

# The Lord Will Provide

**Passage:** Luke 9:1-17 | From the series: Luke

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**Date:** Jun 28, 2026

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Good morning! My name is Dan, and I am one of the pastors here. We are going to jump back into Luke this morning.

## Introduction

When Linzy and I were living in Chicago, we became leaders in our high school group at church. Each year, the high school ministry would send out several different groups of students on mission trips. Linzy and I had some missionary friends in Bolivia, so we thought it would be fun to lead a trip there.

Twenty-four years old at the time, we felt more than capable of leading a group of high school students on a mission trip to a developing country. Somehow, we were able to convince the parents of 28 students that we were capable as well, so we set out on the trip.

There is a lot that goes into preparing for a trip like this, as you can imagine. We had to book flights and arrange ground transportation. We had to prepare the team to lead a Vacation Bible School, which all of our volunteers who helped with VBS last week know is a HUGE lift. We had to train students on the practicalities of international travel, like passports and immunizations, along with the basics of how to share your faith. There was a lot to do.

I was also asked to preach at a church while we were there. Though I was very excited to do so, I was still very green as a preacher. In the midst of all of the other preparation we had to do, I got to Bolivia feeling under-prepared for this sermon. I remember sitting in my room in the Bolivian home where we were staying on the night before the church service. I was anxious, stressed, and a bit overwhelmed.

I wonder if you have ever been there before—the feeling of being under-prepared. Maybe it was for a presentation at work where all eyes were on you. Maybe it was for an exam in school that you didn't have enough time to study for. Or perhaps, like in my case, it was a ministry opportunity—to give a teaching, lead a Bible study, or share your faith with someone.

This morning, as we jump back into our study in the Gospel of Luke, we are going to look at two interconnected stories. In one, Jesus sends his disciples out on mission. In another, he asks them to feed a large crowd of people. In both, they are under-prepared. As we look at these stories, we will

consider how to approach the situations in our own lives where we feel underprepared, ill-equipped, or otherwise lacking the resources to follow the call of God in our lives.

### **The Call to Mission and Ministry (vv. 1-6)**

With that, let's jump into our passage. We will be in Luke 9:1-17. Let me begin by reading Luke 9:1-2:

*And he 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.*

For the last few chapters of Luke, Jesus has been on a roll. He has calmed a storm, cast an army of demons out of a man, healed the woman with chronic bleeding, and raised a young girl from the dead. In addition to that, he has been teaching about the kingdom of God and forgiving people's sins.

His disciples have been privy to all of this and more. Having answered the call to follow Jesus, they have been with him, deepening their understanding of who he is and the nature of the kingdom that he came to bring.

But now, just as Jesus called them to himself, he sends them out into the world on mission.

This text teaches us that following Jesus is not just coming—coming to church, coming to small group, coming to Jesus. Following Jesus is also about going—going into the world, going into ministry, going on mission. Following Jesus is active, not passive. We are not meant to sit on the bench; we are meant to get in the game. We have been given a mission.

What is the nature of that mission? Is it a mission of conquest? Of violence or empire? No. It is a mission of love. Of healing. And of restoration.

Notice that the disciples are not asked to do anything that Jesus himself was not already doing. He has been proclaiming the kingdom of God, casting out demons, and healing people. Jesus has been living compassion, pouring out love, restoring people's lives. Now Jesus sends his disciples out with his authority to do the same things that he is already doing— to preach and teach, cast out demons, and heal people.

Just like these first disciples, Jesus sends us out on mission. But we must remember that he doesn't send us out to do anything that he hasn't already done. He doesn't send us out to do anything that he isn't already doing. Rather, **Jesus invites us to join him in his mission.** He invites us to participate in his work. He sends us out because he is already out there, expanding his kingdom, ministering to people, working in hearts, drawing souls to himself. Now he sends us out to join him in his work. Not to manufacture our own work, but to join him in the work he is already doing.

I don't know about you, but sometimes (all the time?) I feel ill-equipped to join in the mission of Jesus, like I did in Bolivia the night before I was supposed to preach. If I am going to join Jesus on his mission, I am going to need some training, some equipping, some support.

But look at what Jesus says to his disciples as he sends them out: Luke 9:3-6:

*And he said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics. And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them." And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.*

My grandfather was an Eagle Scout. He was the one at family Christmas who always had his pocket knife ready to cut that stubborn ribbon. My grandpa embodied the motto of the Boy Scouts: Be prepared!

Jesus would have made a horrible Boy Scout troop leader. As he sends his disciples out on mission, he tells them to take nothing with them – no bag, no food, no change of clothes, no money.

