

Mark 8

V.1-10 Feeding 4,000

Jesus feeds people - spiritually and practically.

This is something we have seen before when Jesus fed over 5,000 people in Mark 6.

We must recognize though that wasn't Jesus' PRIMARY ministry. He didn't even spend MOST of his time feeding people.

As a matter of fact, when faced with a multitude of people who were following after him just to fill their tummies Jesus challenged them.

[Jhn 6:26-27 NKJV] 26 Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. 27 "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him."

[Jhn 6:35 NKJV] 35 And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.

Jesus' main concern is always everlasting life.

Now this isn't an either or proposition - either we only teach/preach or we only focus on social programs and feeding people.

These things go together - the love we teach and preach about is made real in the practical ministering to our community, feeding, clothing, supporting, etc.

We see here too that Jesus was moved by compassion on the multitude and we, Christ's bride, will have his compassionate heart as well.

That is an important hallmark of Jesus' followers. Not to grudgingly obey, to grudgingly give to others, to grudgingly feed people because God's word requires it but because we are moved by compassion - having our hearts shaped to the image of Jesus' heart.

We see that the disciples were mightily challenged by this...again!

Bear in mind that they already saw Jesus do this before - with less. Here they have seven loaves of bread and a few fish. In Mark 6 they had 5 loaves and two fish.

Does this encourage you? To know that the very men that walked with Jesus in the flesh, that looked him in the eye, who heard his voice, and felt his hands - that they wrestled with doubt and logic and reason.

By any stretch of the imagination what Jesus is asking them now, to feed 4,000 people, is not logical, rational, or reasonable when the disciples account for how small their resources and ability are.

But they were looking at it from a limited perspective and focusing on what they couldn't do - how limited their resources were. Their eyes weren't on Jesus, but rather on the loaves and the fish.

How could 12 men, and a rabbi, impact, feed 4,000 people at one time? They can't but God can - not in the theoretical sense, but as we see in the very real, tangible, practical sense.

Keep in mind too that when these men obey Jesus' word and serve that it isn't magic! They are still required to work, to serve...that a little over 330 people per disciple to serve dinner to.

That's hard work! But in the process they get to see God move among hungry people, they get to meet needs, they get to sweat for the kingdom -- even while they wrestle with doubt and unbelief.

I pray this informs our heart as well -- called to have compassion, called to believe, called to serve above and beyond our capacity, supplied by the Lord Jesus.

V.11-21 Teaching on pharisaical leaven

Again we see the rhythm of Jesus' ministry. In many ways this rhythm continues today: moving among the people, teaching, preaching, healing, feeding, demonstrating compassion, love, people coming to know Jesus AND THEN having that same ministry met with criticism, requesting signs to validate authenticity, being tested, being examined with an overly critical eye.

πειράζοντες - present, active, participle//nominative, plural, masculine - to examine, try, tempt “in a bad sense: to test one maliciously, craftily to put to the proof his feelings or judgment.” (Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon)

In this section Jesus does not engage with them on their level. The reality is that if they are asking to see a sign then they haven’t been paying attention. AND, Jesus isn’t a circus sideshow performing at the whims of the hyper-critical so they can validate his authenticity.

He is little concerned with the Pharisee’s opinion about the validity and authenticity of His work because He, Christ, is ACTUALLY about the work of His Father! (Cf. John 5:17)

Don’t get sucked into the trap of trying to validate yourself or your ministry in the eyes of people who are blind to what is going on! Let Jesus be your validation - your foundation, the roof over your head, your bread, and the only sign you need.

On to the disciples:

They are all traveling together and they forgot to bring bread - only having one loaf between them all.

Now, with that, as we will see comes some guilt and some personal conviction. They’re still looking at the loaves - how much do we have, is it enough, am I going to be in trouble for forgetting to load up, etc?

We see this being the case because as Jesus attempts to teach them on what he terms, “the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod,” all they can think about is forgetting to bring bread.

As a matter of fact they believe that Jesus is low-key rebuking them in a concealed fashion for their negligence.

Now, keep in mind that Jesus was just dealing with the Pharisees so that’s what is on his mind. He greatly desires to warn his disciples against becoming like them!

Leaven represents sin, so Jesus is warning them to watch out for the sin of the Pharisees - we know that the Pharisees were the religious leaders of the day. So, “watch out for the sin of the religious leaders...” There is much to examine there.

And then Jesus also includes the sin of Herod. Now Herod was the political ruler of the day. So, “watch out for the sin of the political class too!”

Herod was an interesting character.

In Mark 6 we read that: [Mar 6:20 NKJV] 20 for Herod feared John, knowing that he [was] a just and holy man, and he protected him. And when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.

SO, even with how wicked we know Herod to have been we also see that he demonstrated some admirable qualities - he knew John the Baptist was just and holy, he protected him, he listened to him gladly,

he did many things based on John's counsel BUT he still had him executed.

