

Rev. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church
Matthew 15:32-39 | A Bad Case of the Normals
Sunday September 15, 2024

WELCOME:

- Please turn your Bibles to Matthew 15.
- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.
- Notes are in the foyer, so take them home with you.

REVIEW:

Before our break with Dr. Bivins' teaching about trust, we learned how to Give God Glory in verses 29-31.

In that passage, the Holy Spirit taught us how the Lord Jesus Christ is a God of compassion.

Jesus is a God of compassion and mercy (love) because He and the Twelve decided to travel to enemy territory—the Gentile area of the Decapolis—

and it was out of love that He taught the Word of God, preached the Gospel, and healed everyone who came to Him. → not Jews, heathens, Godless people → regardless of what they believed.

One of the surprising things that caught our attention was how Jesus, the Son of God, is also so very human.

We discussed how Jesus went to the top of a mountain and “sat there.” (Matt. 15:29)

This is the same God who spoke the world into existence.

Jesus is the same God who appeared to many people throughout the OT—theophanies and Christophanies.

Fast forward a little bit, and this is the same God who will be:

- Murdered on a Roman cross for being the perfect man, *sinless*
- Placed in a borrowed grave and resurrected on the third day,
- Reveal Himself to the Twelve Disciples and 500 others after the resurrection.
- Ascend back to Heaven where He came from,
- Give His Church the Holy Spirit,
- And has promised to come back to make all things right.

And in that passage last week, Jesus—the face and voice of Almighty God—sat there among sinners, teaching them about His truth and caring enough to provide for their physical needs.

Jesus He chose to love people where they're at.

Lastly, I asked if we saw ourselves in that passage.

Do you see yourself, apart from Jesus—laying at His feet—*spiritually* lame?

Do you realize that apart from Jesus, you can do nothing? *is can offer nothing?*

Do you see yourself as *spiritually* blind?

Do you see yourself as *spiritually* mute and deaf?

Do you see yourself as *spiritually* crippled?

I hope so because apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, we are all spiritual beggars who can't help ourselves.

It's only by the Lord's mercy that we're able to see, hear, and understand spiritual truths.

He has chosen us for himself - and given us the faith to believe.

It's also only by the power of the Holy Spirit—illumination—that we can truly love people as God does.

Father, forgive us for our pride. Forgive us for thinking we've got all this figured out. Forgive us for being offended by your truth—and at the same time, thank you for the offense. Thank you for choosing to love us. Thank you for the saving faith to believe. Thank you for turning murderers into missionaries, drunks and drug addicts into deacons and elders, adulterers into evangelists, and perverts into pastors. In other words, thank you for turning sinners into saints.



INTRODUCTION:

Today, we come to a passage with a sense of déjà vu—that we've been here before.

And although there is no Biblical stance on déjà vu, it seems that way today.

Today's passage is connected to the previous one.

We're going to study the feeding of the 4,000 Gentiles—which closely resembles the feeding of the 5,000 Jews in the last chapter of Matthew.

Some people claim this Biblical account is a fabrication—because they wonder why Jesus would perform the same miracle back to back.

But we don't have to wonder.

Scripture reveals how the Lord allowed His prophets to perform miracles in pairs, similar to what He is now doing in Matthew's Gospel.

These ^{OT} miracles occurred in the days of Moses and Elijah/Elisha (Exod 16; Num 11:4–9; 2 Kgs 4:1–7, 42–44).

Those passages are rather long, so we don't have time to look at them today—but let me encourage you to read them this week.

We have much to learn from today's passage.

I've titled this sermon "A Bad Case of the Normals."

Why? And why do you care? Let's find out!

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 15:32— Jesus called his disciples and said, "I have compassion on the crowd, because they've already stayed with me three days and have nothing to eat. I don't want to send them away hungry, otherwise they might collapse on the way."

Matthew 15:33— The disciples said to him, "Where could we get enough bread in this desolate place to feed such a crowd?"

Matthew 15:34— "How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked them. "Seven," they said, "and a few small fish."

Matthew 15:35— After commanding the crowd to sit down on the ground,

Matthew 15:36— he took the seven loaves and the fish, gave thanks, broke them, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds.

