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Sermon Notes

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Jesus Feeds a Multitude... Again!

Mark 8:1-10

One of the great challenges of our Christian lives is how prone we are to forget God's goodness to us in the past... how wonderfully he has provided for us, how completely he has met our needs. These lessons he has crafted over the years of our experiences, and yet how easy it is for us to look at each new challenge as unique and a great threat, and to forget God's faithfulness over our lifetimes.

But in his amazing kindness, God patiently orchestrates days in which lessons are repeated. Some things we live through again and again—God's faithfulness to heal your body when it is sick or injured; God's faithfulness to give you the money needed to meet every need; God's faithfulness in feeding your empty stomach every day of your life from infancy until today.

That is why Psalm 103 says

Psalm 103:1-5 Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. ² Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits-- ³ who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, ⁴ who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, ⁵ who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

FORGET NOT all his benefits! That is why the feeding of a multitude is repeated in the Bible... two separate occasions, six biblical accounts in all: Two in Matthew, two in Mark, one each in Luke

and John. SIX TIMES to learn the same lessons about the greatness of Christ and his power to meet every need.

I. Repeated Repetition

A. A Miracle Repeated

1. This almost exactly parallels the earlier feeding of the 5000 recorded in Mark 6
 2. Tremendous similarities between these two accounts
- It begins with Jesus' compassion... Mark 6:34 tells us Jesus had compassion on the crowd because they were like sheep without a shepherd... here, again, this account starts with Jesus' compassion
 - The location: a deserted place; isolated, distant from a population center
 - The same question is raised among the disciples as to how they are going to feed so many people in such a remote place
 - Jesus asks them the exact same question about their resources... "How many loaves do you have?"
 - In both accounts, there is the order to have the people sit down on the ground
 - In both accounts, Jesus takes the loaves, gives thanks, breaks the bread and gives it to the disciples to give to the people
 - In both accounts, there is a separate mention of the fish being eaten as well
 - So also both times, we are told everyone ate their fill and were satisfied
 - Then both accounts tells us of the broken pieces of bread and fish being picked up and collected in baskets

- Both accounts then give the number of men who were fed, omitting the number of women and children
- Both finish with the crowd being dismissed and Jesus and his disciples moving on to another place along the Sea of Galilee to minister

3. Critics

- a. Some hostile critics of the Bible point this out as a prime example of the slapdash work done by the New Testament writers
- b. These critics don't believe these events actually happened but that stories were fabricated and woven together to make the Myth of Jesus the God-Man
- c. They think we have these New Testament documents as a kluge work of existing documents that were thrown together without any careful editing
- d. The accounts of these two feedings are cited as proof of this; Mark without much thought just included this set of words from some scrap of paper he had on his desk along with the earlier one

4. BUT there are some key differences between the two accounts

- a. One, obviously, are the details of the case... 4000 as opposed to 5000; seven loaves as opposed to five; "a few fish" as opposed to two; seven basketfuls gathered as opposed to twelve
- b. On that last one, we must note that the Greek word for basket was different in the two accounts...
- c. In the first feeding, the 5000, the Greek word was *kophinos*, a smaller basket used to hold a much smaller volume, like enough for one man's meal
- d. In this feeding, the Greek word for "basket" was *spuris*, like a big hamper... much larger volume

- e. If these had been copycat accounts, the writers would have used the exact same language

B. NO! These Two Feedings BOTH Happened! Jesus Said So...

1. Later in this chapter, the disciples will bicker about having forgotten to bring bread... God willing, we'll get to that account next week
2. But listen to Jesus' full answer:

Mark 8:17-21 Jesus asked them: "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened?"¹⁸ Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember?¹⁹ When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" "Twelve," they replied.²⁰ "And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" They answered, "Seven."²¹ He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"

Mark 4:24 "Consider carefully what you hear"

C. Why the Repetition?

1. At one level, this question doesn't even need to be answered
2. Jesus did lots of miracles over and over and over and over again

Mark 6:53-56 When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there.⁵⁴ As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus.⁵⁵ They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was.⁵⁶ And wherever he went-- into villages, towns or countryside-- they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed

Matthew 11:4-5 Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see:⁵ The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.

Matthew 15:30-31 Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them. ³¹ The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.

