

# Signs & Wonders

Dr. Amy-Jill Levine

## SESSION 3

The Feeding of the Five Thousand (or More)  
Luke 9:10-17

### OPENING

**Share** a memory of a magnificent meal you enjoyed.

**Question:** As you think about the scriptures, what is your favorite Bible story that involves a meal?

### REMEMBERING THE STORIES

**Scripture:** 1st Kings 17:1-16

**ONE:** Elijah left and went to Zarephath. As he came to the town gate, he saw a widow collecting sticks. He called out to her, "Please get a little water for me in this cup so I can drink."

**ALL:** She went to get some water. He then said to her, "Please get me a piece of bread." "As surely as the LORD your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any food; only a handful of flour in a jar and a bit of oil in a bottle. Look at me. I'm collecting two sticks so that I can make some food for myself and my son. We'll eat the last of the food and then die."

**ONE:** Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid! Go and do what you said. Only make a little loaf of bread for me first. Then bring it to me. You can make something for yourself and your son after that."

**ALL:** This is what Israel's God, the LORD, says: The jar of flour won't decrease and the bottle of oil won't run out until the day the LORD sends rain on the earth."

**ONE:** The widow went and did what Elijah said. So the widow, Elijah, and the widow's household ate for many days.

**ALL:** The jar of flour didn't decrease nor did the bottle of oil run out, just as the LORD spoke through Elijah.

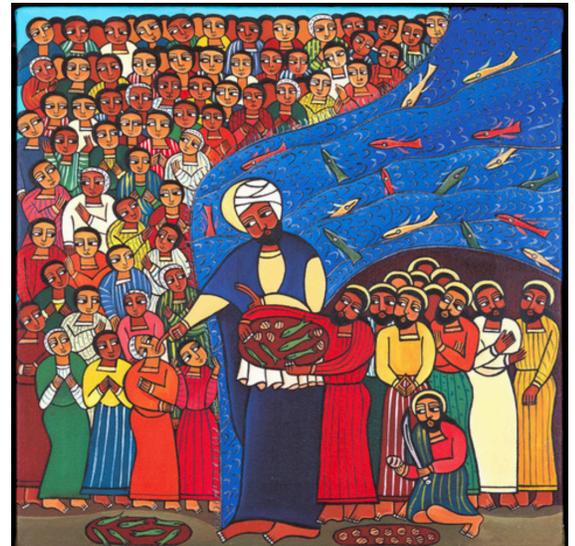
**Question:** What stands out to you in that story? Why?

**Shocking Words:**

---

---

---



## **FOCUS PASSAGE**

**Scripture:** Luke 9:10-17

When the apostles returned, they described for Jesus what they had done. Taking them with him, Jesus withdrew privately to a city called Bethsaida. When the crowds figured it out, they followed him. He welcomed them, spoke to them about God's kingdom, and healed those who were sick. When the day was almost over, the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so that they can go to the nearby villages and countryside and find lodging and food, because we are in a deserted place." He replied, "You give them something to eat." But they said, "We have no more than five loaves of bread and two fish—unless we go and buy food for all these people." (They said this because about five thousand men were present.) Jesus said to his disciples, "Seat them in groups of about fifty." They did so, and everyone was seated. He took the five loaves and the two fish, looked up to heaven, blessed them, and broke them and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. Everyone ate until they were full, and the disciples filled twelve baskets with the leftovers.

---

## **THINKING ABOUT CONTEXT**

**Question:** What are the two stories right before the Feeding of the 5000?

**Follow-up:** How might they interact with the Feeding of the 5000?

## **VIDEO**

---

## **GOING INTO THE MIRACLE**

**Question:** What do you make of the Eucharist language in the miracle story (also appears in the story referred to as the Road to Emmaus)?

**In the Book, AJ writes:** (referring to the feeding of the Israelites during the Exodus) Manna exists in various forms including plant sap that oozes out of the leaves of a tamarisk tree after bugs have bitten into them, or the excretions of the bugs that eat the sap. Manna or "bread from heaven" sounds much better than bug poop.

**Thought:** A miracle could be our eyes being opened to the miraculous generosity of nature.

**Question:** Do you agree?

**History:** During the first Jewish revolt against Rome in 66–70 **CE/AD**, there are stories of storehouses of food in and around Jerusalem being burned, and the Romans using the lack of food as a tool of war as they closed off the city and waited. Famine and hunger can come after a natural disaster or because human beings make poor choices.

**Listening for Tone:** In the story, Jesus said to the disciples, "You give them something to eat." But they said, "We have no more than five loaves of bread and two fish—unless we go and buy food for all these people."

**Questions:** What's the tone in Jesus's voice? In the response of the disciples? How does that compare to the widow in the Elijah story?

---

### **LOOKING AT NUMBERS**

**Interesting:** The final sentence of the story says, "Everyone ate until they were full, and the disciples filled twelve baskets with the leftovers."

**In the Book, AJ writes:** about how she does not believe there is any symbolism in the numbers.

**Alternative:** First of all, what does it mean that there were leftovers? The number twelve (12 tribes, 12 disciples) has often been associated with the notion of *ALL* or *ENOUGH*. For a first century Christian, how might that sentence be heard?

---

**In the Book, AJ writes:** Jesus's command, "You give them something to eat," is both direct and opaque. The disciples wanted Jesus to do something, as they did in the boat. They do not want, or do not think, they have the capacity to do anything for the crowds. But these are the same people who had reported to Jesus about their successful mission, which would have included the experience of the hospitality of strangers. More, that successful mission included their own doing of miracles.

**Interesting:** In the story of the Feeding of the 5,000, there is no specific place where it says the bread and fish were multiplied. The assumption is that multiplication occurred when Jesus offered the Eucharistic language, but it does not specifically say that.

**Question:** What is our participation in miracles beyond simply being wowed?

**Follow-up:** Is there a process that could be implied? Or to say it another way, does Jesus create the possibility, but it is only in the faithfulness of the disciples taking the food to the hungry groups that enough was created?

**For Cypress Creek:** Where are we participating in God-like miracles?