

# 09/07/25 - Luke 9:1-17 - "Empty Hands, Sufficient Savior"

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[ 0 : 00 ] Please join me in turn to Luke 9, 1-17. 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. 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. 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, by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen.

Herod said, John, I beheaded, but who is this about whom I hear such things? And he sought to see him. On the return, the apostles told him all that they had done.

[ 1 : 14 ] And he took them and withdrew apart to a town called Bethsaida. 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.

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.

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, Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each. And they did so, and had them all sit down.

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.

[ 2 : 18 ] And they all ate and were satisfied. And what was left over was picked up, twelve baskets of broken pieces. Thanks be to God.

This is God's word. Well, it has been quite some time since I've had this view.

I've missed it. And yeah, it's been a great summer. It's been great in so many different ways for us to be sitting throughout this summer, to be beneficiaries of the work that God is doing through so many preachers in this church, is truly remarkable.

And not only that, but a loving congregation to support such work. I mean, you have to remember, like many of these guys were like, you know, they've preached maybe three, four sermons.

And a church that doesn't expect, you know, come here as consumers that much, you know, and expect just a home run every time.

[ 3 : 32 ] But bear and listen. I know how loving you are. I've heard my sermons from 2018, 2019, and God forbid, right? So praise the Lord for all the work that's been done.

Getting back in the saddle here from such a long break, I couldn't find the instruction manual on how to do this again.

Couldn't dig up that. I saw the blinking cursor on that Word document. It was kind of just mocking me throughout the week. Like, oh, how do you do this?

And made a joke of it on Facebook for you guys to enjoy. It made me think of something. The simple fact that I am holding, I am holding far less than what this task requires.

In and of myself. Me, I am holding far less than this task requires. And when I began to think of it, I started thinking about similar unforgettable moments, like the first day we took our firstborn home from the hospital, Micah.

[ 4 : 51 ] And, you know, just standing in my living room with my wife, looking down at this tiny human being, and saying, how did they let us take this baby home?

Do they not know that I forget to brush my teeth? And now this, a soul alive. You know, we're responsible for keeping this baby alive.

There's no hotline for text support, unless you want to consider 911 in that category, which I guess could be true. Just diapers, sleepless nights, and two parents, me and Beth, fumbling around like we're trying to defuse a bomb.

It's helpless moments, like those that we say to ourselves, I am holding far less than what this task requires.

Right? I remember once reading a document of Winston Churchill from May 1940, as Hitler's armies stormed across Europe, and Britain stood alone retreating to Dunkirk.

[ 6 : 05 ] It was terrifying and an unknown feat. The weight of the world war stood in the balance. And Churchill actually later admitted to this very reality.

He said, at that moment, he was staring at impossible odds and inadequate resources. May I remind you, this was Winston Churchill.

So this experience is not just for a preacher. We'll say a rusty preacher.

It's not just for a fumbling around parents. Not just for an untested military leader. This experience of not holding what that task requires is universal.

We all deal with this. And in the text today, we see the disciples facing the same reality. And I hope to unpack this in two sections today in order to reinforce that Jesus gives us everything needed to live for him and to serve his kingdom.

[ 7 : 17 ] And so I've labeled this sermon as empty hands, sufficient savior. I think that captures the emphasis well.

I'd like to pray and invite you to do the same as we get into Luke chapter 9. Let's pray. Father, thank you for giving this ministry from the pulpit here so much diversity and dynamics.

Thank you for using so many individuals to proclaim. It is truly marveling at the men that you've used, women you have used through this church in so many different ways.

And we ask at this time that you use this rusty preacher, this man, to proclaim the glorious truth of your salvation in Jesus Christ.

We pray that you do this by the power of your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. And so the first section, I'm going to break this into two sections.

[ 8 : 33 ] Like I said, the first section, I'm going to play on this theme a little bit. It's titled, Empty Hands with Kingdom Power. And in verse 1, Luke tells us that Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases.

