

Broken, Given, and Set

Introduction

The Text

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.

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. 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. 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. ¹⁷ And they all ate and were satisfied. And what was left over was picked up, twelve baskets of broken pieces. (Luke 9:7–17)

Missiology and Christology

A. The story of Jesus’ feeding of the 5000 is the only miracle, apart from the resurrection, recorded in all four gospels. So clearly this event made its mark on the apostles and the early church.

1. And I’m praying that by the time we are done with it, it will have made its mark on us as well.

B. There are two very important subjects being developed in this text.

1. The first is carrying on from what we saw back in [Luke 9:1-6](#). We saw there that Jesus is now starting to include His own disciples, the church, in His mission and ministry. This text brings even more clarity to the partnership that’s being formed. As we shall see, it vividly depicts for us how His ministry relates to our own.

- a. It is this first subject, largely, that we shall be looking at this morning.

2. The second subject being developed here is carrying on from what we saw last week and read again this morning in [vv. 7-9](#). You recall that there is a swirling of opinions concerning Jesus’ identity. The question has loomed large over Luke’s gospel for quite some time now and the miracle in this text seems to bring significant clarity to the matter.

- a. It is this second subject that we shall give ourselves to in more detail next time.

C. Subject #1: Missiology—the mission of the church. Subject #2: Christology—the person and work of Jesus Christ.

1. Today, we pick up the missiology piece. We're going to move verse by verse and I'm going to organize my thoughts under the following four headings: (1) A Perplexing Question (vv. 7-9); (2) A Welcome Interruption (vv. 10-11); (3) A Stubborn Amnesia (v. 12); and (4) A Satisfying Savior (vv. 13-17).

(1) A Perplexing Question (vv. 7-9)

For the Fame of His Name

A. At the beginning of v. 7 we read: "Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was happening, and he was perplexed . . ." The essence of his perplexity: "Who is this Jesus I keep hearing about?"

1. Presumably, Herod has heard of Jesus because of the apostolic mission just outlined for us in vv. 1-6. Luke tells us there in v. 6 that they "went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere."

- a. And now, it seems, such commotion has been stirred by these twelve that news about Jesus has reached even the palace.

B. Now the only thing I want to bring out this time around is the fact that Herod is asking this question concerning Jesus' name and identity at all.

1. One might think that, if it were the activity of the twelve that was causing such commotion, perhaps he would be asking about the names and identities of the twelve. They were the ones preaching, they were the ones healing, in all of those villages. Not Jesus.

C. But, you see, (and here's the critical point) the twelve, it would seem, though they were "doing" the work, they refused to take the credit. They were jealous to help people make the connection between the healings, the casting out of demons, the miracles, the power, the love that they demonstrated and the One truly behind it all: namely, Jesus.

1. They would not let you think this had anything to do with them. So, after all their labor, after all their ministry, only one name is left lingering in people's minds.

- a. That's why Matthew begins his version of this story like this: "At that time Herod the tetrarch heard about the fame of Jesus" (Matt 14:1). They lived to make Jesus famous.

D. I'm reminded of Peter in Acts 3, when, just outside the temple, he heals that man who's been lame from birth. When the people saw this man "walking and leaping and praising God" (v. 8), Luke tells us that they were "utterly astounded" (v. 11).

1. But then we read this in vv. 12-16: “¹² [W]hen Peter saw it he addressed the people: ‘Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk?¹³ . . . the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus . . .¹⁶ And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong . . .’”
 - a. The crowd is wondering at the apostles—staring at them in awe. But Peter won’t have it! There is one name responsible for what you’ve seen here . . . Jesus!

How about Us?

- A. And so the question for us is this: When people look upon the business and activity of your everyday life, do they make this connection?
 1. When they see the love you have for others, the peace you have in trial, the power you walk in, are they brought to trace it back to Christ as the source? Are they left with one name lingering in their minds? Is Jesus made famous?

(2) A Welcome Interruption (vv. 10-11)

