

Church Picnic

Michael Morris / General Adult

Mark 8:1–10

Scripture Reading

This morning's Scripture reading is Mark 8:1-10. Friends hear the Word of the Lord.

Mark 8:1–10 **ESV**

In those days, when again a great crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat, he called his disciples to him and said to them, “I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way. And some of them have come from far away.” And his disciples answered him, “How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?” And he asked them, “How many loaves do you have?” They said, “Seven.” And he directed the crowd to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves, and having given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and they set them before the crowd. And they had a few small fish. And having blessed them, he said that these also should be set before them. And they ate and were satisfied. And they took up the broken pieces left over,

seven baskets full. And there were about four thousand people. And he sent them away. And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.

The Prophet Isaiah declares that the grass withers and the flower fades but the Word of the Lord will stand forever and friends this is the Word of our Lord. Thanks be to God.

Would you pray with me?

O Lord our Lord, thank You for Your Word that we are able to read it and live by it. I pray for hearts here this morning that are troubled will find peace in Your presence. I pray for hearts at peace this morning will be troubled by Your presence. I pray now the words of David in the Psalms that the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts will be found worthy in Your sight, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Introduction

I've never been part of a church that has a picnic like this. So this is brand new but I love it! When I was preparing the message for this morning I wanted to do something from the Bible about food. I could've chosen God raining manna in the wilderness for the Israelites. Or God sending ravens to Elijah to provide him with meat and bread. I could have

chosen the one everybody knows with Jesus feeding the five thousand. But as you just heard I did something different. See Jesus feeding the five thousand is the only miracle, besides the resurrection, that occurs in all four Gospels. Jesus feeding the four thousand only appears twice. In our passage in Mark and also in Matthew. So this might be one that you have never heard before.

So to give some background information that will be important for later, Jesus has just returned from Tyre which fundamentally a Gentile location. Tyre was one of the largest cities in southern Phoenicia, the Mediterranean coastal region northwest of Galilee. The population of Tyre was predominantly Gentile with a Jewish minority.

1. Compassion Catalyzes Provision

Mark 8:1–3

Jesus has great compassion towards us. Guys, we're dumb. Like really dumb. Think about all the times that Jesus calls Himself Shepherd and us His sheep. I had heard before that sheep are dumb but for my own clarity I asked Styler about this. Styler who is our admin at the church has worked with sheep for sixteen years and her own words, sheep are the dumbest animal.

Sheep serve as a fitting metaphor for God's people,

suggesting that God's people are naive and utterly dependent on their shepherd for divine guidance and protection. This dependence isn't incidental—sheep are naturally gentle and submissive, and are predisposed to becoming easily lost or led astray. The image captures humanity's tendency toward waywardness: "All we like sheep have gone astray" (Isa 53:6). Rather than flattery, the metaphor communicates spiritual neediness. The absolute dependence of sheep on their shepherd makes it fitting to liken God and His Messiah to the role of the shepherd.

Because of Jesus' compassion for the people He felt compelled to act and do something for their growing hunger. They had been following him for days and were I'm sure famished. Jesus shows great empathy for the men, women, and children you were present. But Jesus' empathy also shows us God's concern for our physical and spiritual health. Guys just as we should train our physical bodies with exercise, we should train our minds by stimulating them with reading or puzzles and not just watching mind numbing television shows. We should also train our spiritual bodies by reading the Bible and other theological and doctrinal books and praying and other spiritual disciplines such as fasting, silence, and solitude.

2. Challenge: Faith in Scarcity

Mark 8:4–5

Jesus tested his disciples. He wanted them to look at what God had provided. He wanted them to use that to feed the multitudes. It reminds me of the story of Gideon. If you don't know, Gideon was one of the judges of Ancient Israel. He was going to battle against the Midianites who had approximately 135,000 men. Gideon had 32,000. God said, that's too many, send all those who are afraid home. So 22,000 went home. Gideon is now left with just 10,000. God looked again and said, "Nah, still too many. Have them drink water and all of the men to water and all those who lapped the water up like dogs should stay." This would leave Giden with just 300 men against an army of 135,000. But guess what, the Israelites won by the power of God!

Think of the Wright Brothers, who dreamt of flying when everyone else thought it was impossible. They faced ridicule and setbacks, yet their faith pushed them to develop the first powered aircraft.