And he sent them to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. And notice these two unique gifts that have been bestowed to these empty-handed disciples.

Power and authority. So power is the capacity to do something. Authority is the right, the authorization to use it.

I like to think of it like a car that's fully fueled with a full gas tank that is sometimes a hit or a miss in our culture today with the gas prices.

But remember the day when you had that little arrow going up to the full when you could afford it? Yeah, those days, those were good days. Especially when it was under 20 bucks.

[ 9 : 45 ] Some of the older folks are probably like, yeah, 20 bucks. Let's try 10 bucks, right? Man, amen to that. But the capacity is all rested upon that fuel.

And authority can then be understood as a driver's license to give the right of passage on the road. You're authorized to be on the road. And so right here we have the capacity of the disciples.

Here they're given the capacity. And they were also given the right to use authority. And this is apostolic authorization, apostolic authority.

And so this empowerment is completely unique to the laying of the foundation of the church. We might ask Paul in heaven someday, like, what did you mean by Ephesians 2 when you said, We are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.

Well, here you have it. This is right here. These men were given apostolic divine power, kingdom power. The very power Christ used and had to save souls from demonic bondage, just as it had been for the garrison scene in chapter 8.

[ 11 : 18 ] Now, who were these men? Did they take the test? Did they apply for the job?

No. No. They weren't elite men. They weren't part of the A-team with Booker T. Nuh-uh. They weren't the rabbis with the cool hats and suits.

Or priests. These guys were fishermen. They were tax collectors. And they were zealots. That are given power and authority.

Isn't it humbling and breathtaking that God would use such men? Should be. One might expect them to, you know, be in danger of growing proud, right?

Pride is always creeping at everyone's door. My wife even was once told a couple years ago from some Pentecostal influence that this Pentecostal was a super, how is it worded?

[ 12 : 32 ] It was a, she was a pro wrestler in the spirit. How about that? Do you know who you're talking to? I'm a pro wrestler in the spirit.

Right? Right? You would think that these guys would be in danger of that walking around. But no.

All of that was actually proved wrong when COVID came. I think that unmasked the whole prosperity gospel, the whole Pentecostal movement, as every one of them churches closed.

Paul gives us no reason to believe anything other than that these men understood that their power was derived from Jesus Christ alone.

Left to themselves, they were empty handed. In verse 2, even so, their authority was only incidental to the greater task.

[ 13 : 36 ] That the power and the healing, those were to, those served a purpose of proclaiming the kingdom of God here in verse 2. In other words, their healings, their exorcisms were not the main thing.

The main thing was inviting people into the kingdom of God by faith in Christ. Calling them to repentance and to submission under his sovereign reign.

And we have to notice something odd here too. The unique itinerary that has been given in verse 3 through 6. They were to travel light.

Very light. Would give you a panic attack if this were you who have anxiety over, did I forget my toothbrush?

Did I forget the baby? Right? If you want to go home alone on you. Right? They were to travel light, which forced them to always continuously be reminded of God's provision to provide every single need.

[ 14 : 44 ] They couldn't escape that reality. And this is far from a permanent, sort of like a pragmatic, like, 10 steps to be a missionary. Don't take anything. Right? It's situational.

It's another humbling point for them to exercise faith to remind them that their ministry depends on God alone. Keep their hands empty. And you see, these empty-handed disciples became a living parable to everyone around.

They became a living parable to everyone around. That the kingdom of God is actually not about human sufficiency, but upon divine supply.

This is the kingdom of God. Now let me ask you a question then. So where do you feel most insufficiency in your life?

I can't be the only one. Right? Where are you most aware that you've come to the end of your resources?

[ 15 : 52 ] You've got nothing. No hope. Right? For some, it may be your job and issues relating to work or employment.

For others, it might be actually parenting. A lot of young parents here in our church family. But having such a large portion of people being married, I think that this case can apply directly to marriage.

