

Message #26

Mark 8:1-21

We come now to another feeding miracle that Christ performs and this time it is a feeding of 4000, not 5000. Now because of the obvious similarities between this feeding and the feeding of the 5000 (Mark 6:30-44), some critics have tried to say this is referring to the same miracle. Their primary argument is why would the disciples ask Christ where they will be able to get enough food to feed this crowd (8:4), if they had already been involved in the feeding of the 5000?

Well, there are a couple of answers to this question: **First**, their faith was still fickle in spite of all they had seen Jesus Christ do. They were in the process of learning, but they had not learned. In fact, in this very text He will tell His disciples that they have hardened hearts (8:17).

Second, their question about where will anyone find bread is not necessarily denying Christ's ability to provide food; but not presuming that He will again. They had seen Him do some amazing things, but not all the time. For example, they saw Him raise a dead girl. But He did not go to every funeral and raise every dead person. So they are not presuming that He will automatically do another miracle like He did in Bethsaida. We may easily prove these are two separate feedings by offering nine proofs:

- 1) There is a difference in the number—4000 people versus 5000 men, plus women and children.
- 2) There is a difference in location—5000 primarily a Jewish area; 4000 primarily a Gentile area.
- 3) There is a difference in time—5000 with Christ one day; 4000 with Christ three days.
- 4) There is a difference in ambiance—5000 sit in green grass; 4000 sit on ground.
- 5) There is a difference in prayer—5000 Jesus offers thanks; 4000 Jesus offers two prayers.
- 6) There is a difference in bread loaves—5000 there are five; 4000 there are seven.
- 7) There is a difference in fish—5000 two small fish; 4000 a few small fish.
- 8) There is a difference in leftovers—5000 twelve small baskets of bread and fish; 4000 seven large baskets of broken pieces.
- 9) There is a difference stated by Jesus—He says He fed 5000 in **verse 19** and 4000 in **verse 20**.

Now the key to this is **verse 21** when Jesus says, “do you not yet understand?” The point He wants them to understand is this:

GOD'S PEOPLE CAN KNOW AND BELIEVE THAT JESUS CHRIST IS GOD AND HE WILL MEET EVERY ONE OF OUR PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL NEEDS AND WE NEED TO STAY FOCUSED ON UNDERSTANDING HIS WORD AND NOT SPEND OUR LIVES WORRYING ABOUT WORLDLY PROVISIONS.

We all need a good dose of this text. We live in a time when the world is falling apart. We have security problems; we have investment and stock market problems and we sure have moral problems. Politicians will tell you the country is in great shape and they can solve the few problems we actually have. Our hope and security will never be found in anything in this world; our hope and security is found in Jesus Christ. That is what Christ wanted His own disciples to understand.

There are three key episodes that occur that clearly communicate this point:

EPISODE #1 – Jesus feeds 4000 in the Decapolis region. **8:1-9**

Now **verse 1** informs us that another large crowd was following Jesus in the Decapolis region. This was primarily a Gentile region, not Jewish. They were following Christ not necessarily because they believed in Him; but because He was a miracle worker.

One of the things Jesus had done months earlier in this very region was to cast at least 2000 demons out of a man and the man wanted to travel with Jesus and Jesus told him you go home and tell the people in the Decapolis region what the Lord has done (Mark 5:19-20). It is very possible that this massive crowd is gathering around Jesus because of the witness of a man who had at one time been demon-possessed. **No matter what your background you can be greatly used by God to tell others about Jesus Christ.**

The crowd had been following Him so Jesus called His disciples to Him and according to verses 2-3, He gave them three messages:

Message #1 - He felt compassion for the people because they had stayed with Him three days.
8:2a

Jesus has a real concern for those who have been with Him for a while. He is very interested in their lives and needs.

