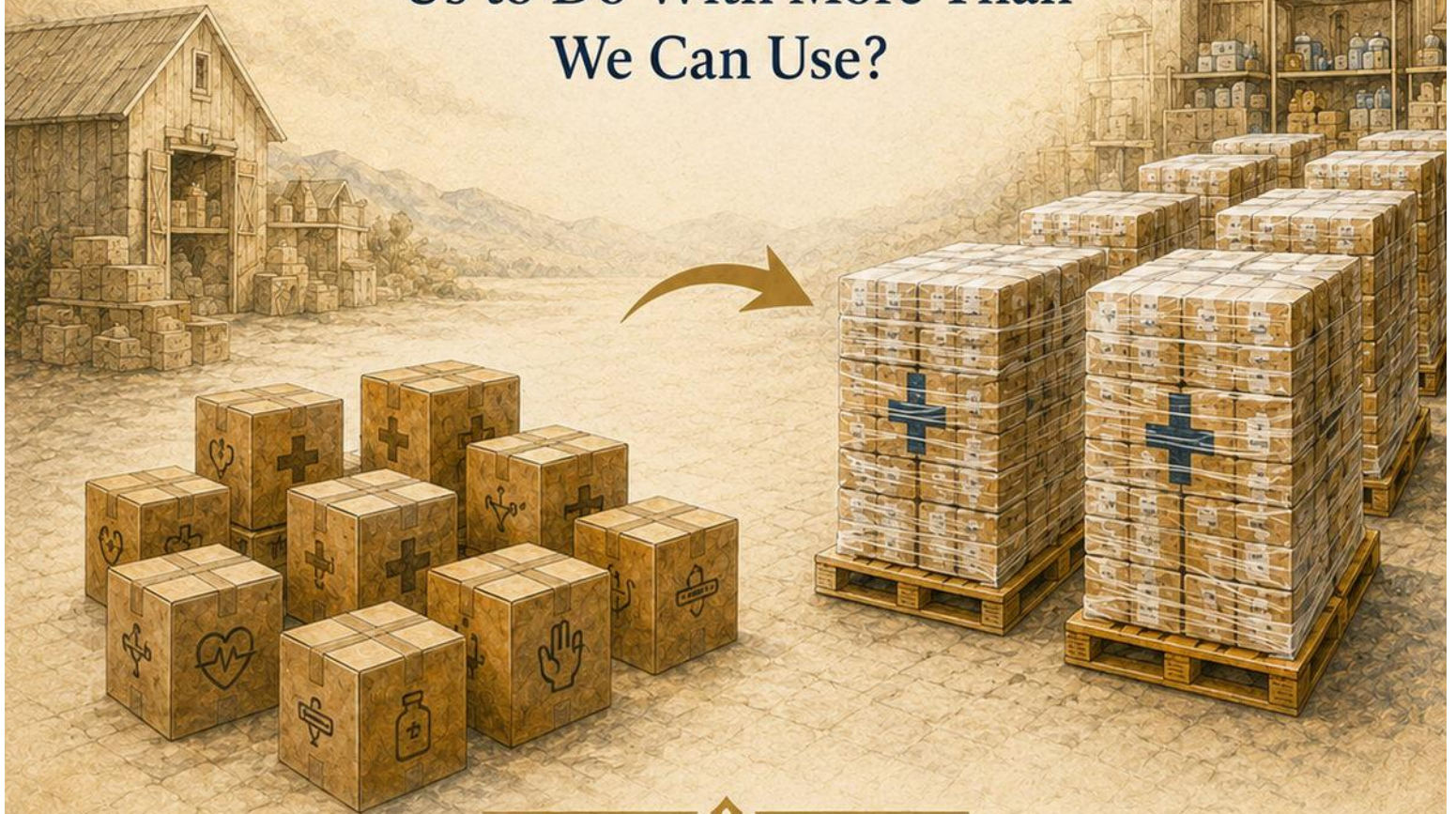


REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

MEDICAL MISSIONS

What Does God Expect
Us to Do With More Than
We Can Use?



Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

www.ReasonTogether.Church

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MEDICAL MISSIONS

Sermon Transcript

**What Does God Expect Us to Do
With More Than We Can Use?**

Luke 5:4-7

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley
Reason Together Church

Aloha.

Welcome to Reason Together Church.

If you are worshipping with us for the first time, we are especially glad you are here.

You will not be singled out.

You will not be asked to stand or introduce yourself.

We simply want you to know that you are welcome.

If you would like us to stay in touch, our guest card asks only for your first name and your email address.

After the service, please join us at the Reason Together Cafe.

The coffee is free.

The conversation is free.

And we offer free refills on both.

This is a church where questions are not treated as enemies of faith.

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let us Reason Together the Word of God.

Let us pray.

Our Heavenly Father,

Thank You for Your mercy.

Thank You for gathering us together today.

Thank You for giving us Your Word.

Open our eyes to recognize what You have placed within our reach.

Give us wisdom to use every gift faithfully.

Keep our hearts generous.

Keep our hands careful.

Keep our motives pure.

Teach us when to act.

Teach us when to ask questions.

Teach us when to call another boat and invite others into the work.

Help us care for people in ways that preserve their safety and dignity.

And if someone here does not yet know Jesus Christ as Savior, use this message to draw that person to Him.

In the Name of Jesus Christ we pray.

Amen.

Our Scripture reading today is from the Gospel of Luke chapter 5, verses 4 through 7.

I will be reading from the King James Version.

The Bible says:

"Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.

And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them.

And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink."

May God bless the reading of His Word.

Before we begin the message, I want to say a brief word about giving.

We do not pass an offering plate at Reason Together Church.

Guests are never expected to give.

If you are a member of another church, we encourage you to support your home church.

If you consider Reason Together Church your church, you may give as the Lord leads you.

God loveth a cheerful giver.

Giving should come from worship, gratitude and grace.

It should never come from embarrassment or pressure.

There is a giving box in the back for those who choose to use it.

But giving is not only about releasing something from our hands.

Stewardship also asks what happens after the gift leaves our hands.

Did it reach the person for whom it was intended?

Did it meet a genuine need?

Was it administered honestly?

Did it help or did it quietly create a burden for someone else?

Sometimes giving begins when we open our hands.

