

MARK 8:1-9a

LORDLY PROVISION

¹ During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, ² "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. ³ If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance." ⁴ His disciples answered, "But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?" ⁵ "How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked. "Seven," they replied. ⁶ He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people, and they did so. ⁷ They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. ⁸ The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ⁹ About four thousand men were present.

The missionary Hudson Taylor is often quoted to the effect that God's work done in God's way cannot fail to have God's provision. Another way of stating this is to say that, although our disobedience can be an impediment to our fulfilling God's will, our lack of resources is not. When we are working for the Sovereign Creator, who created all there is, turned water into wine and has power even over death, why are we so easily thwarted by the specter of a lack of resources?

What are seven loaves and, "Oh by the way," a few small fish in the face of the need to feed 4000 men? If God is directing you to do it... plenty!

However, to avoid presumption, there are several things we need to keep in mind. First, the discernment of God's will was not a problem in this event. Jesus gathered them and told them directly. Second, this episode is specifically a lesson about who Jesus is and not a road map for ministry. Third, the disciples knew the cost, their answer was not "Whatever," or "You can do it, Jesus." Rather, they acknowledged their inadequacy before the problem. Fourth, they had made provision for themselves, and therefore, had the basic resources that Jesus could multiply. Remember, it is not my ministry done in God's name will be automatically supported by God. What we learn from Scripture is that when we are called by God to a particular kingdom task, we are to acknowledge the cost and our inadequacy, and then offer to God what we have and what we can gather as an act of faith that he will provide.

Lord, grow my faith in your provision, but protect me from becoming presumptuous. Make me ever mindful of my need to constantly be discerning between what is my will and what is yours. Help me to seek the corporate discernment of your community the church and of other spiritual leaders. Open my mind to the true cost and grow my faith so that I might seek your will in meeting the need. Amen