A feeling at the end of our resources. Church, what happens when your hands are so full of control, pride, self-defense?

You fight your spouse for the last word. Have that last word. Even if it's whispered under your breath. You cycle through arguments never to resolve. Carrying resentments that poisons any marital intimacy possible.

Amen. And yet, what if the very place that you feel most powerless is the place God is inviting you to empty your hands to receive his transformative power to make a difference?

[ 17 : 12 ] You may be here with your marriage that's falling apart faster than you'd like to admit. The arguments keep circling. The passive aggression keeps building. And distance keeps growing.

But here's the hope. The same Jesus who gave power to raise the dead and authority to preach the kingdom will supply something that you cannot.

And that's for your benefit to rely upon him alone. And so I'll be honest, I don't know how to fix y'all's marriages, right? But I can time and time again point you to the one who can, right?

Empty your hands of control so you can cling to the one with all power and authority bestowed into your life. This is the reality that Luke is reinforcing here, church.

And guess what? The mighty work that was going on in the kingdom of God in this time period, it was pretty legit. Word was spreading, and we see this in verse 7.

[ 18 : 22 ] It became the talk of the town. Herod, the Tetrarch, heard about all that was happening, and he was perplexed. Some said John had been raised from the dead.

He got other birds chirping. Oh, Elijah's been raised. Other birds are chirping. No, others. They're the prophet. But Herod himself wondered, what in the world is going on?

He says, who is this? Not who are they, the disciples. Who is this? It's a singular reference to Jesus.

Who is Jesus? Do you hear, it church, the question that has never gone away even since this day?

This is the greatest question any person must answer and will answer, all of you, of who Jesus is.

[ 19 : 25 ] And notice Herod had all the evidence of power. He saw everything. But he had no category of where to put Jesus in. Isn't that true in our world today?

That people see changed lives. They see the baptismal being filled. They see all this stuff. They see marriages being restored, chains breaking. And they struggle to name the power that's behind it.

When sinners repent, when forgiveness flows, where bitterness once ruled, when enemies reconcile, this is the visible kingdom of God on full display.

And the world cannot explain it away. There's no way to explain it. They must reckon with Jesus Christ. They must. They must.

One behind both our salvation and also this ongoing sanctification. And if you're not in Christ today, you have to know that the most important thing you need to hear right now in your life is that you will reckon with Jesus Christ someday.

[ 20 : 44 ] There will come a time where you will have to give an account. I'm not a fire and brimstone preacher, but the word has a way of really doing a fire and brimstone work in our heart.

And we're better for it if we actually just open our ears and hear it. There will come a day where you will reckon this question.

Who is Jesus Christ? And the answer to that question is absolutely critical. That Jesus is the crucified, the risen, the reigning and returning Lord of all creation.

He is God. And don't miss this. Herod's question has to become your question. And the real issue isn't who do other people say about him, but what do you say about it?

Do you believe it? And I pray that today you begin that hard conversation with your soul of who Jesus Christ is today.

[ 21 : 52 ] We have the passage continuing sort of like changing momentum and changing scenes. Not only do we go from the empty hands with kingdom power, but also empty hands with kingdom provision.

And this continues in verse 10. The disciples returned from their mission. They reported to Jesus. They're saying like, Jesus, this was really cool.

Lives are being changed. Evil isn't having its way in people's lives. People are receiving forgiveness and freedom from sin. The drug addict is becoming clean again.

Hmm. So they all withdrew. And the disciples were obviously tired. Mark's account actually states it, that they were tired. It wasn't an important detail for Luke's emphasis.

But they withdrew to Bethsaida. But when the crowds found him, the disciples were like, oh, great. They found us. But Jesus welcomed them.

[ 23 : 01 ] And guess what Jesus did? He preached about the kingdom and he healed their sick. The disciples get a break. Jesus is saying, oh, I'll take this one.

