

Luke 9:14–17

Sermon: **The Idea is More Real Than the Created**

written by Danijel Dragaš

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INTRODUCTION

1. Let us recall: Jesus decided to leave His region for a while because of King Herod. The people saw through His plan and followed Him. When Jesus reached the other side of the shore, He began again to preach about the Kingdom of God to the very same people.

1.1. Since everyone suddenly followed Jesus, no one thought to bring food or water. The preaching lasted until late in the day, during which the disciples told Jesus to send the people away so they could find food and drink for themselves and their families, and eventually a place to rest.

1.2. After their suggestion, Jesus told them to feed the people themselves. The disciples were confused by His command, but as I said in the previous sermon: Jesus knew exactly what He was about to do — He just wanted His disciples to prepare their hearts for what would happen next. In other words, Jesus was testing His disciples with the intent of strengthening and deepening the faith they already had in Him.

1.3. Alright, let's slowly move into the text:

2. In **Luke 9:14–17** it says: **There were about five thousand men. He said to His disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each."** The disciples did so, and everyone sat down. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He gave thanks and broke them. Then He gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

2.1. In **Mark 6:38–44** it says: **"How many loaves do you have?" He asked. "Go and see."** When they found out, they said, **"Five — and two fish."** Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and

fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then He gave them to His disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. The number of men who had eaten was five thousand.

THE IDEA IS MORE REAL THAN THE CREATED (THE MATERIAL)

2.2. “We have only five loaves of bread and two fish,” the disciples replied.

2.3. Why does Jesus ask them to count the food? I think there are two reasons:

1)The first is so that He could do the next thing — give thanks to God the Father, in front of everyone, for the food they had and for what God was about to do.

2)The second is so that the disciples and everyone else would understand the exact amount of food that was created in that moment directly by God’s action. That mathematical comparison — if we can call it that — must have shocked them as they watched more bread and fish coming from Jesus’ hands, and then into the hands of the disciples who passed them out to the crowd. This was a supernatural miracle in which everyone present participated and from which they personally benefited.

2.4. It is easy to read this text and say: “*Well, Jesus and God the Father are actually like all the other gods we’ve heard about throughout history.*” And what do I mean by that? Since the days of polytheism¹, there has been a belief that the gods in the heavens can create — but only if they take something material to create or multiply their own material. Even today, that idea lingers in our thinking, even if some won’t admit it. In other words, Greek and Roman thought from the Early and Late Ancient Ages² is still with us, I believe.

3. Maybe what I just wrote above has nothing to do with the event in Luke, but I will still take the opportunity to try to convince you of one biblical truth that, in my opinion, is the MOST IMPORTANT to know.

¹ Polytheism, or the belief in many gods, is a faith in more than one deity. It is an older form of religion than monotheism. It arose from primitive totemism and animism, through the personification of the forces and phenomena of nature. Highly developed polytheistic religions—most notably the Greek and Roman—are referred to as mythologies. Today, there are no major polytheistic religions; only traditional beliefs remain. The only larger polytheistic religions are the Japanese faith of Shintoism, founded on the veneration of nature and ancestors, and Hinduism.

² Early Antiquity: 3500 BC – Late Antiquity: 0 – 476 AD. Early Antiquity is generally considered to be the period in which the most powerful civilizations were Ancient Greece, Egypt, and the Asian states (Persia and Mesopotamia, as well as Ancient China and Ancient India). Late Antiquity is the period in which Greek power gradually declined, while the power of the Roman Empire grew, along with the overall strengthening of monarchies in Europe, where many tribes existed at the time (the Germanic peoples, Angles, Saxons...). In this period, Christianity also gained strength, despite the resistance of some Roman emperors—resistance which ultimately failed.

3.1. Long ago, in the time of polytheism, people believed that there were forces (gods) in the heavens whose actions influenced our reality. These forces could bring blessings, but also curses. By blessings, I mean: they gave us the sun to warm us and grow our fields of grain, gave our mothers fertility to bear children, gave us rain so that drought would not destroy our crops, and so on. On the other hand, they brought curses: wars, storms that destroyed crops, diseases, poverty, and so forth. Yet, through it all, humans always believed that the heavenly gods needed — like the wizard Merlin with his ingredients to make a magic potion — their own “ingredients” in order to create something. In other words, they needed the material in order to create their own material.

My question is: Where did humans get the idea that a heavenly god operates that way? The answer is actually simple: humans have always made gods in their own image. I’ll give you two out of thousands of examples:



Image 1.
The Babylonian god named Marduk: Marduk is the son of the god Ea; according to the myth, he created the entire universe and man from his own flesh.



Image 2.
The Roman god Jupiter: Jupiter is the chief Roman deity. With his immense power, he is said to rule over the light and the sky.