And sometimes the greater challenge begins after something has been placed into our hands.

I have been blessed to participate in medical missions in different parts of the world.

I have met physicians and dentists who used their limited vacation time to care for people who otherwise had little access to treatment.

I have watched nurses work for long hours in difficult surroundings.

I have seen volunteers organize patients, clean equipment, distribute supplies and comfort frightened children.

Every one of those people has a story worth telling.

But the story I want to tell today is a little different.

It is not centered upon a particular physician.

It does not identify a hospital.

It does not end with a dramatic photograph of someone who was healed.

This story begins in a warehouse.

It begins with cardboard boxes.

It begins with a request that I thought was rather ambitious.

And it begins with a truck driver standing behind a pallet jack.

My church at that time, First Baptist Central Florida, was participating in a communitywide volunteer outreach.

On that particular day I was serving at an area food bank.

Truckloads of food and other items had been donated by stores as products approached the date when the stores would replace them.

The warehouse was filled with pallets of boxes.

Every box had to be opened.

Every product had to be inspected.

Then the contents had to be sorted according to their kind.

There was a section for canned goods.

There was a section for snack foods.

There was another section for juices and beverages.

There was a place for damaged or expired products that could not be distributed.

And then there was a separate area for toiletries, vitamins and over-the-counter products.

At the end of my shift, I became curious about that separate area.

The food would be repacked and sent to food pantries throughout the city.

But many of the organizations receiving food did not want to assume responsibility for distributing medicinal products.

There were safety requirements.

There were regulatory questions.

There were concerns about proper distribution.

So those products were stored until an organization requested them and could handle them responsibly.

I stood there looking at products that were available in one place while people I knew in another part of the world went without them.

The supplies existed.

The need existed.

What was missing was someone willing to connect the two.

I thought about churches in Asia that ministered to families without even the most basic toiletries.

I thought about pastors who knew the families personally.

They knew the pregnant mother who needed appropriate prenatal supplies.

They knew the family that could not afford shampoo or toothpaste.

They knew the people in their communities who needed help.

And I began thinking about something called a Balik-Bayan box.

A Balik-Bayan box is a standardized shipping container commonly used to send goods to the Philippines.

At that time, the shipping company charged a fixed price for a box of the approved size, regardless of how much it weighed.

That made it possible to pack a considerable amount into one box and send it by ship at a manageable cost.

So I hesitantly asked whether I might receive a few items.

I explained that I wanted to fill some boxes and send them to churches in Asia.

The director did not immediately tell me how much I could have.

Instead, he asked me how many boxes I wanted.

I thought I would begin high and negotiate downward.

So I asked for ten boxes.

To my surprise, the request was granted.

A friend was with me who also wanted to help churches overseas.

He asked whether he could receive six boxes.

His request was granted too.

Then someone asked us what kind of vehicles we drove.

We answered the question.

And we were told that the supplies would not fit.

That should have been our first indication that we were not all picturing the same thing.
My friend worked with a company that moved freight.
He called and arranged for a truck to collect the supplies.
The plan was for the truck to bring part of the shipment to one of my facilities and deliver the rest to his location.
The pickup was scheduled for the following afternoon.
I prepared a corner where my ten boxes could be stacked and sorted.
I thought I was ready.
The truck arrived.
The driver opened the rear door.
And the first thing I saw was a pallet jack.
I assumed that my ten boxes were somewhere behind other freight.
I thought the driver was clearing a path so he could reach them.
I was wrong.
There were not ten boxes in the truck.
There were ten full pallets.
The corner I had prepared suddenly looked very small.
The plan I had prepared suddenly looked very small.
The budget I had prepared suddenly looked very small.
And the question was no longer whether I could fill a box for a church in Asia.
The question was what I was supposed to do with more than I could personally use, store or manage.
Most sermons would stop at the moment when the truck door opened.
We would say, "Look at how abundantly God provides."
And there is truth in that.
God had placed an extraordinary opportunity in front of us.
But the pallet jack revealed something that is often left out of sermons about abundance.
The blessing was larger than my capacity.
The blessing required work.
The blessing required money.
The blessing required discernment.
The blessing required partners.
The blessing required someone to accept responsibility for what happened next.

That brings us back to Peter's boat.

Peter was a fisherman.

Fishing was not a weekend hobby for him.

It was his work.

It was how he fed his family.

It was something he understood through years of experience.

Peter and the others had worked through the night.

They had taken nothing.

Their bodies were tired.

Their nets had already been washed.

Then Jesus told Peter to launch out into the deep and let down the nets.

Peter answered honestly.

"Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing."

Peter knew what the previous night had produced.

He knew what his experience told him.

But then he said:

"Nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net."

Peter obeyed the word of Jesus.

And the catch was so great that the net began to break.

The fish filled the boat until the boat began to sink.

I want us to be careful with this passage.

Luke 5 is not a formula promising that every obedient Christian will receive a boat filled with material wealth.

It is not permission for a preacher to promise that your bank account will overflow if you send him money.

The miracle reveals the authority of Jesus Christ.

It reveals Peter's insufficiency.

It brings Peter to his knees before the Lord.

And it prepares him to hear the call to become a fisher of men.

But there is also an important detail in the way Peter responded to the abundance.

Peter did not pretend that one man and one boat could manage it.

The Bible says:

"And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them."

Peter called another boat.

He admitted that the catch was larger than his personal capacity.

And asking for help did not diminish the miracle.

Calling his partners did not make Peter less faithful.

Sharing the work did not reduce what Christ had done.

Partnership was the means by which the catch could be preserved.

Sometimes partnership is the only way to keep the blessing from sinking the boat.

When those pallets arrived, I needed another boat.

I needed people who could help open the cartons.

I needed people who could sort the products.

I needed help inspecting what could and could not be used.

I needed churches that knew the needs in their own communities.

I needed people who understood transportation and shipping.

And I needed to admit that one person was not supposed to do everything.

There is a dangerous kind of pride that wants to receive every opportunity but refuses to share responsibility.

We sometimes call something "my ministry" so often that we forget it belongs to God.

We want our name attached to the catch.

We want control of both boats.

We want everyone to know who first lowered the net.

But the fish did not belong to Peter merely because they landed in Peter's net.