Message #2 - He felt compassion because they had not eaten in three days. **8:2b**

Let's not kid ourselves. Many of these people do not believe they need Jesus Christ to save them from their sins; but Jesus cared about them and even whether or not they had food. **Most people don't have a clue that God is the One who has given them their skills, their income, their housing and their food. God does this for people who don't even acknowledge Him.**

Message #3 - He knew if He sent them away without eating, some would "faint" on the way.
8:3

The word "faint" means to become so weary that one could even collapse. Some of these people had travelled great distances to be with Him.

Jesus knew each person and He knew how far each person had actually travelled.

Now when Jesus shared His concerns with His disciples, they said in **verse 4**, where will we get enough bread in this desolate place that can feed and satisfy this number of people? **Jesus wants all to know I can and will satisfy the needs of people no matter what the numbers or the background.**

Jesus wants His apostles to learn a very significant lesson and that is I am the One who is the bread of life not only for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles. I supply the life needs of people whether Jew or Gentile.

In **verse 5**, Jesus asks how many loaves of bread do they have and they said seven.

According to **verse 6**, Jesus directed the people to sit down and taking the seven loaves He gave thanks and broke the loaves and then He started giving and giving the loaves to His disciples and they in turn gave them to the people.

The verb “broke” is aorist tense which means He breaks the loaves at one point of time. The verb “giving” is imperfect tense which against indicates He just keeps giving and giving more bread to His disciples and they keep giving it to the people.

Now according to **verse 7**, they also had a few small fish and He blessed them and ordered them to be served as well. **Verse 8** says they ate and were satisfied. That word “satisfied” means they ate to full satisfaction and they ate until they were fat (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 482).

For the most part, we have had so much to eat in this country we have eaten until we are overweight, literally. Do you realize who has given us this food to eat? It is God. God has supplied everything.

After they all ate, they picked up seven large baskets full of leftovers and He sent the 4000 people away (**verses 8-9**). Ray Stedman gave an illustration of this principle of his church that I want to give concerning our church. Every year Ron gives a financial report and every year we come in very close to the budget and usually have just a little left over. We don't have stockpiles of money left over, but we have a little and God has given enough. We basically see this very kind of miracle in this church, year after year, after year.

Now before we move on there are some important observations to make here:

Observation #1 - Jesus Christ knows the physical needs of every person and will abundantly meet those needs.

He knows how many miles we have traveled in life. He knows when we are hurting. He knows when we have needs.

Observation #2 - We can continue to stay focused on doing God's will knowing Jesus Christ will abundantly meet our needs.

If you have your focus in this life on the material, as Kent Hughes said, you will shrivel. However, if, regardless what your age, you keep your focus on the Lord, you will prosper. You may be 15, 25, 35, 45, 55, or 65 and if your whole focus is on the material and the temporal, your life will end shallow and hollow.

You may spend your entire life and choose to eat right, exercise right, and invest right. You may decide to buy your perfect dream house and drive the perfect vehicle. In the end, you will discover that these things will dim. What you will discover over time is that those things are more hollow and shallow. God does not want us wasting our years on earth worrying about stuff. He wants us focused on Him and His Word. You keep your focus there and He will abundantly meet your needs.

Observation #3 - Jesus Christ is the only One who can feed the needs of the soul.

Jesus Christ is the only one sufficient to meet all our needs.

EPISODE #2 – Jesus is confronted by the Pharisees in the Dalmanutha region. **8:10-13**

There is no specific place or location in ancient writings that is known by the name Dalmanutha. Most believe it was located on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee somewhere south of Capernaum. It must have been a Jewish area because as soon as Jesus came to this region, He is met by Pharisees for three reasons:

Reason #1 - They want to argue with Him. **8:11a**

The word “argue” means these guys want to debate with Him and dispute His claims and teachings. They were not interested in a discussion to ascertain truth; this was all about hostile argumentation and challenge. They are not about to leave Jesus alone.

Reason #2 - They want to see Him perform some sign from heaven. **8:11b**

They wanted Jesus to perform some spectacular sign from heaven. They wanted Him to show that His authority and miraculous power did come from God. Jesus has already performed signs and miracles in every region, but it wasn't enough. These Christ haters want Him to do something big.