3.2. You see, in the time of polytheism, people believed that there were heavenly beings — humanlike — who ruled over humanity on earth. They had no concept that God could exist outside the time and matter in which they themselves lived. My question is: How did they come to such conclusions? Let me explain with a simple example: “*If I need wood to make a boat, then the god must need His material to create this or that!*” — so thought the person in the age of polytheism.

3.3. And if I look through those lenses, it’s not entirely crazy, is it? Personally, I love carpentry, and for several years I’ve been making different kinds of furniture from wood, but I need wood to create a lounge chair, a table, a bed... right? In other words, I need the material to create my own material.

3.4. But the biblical perspective is completely different from the beliefs of polytheism. I would dare to say, it is completely different from any religious book ever written. Why do I think so? In **Genesis 1:1** it says: **In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.** The word “beginning” here means: before the beginning of time and space. And if we take the Bible seriously, then we understand that the author (of Genesis) in the time of polytheism presents a completely new and revolutionary idea about God, and about how we should actually think of His existence.

3.5. As I’ve seen over years of Bible study that every biblical author believes the same idea about God, I too have come to accept it as truth — namely, that the God of the Bible exists outside our reality and outside our time. Which can only mean one thing: He does not need

the material to create His material — He only needs to imagine it, and out of NOTHING it comes into being... just as He created our reality and us within it.

3.6. That is both a little frightening and magnificent at the same time, isn't it? At least that's how I see it.

3.7. Now, back to the subtitle: Why did I write that the IDEA is more real than the material? The simple answer is: Because it is! Here's an example: my idea for a lounge chair first exists in my mind, and then, with wood (material) and my hands, I turn the idea into reality (my material). But if I had to choose between the idea and the lounge chair itself — I choose the idea. In other words, as long as I live and carry in my mind the idea of the lounge chair, it never ceases to exist. That's why the idea is more real than the material.

3.8. I hope you've understood the point and that I haven't overcomplicated it.

OUR EXISTENCE

3.9. Our existence — today, because of everything happening in the world, people tend to conclude the worst. And how could they not? Without God, and without the idea that we live in His mind, humans are left to make decisions on their own that will affect their present and near future. I'm talking about the countless TV series and films whose core message is the END OF THE WORLD. And, of course, the end comes because of humanity's negative impact on nature and because of the possession of nuclear weapons that could erase mankind with the push of a red button.

4. Observing the people around me, listening to their comments about politics, economics, wars — I too sometimes wonder where this world is headed... it must be heading toward its destruction. But knowing who God is, and of course knowing that His plan for the end of this age is the opposite of today's beliefs, brings me back to a state of peace and spiritual stability.

4.1. Although I don't know the exact details of how events will unfold before the end of this age³ — whether there will be nuclear bombs, 80-meter tsunamis, or a new ice age — I know one thing for certain: as long as there is a God who exists outside this reality, and He has the IDEA of the end of this age, and He has the IDEA of my existence, and He has the IDEA of what the future will look like after this age... I'm fine. I'm not panicking. In other words, as long as the eternal God of the Bible carries me as an IDEA in His mind — no catastrophe, no end of the world, can stop such a God from creating me anew (resurrecting me)!

³ The Book of Revelation describes events leading up to the very end of this age. It focuses on Israel and how the events will unfold prior to the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. What we cannot predict is whether there will be nuclear wars, or whether natural disasters will occur that will wipe out 50% of the population from the face of the earth before the troubles begin—troubles that will directly affect Israel first, and then the rest of the world.

4.2. As I write this, I realize how important it is for us to understand this biblical truth. I believe it should be the main foundation of our faith as we go through perhaps the most vulnerable period in human history. That is why I'm sharing this with you, my dear friends. The day will come when the foundations⁴ of our security will be shaken. The day will come when we will not be able to control the JUSTIFIED FEAR that will grip every cell of our body, our mind — and if we do not have the IDEA OF GOD I described above, the darkness will swallow us.

4.3. I know I've wandered far from the text, but the Spirit of God has moved me to lay this out for you. Let's slowly return to the passage.

WHERE DID GRATITUDE GO

5. As I wrote above, Jesus did not need to find a fish in order to create a multitude of fish. He primarily wanted to thank His Father — on behalf of all those present — for the fish and bread which HE had created from the very beginning of the world to feed and nurture His most beloved creation, mankind.