The pallets did not become my personal property merely because the truck arrived at my facility.

First Corinthians chapter 4, verse 2 says:

"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

A steward is not the ultimate owner.

A steward has been entrusted with something that belongs to another.

The question is not merely, "What did I receive?"

The question is, "Will I be faithful with what has passed through my hands?"

Jesus told another story about a man who received more than he had room to store.

It is found in Luke chapter 12.

The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully.

The harvest was larger than his existing barns could contain.

And the man asked a question that could have been asked while I was looking at ten pallets.

He said:

"What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?"

His practical problem was real.

There was more in front of him than his present storage could hold.

But listen carefully to his answer.

"This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods."

Notice how often the man spoke about himself.

My barns.

My fruits.

My goods.

My soul.

He received an abundant harvest but never considered that someone else might be hungry.

He could imagine larger buildings.

He could imagine many years of comfort.

He could imagine eating, drinking and being merry.

But he could not imagine another person.

God called him a fool.

The problem was not simply that he had received an abundant harvest.

The problem was that he interpreted the entire harvest as being exclusively for him.

Peter and the rich fool faced a similar practical question.

Both had more than their present capacity could hold.

Peter called another boat.

The rich fool built another barn.

Peter invited others into the work.

The rich fool spoke only to himself.

Peter's abundance brought him to his knees before Christ.

The rich fool's abundance made him feel independent of God.

So here is a question worth carrying home today.

When God places more in your hands than you need, do you build a larger barn or call another boat?

Those ten pallets could have become a monument to what I possessed.
Or they could become a ministry to people I might never meet.
The difference would not be found in the retail value printed on the boxes.
The difference would be found in what happened next.
As a businessman, I tried to estimate the value of the merchandise.
There were vitamins, toiletries, shampoo, appropriate over-the-counter products and other items commonly found in a drug store.
I estimated that each pallet originally contained more than ten thousand dollars in merchandise.
Ten pallets may have represented more than one hundred thousand dollars in retail value.
That sounds like a free blessing.
But free merchandise is not the same as free ministry.
The supplies still required storage.
They required labor.
They required inspection.
They required packaging.
They required transportation.
They required international shipping.
And the cost of shipping greatly exceeded the amount I had originally budgeted for ten boxes.
A blessing can be free and still be expensive to steward.
That is true far beyond a warehouse.
A growing ministry may be an answer to prayer, but growth requires workers.
An open door may be an answer to prayer, but walking through it requires courage.
A new relationship may be an answer to prayer, but relationships require time.
A person who asks for help may be the opportunity we requested, but loving that person may involve more than one conversation.
Sometimes we pray for a larger catch without asking whether our nets, boats and partners are ready.
Sometimes the answer to prayer arrives carrying an assignment.
God's provision did not remove the work.
God's provision revealed the work that needed to be done.
We gathered people to begin sorting the pallets.
The cartons had to be opened.
The contents had to be examined.

Different kinds of products had to be separated.

Some items were damaged.

Some were expired.

Some were not appropriate to distribute.

Approximately ten to twenty percent could not be used.

Those items had to be removed.

The rest had to be repacked so it could be sent where it would do genuine good.

That sorting process reminds me of what Jesus did after feeding the five thousand.

The people had eaten.

They were satisfied.

The provision had been abundant.

Then Jesus said to His disciples in John chapter 6, verse 12:

"Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost."

The same Jesus who multiplied the bread commanded His disciples to gather what remained.

Divine abundance did not excuse waste.

The miracle did not eliminate stewardship.

Jesus cared about what happened to the fragments.

The disciples gathered twelve baskets.

There is something deeply spiritual about refusing to waste what God has supplied.

There is also something deeply spiritual about refusing to pass unusable things to people simply because they are poor.

Faith is not an excuse for carelessness.

Generosity is not an excuse to abandon accountability.

And a donation is not automatically a blessing merely because the donor meant well.

This is especially important when we speak about medical missions.

Medical products must be handled under current safety requirements and appropriate professional oversight.

The original magazine article described a medical opinion that had been given at that time concerning certain recently expired over-the-counter products.

I would not use that statement as present medical guidance.

Today we would follow current safety standards.

Expired, damaged or unsuitable medicinal products would not be distributed.

Qualified professionals would determine what could be sent and how it could be used.

That is not a small technical correction.

It grows directly out of the Biblical responsibility to love our neighbor.

Poverty does not make a person less deserving of safe medicine.

We should never send another family something that we would consider unsafe for our own family.

We should never use a struggling community as a convenient place to discard what we no longer want.

Responsible medical assistance begins by asking what the recipients actually need.

It considers whether the products are legal and appropriate where they are going.

It considers labels, storage, transportation and remaining usable life.

It makes certain that someone qualified will oversee distribution.

And it includes a plan for products that cannot safely be used.

Good intentions are important.

But good intentions do not transform every object we donate into something helpful.

Careless giving can transfer a problem instead of relieving one.

The person receiving the donation may be left with storage costs, customs problems or the expense of safe disposal.

That is not mercy.

Mercy sees the recipient as a neighbor rather than a destination.

There is an early Christian writing called the Didache.

It is not Scripture and we do not treat it as Scripture.

But it preserves evidence that early Christians wrestled with questions about giving wisely.

It contains a memorable expression about allowing alms to sweat in the hand until the giver understands to whom he is giving.

Another early Christian writing, The Shepherd of Hermas, emphasizes giving freely and refusing to let suspicion close the hand.

That document is not Scripture either.

But together these writings reveal a tension that Christians have faced for centuries.

How do we remain openhanded without becoming careless?

How do we practice discernment without becoming so suspicious that we never help anyone?

The Biblical answer is not cynical refusal.

And it is not thoughtless disposal.

The Christian should have an open heart.

The Christian should have open hands.

The Christian should also have open eyes.

Biblical discernment asks how to help wisely.

Cynicism searches for an excuse not to help at all.

There is a difference between asking a responsible question and constructing a comfortable excuse.

The food bank did not merely load everything into random vehicles and hope for the best.

We did not tape the pallets shut and send them indiscriminately across the ocean.

Someone had to sort.

Someone had to inspect.

Someone had to make decisions.

Someone had to keep records.

Someone had to coordinate with churches.

