



## BIBLE STUDY

# ALL ATE AND WERE FILLED

by Audrey Novak Riley

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## Hymn

“Strengthen for Service, Lord” (*ELW* 497)

## Prayer

*Creator God,  
when you ask us to do your will  
you give us everything we need.  
Grant that we may leave our fear behind  
and trust your Son when he asks us  
to go beyond what we see as our limits.  
This we ask through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
One God, forever and forever.*

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## Confidence

Has someone ever had more confidence in you than you had in yourself? So much confidence that they asked you—no, they *expected* you—to do something that you weren’t even sure was possible for you? That happened to me recently.

I used to sing with the choir at a church in the city for years. In comparison with my fellow altos, I thought my musical gifts and skills were adequate but not much more

than that, and that was fine with me. *Someone* has to be average, after all, and I was just happy to contribute what I could.

Then my husband and I started attending a church closer to home, and I volunteered with that choir. My new choir director seemed to have an entirely different opinion of my skills than I did. He told me he thought I was a very fine musician, of all things. I thought he was just being nice, but he kept acting as if

he meant it. Sometimes he’d ask me to sing with the sopranos, even at the last minute. (Sight-reading Bach, in German, in public, at the tippy-top of my vocal range. I can’t believe I actually did it!)

Then he invited me to sing in the chorus for the annual concert series, alongside *real, trained, professional* musicians, for a *paying* audience! Clearly he wouldn’t ask if he didn’t think I could do it—but where in the world did he get that idea? What could I possibly say?

## Let’s Talk About It

1. What do you think made the choir director’s invitation so surprising to me?
2. When did someone expect more of you than you thought you were capable of? What was it like? Tell the person next to you about it.
3. How did it feel to know that someone had that much confidence in you? Did you do anything differently because of their faith in you?

## Jesus' Confidence

Now let's turn to the gospel according to Luke chapter 9, where we'll hear about Jesus' confidence in his disciples—and why he was so confident.

### READ LUKE 9:10–13A.

This sounds almost exactly like the story in Mark's gospel that we looked at in Session 2 of this study, doesn't it? There's a reason for that. Luke tells us in the beginning of this gospel that he drew on many sources to tell the story in an orderly fashion. Scholars have determined that the Gospel of Mark is one of the main sources.

A few verses before this, in Luke 9:1–6, Jesus had sent the disciples out to proclaim the good news and heal the sick. He told them not to bring any supplies with them, not even a change of clothes. Look at Luke 9:6. They not only proclaimed the good news through the villages, they cured diseases “everywhere.”

### Let's Talk About It

4. Jesus gave the disciples a big assignment when he sent them out to the villages in Luke 9:2. Do you think they were confident that they could do it? Why or why not? Do you think Jesus was confident that they could? Why or why not?
5. In Luke 9:13, Jesus clearly expects the disciples to be able to give the crowd something to eat. What do you think gave him that idea?

### “No, Not A Thing.”

Much later in Luke's gospel (22:35), Jesus asks the disciples, “When I sent you out without a purse, bag, or sandals, did you lack anything?”

That's an interesting question, and the answer is even more interesting. The disciples could have answered him, “Well, I didn't have any money,” or “Clean socks would have been nice,” but they didn't say anything like that. They said, “No, not a thing.”

How could that be? How could they lack nothing when they went out with nothing? How could they succeed as missionaries—medical missionaries, at that—without any equipment? Take a look at Luke 9:2. Jesus gave the disciples the power to do what they needed to do in order to carry out their mission. Jesus equipped them. (See “The Gospel of Enough,” p. 26.)

Apostle Paul, who thought deeply about these things, wrote a letter from prison to the believers in Philippi. In it, he wrote about how he kept on through everything he endured on his own mission trips: “I can do all things through [Christ Jesus] who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). The important part of that sentence isn't the first part but the second: “Jesus . . . strengthens me.”

Jesus strengthened his disciples for their mission trip (Luke 9:2). He equipped them with what they needed in order to carry out the assignment he gave them. The gospel names not only the power to cure diseases, but “power and authority over all demons.”

The gospel writer understood demons differently than we do; we certainly wouldn't say that a child with epilepsy had a demon. But I think if the gospel writer includes in that category of demons whatever causes us to lie to ourselves and whatever causes us to believe those lies—well, I think we could go along with that. Jesus strengthened the disciples and gave them the power to cast out—even from themselves—the demons that whisper, “Don't be silly, you can't do that. Who do you think you are?” or “Don't ask for things that way. What will people think?”

