

Mark 6:36

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat.

Analysis

Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat. The disciples propose human solution to the crisis: dismiss the crowds. 'Send them away' (ἀπόλυσον αὐτούς, apolyson autous) suggests dispersing the multitude. Their plan: 'that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages' (ἵνα ἀπελθόντες εἰς τοὺς κύκλῳ ἀγροὺς καὶ κώμας, hina apelthontes eis tous kyklō agrous kai kōmas)—people would find their own food in surrounding farmsteads and villages. 'Buy themselves bread' (ἀγοράσωσιν ἑαυτοῖς ἄρτους, agorasōsin heautois artous) assumes they had money for purchases. The rationale: 'they have nothing to eat' (οὐκ ἔχουσιν τί φάγωσιν, ouk echousin ti phagōsin)—recognizing real need but proposing self-provision as solution. The disciples' suggestion was logical but faithless. They failed to consider that Jesus, who had just taught thousands and performed countless miracles, could provide. This illustrates how even Christ's closest followers can default to natural thinking despite supernatural power's presence. Reformed theology teaches that faith must constantly battle natural reason's tendency to exclude divine possibility.

Historical Context

The suggestion to 'buy themselves bread' assumed several things: the crowds had money, nearby villages had sufficient food supplies for thousands, and dispersing was more appropriate than Jesus providing. Ancient village economies couldn't

suddenly accommodate thousands of buyers—most families produced their own bread daily, with minimal surplus. The disciples' plan, while superficially reasonable, would have created chaos: thousands descending on small villages, competing for limited food, traveling in darkness. Their failure to consider asking Jesus for provision reveals how quickly even devoted disciples forget divine power when facing practical crises. Matthew's account specifies the crowd numbered 5000 men, besides women and children (Matthew 14:21)—possibly 15,000-20,000 people total. No village economy could feed such numbers. Early church fathers noted the disciples' pattern: repeatedly witnessing miracles yet doubting when new challenges arose. This mirrors Christian experience: past testimonies of God's faithfulness often forgotten when present crisis arrives. The cure is remembering God's character and past provision when facing new impossibilities.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does the disciples' plan to 'send them away' to buy their own food reflect our tendency to default to self-provision rather than depending on God's miraculous supply?
2. What does this episode teach about how quickly we forget God's past faithfulness when facing new challenges?

Interlinear Text

ἀπόλυσον	αὐτούς	ἵνα	ἀπελθόντες	εἰς	τοὺς	κύκλῳ
Send	them	that	they may go	into	round about	
G630	G846	G2443	G565	G1519	G3588	G2945
ἀγροὺς	καὶ	κώμας	ἀγοράσωσιν	ἐαυτοῖς	ἄρτους	
the country	and	into the villages	and buy	themselves	bread	
G68	G2532	G2968	G59	G1438	G740	
τί	γὰρ	φάγωσιν	οὐκ	ἔχουσιν		
nothing	for	to eat		they have		
G5101	G1063	G5315	G3756	G2192		

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.

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