Jesus also would have made a horrible sales manager. I had someone come to my door the other day trying to sell me something – a new roof or new windows or something. I had to say no five times before they actually left. They were persistent because they knew that persistence can close deals.

Jesus says, "If you get to a town and you don't want you there, just leave. It's fine. Move on to the next town."

Why does he do this?

He tells them to take nothing because he knows that God will provide them with everything that they need. And he tells them to leave where they aren't welcome because our job is not to sell a product or close a deal but to discern where God is already at work and then join him in that work!

That is what Jesus called his original disciples to do, and that is what he calls us to do as well.

## **The Most Important Question of All Time**

At this point, our text takes a bit of a turn as Luke gives us somewhat of a sidebar. Luke 9:7-9:

*7 Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was happening, and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead, 8 by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen. 9 Herod said, "John I beheaded, but who is this about whom I hear such things?" And he sought to see him.*

This paragraph seems to interrupt our narrative in a way, bringing us back to a character that we haven't heard from in some time: Herod. Reports of Jesus' teaching and miracles are spreading around, and Herod begins to wonder what is going on.

His wondering takes the form of one crystalized question: Who is this? This question has been asked by the Pharisees when Jesus forgave sins and by the disciples when Jesus calmed the storm. Now, it is being asked by Herod.

In our passage for next week, this question comes to a head when Jesus directly asks his disciples: Who do you say that I am?

This is the most important question in Luke. It is the most important question of all time. Who is this Jesus? What is his nature? What is his mission? Why do people find him so compelling? We will explore that more next week, but for now, note that everything that Luke is writing about is meant to help us answer that question.

### **Learning to Depend on God**

More on that next week. For now, let's continue in Luke 9, where Jesus illustrates the point he has just been making. Luke 9:10-11

*10 On their return the apostles told him all that they had done. And he took them and withdrew apart to a town called Bethsaida. 11 When the crowds learned it, they followed him, and he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God and cured those who had need of healing.*

Here, the disciples return for this ministry trip. We can imagine that they were a bit tired by this point, looking to get "off the clock." To have some much-needed R&R. But the crowds follow them. Does Jesus chase them away? No. He welcomed them and continued the mission: teaching about the kingdom of God and healing people of their diseases.

I have to admit, sometimes I just want to be "off the clock." Step away from the need, from the demand, from the mission. And while Jesus certainly takes time to prioritize rest and recovery, solitude and Sabbath, he is also willing to be interrupted because he recognizes that the mission of God is not something that you clock in and out of. It's not a hat we put on at church or on a mission trip. All of life is meant to be lived on mission.

When we are at work. When we are at home. When we are watching our kids play sports or on vacation.

Yes, we need to prioritize rest and recovery, solitude and Sabbath, but we also need to be willing to be interrupted. We need to get rid of the idea that mission is something that can be relegated to the margins of life or done on a schedule. All of life is mission.

So, as the crowds follow them, Jesus continues preaching, teaching, and healing.

Take a look at what happens next. Luke 9:12-14a:

*12 Now the day began to wear away, and the twelve came and said to him, "Send the crowd away to go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find lodging and get provisions, for we are here in a desolate place." 13 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." 14 For there were about five thousand men.*

We have a problem here. Jesus and the disciples, trying to escape the crowds, had gone out to a desolate place—the wilderness. But the crowd followed, and now people were getting hungry. There was no In-N-Out around the corner. DoorDash didn't deliver to that address. They had a problem on their hands.

The disciples tell Jesus to send the crowds away so they can find something to eat. Jesus responds, "You give them something to eat."

This line is super important. Jesus could have just fed all of the people himself, as he is about to do. But remember, God doesn't choose to accomplish his work on his own. He invites us to participate with him in his work. So he tells the disciples, "You feed them."

Now, the need here is overwhelming. They have a crowd of 5,000 men. Most people think that number excludes women and children, so we might have twice that number here. That's a big crowd! The need is overwhelming.

And the resources were severely lacking. They are able to find five loaves of bread and two fish. That is not going to go very far with a crowd of 10,000 people!

An overwhelming need. And severely limited resources. Do you ever feel like this? Like the needs around you far exceed the resources that are available to you?

I do. I feel this is parenting. I feel this in ministry. There is only one of me, yet sometimes I feel like I need to multiply myself to meet all of the needs around me. But more than that, I know that even if I could multiply myself, I don't have what it takes to actually meet many of the needs that I am faced with. I feel underprepared, ill-equipped, and otherwise lacking the resources.

Finding themselves in this situation, the disciples look for natural solutions. Their imagination is limited by what they have seen before. But Jesus wants to expand their imaginations to include supernatural solutions – solutions that are only possible with God's power.