Matthew 4:23-24 Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. ²⁴ News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them.

There are only so many ways you can heal a crippled person, a blind person, a deaf person, a sick person... generally Jesus just touched them, spoke to them, healed them, and they went away. It basically looked the same day after day.

So also Jesus' teachings... Jesus had an array of teachings recorded for us in the Gospels, lots of different parables, lots of different sermons; but some of the messages must have been repeated... like the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 and the Sermon on the Plain in Luke 6; both begin with a series of "Blessed are..." statements and cover very similar ground, but they are different too.

So... Jesus did many things in his ministry multiple times

3. More on repetition

a. We NEED the reminders!

- i) The disciples' constant forgetfulness represents all of us
- ii) We tend to go through experiences many times before we learn the lessons
- iii) We are dull like they are, slow of heart to understand and believe what the Lord is teaching us

4. The Bible makes much of the need for repetition

- a. The Book of Deuteronomy is so-called because it is the SECOND law-giving; the nation of Israel already had heard the law once, now they heard it again
- b. Jesus warned his disciples again and again about his own sufferings and death... yet, despite all his warnings, they still did not comprehend it
- c. The New Testament writers spoke openly about the need for repetition in their teachings:

Philippians 3:1 Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.

Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

Philippians 3:18 For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.

2 Peter 1:12-13 So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. ¹³ I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body

Jude 5 Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe

D. Why We Need This Particular Lesson Repeated

1. This is the lesson of Christ's ability to feed our stomachs
2. This is a central drive in our lives, as I will say more of next week

Ecclesiastes 6:7 All man's efforts are for his mouth, yet his appetite is never satisfied.

And

John 6:27 Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.

And

Matthew 6:31-33 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

3. The overwhelming anxiety many have of having their bodily needs met must be met by faith in the future grace of God... and that faith comes by the WORD and by EXPERIENCE... seeing God be faithful AGAIN and AGAIN

Psalms 37:25 I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.

4. So Christ in his kindness and compassion does this miracle twice... and the Holy Spirit in his kindness and compassion has the doubled miracle recorded in Matthew and Mark, in addition to the original feeding of the 5000 in all four gospels... that's SIX ACCOUNTS of Jesus' miraculous feeding of the empty stomachs of huge numbers of people

E. So... Let's Walk Through This Again... and Learn the Same Lessons Again!!

And... it starts with Jesus' compassion

II. Jesus Speaks His Compassion

Mark 8:1-3 During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, ² "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. ³ If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance."

A. Compassion is by FAR the Most Common Emotion Ascribed to Jesus

1. Again and again and again, Jesus is said to be moved with compassion for the sufferings of another person or a group of people

2. The first time in Mark's Gospel is with the leper in chapter 1

Mark 1:40-42 A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." ⁴¹ Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" ⁴² Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.

3. The Greek term there, as also in our account today is *splangnizomai*... related to the inner organs, the intestines
4. Often we can FEEL emotions in our stomachs... like "in the pit of my stomach" or "my stomach was tingling" or "I had a gut feeling"
5. Jesus can FEEL the pain and suffering of others within his inner organs... as if it were happening to him

B. Other Times... Very Moving!

1. As when Jesus saw a funeral procession in which a widow was burying her only son... and her heart was broken
2. Jesus was filled with compassion for her, came up to her and said "Don't cry!" Then he touched the coffin and raised the young man from the dead

C. BUT This Occasion is the ONLY TIME in ALL THE GOSPELS in which Jesus speaks it about himself... both here and the parallel in Matthew 15

1. All those other occurrences, the account tells us Jesus had compassion or it was merely shown how Jesus had compassion on the sick and needy people and cared for them
2. But here, Jesus speaks it of his own condition...

D. Jesus Reflects the Father's Compassion

1. Again and again in the Old Testament, God displays compassion on his people

- a. The Exodus began because God was compassionate toward the sufferings of Israel in Egypt and he heard their cries:

Exodus 2:23-25 The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. ²⁴ God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. ²⁵ So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them

- b. God spoke of his compassion to Moses on Mount Sinai

Exodus 34:6 And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness

- c. Even when Israel was sinning overtly against him in the days of the Judges, going after other gods and defying him, again and again he showed compassion on them in their misery

Judges 2:18 Whenever the LORD raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived; for the LORD had compassion on them as they groaned under those who oppressed and afflicted them.