Reason #3 - They want to test Him. **8:11c**

They wanted to trap Him. This word test is one that is used in a bad sense, trying to ensnare Him (*Ibid.*, p. 351).

Jesus responded to them in three ways:

(Response #1) - Jesus sighed deeply. **8:12a**

At this point Jesus has performed amazing miracles and these guys knew it. This “deep sighing” in His spirit was that of emotional grief and frustration.

(Response #2) - Jesus questioned them. **8:12b**

Jesus asked them a rhetorical question. Frankly, He is mad and He said you are a generation who always wants a sign; well, no sign will be given to you. Matthew adds, He also said you are an evil and adulterous generation and the only sign you will see is the sign of Jonah (Matt. 16:4). What that means is the only sign you will see is Me coming out of a grave three days after you put Me in it dead. In other words, the only sign I will do for you is My Resurrection. Is that big enough for you? You kill Me and I come back alive in three days. Is that big enough? No.

(Response #3) - Jesus left them. **8:13**

Jesus got in the boat and left these religious leaders and headed back across the sea toward the Gentile area.

There is a place for saying, "I have had enough." That is what Jesus does here. He says I am getting out of here because I am sick and tired of you Pharisaical losers.

EPISODE #3 – Jesus uses this to teach His disciples that He is the One who will meet all of their needs. **8:14-21**

At this point we are about one year away from the cross and these disciples are still struggling, in spite of all they have seen Him do. You would certainly expect the Pharisees and Scribes to misunderstand and not believe, but you would not expect it from His own disciples.

Now **verse 14** says that when they were in the boat, they forgot to take the bread they had from the huge number of leftovers in the feeding of the 4000. All they had was one loaf.

According to **verse 15**, Jesus started giving them orders. He gave them to specific orders:

Order #1 - Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. **8:15a**

Order #2 - Watch out and beware of the leaven of Herod. **8:15b**

Now when I read this, the first question that comes to my mind is what is the leaven of the Pharisees and what is the leaven of Herod? The first thing that came to these disciples minds is we don't have any bread on board (**verse 16**). They apparently think Jesus is challenging them about why they forgot the bread.

Now Matthew refers to the leaven of the Pharisees as being their teaching (Matt. 16:12). Luke says it was their hypocrisy (Luke 12:1). **What we conclude is that the leaven of the Pharisees is their teaching of man-made religious traditions which they elevate to the same level as the Word of God and their play acting that they are right with God in this.** Beware of that.

The leaven of Herod would seem to be that which listens to truth and knows it is the truth but then does the opposite of truth. Herod sold out the truth for the whims of his wife.

Now Jesus is giving them this instruction and they are discussing a loaf of bread in the boat. Jesus asks them a series of five rhetorical questions:

(Rhetorical Question #1) - Why are you discussing the subject of bread? 8:17a

Good question. The answer is because these guys are missing it.

(Rhetorical Question #2) - Do you not yet see or comprehend? 8:17b

The answer is “no” we do not see yet and we don’t comprehend.

(Rhetorical Question #3) - Do you have a hardened heart? 8:17c

The answer is “yes” we do have a hardened heart.

(Rhetorical Question #4) - Do you have eyes that cannot see? 8:18a

The answer is we do have eyes but “no” we don’t see.

(Rhetorical Question #5) - Do you have ears that cannot hear? 8:18b

The answer is we do have ears but “no” we don’t hear.

Now in **verse 19** Jesus brings this discussion down to their level. These guys are discussing one loaf of bread. So Jesus says when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full did you pick up and they said twelve.

In **verse 20** Jesus said and when I broke the seven loaves for the 4000 how many large baskets full did you pick up and they said seven.

Now **verse 21**, do you not yet understand? **You are traveling with God!** This is what the Pharisees deny and this is what Herod denies.

Don’t you guys get it yet? Jesus says don’t you understand that I am the God/Savior/Messiah/King. Jesus is God. He is the Divine Savior and the Divine Provider.

Most of the religious world has misread this fact; don’t you make the same mistake.