And he did. Now this sets the stage for one of the greatest miracles Jesus performs. Beating the 5,000, which it's known as.

You can't help but notice how Luke places it immediately after Herod's question of who then is this?

It's almost as if Luke was writing, he had an intended audience to write to. Theophilus. So it's like Luke is saying, Theophilus, watch this.

Herod's asking, who then is this? He's saying, watch this. Take a look at this. Evening fell in verse 12. The disciples urged Jesus, well, send away the crowd.

[ 24 : 04 ] You know, that's good. You did your thing. We got to wrap things up, right? Because you're the mastermind that said not to bring anything with us. So we got to send them out, as it's stated here, so that they can find lodging and provisions, which we have not received.

And we're in a desolate place here. We got nothing. He sent us with nothing. In other words, we are empty-handed to serve, to provide.

It's important to note that this was not a suggestion that they were offering to Jesus. This is actually emphatic. This is a command to Jesus.

Imagine that. They were commanding Jesus, send them away. And almost like taking verse 3, what we saw, that itinerary, and like using that to weaponize against Jesus.

You sent us with nothing, Jesus. Here we are. How quickly their sense of spiritual power turned into presumption. Having it all together, reporting to Jesus everything that's happening.

[ 25 : 14 ] And now it's like, who are these guys? Did they wake up on the wrong side of the bed? How quickly their sense of spiritual power turned into presumption.

Yesterday they were casting out demons in his name, and today they're commanding him that they know better. Church, are we really any different?

Are we really any different? How many times has God provided for us? A thousand times, in a thousand ways. Yet at the next instance of difficulty, all of a sudden we panic and abandon our theology and orthodoxy.

We doubt. And even worse, we tell Jesus how to solve our problem. And I'm saying we.

Because I'm included in that. Okay? You see, it's in these moments of spiritual amnesia, like what I like to call it, that we must remember to let go of our presumption and to fall on our knees in submission to Jesus.

[ 26 : 32 ] Jesus does just that. He actually fires right back to the disciples here with their demand, and he gives them an actual command.

He said, you give them something to eat. I don't know the tone and everything that he used, but it was a command. However you command. I think of my kids like, you give them something.

I don't think he was yelling, but it was very, it had some thrust to it. Command. You give them something to eat. In other words, with such this emphatic force, Jesus pushes their inadequacy to the surface.

All of a sudden they're like, Jesus, we only have some fish and bread. You got 5,000 men, countless women, not to mention the children.

Children don't eat anyhow, right? Let's be honest. Parents, they want mac and cheese. Some parents do too. Gospel of John adds a little bit, even more tension as Andrew protests to Jesus.

[ 27 : 41 ] How far will these five loaves and two fish go for so many? We are inadequate. We are empty-handed. We are empty-handed.

We are empty-handed. We are empty-handed. I'm going to get a little fiery here, but whoever created the lie that God won't give you more than you can handle is a joke.

That is found nowhere in Scripture. He won't tempt you beyond, you know, right? That's in 1 Corinthians. That's important. That's good. But he will always give us more than we can handle.

Always. Whoever made that phrase, I didn't look it up. I don't care who wrote it. I just know it exists, and a lot of Christians believe it. And it's bad for your lies, bad for your sanctification.

Whoever wrote it needs a new Bible with a good, sound, orthodox commentary. That's it. Let's close in prayer.

[ 28 : 47 ] God will give us more than we can handle. We see here that God trains us like this in our faith. He will tell us to do something that we are inadequate to do.

Always. Always. God will always give us tasks beyond our strength to drive us to his sufficiency. I love Alexander McLaren, his great theologian.

If you don't have a commentary for him, go ahead on Amazon. I give you permission to go on your phone. Grab one. He says, It is often our duty to attempt tasks to which we are conspicuously inadequate.

Little tongue twister there. He says, In the confidence that he who gives them has laid them on us to drive us to himself and to find sufficiency.