Clear example, Judges 10...

Judges 10:6-8 Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD. They served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites and the gods of the Philistines. And because the Israelites forsook the LORD and no longer served him, ⁷ he became angry with them. He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and the Ammonites, ⁸ who that year shattered and crushed them. For eighteen years they oppressed all the Israelites...

Judges 10:10 Then the Israelites cried out to the LORD, "We have sinned against you, forsaking our God and serving the Baals."

Judges 10:11-16 The LORD replied, ... you have forsaken me and served other gods, so I will no longer save you. ¹⁴ Go and cry out to the gods you have chosen. Let them save you when you are in trouble!" ¹⁵ But the Israelites said to the LORD, "We have sinned. Do with us

whatever you think best, but please rescue us now." ¹⁶ Then they got rid of the foreign gods among them and served the LORD. And he could bear Israel's misery no longer.

Wow!! God could only stand Israel's misery in his judgments for so long... his compassion rose up within him as he saw their misery.

d. The Psalms and the Prophets celebrate God's compassion

Psalm 103:13-14 As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; ¹⁴ for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.

Isaiah 49:15-16 "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! ¹⁶ See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me.

Hosea 11:8 "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboiim? My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused.

2. It was Compassion that Caused God to Send His Son

3. Jesus spoke powerfully of the compassion of God toward sinners in the Parable of the Prodigal Son:

Luke 15:20 But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

Luke 15:22-24 the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'

4. And Paul calls God "the Father of compassion"

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our troubles

E. So... Jesus is the Perfect Display of the Father's Compassion

Hebrews 1:3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being

Jesus said to Philip

John 14:9 Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.

F. Compassion Here in this Account

Mark 8:1-3 Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, ² "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. ³ If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance."

1. Huge crowd... from all that area; perhaps many of them Gentiles, given where he was...the Decapolis (a predominantly Gentile area)
2. Those people had never seen anything like what Jesus was doing
3. He was healing any and every disease and sickness, so that the people marveled

Mark 7:37 People were overwhelmed with amazement. "He has done everything well," they said. "He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

4. And they just stayed there hour after hour, day after day
5. Undoubtedly Jesus was also teaching them the Good News of the Kingdom of God... and many teachings as well
6. They were so absorbed that they forgot their own bodily needs
7. Jesus knew that they hadn't had anything to eat for three days... so clearly he wasn't there to meet all their bodily desires, for this was the third day without him feeding them

8. He said "I HAVE COMPASSION ON THESE PEOPLE..." because he knew their physical condition
9. Without nourishment, they would collapse on the way home, since they were in such a remote place
10. No, we don't live for food... but without energy, the body can't move
11. The Greek expression for "collapse" is that that used of a bowstring coming loose from a bow; hanging limp... so would they be if they tried to walk ten miles home after three days

This is the nature of Jesus' compassion... very aware of their situation!

III. The Feeding Effected

A. Jesus Involves His Disciples

1. He expresses his compassion for the crowd to THEM
2. He wants them to know his concerns... and to imitate him in that compassion
3. Like the last time, he wants them to feel the burden of the problem
4. Their response

Mark 8:4 His disciples answered, "But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?"

5. Somewhat predictable... they still haven't fully learned the lesson of the loaves, as they will prove at the end of this chapter when they faithlessly argue about having no bread
6. The disciples represent us in our DULLNESS and SLOWNESS OF HEART to believe in all that Jesus can do

B. Jesus Takes Inventory of What They Have

Mark 8:5 "How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked. "Seven," they replied.

1. Like last time, he wants the disciples to provide what they have as a physical starter for the miracle
2. As we said with the feeding of the 5000, Jesus clearly doesn't need to use the seven loaves or the few fish; he created the universe out of nothing with the word of his power
3. But he wants us to present what we do have as a connection to the power of God; God has already provided SOME to these men; he will now provide the rest

C. Jesus Works Out the Logistics

Mark 8:6 He told the crowd to sit down on the ground.

Last time, the account went into more detail about this...

