

Luke 9:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals: for we are here in a desert place.

Analysis

And when the day began to wear away (ἡ δὲ ἡμέρα ἥρξατο κλίνειν, hē de hēmera ērxato klinein)—literally "the day began to decline," indicating late afternoon approaching evening. **Then came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away**—The disciples' request seems reasonable: it's getting late, people need food and lodging, and this is a remote area. Their logic is purely practical.

That they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals (ἵνα πορευθέντες εἰς τὰς κύκλως κώμας καὶ ἀγροὺς καταλύσωσιν καὶ εὑρωσιν ἐπισιτισμόν, hina poreuthentes eis tas kyklō kōmas kai agrous katalysōsin kai heurōsin episitismōn)—The disciples propose dispersing the crowd to nearby villages for shelter and food. **For we are here in a desert place** (ὅτι ὡδε ἐν ἐρήμῳ τόπῳ ἐσμέν, hoti hōde en erēmō topō esmen)—the Greek erēmos means uninhabited, not necessarily arid. Their assessment is accurate but incomplete—they see the problem clearly but haven't yet learned to look to Jesus for impossible solutions. This sets up the miracle: Jesus will demonstrate that His resources are unlimited.

Historical Context

The disciples' concern reflects practical realities of first-century Palestine. Villages were scattered across Galilee, and travelers needed to reach them before nightfall for safety and hospitality. Food wasn't available in uninhabited areas—no restaurants or stores existed. The crowd numbered about 5,000 men (v. 14), plus women and children, possibly 10,000-15,000 total. Feeding such a multitude seemed impossible, yet Jesus had just taught them about the kingdom of God—and the kingdom operates by different rules than earthly logic.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How do the disciples' reasonable-sounding concerns reveal a failure to grasp Jesus's power and resources?
2. In what situations do you tend to see problems clearly but fail to look to Christ for solutions beyond natural means?
3. What does this passage teach about the relationship between human logic and divine provision in addressing seemingly impossible needs?

Interlinear Text

Ἐν δὲ ἡμέρᾳ ἥρξατο κλίνειν· προσελθόντες δὲ οἱ
G3588 And when the day began to wear away
G1161 G2250 G756 G2827 G4334
δώδεκα εἶπον αὐτῷ Ἀπόλυσον τὸν ὄχλον ἵνα
the twelve and said unto him Send the multitude that
G1427 G2036 G846 G630 G3588 G3793 G2443
ἀπελθόντες εἰς τὰς κύκλως κώμας καὶ τοῦς ἀγροὺς
they may go into round about the towns and G3588 G68
G565 G1519 G2945 G2968 G2532 G3588 G68
καταλύσωσιν καὶ εῦρωσιν ἐπισιτισμόν ὅτι ὕδε ἐν
and lodge and get victuals for here in
G2647 G2532 G2147 G1979 G3754 G5602 G1722
ἐρήμῳ τόπῳ ἐσμέν
a desert place we are
G2048 G5117 G2070

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 15:23 (Parallel theme): But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.

Hosea 13:5 (Parallel theme): I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.