Some people believe that work like this is merely administrative.

They imagine that real ministry happens only when someone is preaching, singing or standing in front of a crowd.

But Acts chapter 6 gives us a different picture.

The early church was caring for widows through a daily distribution.

Then a complaint arose because some widows were being overlooked.

The church believed in compassion.

The church possessed resources.

The church had people willing to help.

But the distribution system was not working fairly.

Good intentions did not prevent someone from being missed.

So the apostles instructed the church to select trustworthy people.

They were to be of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.

These people would be appointed over the business of distribution.

The apostles did not say that administration was unspiritual.

They required spiritual maturity for the people who would perform it.

And after the church addressed the administrative weakness, the Bible says:

"And the word of God increased."

The sorting table can be part of the mission.

Preparing shipping documents can be ministry.

Checking expiration dates can be ministry.

Maintaining accurate records can be ministry.

Loading a truck can be ministry.

Connecting churches can be ministry.

The person sorting boxes in a warehouse may be serving God just as faithfully as the person preaching behind a pulpit.

That is important to me personally.

I do not have to be the person standing in front of everyone in order to know that something worthwhile has been accomplished.

Some of the most important work of my life has occurred behind the scenes.

The families who eventually received these supplies did not need to know my name.

They needed someone to do the work faithfully.

They needed a church that knew them.

They needed a box that contained something useful.

And they needed that box to arrive.

Second Corinthians chapter 8 speaks about an abundance that had to be administered.

Paul and the churches took steps to protect the integrity of the offering.

Verses 20 and 21 say:

"Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us:

Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men."

Accountability is not a lack of faith.

Good administration protects the recipient.

It protects the donor.

It protects the ministry.

And it protects the public testimony of the church.

If we tell people that a gift is going to a particular purpose, we have a responsibility to see that it reaches that purpose.

If we place a church's name upon a project, we have a responsibility to conduct it honestly.

If people trust us with an abundance, we should never resent reasonable questions about how it was administered.

The Lord sees everything.

And Paul says we should also provide for what is honest in the sight of men.

Second Corinthians chapter 8 also explains why one person's abundance may exist beside another person's need.

Verse 12 says:

"For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."

God does not ask you to give what you do not possess.

Then Paul says:

"For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened."

Christian generosity is not supposed to relieve one person by irresponsibly crushing another.

Then he gives the principle:

"But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want."

The pallets represented abundance in one location.

The churches overseas knew people with genuine needs in another location.

But the abundance did not supply the need merely by existing.

Someone had to connect the two.

A warehouse full of supplies does not help a family across the ocean until someone accepts the responsibility of carrying them.

That responsibility was eventually shared by many people.

The ten pallets were sorted and repacked.

Instead of serving only the one church I had first imagined, the supplies were distributed through twenty-five churches.

Those churches knew the people in their congregations and communities.

They knew which family needed toiletries.

They knew which mother needed help.

They knew who lacked products that many of us purchase without giving them a second thought.

What began as one hesitant request became a network of mercy.

The blessing continued moving after it left my hands.

First Peter chapter 4, verse 10 says:

"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

The person who receives a gift becomes a steward of it.

The gift is not supposed to stop moving merely because it has reached us.

We know that something has been faithfully stewarded when the blessing continues moving after it leaves our hands.

There is another story of unexpected abundance in Second Kings chapter 7.

The city of Samaria was under siege.

The people were starving.

Outside the city were four leprous men.

They understood that remaining where they were meant death.

Entering the starving city offered no hope.

So they went toward the camp of the Syrians.

Unknown to them, the Lord had caused the Syrian army to hear the noise of chariots, horses and a great host.

The Syrians fled and left the camp behind.

When the lepers arrived, they found food.

They found drink.

They found clothing.

They found silver and gold.

At first they ate.

They carried away treasure and hid it.

Then they returned and hid more.

But finally they stopped and spoke an important truth to one another.

They said:

"We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace."

The city was starving while four men sat beside an abundance.

The people inside the walls did not know that provision was already available.

The lepers realized that the good news created an obligation.

They could not manufacture the food.

They had not defeated the Syrian army.

They had merely discovered what God had already made available.

But once they discovered it, they could not righteously keep the news to themselves.

Sometimes the answer to someone's prayer is already sitting in a warehouse, waiting for a steward.

Sometimes the food exists but transportation is missing.

Sometimes the building exists but no one has opened it.

Sometimes the skilled person exists but no one has made the introduction.
Sometimes the need and the provision are only one faithful connection apart.
Perhaps God has allowed you to see something that others continually walk past.
That does not make you the hero.
It may make you the messenger.
It may make you the bridge.
It may make you the person who calls another boat.
The story of those lepers also carries us toward the Gospel.
They said, "This day is a day of good tidings."
The people of God possess the greatest good tidings ever given.
Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.
He died upon the cross for our sins.
He was buried.
He rose again.
Forgiveness and eternal life are offered through faith in Him.
We did not create that provision.
We did not defeat sin and death.
We discovered the good news because someone carried it to us.
And we do not well if we hold our peace while others remain unaware that salvation is available.
The medical supplies gave churches opportunities to serve people in practical ways.
They also created relationships through which Christians could speak about the hope found in Jesus.
But we must be careful here too.
Mercy must never become bait.
We do not help people so they will become Christians.
We help people because we are Christians.
We should share the Gospel clearly.
We should never be ashamed of the Name of Jesus.
But we should not make toothpaste, food or medical care conditional upon a profession of faith.
Jesus said in Matthew chapter 10, verse 8:
"Freely ye have received, freely give."
James chapter 2 asks what profit there is if we speak religious words to someone who lacks clothing or food but refuse to provide what the body needs.

James writes:

"Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"

The Gospel addresses our deepest eternal need.

And the Gospel changes the way we respond to the physical needs standing in front of us.

Jesus illustrated neighbor love through the story of the Good Samaritan.

The Samaritan did not shout advice from the other side of the road.

He went to the wounded man.

He treated the wounds.

He placed the man upon his own animal.

He transported him to a place of care.

He paid the expense.

And he promised to return.

He carried mercy all the way to the person who needed it.

That is the difference between feeling compassion and administering compassion.

Compassion sees.

Stewardship carries.

Compassion cares.

Stewardship develops a plan.

