

**Mark 8: 1-10; “Learning Compassion from Jesus”, Sermon # 45 in the series –  
“Astonished at His Teaching”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on  
November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015, in the Morning Worship Service.**

The last time that I preached to you from this book we looked at the compassion and sympathy of our Lord Jesus Christ in relation to the healing of people’s bodies, with applications on how also to minister to their souls. Today we want to look at the compassion and sympathy of the Lord Jesus in relation to His feeding of the four thousand. I believe that it will be perfectly appropriate to apply this truth, also, to those who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Those who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness are those who want to learn the way of the Lord. They want to learn to do good works to promote Christ’s cause and kingdom of righteousness and truth. I will hope to convince you, through this message, that you as a Christian should earnestly desire that the compassion of Jesus would become your compassion, if you do not presently have it and exercise it. I want you to understand that your willingness to learn compassion from Jesus Himself will affect your personal ministry as a Christian, and it will also affect our ministry together as a church, to the many people around us who are in need.

We learn from this passage that the ministry of the Christian Church (represented by the apostles and disciples of our Lord, here) is to feed those who are, as it says in our text, “continuing with Him”. It is the obligation of every individual Christian and every Christian church to think seriously about how they can help other people around them. And more particularly, I am trying to draw your attention to the people who are continuing on with us. They are the people who are regular visitors to our church and they are getting to know us. They are beginning to learn what it means to be a Christian. They are hearing the teaching and they are willing to receive the truth of the Word of God, even at a cost to themselves. Here in our text, Jesus orchestrated this miracle for the multitudes, not only that they might be fed, but also so that the disciples might be taught. This was for the training of the twelve, but it is also for our instruction as well. Both Jesus and the disciples who were closest to Him ministered to these people in this miraculous way in the wilderness so that each of us will grapple with what we can do for others around us. So let us think together, 1<sup>st</sup> of all this morning, about the compassion of Jesus. Then 2<sup>nd</sup> - We will think about the question of the disciples. And 3<sup>rd</sup>, we will think about the meal and the leftovers.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – Let’s think together of the compassion of Jesus.** (Verses 1-3)

Verse 1 says - “In those days, the multitude being very great and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples to Him and said to them, ‘I have compassion on the multitude...’” We see here the thoughtfulness and compassion of our Lord Jesus. He truly took notice of those who were continuing with Him. The people of this passage that have read about, were not people laid off from their jobs. The vast majority of them were not people who were down and out. Probably many of these people were those who could work, desired to work, and probably did have jobs that they were going back to, in the next days. Their need of help had come from their following Christ closely; so closely that they ran out of the resources that they had brought with them. That was what was happening here. This multitude of people were following Jesus, and they were listening to the teaching of His word. And because of their attendance upon His word, having come from afar, they needed to receive the hospitality, and the temporary help of Jesus and his disciples, because they did not have enough of their own resources with them at that time to supply their needs. In verse 2 it says: “I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat.” “And if I send them away hungry to their own houses, they will faint on the way; for some of them have come from afar.” The Compassion of Jesus is that which flows from His watchful care over His followers. He

marks down every service done for His name's sake and all the expenditure of personal resources. He sees and knows every bit of strength which is used in following Him. Jesus is watchful over those who continue with Him, and He has compassion on them.

If we turn to the 1828 Webster's Dictionary, which is one of the best of all dictionaries in my estimation, we find that compassion means, "A suffering with another; painful sympathy; a sensation of sorrow excited by the distress or the misfortunes of another; pity; commiseration." "Compassion is a mixed passion, compounded of love and sorrow; at least some portion of love generally attends the pain or regret, or is excited by it." "Extreme distress of an enemy even changes enmity into at least a temporary affection." "He, (God) being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and did not destroy them." "Yes, many a time He turned His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath; for He remembered that they were but flesh, a breath that passes away and does not come again." (Psalm 78: 38 and 39) The Dictionary also quotes Luke 15: 20 - "His father had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." This Dictionary also further says: To compassionate someone means that you have "a temper or disposition to pity; an inclination to show mercy; having a heart that is tender, and easily moved by the distresses, sufferings, wants and infirmities of others." "There never was a heart truly great and generous, that was not also tender and compassionate." (Robert South, 1634-1716) This is what the Lord Jesus had. And we must ask ourselves if we have it as well; we who are his followers. Let us ask ourselves whether we have a disposition to pity people in need? Let us ask ourselves whether our heart is easily moved by the distresses and sufferings of others; the needs and weaknesses of people around us? Let us ask ourselves if we have a generous heart? The Lord Jesus had all of these. He sympathized with the plight of those who were following Him. He felt what they were feeling. He put Himself in their position.