5.1. I want to say this: understanding throughout life that God the Father has given us something simply because He decided to — and that every decision for new creation comes from His goodness — leads us believers into a state of gratitude. And that is what Jesus, as well as His people, want to teach us here: *"Always be aware that every good thing in this world comes from God. Fish is good, bread is good, isn't that so?! And who created the fish? Who created the wheat? Did we humans create them? No, we know we didn't! So who deserves our constant gratitude? Our Father, of course! And we must never forget that!"*

5.2. Where are we as Western society in all of this? To whom do we give thanks? We've forgotten to say thank you even to each other — let alone to lift our eyes toward heaven and say, "Thank You, Father." God no longer exists in Western society; we have become our own gods, thanking ourselves every day. A tragedy, nothing else. The crowd that sat and watched what Jesus was doing at least acknowledged in their hearts that everything they had came from God. Where are we in relation to that belief? Our belief is roughly this: *"We made the bread, we planted the wheat, the sea is ours, the fish is ours, we breed it, we use it freely."* But we go no further — we're not interested. Because if we were to ask just one reasonable question: *"Who created the fish? Who created the wheat?"* we would come to a reasonable conclusion: *"It wasn't us, that much we know. And if it wasn't us, then there must be Someone out there who can, Someone not limited like we are."* And then our reason would tell us: *"Alright, now that we understand that Someone exists, we should thank Him for all the good He has given us."*

⁴ A nation, an army, wealth, a position of high rank, tactical skills we may have acquired throughout life, family, church...

5.3. Do you see where I'm going with this? The questions would just keep coming, and our reason would tell us what we need to do next.

5.4. And that is exactly what we avoid at all costs today. Deep down we know such questions would cost us something — and so, it's easier simply not to ask them. It's easier to say: *"Thank you, Danijel, thank you, Ivana, thank you, Marija, thank you, Filip."* In other words, in our desire to be our own gods, gratitude belongs to us alone.

5.5. I encourage us Christians — who are becoming fewer in these lands — to raise our hands toward heaven while in public and thank God for everything He has given us, in the hope that someone from our nation will see it and begin to ask the right questions.

THE PROMISED MESSIAH FEEDS HIS PEOPLE

6. Yes, Jesus feeds His people — but why? Why, in a situation where the crowd was tired and hungry, did Jesus not say: *"Go to town, eat something, and rest"*?

6.1. As I've said in previous sermons, Jesus, throughout His life, studied the Old Testament and came to understand what the titles MESSIAH, CHRIST, SON OF GOD truly meant.

He read about kings who ruled over Israel in their time. He read how King David danced and fed the people with bread while bringing the Ark of the Lord back to his city⁵.

He read Isaiah's words that in that day the Lord would swallow up death forever, and that it would be a great feast because His people would finally be free⁶.

He read the prophet Ezekiel's words that on that day the Lord would set up the GOOD SHEPHERD as king, and that finally there would be a covenant of peace, prosperity, and all the good that the millennial kingdom would bring when the Messiah came⁷.

He also read how Isaiah wrote about what is more important in God's eyes: 1) That His people listen to Him? Or 2) That they seek their existential needs first⁸?

6.2. Yes, my friends, He read... and He knew that His people knew the Old Testament, and He knew they knew all those passages that He knew — and so He did the following:

"You know the story of David and how he brought the Ark of the Lord back to his land, and how he fed all who were present at that event. I am the Ark of the Lord. I am the Israelite who shows you the way: how to live, how to understand God, how to act in certain situations life throws at you, how to distinguish God's righteousness from human righteousness, what it looks like when an Israelite truly loves God with all his heart, all his soul, all his mind, all his strength. I am also your promised shepherd from Ezekiel; I am the one with whom will come victory over death. When I reign on earth, God — our Lord — will once again descend in a cloud into His Temple and dwell among us as He did in the days of the prophet Moses. That is

⁵ (2 Samuel 6:16–19)

⁶ (Isaiah 25:6–9)

⁷ (Ezekiel 34:23–31)

⁸ (Isaiah 55:1–2)

why I feed you now — so that you may rejoice with me because the King is among you, the King who carries in His heart the Ark of the Lord.”

CONCLUSIONS

7. Jesus knows how to reach His people — He is an Israelite who longs for the establishment of the Kingdom just as His people do. And that is why, through this act, He reminds them of the promises that will be fulfilled during the establishment of God’s Kingdom.

7.1. In other words, the food is merely a symbolic reminder that ties together all the promises God will fulfill toward His people. And the fact that He did it through Jesus is proof that He is the promised shepherd from **Ezekiel 34**.

7.2. Of course, I don’t want you to misunderstand me — I cannot enter Jesus’ mind, and when I write that He said this or that, I know there’s always a chance I could be wrong. But when I take everything into context — the Old Testament, God’s promises, the prophets, the lives of the kings, and the way kings communicated with the people regarding God — I arrive at a potentially acceptable idea that describes the reason and intent behind Jesus’ actions in certain situations.

7.3. Finally, even though Jesus from the very beginning always emphasized what is more important in God’s eyes — namely: *“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him!”* — the people, unfortunately, were disobedient to His Son. They did not understand what was more important. They did not understand that Christ’s teaching was more important than bread — that is, more important than their existential needs.

7.4. But I will leave that for the next sermon, where we will go into **John 6** and explore it in detail.