Everything he heard, his teetering affection for John the Baptist, wasn't enough to bring him into the Christ's kingdom, or to even support Christ's kingdom. Rather, by his actions and his alliance with the Pharisees he opposed Christ's kingdom.

The Herodians, "were not a religious sect, but, as the name implies, a court or political party, supporters of the dynasty of Herod." (ISBE)

It was this religious/political alliance that opposed and criticized Jesus' ministry and tried to bend it to their own will:

[Mar 3:6 NKJV] 6 Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him.

So this is what Jesus is trying to communicate to them but they believe Jesus is attacking them because they forgot bread!

Don't we get this way too? Jesus is trying to teach us something profound and we are so caught up in our immediate circumstances, or our immediate negligence, that we make it all about us?

Aw man..this sermon is about me because I forgot to bring enough bread for everybody.

This doesn't escape Jesus' notice and he reels them back into the center of things and reminds them of just how much they have seen and participated in.

It's not about the bread! It's never about the bread - whether that involves feeding people, or teaching on sin, it's about the Bread of Life.

Truly these men were being turned into something else through all of this but in the moment they didn't understand, they didn't see, they didn't hear, they had hard hearts.

How is it that people can be so engaged in the work of Jesus but fail to recognize it for what it is?

And we do too sometimes. But Jesus is near to us and He will teach us.

V.22-26 Jesus gives sight to a blind man - this is important, He continues to minister even after what I would characterize as a couple of rough interactions - the one with the pharisees, the second with the disciples.

Jesus is so steady and faithful - even when we don't get it.

AND, there's no pre-requisite for this blind man to be touched by Jesus. Jesus doesn't ask him if HE gets it, "hey, do you understand the parable of the leaven of the pharisees?" He favors this blind man, has compassion on him, because of His own intrinsic goodness.

Also of interest is to note that this man is a participant in a progressive healing. He sees a little, though unfocused at Jesus' first touch -

unable to distinguish between trees and people, and he sees clearly at Jesus' second touch.

There is much spiritual depth found in that healing that applies to our earthly condition as well.

It is true that the more the Lord puts his hands upon us, the clearer things become.

V.27-33 Jesus asks his disciples who people think he is and teaches them about his future suffering.

This is an important moment for them. And in this moment too Jesus is checking their hearts.

Let us first understand that Jesus already knows the answers to these questions - but it is the working through this by his disciples that is desired.

Who do others say that I am, what is their opinion? And wow!
Opinions abound!

Next, who do you say that I am - notice Jesus' choice of verb - SAY...not think.

λέγουσιν - present, active, 3rd person plural "...they say" - for the general people

λέγετε - present, active, 2nd person plural "...you (plural) say" - for the disciples

What is your word on the subject? Who is Jesus? Does it match with what the crowds say, what the general public says? Or is it wisdom from God that has shown you who Jesus is?

[Mat 16:16-17 NKJV] 16 Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed [this] to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

And so it is for every person that comes to say that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the anointed one that was promised by God to reconcile mankind to Himself.

If somebody can talk you into your belief, then somebody can certainly talk you out of it. You must meet with God and find that Jesus is the Christ of the Bible, and while many people have many different opinions salvation comes to those who believe.

Oh, what a moment for Peter too! Such a grand answer!

Peter's moment wouldn't last long - because, even though he professed Jesus as the Christ, he didn't want to hear about the ministry of the Christ toward mankind.

He wanted it his way. And while Jesus taught them about suffering, and rejection by the religious leaders, and death, and resurrection - perhaps Peter was still hoping somewhere in his heart (perhaps the leaven of the pharisees and herodians had gained a little ground) that

Jesus would be exempt from all that. That Jesus kingdom was going to be a kingdom of earthly power, and might, and revolution!

So when the disciples hear Jesus' version of how their years long ministry ends - with pain, suffering, death...perhaps that didn't fit their expectations.

Many struggle with this today still.

But Jesus is very clear on the topic. He then gathers together not only his disciples but also the people, the public, and teaches them about suffering and if you want to be part of God's kingdom then that requires suffering, self-denial, following in the footsteps of Jesus.

V.34-9:1 Jesus teaches about discipleship, bearing the cross, seeing amazing things (segways into chapter 9 and the transfiguration)

It's possible to know who Jesus is but to still try and build a kingdom here in this life for ourselves.

It's even possible to superficially build a kingdom to ourselves that is plastered with the veneer of faith.

But the question lingers...what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

We have nothing to give. Though we build a kingdom to fill the world and dedicate it entirely to Jesus - that still doesn't pay the bill for our sin.

Though we give everything we have to the poor, though we say all of the “RIGHT” things; though we ‘DO’ all of the right things it doesn’t pay the bill required at the hands of a righteous judge.

Only one thing does that - Jesus Christ on the cross. That is what he is teaching them. And to share in his death and resurrection is our only hope.

[Phi 3:10-11 NKJV] ...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Next week we answer the question from 9:1 - what is Jesus talking about when he says some of you will not taste death...