I would like to say, by way of application, that it is entirely possible for any Christian to become a person who is intensely observant, and yet at the same time, to so lack the sympathy and the feeling necessary to go about to help a person in need, that they do not go on to help them. They give themselves good reasons for this, they think, in their heart, as to why they should not, or cannot help them. They do this, even if that person is a brother or a sister in need. But we should understand that true compassion always leads to good works. A person having true compassion does not just make the correct observations. They deliberately go to the next step, and they think about what they can personally do to help that person in need. They reason with themselves; what will happen if I do nothing to help? Listen to the holy reasoning of Jesus again. "I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat." "And if I send them away hungry to their own houses, they will faint on the way; for some of them have come from afar." The Lord Jesus convinced Himself that it would not be the right thing to do; to do nothing. "They have continued with Me three days." They have used up all the resources that they brought with them. They will faint trying to get back home, because they have come a long way.

You and I need to think about the implications of the faith and obedience of other Christians around us. If they are being faithful to continue with Christ, even if they do not have the organizational skills that you might have to accomplish practical tasks or meet your own needs, will you not compassionate them in His name? Sometimes we think – If I can do these things, then they should be able to do them. But this is not necessarily the case, and so you must learn to show them how; you must learn to help them. Think about the words of 1<sup>st</sup> John 3: 17 with me for a moment. "But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?" If you have the ability to help, and you shut up your heart from him, the love of God is not abiding in you. If you know the right thing to do, and you do not do it, it is sin to you. This is the shutting up of your heart; it is closing the door of your heart to show compassion. This is something that Jesus did not do; and

it is something that we dare not do, unless we want to prove that the love of God is not something abiding in us.

Jesus could have reasoned to Himself in this way. He could have said, "Well, why is it that these people have stayed so long here, when they live so far away?" "Why didn't they plan better?" "If they knew that they were running low on food, why didn't they think simply think about leaving sooner to go back, so that they will not faint along the way?" He could have blamed them for their lack of organizational skills, and left them to the implications of their own poor planning. But he did not do it. He thought about their good intentions and their desires in following Him, and learning from Him. He saw that there was a holy abandon in them; a holy forgetfulness of the time, when they were with Him. He didn't look down upon this. He used it as a reason why He should have compassion, and why He would help them out. Ah, brethren, let us think of the sacrifices of those who continue with Christ, and even the inability of those who continue with Christ to provide for themselves. Let it be a reason why we will show them compassion. Let us remember the words of James in James 2: 14. "What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?" "Can that faith save him?" "If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled, but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?' "Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works is dead." You see, Jesus could not do this with the people who were continuing with Him, because He had compassion. He could not simply give them the verbal blessing of "be warmed, be filled", and then send them away. He would do what He knew that He could do for them. You and I, if we are becoming more like Christ, we will do the same. We will have compassion.

**2ndly - Let us think together about the question of the disciples and the question of Jesus to them.** (Verses 4 and 5)

"Then His disciples answered Him, 'How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?' "He asked them, 'How many loaves do you have?' "And they said, "Seven." They are confessing to Jesus how impossible it will be for them to be able to obtain the amount of bread necessary for all these people to be satisfied. Where were they going to get that bread when they were so far from a city? Now I do not think that they had forgotten the time before, when Jesus fed the 5,000. I do not think that this is a case of their entire forgetfulness and their entire unbelief. But I do believe that there was in them a mixture of faith and unbelief, as there often is in ourselves, in relation to the Lord Jesus' repeatedly doing some amazing and miraculous work, in relation to the needs of people around us. I think that they did believe that Jesus had the power to work this same kind of miracle that He did before, for the 5,000. The real question was; would He be willing to do it once again here? They did not want to presumptuously assume that He would do a miracle, when He might have some other reason in His mind why the normal means should be used. The disciples, it is evident, truly wanted to help Jesus show them compassion. They did not know how they could help Him.

When they ask their question, they are confessing their own inability. "How can one satisfy these people with bread...?" They pose it as an objective question with the implied answer that no one but Jesus could. But here we see the gentle and humble way that Jesus draws them into helping Him, in showing the multitudes compassion. He does not say, "I will do what I did before." The thought of Jesus, here, is to bring the disciples to do what they should do in anticipation of what He would do for them and through them, to feed the multitudes. He asks, "How many loaves do you have?" He would have them bring what resources of food, that they did have, to Him. Then He would do the miracle. Here is the lesson of the feeding of the five thousand repeated once again, but in this second incident the truth becomes more personal for the disciples. In the other incident, it was a little boy's lunch that was brought to Jesus. In this incident, it was the collective resources of bread and fish of those disciples closest to Him. Jesus

is saying that whether you are a little boy, or whether you are an Apostle of the Lord, you are to bring what resources that you have to Him.

What resources do you have to truly help and feed others with? You are to bring those resources, no matter how meager, to Jesus; and He will multiply the reality of them and the effects of them to those in need, in your giving of them to Him. You see, in our unbelief we would say to ourselves: "Really, there is no use bringing the little that I have, to Jesus." "Why would such a little amount as I have, make any real difference when there is a multitude to be fed?" But when we are asked by Jesus to examine and think about what we do have; we see that even a little will go a long ways in helping the real needs of others, when He can multiply it. Whether it is one person that you are trying to help, or a multitude; if you are trying to help them in Jesus name, He expects you to take stock of what you have and to bring what you have to Him that He might use it. This is how every Christian ministers to others in need, even though they themselves may have very little in the way of resources. They believe and know that God has great resources, boundless and infinite resources. And so they can trust that Christ will multiply the little that they have given to Him. It does not matter if you are small, or if you are great in the eyes of men; it is all the same. It is Jesus by His power and His grace who is multiplying the effects of the little that you have in comparison with Him. He has entrusted you with the little that you have. He expects you to make good use of it. He uses all your good intentions to help, and everything that you actually bring to Him, to help others with.