Let's see how he does that. Luke 9:14b-16:

*And he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each." 15 And they did so, and had them all sit down. 16 And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to*

*heaven and said a blessing over them. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd.*

This scene is incredible. Jesus takes the loaves and the fish, gives thanks, then just starts tearing off piece after piece of bread... and it never runs out.

In the minds of the disciples, they were ill-equipped for the task at hand because they lacked the resources that were necessary. Jesus doesn't want them to wait until they have enough; he asks them to offer what they have. Five loaves. Two fish. A drop in the bucket.

Jesus takes what they have and multiplies it to accomplish the task that he gave them.

And look at the results. Luke 9:17:

*17 And they all ate and were satisfied. And what was left over was picked up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.*

They all ate and were satisfied. What started as extreme scarcity ended in overwhelming abundance.

We need to remember that we follow the God who created everything from nothing. The God who spoke and stars filled the sky, who breathed and breath filled Adam's lungs. He filled this world with all kinds of good things for us to enjoy, and he has the power to supply us with even more when we need. Sometimes we feel like we live in a world of scarcity, where we need to grab onto everything we can before it runs out. With this miracle, Jesus wants to shift our perspective. We don't live in a world of scarcity. We live in a world of abundance.

This is not a promise that God will give you everything you want. It's not a promise that every prayer will get answered in the way you want. It's definitely not a promise that following Jesus will be easy (Jesus will clarify in our passage for next week). Rather, it is a promise that God will give us everything we need. It is a promise that **The Lord will Provide**. The Lord will provide.

There are so many ways that we can follow the invitation to Jesus to follow him into ministry and mission. There are opportunities here at PBC to serve in children's and youth ministry—to invest your life in the next generation. There are opportunities here at PBC to serve in our compassion ministry, our worship ministry, and so many more places.

There are opportunities outside the walls of this church—to engage your neighbors or coworkers in spiritual conversations. To work for justice in our community by caring for the underresourced. There are countless opportunities to get involved in mission and ministry.

Let me just tell you right now: you don't have what it takes to accomplish that call on your own. Your resources are scarce. But you don't go alone. You go with the God of abundance, the God of miracles, the God who will provide.

## Conclusion

While we were in Bolivia on our mission trip, Sunday morning rolled around. It was almost time for me to preach. I was looking over my notes, jotting down a few more ideas. The missionary we were working with noticed and came over. "Dan," he said, "I learned something over my years of ministry. When you are this close to your deadline, it's time to stop preparing and start praying!"

He was right. Being effective in that moment was much more about God's provision than it was my preparation. And while God calls us to prepare, the same is always true: we need the Lord to provide. And there is a provision from the Lord that is only possible with prayer.

Hudson Taylor was a man who embodied this truth in a profound way.

As a young man, Hudson Taylor arrived in China in 1854 to serve as a missionary. After being there for some time, he became troubled that almost all the missionaries in China stayed in the wealthy coastal cities, while the vast interior of the country—hundreds of millions of people—had little or no chance to hear the gospel.

Taylor wanted to change this. He believed God wanted to reach the interior of China. But the mission ahead of him was so vast that most people told him it was impossible. But Hudson Taylor believed something simple: if this was God's mission, then God would provide what was needed.

So in 1865, he founded the China Inland Mission. In addition to their commitment to reach the interior of China, there was another thing that set the China Inland Mission apart: they decided not to actively raise any funds. Instead, they would pray and trust God to provide workers and resources as they were needed.

Taylor himself said it this way: **"God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply."**

And indeed, God did supply. What began as a handful of missionaries grew to one of the largest Protestant mission organizations in the world, and tens of thousands of Chinese men, women, and children heard the gospel for the first time. Hudson Taylor wasn't responsible for changing China. Jesus was. Taylor simply joined Jesus in his mission, trusted him to provide, and left the results to God.

And Jesus invites us to do the same.

## Concluding Prayer

As we close, I want to invite you to stand. We are going to pray a responsive prayer to help us look to the Lord and affirm that he is the God who provides. I'll pray one line, and you will respond with, "The Lord will provide." Would you pray with me?

Leader: When Jesus calls us to follow him,

People: **The Lord will provide.**

Leader: When he sends us to join his mission,  
People: **The Lord will provide.**

Leader: When we feel unprepared and inadequate,  
People: **The Lord will provide.**

Leader: When our own strength is not enough,  
People: **The Lord will provide.**

Leader: When what we have seems too small,  
People: **The Lord will provide.**

Leader: When we step out in faith and obedience,  
People: **The Lord will provide.**

Leader: For everything we need to accomplish his will,  
People: **The Lord will provide.**