What Jesus did for his disciples then, he continues to do for us now. If you have an *ELW* hymnal handy, take a look at page 237, the Affirmation of Baptism. The presiding minister asks, “Do you intend . . . to proclaim the good news . . . [and] serve all people, following the example of Jesus?” That sounds pretty much like the mission Jesus sent the disciples out on, doesn't it? The baptismal ritual has us all answer, “I do, and I ask God

to help and guide me.” *There*. That’s the key. With God’s help and guidance—with Jesus strengthening us—we can carry out the mission we’ve been given. Who do we think we are? We think we’re disciples of Jesus Christ, who strengthens us and equips us for mission. What will people think? They might think we’re pretty bold, and that’s what happens when Jesus not only gives us an assignment but also gives us everything we need—resources, wisdom, generosity and friends to help us along the way—to carry out that assignment. Jesus has confidence that we can carry out his mission because he has equipped us for that mission.

### Let’s Talk About It

6. When the disciples went out on their mission trip, they didn’t bring anything with them. How do you think they arranged for such basics as food and lodging?
7. If you believed that Jesus was strengthening you and equipping you for mission, would you do anything differently than you do now? What? How would you do it differently?

### Jesus Reminds Us When We Forget

When the disciples ask Jesus to send the crowds away so they can buy their own suppers and Jesus answers with that astonishing request, “You give them something to eat,” the disciples are caught flat-footed. They’ve clearly forgotten what happened on their successful mission trip: Jesus had equipped them to carry out his assignment. If Jesus had made it possible for the disciples to do something that looked impossible then, wouldn’t he do the same thing again?

In all three versions of the story we’ve looked at in this study, we see that Jesus doesn’t spend any time on the disciples’ fears or protests or smart-aleck remarks about tons of bread. He simply says, “Show me what you have.” He doesn’t let them dwell on what they *don’t* have; he shifts the focus to what they *do* have.

What do they have? To our eyes, not much. But

with Jesus, it’s more than enough, because he has already equipped them with everything they need. (See “Seven Tips for Service,” p. 12.)

### Let’s Talk About It

8. If you were to follow Jesus’ example and focus on what you do have instead of what you don’t have, would you do anything differently? How? What would you do differently?
9. If Jesus were to say to you today, “You give them something to eat,” what would you say? What would you do?

### Prayer

Our closing prayer concludes with our offering of groceries for a local food pantry and our offering of monetary gifts for our church’s ministry with those who are hungry, ELCA World Hunger.

This ritual calls for one leader and two readers, as well as two assistants to gather the offerings. Envelopes may be gathered in a basket; groceries may be placed together in grocery bags or baskets. Please feel free to improvise or elaborate on this basic outline. Musicians and decorators are invited to add their services, as well.

*Note to the leader:* You might remind participants that they can give to ELCA World Hunger through Women of the ELCA. Simply make out the check to Women of the ELCA and write “ELCA World Hunger” on the memo line.

**Leader:** Let us pray.

*Loving and ever-giving God, you give us all we need to carry out your will. Grant us wisdom to turn away from our own fears and act joyfully when your Son asks us to give the people something to eat. This we ask through your son Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

**Reader 1:** A reading from the Gospel of John, the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter.

Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you

love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."

**Leader:** When Jesus speaks to Peter, he is speaking to all his disciples, even to us, his present-day followers. When Jesus tells us, through Peter, to feed his sheep, we know that he has supplied us with everything we need to carry out his mission.

**Reader 1:** Jesus asks, "Do you love me?"

**All:** Yes, Lord, you know that we love you.

**Reader 2:** Jesus says, "Feed my lambs."

**All:** I will, with God's help and guidance.

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**All:** I will, with God's help and guidance.