You remember the parable of the talents that Jesus told in Matthew 25: 14-30? In that parable the kingdom of heaven is described to be like a man who is traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. It says: "And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey." "Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents." "And likewise he who had received two gained two more also." "But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money." "After a long time the Lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them." The ones who had received 5 and 2 talents, both gained as many as they were given because they had faithfully used them. But then in verse 24, it says, "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, "Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed." "And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground." "Look, there you have what is yours." "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed.'" "So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest."

There are two reasons that this servant who had received only one talent, failed to use it wisely. He thought that His master was a hard man. He did not know how compassionate and loving a man he really was. He had a misconception of him. And the second reason that he failed was that he failed to use it at all, in trading for anything. He didn't even put it in the bank; he rather hid it in the ground. The lessons apply to what we are studying today. How do you see the Lord Jesus Christ, your Master? Do you see Him as a hard man? Do you see Him as reaping where He did not sow and gathering where He did not scatter? Do you see Him expecting you to do all these acts of service on your own? You don't see Him coming to you to help you with what you should give back to Him? How then can you bear fruit to God? And then, let me ask you this question: How do you see yourself? Do you see yourself, only in terms of the limited resources that you have to give to Him, or to others? And so, you are tempted to take all of your resources, and as it were, hide them in the ground so that they are never used in the Master's service, to His profit, in any sense at all? Wouldn't it be better to bring them to the bankers, to those persons who are wise in the ways of the use of your money? Others who are experience

Christians who can help you to see how you could wisely use what you have. Let us see how great is the compassion of our Lord Jesus. Let us see how greatly He can multiply even the little that we give to Him, so that we can be of real help to others in need.

**Then finally - Let us think together about the meal and the leftovers in the baskets.**

(Verses 6-8)

“So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.” “And He took the seven loaves and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples to set before the multitude.” “They also had a few small fish; and having blessed them, He said to set them also before them.” “So they ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets of leftover fragments.” Now here, once again, we need to reflect and marvel at the idea that 4,000 men, besides women and children, were fed that day; probably 8-10,000 people in all. A few moments before, the disciples could not comprehend how they could do it. And now, they were doing it. Now the multitude is told to be seated. Now the disciples see their Lord take the 7 loaves and give thanks. Now they see Him bless the meal of fish. Now they see their Lord’s hands busily continuing to break the bread of the seven loaves until the disciples had distributed it to them all. It was very obvious to them that the Divine Creator of all things had become flesh and manifested His power to create and to provide. Is it evident to you, dear believer? “So they ate and were filled.” They ate and were satisfied. It was enough.

And this is always the way that it is spiritually for all those following Jesus. Jesus was enough for them then. And Jesus is enough for us now. Jesus is all your soul needs to be satisfied, both now and forevermore! He is the bread of life. The person who comes to Him shall never hunger and he who believes in Him shall never thirst. Seven large baskets of leftover fragments. It is to show us that they ended up with far more than they started with. When Christ multiplied the loaves and the fishes, and they were not only fed and satisfied for that meal, but there was enough there that any who needed more to sustain them on the trip home would have meals for that journey. The same is true in the way that Christ provides for those who continue with Him today. His grace and the compassionate miracles of His love and mercy which are shown to us now in these days, are not going to stop any time soon. As we trust in Him, He will surely give us all that we need to bring us all the way safely home to glory, in the days to come. He will never fail us, nor forsake us. And we shall be satisfied and blessed in our souls all along the way if we continue with Him. Whatever miracles or great things that He does for us now, in providing for all of our spiritual and physical needs; let us gather up all the fragments of them so that we will be able to draw up them during times where we may not see such miracles. The effects of His miracle-working grace will continue to multiply by His blessing, even so.

Let me say this by way of closing; if you have had your eyes opened this morning to the Compassion of Christ, the Power of Christ, and His ability to teach His disciples how they could work together with Him; will you not believe that He will show us the same? Will you not pray expecting our Jesus to have compassion on this community? We are here in a wilderness spiritually. There are many people perishing for lack of knowledge and some are perishing because they do not want knowledge, and some perishing because they despise the knowledge of God. How can we feed this multitude in the wilderness? We will do it with Jesus’ breaking the bread, multiplying the effects of our preaching and teaching and singing, and working. We will do it by Jesus’ blessing everything that we bring to Him. He will ask us what we have and we will say, “We only have a few loaves and a few fish.” But He will work miracles with what we bring Him. Let us look to Him to do great things for us, and for those who will come in those days.