

Every day there is only one question you need to answer:

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 - It is the most practical question you have because it will change every decision, every relationship, every emotion.

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 - It will determine:
 - Whether you live out of a mindset of scarcity or generosity
 - Whether you live out of fear or joy
 - Whether you use the people around you to get what you need/want or whether you serve the people around you out of selfless love.

Does that seem silly?

- Maybe you've been a professing Christian for years
- Maybe you don't doubt the Bible and you always go to church and profess your faith
- Maybe you've made costly sacrifices for the church and this world
- Maybe you're a minister and it's your job!

A deeper test

- Is my emotional world marked by joy, peace, stability, and an abiding hope?
 - Rather than fear, anxiety, and worry
- Is my behavior marked by generosity and self-giving love?
 - Rather than a need to settle scores and make people behave as they should or a frenzied, destructive pursuit to meet my own felt and perceived needs.

A deeper test

- Do I love God for his goodness and beauty more than his usefulness to give to me the things I want or to make things the way I want them to be?
- Is my prayer life dominated by and motivated by adoration of God's goodness rather than a frenzied desire for temporal blessings or fixes?

Maybe you fail all these tests...

- I've got such good news for you
 - God's ability to save you is not dependent upon your moral or spiritual performance

Maybe you fail all these tests...

- I've got such good news for you
 - God's ability to save you is not dependent upon your moral or spiritual performance
 - In his overwhelming generosity he has already moved towards you and wants you to join in his own abundant life that he will give you merely for the asking

Every day there is only one question you need to answer:

- “Will I believe the Gospel today?”

What are we doing here?

- We worship to train our hearts to believe what we profess
- We encourage and reinforce our belief with each other
- We hear the Gospel from the Bible to help us to believe and tamp down our unbelief

Our problem

- We live in a wilderness of decay
 - Everything we have we will lose
- Even our hearts are curved in on themselves
 - We are constantly viewing the world in relation to ourselves, distorting our ability to see the truth and love each other

Jesus has come to rescue us from our bondage to both!

Spirit of the LORD is upon me,
for he has anointed me:

To preach good news to the poor he has sent me:

To proclaim for the captives release,
and to the blind sight

To send forth the oppressed in release;

To proclaim the year of the LORD's favor.

Translation by Joel Green

He rolled up the scroll, gave it to the attendant, sat down,
all eyes fixed on him...

"Today is fulfilled this scripture in your hearing"

Our last two Sundays

Jesus delegates
this proclamation
and sampling to his
disciples

Herod, represents us
as being confused and
distorted by his heart
curved inward

Luke 9:1-6 (NRSV)

Then Jesus 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. He said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there, and leave from there. Wherever they do not welcome you, as you are leaving that town shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them." They departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere.

Luke 9:7-9 (NRSV)

Now Herod the ruler heard about all that had taken place, 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 ancient prophets had arisen. Herod said, "John I beheaded; but who is this about whom I hear such things?" And he tried to see him.

Jesus wants to debrief them and build on their faith building short term mission trip

Luke 9:10 (NRSV)

On their return the apostles told Jesus all they had done. He took them with him and withdrew privately to a city called Bethsaida.

But life intervened and Jesus responded in grace

Luke 9:10-11 (NRSV)

On their return the apostles told Jesus all they had done. He took them with him and withdrew privately to a city called Bethsaida. When the crowds found out about it, they followed him; and he welcomed them, and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed to be cured.

Luke 9:12-17 (NRSV)

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."

Luke 9:12-17 (NRSV)

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."

- The disciples are probably tired and annoyed
- They just came back from their wonder-working short term missions trip but their mind immediately perceives the expedient obstacle and the practical solution

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- They are missing the Biblical resonance
- Think Old Testament:
 - God has come to save his people
 - He is announcing salvation and healing them in the wilderness
 - The multitude has nothing to eat
 - The disciples kind of say "There was food in Egypt!"
 - How will God respond?

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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.

Did the disciples believe?

- They had just done this miracle laden announcing throughout the region
- Jesus was receiving them back for more quiet, acceptance time with them
- Here they once again automatically assume: "Jesus can't do anything about this."

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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.**

What happened?

- Jesus gave them yet another sample of what the end of the age of decay means.
- Jesus proved to them that he can give them life in this wilderness of decay
- Jesus just stepped into God the Father's role of feeding his people in the wilderness

Cultural moment

- If you are a first century observant Jew, you don't just sit down with anyone and eat with them!
- Here Jesus sets a table before the masses regardless of their ethnicity, their ceremonial status, the condition of their hearts.

Not just Exodus...

Isaiah 25:6-9 (NRSV)

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.

And he will destroy on this mountain
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,
the sheet that is spread over all nations;
he will swallow up death forever.

Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces,
and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth,
for the Lord has spoken.

It will be said on that day,

Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.

This is the Lord for whom we have waited;

let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Why doesn't it work?

- The age of decay is still with us
- I still live in anxiety, fear, anger
- Loss is still a brutal reality!

Faith

- Belief is more than profession, it is something that
 - Embraces all of life
 - Is personal
 - Grips the heart, is compelling
 - Just like but opposite all the things that powerfully attract you or make you afraid or anxious

This deliverance is free, but personal and costly

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How can I know this comfort and joy?

- Face fully your participation in this decay
- See the costliness of the deliverance that was purchased for you
- If you know the cost, and you see it paid, the gratitude and joy will rework you from the inside out!

The Table of Plenty