Compassion gives.

Stewardship makes certain that the gift arrives safely.

Many people will feel something when they see suffering.

Faithful mercy asks, "What can I responsibly do next?"

The answer will not be the same for everyone.

God may not place ten pallets in front of you.

But He has placed something within your reach.

Perhaps you have food that can be shared.

Perhaps you have clothing that someone can genuinely use.

Perhaps you have a vehicle and know someone who needs transportation.

Perhaps you possess professional knowledge that could protect a small ministry from an expensive mistake.

Perhaps you know the person who has resources and the person who has access.

Perhaps you have a building that sits empty during hours when another group needs a safe place.

Perhaps you have survived something that another person is facing for the first time.

Perhaps you have time to listen.

Perhaps you have influence that can open a door for someone who has no voice.

Perhaps you know the Bible and someone near you is quietly carrying questions.

Perhaps God has placed the Gospel in your heart and a person you love has never heard you explain it.

The question is not merely how much you possess.

The question is why God allowed it to reach you.

Look around your home.

Look at your work.

Look at your experience.

Look at the relationships God has given you.

What is sitting unused while someone else is praying for help?

What ability have you treated as insignificant?

What need have you noticed that everyone else passes?

What connection could you make?

What partner must you call before the net breaks and the boat begins to sink?

And are you building a larger barn when God is asking you to call another boat?

If God gives you more than your hands can hold, perhaps He intends you to open your hands.

But before anyone leaves thinking that generosity can purchase salvation, we must return to the center of the Gospel.

Good works cannot forgive sin.

Shipping medicine cannot reconcile us to a holy God.

Feeding a hungry person does not erase our guilt.

Giving away everything we possess cannot replace what Jesus accomplished upon the cross.

The Bible says in Ephesians chapter 2, verses 8 and 9:

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Not of works, lest any man should boast."

Salvation is the gift of God.

Jesus Christ lived the sinless life that we could not live.

He willingly died upon the cross.

He bore the judgment our sins deserved.

He was buried.

And on the third day He rose again.

The price has been paid.

The gift is offered freely.

You do not earn it by serving enough hours in a warehouse.

You do not earn it by giving enough money.

You do not earn it by becoming more religious.

You receive salvation by placing your faith in Jesus Christ.

Then Ephesians chapter 2, verse 10 says:

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

We do not perform works of mercy to become God's children.

We perform works of mercy because, through Christ, God has made us His children.

Grace came to us in greater abundance than we could ever deserve.

And it was never intended to stop with us.

If you have never trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior, you can come to Him today.

You may have spent your life trying to store enough good deeds in a larger barn.

You may have tried to balance every wrong act with something generous.

But you cannot save yourself.

Jesus has already done what you could never do.

The question is whether you will trust Him.

The Bible says in Romans chapter 10, verse 9:

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

You can come freely.

You can come just as you are.

Wherever you are, you may pray with me.

The prayer itself is not a formula that saves.

Jesus saves.

But you may use these words to express your faith in Him.

Let us pray.

Dear God,

I know that I am a sinner.

I know that I cannot save myself.

I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

I believe that He died on the cross for my sins.

I believe that He was buried and rose again.

I turn from trusting myself.

I place my faith in Jesus Christ.

Please forgive me.

Please save me.

I receive Jesus as my Savior.

I give my life to You.

Thank You for Your grace.

Thank You for Your forgiveness.

Thank You for giving me eternal life through Jesus Christ.

In Jesus' Name I pray.

Amen.

If you trusted Christ today, please speak with me after the service or send us a message.

We will not embarrass you.

We simply want to rejoice with you and help you take your next steps with Christ.

And for those of us who already know Christ, let us return one final time to the truck.

The rear door opened.

The pallet jack appeared.

Ten requested boxes had become ten full pallets.

The prepared corner was too small.

The transportation plan was too small.

The shipping budget was too small.

The original vision was too small.

But the opportunity was not too large for the body of Christ.

Partners were called.

The cartons were opened.

The products were sorted.

Unusable goods were removed.

The remaining supplies were packed.

The shipping was arranged.

And twenty-five churches became part of the distribution network.

The greatest part of the story was not that ten boxes became ten pallets.

The greatest part was that ten pallets became thousands of individual acts of mercy.

Before this day ends, look around your life.

Ask God to show you what He has placed in your hands.

It may look like an extra box.

It may feel like an unexpected burden.

It may be an ability that no one applauds.

It may be a relationship only you possess.

Somewhere there may be another person praying for what you have been given to carry.

Call another boat.

Gather the fragments.

Open your hands.

Please join us at the Reason Together Cafe.

Bring your questions.

Bring your story.

The coffee is waiting and so is the conversation.

If God gives you more than your hands can hold, perhaps He intends you to open your hands.

Aloha Nui Loa.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

MEDICAL MISSIONS

**What Does God Expect Us to Do
With More Than We Can Use?**

Luke 5:4-7 | Luke 12:16-21 | 2 Corinthians 8:12-15

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

Reason Together Church

www.ReasonTogether.Church

"Come now, and let us reason together" | Isaiah 1:18

Commentary in Brief

The medical-mission story begins with a modest plan. Dr. Thomas Hawksley asked an area food bank for ten boxes of toiletries and appropriate medical products that could be sent to a church in Asia. A corner was prepared for the expected boxes. When the truck arrived, however, the first thing visible through the open door was a pallet jack. Ten boxes had become ten full pallets.

The immediate temptation is to call this a simple story of divine abundance. Yet the pallets created obligations as quickly as they created possibilities. The products required storage, inspection, sorting, packaging, labor, transportation, funding and trustworthy distribution. Some goods were damaged, expired or otherwise unsuitable. What could be used eventually moved through twenty-five churches rather than one.

"And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them." Luke 5:7, KJV

CENTRAL CONCLUSION: Unexpected abundance is not merely a blessing to celebrate. It is a stewardship to organize, protect, share and deliver responsibly. If God gives us more than our hands can hold, He may intend us to open our hands and call another boat.

Luke 5 supplies the governing picture. The miraculous catch exceeds the capacity of one net and one boat, so Peter calls his partners. Luke 12 supplies the contrast. Another man receives more than his existing capacity can hold, but he builds larger private barns and speaks only about himself. Peter calls another boat. The rich fool builds another barn.

