

Luke Chapters 8-9: Jesus Feeds Five Thousand

From the Theology of Work Bible Commentary on Luke

Throughout Luke, Jesus teaches that living in God's kingdom means looking to God, rather than human effort, as the ultimate source of the things we need for life. Our labor is not optional, but neither is it absolute. Our labor is always a participation in the grace of God's provision.

Jesus demonstrates this in actions before he teaches it in words. In the feeding of the five thousand (Luke 9:10-17), God, in the person of Jesus, takes responsibility for meeting the crowd's need for food. He does it because they are hungry. Exactly how Jesus works this miracle is not stated. He makes use of ordinary food — the five loaves of bread and two fish — and by God's power, a little bit of food becomes enough to feed so many people. Some of Jesus' disciples (the fisherman) were in the food service profession and others (e.g., Levi the tax collector) were in civil service. He employs their accustomed labor, as they organize the crowd and serve the bread and fish. Jesus incorporates, rather than replaces, the ordinary human means of providing food, and the results are miraculously successful.

Human work is capable of doing good or doing harm. When we do as Jesus directs, our work is good. As we so often see in the Gospel of Luke, God brings miraculous results out of ordinary work—in this case, the work of providing the necessities of life.