When Jesus Heard This, He Withdrew

- A. In v. 10, we read that the apostles return from their mission and Jesus takes them away to a desolate place for a little R and R—a little recovery time, it would seem.
- B. But, again the parallel accounts bring out something that I could not bear to skip over. In Matthew’s gospel, we’re told a little bit more about why Jesus withdrew with His disciples here.
 1. You see, in between Herod’s questioning and Jesus’ withdrawing, Matthew recounts the story of John the Baptist’s death—how Herod locked John up for calling out his unlawful marriage to his brother’s wife, and how Herod ultimately ends up calling for John’s head to be brought to him on a platter. He had him executed in the most grisly of ways.
 - a. And then in [Matt 14:12](#) we read this: “[And his \[John’s\] disciples came and took the body and buried it, and they went and told Jesus.](#)”
- C. And it’s with this background in view that Matthew goes on in v. 13 to write: “[Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place . . .](#)”
 1. So it’s not just R and R here. It’s anguish of soul. John the Baptist was His cousin, His friend, His forerunner. John’s murder would’ve stabbed at our Savior on multiple levels.
- D. Not only did Jesus lose a loved one. He also saw in John’s death a harbinger of a similar end coming for Him in the cross.
 1. Herod who stood over the corpse of John will also stand over the corpse of Jesus: “[\[T\]ruly in this city \[Jerusalem\] there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate . . .](#)” ([Acts 4:27](#)).

- a. In the beheading of John, He could see the cross of Calvary. Stuff's getting real for Jesus at this point. "I've got to get away for a little while."

He Welcomed Them

- A. And I go into all of this simply to accentuate the profundity of what happens next in v. 11 of our text: "¹¹When the crowds learned it [i.e. that He'd withdrawn to a desolate place], they followed him, and he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God and cured those who had need of healing."
 1. The Greek word translated here "welcomed", *apodechomai*, means: "to receive someone favorably" (BDAG). And that just blew me away!
- B. With the shadow of the cross moving now over our Savior, with death now showing its fangs, He does not bend inward with self-concern or self-pity, rather He continues entrusting Himself to His Father and bends outward with concern and compassion for others.
 1. In fact, Matthew, in his account, would go on to say just this: "He had compassion on them" (Matt 14:14). In the midst of personal anguish, His heart gushes with love for us.
 - a. This crowd is not an interruption of His plans or needs. He's happy to see them!
- C. Do you ever feel like you're interrupting God—like your needs, your fears, your brokenness is a bother to Him? Let me tell you something: If Jesus wasn't bothered by the needs of people on this day of His great anguish, He won't be bothered by you . . . ever.
 1. He welcomes the interruption. He's happy to see you.

How About Us?

- A. Now the implication here for the church's mission is plain. If Jesus is so approachable, even in His pain, so compassionate and welcoming, even in His own dark night of the soul, are we?
 1. Are we so busy caring for ourselves that we feel we have no time to care for anyone else? Do we welcome interruptions, intrusions into what we've planned, into what we think we need?
- B. This is the kind of person He is making us to be more and more by His Spirit—freed of self-concern and gushing with compassion for others. This is what we watch Him now trying to develop in His disciples as we move forward in the text.

A Stubborn Amnesia (v. 12)

A Tragic Theme

- A. As we come to v. 12, we come to face what I would call A Stubborn Amnesia. It's this tragic theme that runs not just through the gospels but through the entire narrative of the Bible. Fallen man is plagued with forgetfulness.

1. God does something marvelous, the people revel in it for a few hours, a few days, maybe a few weeks, and then they proceed resolutely to forget it ever happened.
 - a. When the next crisis strikes, they act as if God can't help them, as if God has even, perhaps, abandoned them.
- B. This is why God sets up so much in Israel that really just seems like elaborate memory aids.
 1. He shapes the calendar with Sabbaths, feasts, and festivals so that they'll remember things like the Exodus and the wilderness wandering and His faithfulness to them through it all?
 2. Here's one interesting thing He has them do. Do you remember how God provided Israel with manna during their wilderness wandering—bread from heaven? Well, God says in [Exo 16](#): "Listen. Here's what I want you to do. Take a little bit of that manna and keep it in a jar and place it by the tablets in the ark. I want you to have evidence of it always before you. Because I know about your amnesia. You're going to forget about My provision in the wilderness. You're going to forget that I'm here to help."

Send the Crowd Away

- A. And that's exactly what's happening here in [v. 12](#) of our text: "[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.'"
- B. So you've got hungry people and a desolate place. You don't think Jesus can work with this?
 1. These guys have watched Him raise the dead.
 2. In fact, [v. 11](#) tells us that He's been working miracles right there in front of them. That's why the day is wearing away. Jesus has spent the great majority of it "[cur\[ing\] those who \[have\] need of healing.](#)"
- C. And yet, here they are, certain that the only thing left to do with these people is send them away to get food and shelter. They don't even ask Jesus what He thinks. They don't even seem to think He can do much about the situation. It's a stubborn amnesia.

How about Us?