This study also confronts a practical truth. A donated item is not automatically helpful because it is free. Christian love listens to recipients, protects their dignity and follows current safety requirements. Mercy must never become a means of disposing of unwanted goods or purchasing a religious response.

The Question Behind the Study

The ordinary question suggested by the story was, "Why does God sometimes give us more than we ask and sometimes say no?" Scripture contains rich material for that study. Solomon received more than he requested, Paul prayed for the thorn to depart and Jesus submitted His request in Gethsemane to the Father's will.

Yet that question does not arise from the most distinctive part of the medical-mission story. The magazine account is not mainly about the internal experience of prayer. It is about what happened after something much larger than expected entered the warehouse.

The stronger question is: What does God expect us to do with more than we can use?

The wording matters. "More" is not limited to money or merchandise. A person may possess more knowledge, time, influence, food, building space or professional experience than he presently uses. A church may have local relationships that a distant organization lacks. One person may know someone with resources while another knows where those resources are needed.

The question also refuses to assume that abundance is automatically easy. The pallets exceeded the prepared space and original shipping budget. A gift may be free while its faithful use remains expensive.

GOVERNING TENSION: Receiving abundance is not the end of stewardship. It is the beginning of accountability for what happens next.

1. The Supplies and the Need Already Existed

The Overlooked Area of the Warehouse

The story begins during a communitywide volunteer outreach at an area food bank. Donated products were opened, examined and separated into categories. Ordinary food products would move through established food-pantry channels. Toiletries, vitamins and over-the-counter products were placed in a different area because many organizations were not equipped or willing to accept the additional responsibility of distributing them.

Those products had not been created at the moment Dr. Hawksley noticed them. They were already present. In another part of the world, churches knew families who lacked basic goods. Those needs also existed before anyone prepared a shipping box.

The missing element was a responsible connection.

Christian service frequently begins when someone notices two realities that have not yet been brought together. One person has a vehicle while another lacks transportation. A professional possesses knowledge that a small ministry needs. A building sits unused during hours when a community group needs a safe room. Food is available in one location while families elsewhere do not know how to obtain it.

Noticing the gap does not make a person the hero. It may make him the bridge.

The Balik-Bayan Box

A Balik-Bayan box offered a practical means of sending a standardized container to the Philippines at a predictable historical shipping cost. The details matter because compassion without a delivery method remains an intention.

Dr. Hawksley asked for ten boxes, believing that he had made a rather ambitious request. A friend asked for six more. When they were asked what kinds of vehicles they drove and were told the goods would not fit, the warning did not yet reveal the scale of the misunderstanding.

The freight arrangements and prepared corner demonstrate responsible initiative at the level originally understood. No one had prepared for ten pallets because no one believed ten pallets were coming.

2. The Lord of the Catch

Read Luke's Narrative in Its Full Direction

Luke 5 opens with people pressing upon Jesus to hear the Word of God. Jesus teaches from Simon's boat before commanding him to launch into the deep. Simon has already worked all night without success. His nets have been cleaned and his professional experience offers little encouragement.

"Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net." Luke 5:5, KJV

Peter does not deny what happened during the night. He places the word of Jesus above what his discouragement predicts.

The resulting catch reveals Christ's authority. Peter responds by falling at Jesus' knees and confessing his sinfulness. Jesus then calls him to catch men. The passage moves from the Word, to obedience, to revelation, to confession and finally to discipleship.

That direction protects the text from prosperity teaching. Jesus is not offering Peter a repeatable technique for obtaining material wealth. The catch brings Peter to Christ and Christ's call leads Peter away from making the fish his ultimate treasure.

A Secondary Stewardship Observation

Within that larger movement, Luke gives a practical detail. The catch exceeds the equipment and capacity of one crew. The net begins to break and the boat begins to sink.

Peter does not preserve an appearance of independence. He beckons to his partners.

That detail supports a legitimate application to the medical-mission story. When the pallets arrived, the opportunity was larger than one person's available room, labor and budget. The correct response was not to pretend that faith eliminated limitations. It was to call people who could help carry the work.

Partnership does not diminish the blessing. Sometimes partnership is the only way to keep the blessing from sinking the boat.

3. Call Another Boat

The Humility of Shared Work

Some ministries grow around a gifted individual who becomes reluctant to share responsibility. The opportunity may belong to God, but the language slowly changes into "my ministry," "my people" and "my results." Others are welcomed as helpers only if they remain under one person's control. Luke 5 provides a healthier picture. Peter's partners do not steal the catch by helping him. Their boat becomes part of the answer. Shared work preserves what no single crew could carry.

The ten pallets required people to open cartons, inspect contents, separate categories, remove unusable products, repackage goods, coordinate churches and arrange shipping. Those tasks did not make the gift less spiritual. They made the gift usable.

The final distribution through twenty-five churches also allowed local knowledge to shape the work. A distant donor may know what is available. A local church may know which family actually needs it. Neither part of the body must pretend to possess every ability.

The Body Does Not Need a Solitary Hero

First Corinthians 12 teaches that the body has many members and that no member can dismiss another as unnecessary. The metaphor applies naturally to mission partnership. The person who obtains supplies is not automatically the best person to assess a medical product, navigate a local community, manage freight or provide ongoing care.

Calling another boat is not surrendering responsibility. It is accepting responsibility for the size and complexity of the assignment.

4. Another Boat or Another Barn?

The Rich Fool's Storage Problem

Luke 12 begins with Jesus warning against covetousness.

"Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Luke 12:15, KJV

Jesus then describes a rich man whose land produces more than his existing barns can contain. The man's practical question resembles the problem created by ten pallets: "What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?"

The abundance itself is not condemned. The man's interpretation of it exposes his heart.

He reasons entirely within himself. He speaks of my fruits, my barns, my goods and my soul. God, neighbor, worker and hungry person are absent from his imagined future. His solution is to expand private storage so he can preserve everything for personal ease.

God calls him a fool and requires his soul that night. The goods remain, but the supposed owner does not.

Two Responses to More Than We Can Hold

Peter and the rich fool both receive more than their present capacity can contain.

Peter calls another boat.

The rich fool builds another barn.

Peter's abundance brings him to his knees before Christ.