Mark 6:39-40 Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰ So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties.

The comment I made last time was for crowd control... and logistical organization

D. Giving Thanks to God... and Distributing the Result

Mark 8:6 When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people, and they did so.

The thanksgiving is essential... for

“What do you have that you did not receive?”

“Every good and perfect gift comes down from above.”

Then... in the midst of verse 6 comes the miracle... the bread is multiplied, matter is created, like at the original creation... and all needs are met

E. The Fish Too

Mark 8:7 They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them.

1. The fish are mentioned as a second act
2. Again, the fish flesh that Christ created was of fish that never grew or swam... one scholar said humorously "They were created dead!"

F. The People Completely Satisfied

Mark 8:8 The people ate and were satisfied.

Like the Feeding of the 5000, the Greek word "*chortadzo*" is used, meaning "gorged," like the "fattened calf"

They couldn't eat another bite!

G. The Pieces Collected as Evidence

Mark 8:8 Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

Again... the word for "basket" here is much larger than the last time; like big hampers... LOTS of leftovers, though the number of baskets was fewer... seven rather than twelve

H. The Count and the Dismissal

Mark 8:9-10 About four thousand men were present. And having sent them away, ¹⁰ he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha

Four thousand men... plus women and children; a smaller crowd this time, fed with a few more loaves than last time... but still every bit as mighty a miracle!

Dalmanutha is another name for Magadan, the region between Magdala and Capernaum; Magdala is where Mary Magdalene was from... this is Jesus' return to Galilee

The cross was now less than a year away, and Jesus would finish his ministry in Galilee and begin making his way down to Judea and Jerusalem where he would die for the sins of the world

IV. Lessons from This Second Feeding

Not Much Different that the Lessons from the First!!

A. Jesus Christ is God! Come to Him for Eternal Life

1. First and simply... all the miracles show us clearly who Jesus is... he is GOD and there is nothing he cannot do
2. The creation of SOMETHING out of NOTHING is patterned after the original creation of the entire universe... and Jesus is the Word by which the Father created all things

John 1:3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

3. So we should just stand in awe of Jesus and worship him, as at the end of Mark 7:

Mark 7:37 People were overwhelmed with amazement. "He has done everything well," they said.

4. Beyond that, in the first version of this particular miracle Jesus links their need for physical nourishment to his death on the cross

John 6:47-51 I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. ⁵⁰ But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

Jesus' death on the cross is what gives us life; we "feed" on that by believing in Jesus' death... trusting in him for the forgiveness of our sins and for eternal life

B. Develop a Heart of Compassion Like Jesus

1. Christlikeness is the goal of our salvation

2. Jesus' compassion for lost, needy, suffering people is so obvious and powerful throughout the Gospels
3. We, like the priest and Levite in the Parable of the Good Samaritan tend to look at suffering people and walk on by on the other side
4. Jesus wants his people to **MOVE TOWARD** suffering and to alleviate it... especially spiritual suffering of lostness and the eternal suffering of damnation in hell; but also temporary suffering in this world: **"I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was sick and you visited me."**

C. Jesus Prepares His Disciples for a World Mission

1. Most commentators see these chapters (the end of Mark 7 and on into Mark 8) as a significant venture into Gentile territory
2. It began with him healing the demon-possessed daughter of the Syro-Phoenician woman... and even though he said to her "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel" yet she had saving faith... what Jesus called "GREAT FAITH" and she got the scraps of power that feel from the Jewish table
3. Jesus continued to do miracles among the Gentiles for awhile there, including this feeding of the four thousand; many scholars believe these people were predominantly Gentiles
4. So Jesus was showing that God's compassion and power through Jesus flows to Gentiles too, not just the Jewish nation
5. In doing this, Jesus was training his disciples to get ready to expand their hearts beyond the nation of Israel
6. He couldn't just spring it on them after the resurrection... they had to be prepared to take the message to Samaritans (hence that time in John 4 with the Samaritan woman at the well, and her whole village) and now a preliminary excursion into Gentile territory
7. After his resurrection, he will make it plain:

Mark 16:15-16 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. ¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Luke 24:46-48 He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.

D. Do Not Be Anxious About Your Needs!

Matthew 6:31-33 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

More on this next time!