Then just 24 years later, a man named Charles Lindbergh took off on a solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean, a feat seen as impossible at the time. He not only succeeded but found his place in aviation history. It serves as a reminder that with courage, determination, and a little divine intervention, what seems unachievable can become a remarkable accomplishment.

Consider the story of the famous Mount Everest climber,

Sir Edmund Hillary, who was the first to conquer the peak in 1953. Many believed it was impossible, but his faith in perseverance and teamwork turned what seemed unattainable into a victory.

We should recognize God's power and sovereignty even in our own impossible situations. God has the ability to multiply the small efforts to make something great. In the words of Margaret Mead, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

3. Thanksgiving Precedes Multiplication

Mark 8:6–7

Notice what Jesus does here. He does the same thing when He fed the 5,000. He gathered up the food and then he very intentionally gave thanks to God above for the provision. This should show us how our posture should be. We should come with a posture of gratitude for what God has given us. He doesn't give us all a mansion or a million dollar bank account. But what He does bless us with we should be grateful. We must acknowledge what God has done for us before seeking His multiplication.

Now I want to be clear even if we are thankful for all that God has done does not necessarily mean He will multiply

what we have. We can ask but His answer might be “no”. And if God does say, “No” we need to be okay with that. We don’t know God’s purposes. There was a theologian named Ravi Zacharias who did some terrible things to be honest with you and I don’t know if he ever repented of them but one story he tells has always stayed with me:

A story is told in mid-Eastern folklore of this man who lost his horse that ran away. And when the horse ran away his neighbor came to him and said, “Bad luck isn’t it that your horse is gone.” The man replied, “What do I know about these things.” A few days later the horse came back with twenty other wild horses. The neighbor came back and said, “Amazing, it’s not bad luck, it’s good luck. You’ve got twenty more.” Man says, “What do I know about these things.” His young son is going and taming one of the new horses, that horse kicks him and breaks his leg. Neighbor comes back and says, “Terrible isn’t it. It must be bad luck after all with that wild horse breaking your son’s leg.” The man replies, “What do I know about these things.” A few days go by and a bunch of thugs come by looking for recruits to join their gang and they’re looking for all the able bodied young men and they’re about to pick this young man when they see his leg is broken. They say, “We don’t want him, we’re going to move on to the next house.” Neighbor comes back and says, “Good luck your son’s leg was broken.”

In one short series of episodes we don't know what lies ahead.

We don't know what tomorrow holds. We don't know what will happen. God might multiply all that you have. He might take away all that you have. But in all things we should praise God and thank Him for the things we do have.

4. Surplus: Satisfaction in Abundance

Mark 8:8–10

But the abundance God DOES provide will more often than not exceed our wildest expectations. Look at the 4,000 who were satisfied and had leftovers remaining. Jesus' provision is both generous and sustains us. Not only does He provide for our physical needs. He supplies us with all of our spiritual needs too. Think about the Israelites in the wilderness after escaping captivity in Egypt. God provided for them manna like I mentioned earlier.

In John 6, Jesus reinterprets the manna narrative by claiming that his Father—not Moses—provided the true bread from heaven, and that he himself is “the bread of life” who gives life to the world. Jesus emphasizes the contrast: while the Israelites ate manna and died, he is “the living bread that came down from heaven” so that those who eat

it will not die. This represents a fundamental theological move in which Jesus becomes the ultimate fulfillment of what manna merely foreshadowed.

So brothers and sisters eat of the body of Jesus who is the bread of life and you will never die. You will taste the heavenly bread and you will not just be blessed physically but also spiritually.

Conclusion

The feeding of the 4,000 carries distinct theological weight as a miracle directed toward the Gentile community, contrasting with the feeding of the 5,000 which addressed Israel. The seven baskets of leftover food symbolize completeness in biblical numerology, signifying God's covenant extending beyond Israel to encompass Gentiles.

The timing proves crucial—immediately after Jesus taught that moral defilement stems from the human heart rather than ethnicity or food, he enters Gentile territory and performs the same miraculous feeding he had accomplished in Israel. This demonstrates that Jesus offers his grace equally to both Jews and Gentiles, fulfilling Old Testament expectations that all nations would be blessed through Abraham's offspring.

Friends because Jesus loves us so much we are part of

Abraham's offspring and are blessed because of it. Won't you share this blessing with other people? Let's pray.