The rich fool's abundance persuades him that he can secure his own future.

Peter invites partners.

The rich fool conducts a private conversation with his own soul.

The comparison is a sermonic contrast rather than a claim that Luke intended the passages as a formal pair. Yet it faithfully exposes two different beliefs about abundance.

Ten pallets can become a monument to what a person possesses or a ministry to people he may never meet.

5. A Free Blessing Can Be Expensive

The Hidden Cost of Receiving

The magazine estimates that each pallet contained more than \$10,000 in drug-store merchandise. That was a contemporary business estimate rather than an audited appraisal, but it communicates the scale of what arrived.

The products were donated. Storage was not free. Labor was not effortless. Packaging did not arrange itself. International shipping still had to be funded. The out-of-pocket cost exceeded what had been budgeted for the original plan.

A free piano may require moving, tuning and room. A donated building may require insurance, repair and accessibility work. A free vehicle may require registration and maintenance. A large ministry opportunity may demand trained volunteers, safeguards and continuing care.

A gift should not be rejected merely because it carries responsibility. Neither should hidden costs be denied because the gift sounds impressive.

Abundance as Assignment

Many sermons treat provision as the end of the testimony. The check arrives, the door opens or the shipment appears. Everyone celebrates and the story stops.

The medical-mission story continues. God's provision did not remove the work. It revealed the work that needed to be done.

This does not mean every unexpected burden is a divine assignment. Wisdom may require declining a donation that cannot be used responsibly. It does mean that gratitude should mature into careful questions: What is this for? Who can use it? What will it cost to deliver? Who is qualified to help? Can we complete what we begin?

6. Gather the Fragments

Abundance Without Waste

After Jesus fed the multitude, everyone ate and was filled. The miracle displayed His identity and sufficiency. Then Jesus gave an instruction that can easily be overlooked.

"Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." John 6:12, KJV

The same Lord who multiplied the bread commanded the disciples to gather the remains. Abundance did not make the fragments meaningless. Divine generosity did not authorize human carelessness.

The disciples collected twelve baskets. The commentary need not build a speculative doctrine around the number. The secure observation is strong enough: Jesus cared about what happened after the people were satisfied.

The Sorting Table

The pallet contents had to be opened and examined. Damaged, expired and unsuitable products had to be separated from useful goods. The process required judgment rather than indiscriminate enthusiasm.

The sorting table represents an important form of stewardship. It stands between good intentions and genuine help. At that table, someone asks whether an object can safely complete the journey from donor to recipient.

Preventing waste does not mean distributing everything. Sometimes faithful stewardship preserves a usable product. Sometimes it responsibly removes an unusable one.

7. When a Donation Is Not a Blessing

Recipient Need Comes First

Christian generosity can become strangely centered upon the giver. We may ask what we want to donate before asking what another person needs. We may count the original retail value while ignoring the cost imposed upon the recipient. We may feel successful when a shipment leaves our building even if no one can use it when it arrives.

Responsible medical-donation guidance emphasizes expressed need, appropriate products, reliable sourcing, adequate remaining shelf life, understandable labeling, suitable packaging, communication and clear responsibility for transportation and related costs.

These principles fit the command to love our neighbor. The recipient is not a destination for unwanted inventory. The recipient is a person whose safety and dignity matter to God.

The Expiration-Date Clarification

The original magazine records an informal medical opinion concerning certain recently expired over-the-counter products. That historical statement should not be used as present advice.

Current general guidance from the United States Food and Drug Administration says that after the labeled expiration date there is no guarantee that a medicine remains safe and effective. Any present medical mission must follow current law, authoritative guidance and qualified professional oversight. Expired, damaged or otherwise unsuitable medicinal products should not be distributed.

This correction does not diminish the story. It strengthens its central lesson. Faithful stewardship continues to learn. When better guidance protects a recipient, love receives the correction rather than defending an old practice.

Poverty does not make a person less deserving of safe medicine. We should never send another family something we would consider unsafe for our own family.

Dignity Rather Than Disposal

The standard cannot be, "It is better than nothing." That sentence can conceal assumptions we would never apply to ourselves.

A useful gift is safe, wanted, understandable and capable of responsible use. It arrives with enough time and support to benefit the recipient. It does not leave another community paying to store or discard what the donor wanted removed.

Wise generosity asks questions because people matter, not because generosity has grown cold.

8. Administration Is Ministry

The Overlooked Widows of Acts 6

Acts 6 describes a growing church with a real distribution problem. The Grecian widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Generous intentions did not prevent unequal results.

The apostles did not respond by declaring administration unspiritual. They asked the church to identify people of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, who could be appointed over the business.

"Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." Acts 6:3, KJV

The assignment required trustworthy character and spiritual maturity. Proper organization allowed the apostles to guard their own calling without demeaning the calling of others. After the weakness was addressed, the Word of God increased.

Honest Things Before God and People

Second Corinthians 8 describes safeguards around a large interchurch gift.

"Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us: Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." Second Corinthians 8:20-21, KJV

Accountability is not distrust of God. It is care for recipients, donors, workers and the church's public testimony.

Sorting boxes can be ministry.

Checking labels can be ministry.

Preparing shipping documents can be ministry.

Maintaining truthful records can be ministry.

Loading a truck can be ministry.

The person doing those things may never stand before a congregation. The work remains visible to God.

This is a particularly important application for people who do not want to be the public performer.

The body of Christ needs people who quietly build systems, solve problems and help promises become completed acts of mercy.

9. Your Abundance and Their Need

According to What a Person Has

Second Corinthians 8 gives a balanced theology of generosity.

"For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." Second Corinthians 8:12, KJV

God does not condemn a person for failing to give what he does not possess. Willingness is joined with actual capacity.

Paul immediately adds that he does not intend for others to be eased while the giver is irresponsibly burdened. Christian compassion is not proven by destroying one household or ministry so another can temporarily breathe.

Then Paul describes the movement of abundance:

"But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality." Second Corinthians 8:14, KJV

The pallets represented abundance in one place. The churches knew people experiencing lack in another. The goods helped only when a trustworthy chain connected the two.

Mutuality Rather Than Superiority

Paul imagines roles reversing. The present giver may become a future receiver. That possibility protects dignity. The helping church is not a permanently superior class and the receiving church is not a permanently dependent class.