**Reader 1:** Jesus asks, "Do you lack anything?"

**All:** No, not a thing. We are equipped for mission.

**Reader 2:** Jesus says, "You give them something to eat."

**All:** We will, with God's help and guidance.

**Reader 1:** Jesus asks, "Do you lack anything?"

**All:** No, not a thing. We have been equipped for mission.

**Reader 2:** Jesus says, "You give them something to eat."

**All:** We will, with God's help and guidance.

**Reader 1:** Jesus asks, "Do you lack anything?"

**All:** No, not a thing. We have been equipped for mission.

**Reader 2:** Jesus says, "You give them something to eat."

**All:** We will, with God's help and guidance.

**Leader:** Jesus has equipped us for mission, and so we act on his command with confidence and joy.

*Assistants may help gather the offering of groceries and monetary gifts into a central place visible to all. As the offering is received, the leader may describe the local food pantry that will receive the groceries, and another person may describe the ministry of ELCA World Hunger, which works to alleviate hunger and poverty in more than 50 countries around the world, including the United States.*

**Leader:** Let us bless the Lord.

**All:** Thanks be to God!

### Hymn

"All Who Hunger, Gather Gladly" (ELW 461) 🌿

Audrey Novak Riley serves the church as associate program director, ELCA World Hunger.

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## LEADER GUIDE

# ALL ATE AND WERE FILLED

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## Confidence

This section is simply intended to help each participant consider the idea of someone having confidence (you might call it faith) in her.

There are no right or wrong answers to the first three discussion questions, but the leader might ensure that certain points arise in the discussion:

The choir director was confident in my abilities because of the other times he had asked me to stretch past what I thought were my abilities. He had ascertained that I was equipped with everything I needed to carry out the assignment, even if I didn't realize it. (If people are curious, the leader can tell them that I said yes, and the concert was wonderful.)

## Jesus' Confidence

This short section focuses on the reason why Jesus was confident that the disciples could carry out his request to feed the hungry crowd. He had already seen how they carried out a previous assignment, and he knew that he had already equipped them with everything they needed.

Question 4 is intended to bring out the point that even if the disciples weren't confident in their own abilities, Jesus was, because he knew that he had equipped them with everything they needed.

Question 5 is meant to lead to the conclusion that

Jesus was confident that the disciples could carry out this new assignment because he knew that, again, he had equipped them with everything they needed, whether they knew it or not.

## “No, Not A Thing.”

This longer section contains the point to this entire Bible study: Jesus strengthens us. We can confidently answer, “I will, with God's help and guidance,” because that help and guidance will always be there.

The short discussion of the power to cast out demons is this writer's own interpretation of what that can mean for us today. We women are sometimes reluctant to act even on what we know is right because we have false ideas about ourselves. The truth—and Jesus is the Truth—will set us free.

There are no right or wrong answers to the discussion questions, but Question 6 is intended to suggest that the disciples were equipped to ask people to help support their mission by supplying food, lodging, money, and so on. It's a fact that people actually like to help; they like to be asked and they will often respond more generously than we expect. That might have happened with the hungry crowd, as well: The disciples might have asked the people to give what they could to help their neighbors, and the people might have responded more generously than anyone expected.

## Jesus Reminds Us When We Forget

This section reminds us that we don't need to worry; Jesus will supply what we need to carry out the assignments he gives us.

There are no right or wrong answers to the last two discussion questions. You might suggest that participants take these questions home and ponder them privately in prayer as well.

## Prayer

The suggested ritual is only a basic outline; please feel free to elaborate or improvise on it with joyful music, decoration, dance—whatever will honor the generosity of the participants.

After all, we're responding together to Jesus' call to feed the hungry, and that's worth celebrating!

## ABOUT ELCA WORLD HUNGER

Our church is a leader in the movement to end hunger and poverty in the world, and ELCA World Hunger is how we do it. Thanks to the generous support of ELCA members through-

out the church, ELCA World Hunger empowers families and communities around the world to lift themselves out of poverty and into self-sufficiency—for good.

Please visit [www.ELCA.org/hunger](http://www.ELCA.org/hunger) for much more about our church's ministry to end

hunger and poverty, for resources you can use in your own congregation, and for ways you can be involved as a volunteer hunger leader.

Your generosity in service, prayer, and giving is what makes ELCA World Hunger as effective as it is. Thank you.

# The peace of Christ be with you always.

We are a church that believes God is calling us into the world – together. Working with Lutheran churches in the U.S. and around the world, ELCA World Hunger is uniquely positioned to reach communities in need with innovative solutions that get at the root causes of hunger. Thank you for your prayers, your partnership and your gifts.

## Give now.

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God's work. Our hands.