- A. And it's in us as well. Think of God's faithfulness to you. Think of your own Exodus—when God brought you out of slavery. Think of your own wilderness wandering—where God sustained you and kept you and was faithful to you even when you felt like you were forgotten. And, behind all of this, think of the cross where God demonstrated His own unswerving, unrelenting love for you.
 1. And yet, when the next crisis strikes, when life gets hard, are we not also prone to think God doesn't have much to offer? I better look for help elsewhere?
 2. And, God forbid, if there are others in our lives who find themselves in the wilderness, people we are called to bring to Christ—God forbid we should see their situation, their

need, and send them away from Him, as if Jesus can't help. "You need counseling . . . you need education . . . you need medicine . . . you need a better job . . ."

- a. And you might need some of these things, but before any of this, you need Jesus!

A Satisfying Savior (vv. 13-17)

You Give Them Something to Eat

- A. Now, Jesus knows that anyone who wants to be God's missionary will be tried on this point. So He doesn't let His disciples get away with this: "But he said to them, 'You give them something to eat'" (v. 13a). "Okay, so you see the need. Don't send them away. You meet it."
 1. Now, to be clear: This is not Jesus shirking responsibility. Nor is He asking the disciples to come up with something in and of themselves. No! This is training.
 2. John, in his account of this, makes this plain: "[Jesus] said this to test [them], for he himself knew what he would do" (John 6:6). He knows where this is going, but He wants His disciples to come along with Him.
 - a. Do you want to know what I think He wants? He wants their compassion to exceed their capacity. He wants their hearts to break for these people in such a way that they are sent as beggars to God on their behalf: "God I can't meet this need, but You can! Would You do it for them? Would You do it even through me?" That's the lesson here. That's the test.
- B. And they fail: "^{13b}They said, 'We have no more than five loaves and two fish—unless we are to go and buy food for all these people.' ^{14a}For there were about five thousand men" (vv. 13b-14a).
 1. The command to give the crowd food necessarily sends the disciples searching for resources. But they make the grave error we are all so prone to make. They look out at the need and immediately look in at themselves. "Well, I don't have the resources for this."
- C. But, in all their looking out and looking in, they forgot the most important look of all. It is the one that Jesus reintroduces them to in v. 16: "[T]aking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven . . ."
 1. "I know you see the great need in front of you. And I know you see the great shortage inside of you, but look up—look up and you shall find the great supply, from our Father in heaven."
- D. Jesus looks up, blesses, breaks, gives, and the disciples set the meal before the masses . . . "And they all ate and were satisfied" (v. 17a).
 1. Even the twelve apostles it seems were well provided for. I think that's the meaning of the twelve baskets of broken pieces that were left over (v. 17b). God doesn't forget His

servants. We don't have to take care of ourselves at the neglect of others. God will take care of us.

- a. The twelve didn't just get to eat, they went home with the leftovers. Did you catch that? There's bread and fish in the fridge.
- E. It's what Isaiah's talking about in Isa 58:10-11: “¹⁰ if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. ¹¹ And the Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.”
1. “I thought I'm pouring myself out?” Yeah, you are, but, all the while, God is pouring into you. “I thought I was feeding these people?” Yeah, you were, but, all the while, God is feeding you . . . satisfying you.

A Vivid Picture

- A. Now, I don't think God has anywhere given us a more vivid picture of what it means to be His ministers, His missionaries.
1. We'll see next time that the bread and fish broken really come to symbolize His body broken so that sinners might live. We're not just talking about food here but the grace of the gospel, the crucified One.
 - a. Jesus breaks, gives, and we just get to set what He's accomplished before others.
- B. It's amazing! The “you” of v. 13 really does come back around here in v. 16. The disciples would, in fact, be the ones to actually give the crowd something to eat. They “set” the bread and fish before each person.
1. But don't you see?! Though this gracious portion comes through us it is not ultimately from us. As Christians, as God's missionaries, we get the privilege of distributing that which only Christ can produce. That is the essence of ministry.

Who Is Sufficient for These Things?

- A. There is great encouragement for us here. I don't know if you've ever felt insufficient for the ministry you've been called to—whether to neighbor, or coworker, or church, or child.
- B. Perhaps it would encourage you to know that Paul the apostle felt the same.
1. In 2 Cor 2:16, as he's considering the work of gospel ministry, it's as if he just erupts with the question: “Who is sufficient for these things?” The implicit answer is no one.
 2. But he goes on to write this in 3:4-6a: “⁴Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. ⁵Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant . . .”

3. And later, in 4:7 we read: “[W]e have this treasure [the gospel] in jars of clay [you and I], to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.”
- C. Do you feel insufficient? Do you feel like a broken vessel? Do you look out and look in and feel like you don’t have the resources for this Christian missionary life?
1. Brother/sister: Look up! He who was broken for you, is giving Himself to you. He will supply what you need to set before the crowd.