Christian partnership does not divide the world into heroes and needy objects. It joins believers whose resources and needs differ across time.

A warehouse full of supplies does not help a family across the ocean until someone accepts the responsibility of carrying them. A person with access may need someone with resources. A person with resources may need someone with local knowledge. Each supplies what the other lacks.

10. This Day Is a Day of Good Tidings

Four Lepers and a Starving City

Second Kings 7 describes Samaria under siege and four leprous men outside the city. Remaining where they are means death. Entering the starving city offers no hope. They decide to approach the Syrian camp.

Unknown to them, the Lord has caused the Syrians to flee. The lepers discover food, clothing, silver and gold. At first they eat, drink and hide treasure.

Then they stop.

"We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace." Second Kings 7:9, KJV

The starving city does not know that provision is available. The four men did not create the food and did not defeat the army. They discovered something God had already accomplished. Once they knew, silence became morally wrong.

The Missing Connection

The story offers a powerful comparison with a warehouse full of products and distant communities unaware that those goods might be available. Sometimes the answer to someone's prayer is already sitting in a warehouse, waiting for a steward.

The comparison also prepares a Gospel transition. Christians did not defeat sin and death. Jesus did. We learned the good news because someone carried it to us. We do not do well if we remain silent while people do not know that forgiveness is offered through Christ.

The historical deliverance of Samaria is not identical to the Gospel. It becomes an illustration of received news that must be shared.

11. Mercy Is Not Bait

Bodily Need and Religious Words

James confronts a profession of faith that offers a blessing while withholding tangible help.

"If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" James 2:15-16, KJV

The Gospel addresses humanity's deepest need, but the Gospel does not teach us to ignore the body standing before us. Living faith produces visible love.

The Good Samaritan sees the injured man, approaches him, treats his wounds, transports him, pays for care and promises to return. His compassion travels all the way to the need.

Why Christians Help

The medical supplies created relationships through which churches could express the love of Christ and speak about the Gospel. Yet mercy must not become bait.

We do not help people so they will become Christians. We help people because we are Christians. That statement does not require silence about Jesus. Christians should speak clearly about the One who saved them. It means that a hungry person does not owe us a sermon audience in exchange for food and a sick person does not owe us a profession of faith in exchange for care.

"Freely ye have received, freely give." Matthew 10:8, KJV

Christian witness is strongest when words and actions tell the same truth: grace is not for sale.

Open Hands and Open Eyes

Two early Christian writings preserve different emphases within the long discussion about charity. The Didache uses memorable language about allowing alms to "sweat" in the hand until the giver knows to whom he gives. The Shepherd of Hermas urges simple giving without allowing suspicion to close the hand.

Neither writing is Scripture. Their tension is still recognizable. How do believers remain generous without becoming careless? How do they practice discernment without constructing excuses to help no one?

Canonical Scripture provides the governing balance. Do not harden the heart. Do not shut the hand. Protect vulnerable people. Use trustworthy administration. Give freely and refuse manipulation. Biblical discernment asks how to help wisely. Cynicism searches for a reason not to help at all.

12. The Greatest Abundance Is Grace

Stewardship Cannot Save

The study asks what we do with abundance, but it must not suggest that generosity earns salvation. A person could distribute every pallet, pay every shipping bill and remain separated from God by sin. Good works cannot erase guilt. Mercy toward another human being cannot purchase mercy from a holy God.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Ephesians 2:8-9, KJV

Salvation is the gift of God. Jesus Christ lived without sin, died for our sins, was buried and rose again. Forgiveness and eternal life are received through faith in Him.

Created Unto Good Works

Paul continues immediately:

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10, KJV

The order matters. Good works do not create salvation. Salvation creates a new person who walks in good works.

Christians do not serve in order to become God's children. Through faith in Christ, God makes them His children and grace begins teaching them to open their hands.

The greatest abundance in this study is not ten pallets. It is the grace of God given to undeserving sinners through Jesus Christ.

13. A Personal and Congregational Examination

The medical-mission story does not require every listener to ship a box overseas. It asks whether we recognize and faithfully administer what has entered our own reach.

- What has God placed in my hands that I am not personally using?
- Have I mistaken temporary possession for ultimate ownership?

- When an opportunity exceeds my capacity, do I call trustworthy partners or protect my control?
- Am I building a larger private barn when I should be calling another boat?
- Do I calculate the complete cost of delivering what I promise?
- Do I ask recipients what they need before deciding what I want to give?
- Would I consider the donated product safe and dignified for my own family?
- Have I treated administrative work as inferior to visible ministry?
- Do I honor the people who inspect, pack, transport, document and distribute?
- Can my ministry answer reasonable questions about what it receives and where it goes?
- Have I allowed fear of being deceived to close my hands entirely?
- Have I allowed enthusiasm to replace discernment?
- Do my acts of mercy respect the recipient's freedom?
- Do I share Christ as good news or use assistance as leverage?
- What professional knowledge, transportation, building space, time or relationship could I place into service?
- Who is the "other boat" I need to call?

The examination returns to the central refrain: If God gives you more than your hands can hold, perhaps He intends you to open your hands.

Final Commentary Conclusion

Ten boxes became ten pallets. The surprise was memorable, but the scale of the shipment was not the deepest evidence of faithfulness.

The pallets had to be opened. Products had to be inspected. Unusable goods had to be removed. The remaining supplies had to be repacked. Shipping had to be funded. Churches had to be identified.

Local partners had to carry the work toward actual people.

Peter's net-breaking catch teaches us to call another boat. The rich fool warns us against interpreting every surplus as material for a larger private barn. Jesus' command to gather the fragments joins abundance with careful use. Acts 6 dignifies administration. Paul connects present abundance with another's lack while refusing to crush the giver. The lepers of Samaria remind us that good tidings cannot be hoarded.

The greatest part of the story was not that ten boxes became ten pallets. The greatest part was that ten pallets became thousands of individual acts of mercy.

The final answer is Jesus Christ. His grace cannot be purchased and His Gospel cannot be sold. He freely saves everyone who trusts Him. That grace then forms faithful stewards who notice needs, call partners, protect people and complete the journey of mercy.

Call another boat.

Gather the fragments.

Open your hands.