He reinforces this fact here. And in so doing, Jesus, being flesh and blood, the Son of God, is here with the disciples, literally making echoes of Old Testament reenactments of Elijah in 2 Kings 4, verse 42 through 44.

[ 30 : 06 ] And even if you want to go to John's gospel, he really thrusts in the Moses in the wilderness imagery. But this time, the provider is standing in flesh and blood, reenacting an Old Testament illusion and proving the fact that, well, Herod, you had a good question.

Who is Jesus? Luke is saying, let me answer it for you. He is greater than Elijah. He is flesh and blood, the Son of God, in this direct reenactment.

Direct statements. He's greater than Moses. He's certainly greater than any person who has walked the face of this planet. In verse 16, Now the time of demonstration had come.

Jesus took the loaves and the fish, looked to heaven, blessed them, broke them, and gave them to the disciples to distribute.

Maybe I should emphasize that a little bit. He gave them. Gave them to the disciples to distribute.

[ 31 : 21 ] Although he commanded for the disciples to feed them, the means of the provision was through the hands of Jesus Christ. Maybe for clarity of the argument of this passage, is that Jesus Christ took the object of their doubt, the bread, the fish, took the object of their doubt, lifted it up, literally transformed it within his hands, and took their doubt, transformed their doubt, and gave them faith to provide.

Abundant provision, mind you. In other words, creation itself flowed from his hands.

The 5,000 men, and you all know, those men had some women, some ladies, right? Probably some kids, complaining about food. And they ate until they were satisfied.

They had plenty left over. Twelve baskets they filled up with leftovers. The all abundance of faith that derived from Christ's hand. As Herod's question, he's back saying, who is this?

Well, he's Lord over all. He's Lord over all. I love Colossians. It was one of the first series I preached through when I was brought to this assignment of pastorate.

[ 32 : 55 ] And Paul writes in Colossians 1, 16, for by him, all things were created in heaven and on earth. He's visible, invisible, whether thrones or dominions, or rulers or authorities.

All things were created through him and for him. Like, see that direction. It's all encompassing within the person of Jesus Christ.

Verse 17, he is before all things and in him, all things hold together. Who is this? He is Lord. He is Lord.

Here we stand church. We panic over diapers. We panic over diapers. Our doubts, it conquers our faith.

In these situations where we've exhausted our resources. We say to ourselves, I'm holding far less in my hand than this task requires.

[ 34 : 14 ] But maybe that's exactly where you need to be. Empty of us. And fulfilled in Christ.

Only what he has given us. Paul wrote in chapter 8, verse 32. He said, he who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for all of us.

Amen. How will he not also along with him graciously give us all things? Why today be the day when we give Jesus our doubts and allow his word to take them, to transform them, that your doubts are transformed into faith.

And faith is not something, right, that you muster then. It's something that's given to you. It's something that only Christ can give. Are you looking to Christ or are you consumed in your doubts?

See, Jesus Christ gives us everything needed to live for him and to serve his kingdom. Who is this?

[ 35 : 50 ] In faith we declare he is our king. He's our creator. He's our savior. Make this declaration personal, though.

Because you can sit on the sideline like Herod and be like, all right, this is cool. Is he your king? Is he your creator? Is he your savior?

I hope you realize, myself included in this, that our helpless estate is not unique in this life. It's going to hit us time and time again.

I'll need to go back to my sermon notes and in Luke chapter 9, remind myself that the next situation, whatever that might be, but he reminds us time and time again that he is sufficient in all things.

He is sufficient in all things. Jesus Christ remains sufficient today, whether you're in grief, whether you're in loneliness, or whether you're rejected or facing depression.

[ 36 : 55 ] Literally all things, he is sufficient. He is. And the sooner we realize that all things flow from his sufficiency, the sooner we experience the repair work that only that he can do.

Because he is God and we are not. He is sufficient. We are insufficient. Praise God for his sufficiency.

Let's pray.