want us to be thinking how sufficient we think we are in the service of Jesus. I hope, as we explore this passage that we find encouragement because what we see here is that Christ, by his grace, works through our weaknesses and insufficiency, for his own glory, by bringing sinners to himself. None of us here is sufficient in and of ourselves, but Jesus is!

A Hungry Crowd. Jesus sent out the twelve on a mission (v 1-6) and they had a lot to report to Jesus. They've earned a rest, so they withdraw by themselves to a remote place near Bethsaida when crowds of people show up. When your plan to have some rest is interrupted it can be frustrating. Once more, though, Luke gives us an insight into the heart of Jesus for lost people. Jesus, we must remember, was God but his human nature got weary and tired as we all do. He needed a rest as much as his disciples did. Yet here, when he sees the crowd, he welcomes them, teaches them, and even spends time healing their sick. In the parallel account in Mark 6:34, we read that when he saw them 'he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.' Jesus' love and compassion for these people far outweighed his weariness. As evening was approaching, the disciples had clearly had enough. They even come and tell Jesus what to do, 'We came here for some rest, we're tired, you're tired, send them away, so that they can find food for themselves.'

These weary hungry people are sheep without a shepherd who have come to, Jesus, the great shepherd, for food. These are the sort of people that Jesus has come for, and the disciples want to send them away. We are either part of the hungry crowd who are in need, or we're a disciple and a follower of Jesus. These opening verses show us Jesus' own heart and compassion for the needy, the people who have been starved of any spiritual nourishment and need Jesus to feed them. Jesus is alive today, and just like he was during his earthy life, he is still in the business of welcoming lost sinful people to himself and feeding them with the bread of life! Come to him by faith in your brokenness, in your emptiness, in your sin and he will satisfy. (Luke 9:17). If we are a disciple of Jesus, we have a great example of what being a disciple doesn't look like. Hungry people were coming to them, and instead of asking the people to stay and come even closer to Jesus, they wanted to send them away to fend for themselves. Being a disciple of Jesus means welcoming as he welcomes. Jesus himself is our great example. J.C Ryle writes, 'But let us remember Jesus and not be weary. He received all, spoke to all and did good to all. Let us go and do likewise. As Christ deals with us, so let us deal one with another.' That's the scene set. 5000+ hungry people coming to Jesus, and the disciples aren't too happy about it.

Insufficient Servants. Look at how Jesus responds to the disciples, (v 13). 'You give them something to eat.' They've come to Jesus with a suggestion, and Jesus turns it around and says: 'why don't you do it.' And the 'you' in this verse is emphatic. Jesus uses the word 'You' with force. There is no doubt in Jesus' mind what the disciples should be doing. To which they reply, 'We can't. We only have five loaves of bread and two fish. And there's about five thousand men there'. Matthew tells us that there were 5000 men plus women and children (Matt. 14:21). Practically speaking, how on earth are just five loaves and two fish going to make feed a crowd of at least 5000 people!? It's impossible for man. Jesus is continuing to include his disciples in his ministry, yet seemingly they have forgotten it all now when faced with another job. (v 1-9). Jesus 'gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases.' It's almost as if they had spiritual amnesia. They've just been on a mission-tour casting out demons and healing incurable sicknesses and are now faced with the command of feeding a crowd of people; they conclude that they can't. And so automatically they turn to what they could do in theory, they could buy food, that's a practical solution! But then quickly

conclude it's no use. That's far more money than they had, (Mark 6:37). As they pondered what Jesus asked them to do and looked out at the thousands of people who were hungry, they conclude that there was nothing they could do. They were insufficient in and of themselves, and their resources were also insufficient. It's common for us to feel like this.

last week was a difficult week for me. I sat down in the office on Monday morning and wrote a to-do-list for the week. It soon became very clear that I had much more to do than I had time for. It was non-stop all week and then I preached twice on Sunday. By the evening service my energy was insufficient and I was running on grace. I'm sure you can all relate to that. Think about Monday morning and the week ahead. Or a situation in your life right now that's hard. Think about your own walk of discipleship, about your own ministry and service. Maybe you feel insufficient as a home group leader, as a pastoral visitor, as a youth or kid's leader, as a Christian parent, a husband or a wife, maybe insufficient as an evangelist and witness of Jesus! And think about yourself and what you have. Or rather what you don't have. I don't have enough faith, enough patience, enough strength, enough wisdom. I'm too old, too young, too inexperienced. The disciples had five thousand people to feed, and only five loaves of bread. They had forgotten how Jesus had empowered them just a week or so before. Talk about insufficiency! But there was one thing that they did have, and one thing we all have: A Sufficient Saviour. We are insufficient servants, but we are in the hands of a...

Sufficient Saviour. So, using these very insufficient servants Jesus met the needs of the hungry crowd. He asked the disciples to hand over what they had. And at this Jesus could have told everyone to queue up and he'll give them something to eat. Or just made manna appear on the ground like he did during the time of Moses. In his grace he uses the disciples. We used to go into one of the schools and hold a club called Bake through the Bible. One of the things I found so hard was to watch the kids fail and not do it for them. It would be much easier and quicker. Jesus could adopt the same attitude with us. In his grace, Jesus uses even us with all our insufficiency, weakness, doubt and lack of faith, our foolishness, sin and failings. We come to him with the very little we have, with our five loaves of bread and two fish and he takes it and says: 'I can work with that and through you because I am sufficient.' In his grace he uses our weaknesses. The apostle Paul, the most successful church planter in history was himself completely insufficient. Jesus, told him, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Jesus took what very little his disciples had, just five loaves and two fish, asked them to do something very simple, 'make them sit in small groups and distribute what I give you,' and he does the miraculous. Jesus doesn't expect us to do the miraculous, he does it whatever our role is. It's not to do the saving or the convicting or the transforming of lives. That's the miracle. Our job is simply to come to him with the little we have by faith and to distribute it while relying on him to do the miraculous.

Christ by his grace, works through our weaknesses and insufficiency, for his own glory, in bringing sinners to himself. He gives abundantly. Everyone was satisfied! They'd had their fill! And there were, twelve baskets left over. I don't think there's any real hidden significance in that number in this context. Sometimes numbers do have meaning but I think Luke, is simply emphasising the abundance of Jesus' provision. My own theory is that the disciples needed feeding too. Jesus ensured that they had a basket each; such is his grace. He feeds his faithful servants as well as the hungry shepherdess sheep. In all your service, keep returning to him to be nourished and fed, so that we can continue to serve him in faith and obedience.

Conclusion. We are insufficient, we are sinful, weak, foolish, easily wearied, but Jesus, our Sufficient Saviour, in his grace, includes us in his work. He works through our weakness, for his glory, and brings people to himself.

“When we have exhausted our store of endurance,
when our strength has failed ere the day is half done,
when we reach the end of our hoarded resources,
our Father's full giving is only begun.”