Matthew 15:37— They all ate and were satisfied. They collected the leftover pieces—seven large baskets full.

Matthew 15:38— Now there were four thousand men who had eaten, besides women and children.

Matthew 15:39— After dismissing the crowds, he got into the boat and went to the region of Magadan..

These are the very words from the authoritative, inerrant, inspired, infallible, and sufficient Word of Almighty God.

PRAY:

*The Lord is good to everyone;
his compassion rests on all he has made.
(Psalm 119:65-68)*

EXEGESIS:

Matthew 15:29—Moving on from there, Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee. He went up on a mountain and sat there,

Matthew 15:30—and large crowds came to him, including the lame, the blind, the crippled, those unable to speak, and many others. They put them at his feet, and he healed them.

Matthew 15:31—So the crowd was amazed when they saw those unable to speak talking, the crippled restored, the lame walking, and the blind seeing, and they gave glory to the God of Israel.

Matthew 15:32—Jesus called his disciples and said, "I have compassion on the crowd, because they've already stayed with me three days and have nothing to eat. I don't want to send them away hungry, otherwise they might collapse on the way."

Jesus is ministering in the Decapolis— which is modern-day ^{legion} Golan Heights in Syria.

This is the same region that a year or so prior where Jesus healed a demon-possessed man who had not one demon but a legion of demons— thousands.

Jesus cast those demons into a herd of pigs, and the pigs panicked and thrust themselves off a cliff into the water.

The townspeople came out to see what happened and saw the ex-demon-possessed man, completely sane—

And they are so freaked out—they asked Jesus to leave. (Jesus is different/holy).

Fast forward to today's passage, and it looks like those townspeople learned their lesson...

Matthew 15:32—Jesus called his disciples and said, "I have compassion on the crowd,

Jesus had compassion on the demon-possessed man, and now He has compassion on everyone who is in front of Him.

We've talked about the Lord's mercy and compassion throughout Matt's Gospel.

Mercy is a gift from God that we don't deserve.

→ withholding of God's judgment

- We deserve God's justice & judgment because we are sinners.

↳ there is no one - not one who is good.

KEYPOINT

Compassion is God's pity for humans.

Compassion is an extension of God's love.

↳ A divine characteristic

Compassion also includes the Lord Jesus doing something about our brokenness—our sinful and hopeless state.

Here, we see how The Lord's mercy and compassion intersect.

Matthew 15:32— "I have compassion on the crowd,

Jesus said the same thing about feeding the 5,000 Jews.

Matthew 14:14— ~~When he went ashore,~~ ^{Jesus} he saw a large crowd, had compassion on them, and healed their sick.

Compassion is the main character trait of God Himself, which was revealed from the beginning.

We see God's compassion directly after the Fall in Gen 3 w/ the Lord providing clothing for Adam & Eve.

Exodus 33:19—I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

Earlier we talked of God choosing His people — see it there.

It's out of compassion that God the Father sent God the Son.

John 3:16—For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

God is a God of love and compassion—and God's definition of love is about sacrifice.

God's love is about giving.

So God the Father gave His Son, and God the Son, gave Himself to be the sacrifice for those who believe.

And as the Church, we now give that same love and compassion away to others—especially when they don't deserve it—because we certainly didn't.

Love is the miracle that can change any heart.

Matthew 15:32— "I have compassion on the crowd, (why) because they've already stayed with me three days and have nothing to eat."

Can you imagine that? 😊

To come here on a Sunday morning for worship and leave on Tuesday? (Watch)

Jesus stopped teaching, preaching, and healing only because people had run out of physical food—they're hungry!

people stop listening when hungry

I want you to think about that—the needs of the people are so great that Jesus could continue to provide a feast of spiritual bread for the next week.

And now, out of love, compassion, pity, and mercy—Jesus is concerned about physical bread—physical sustenance.

Matthew 15:33—The disciples said to him, "Where could we get enough bread in this desolate place to feed such a crowd?"

This is where we have a sense of déjà vu.

Haven't we heard this before?

Yes, this Biblical account sounds very familiar to when Jesus fed the 5,000 Jews just a few months prior.

So, is Matthew retelling the same story to make it seem like Jesus performed more miracles than He really did?

Is Matt fabricating what really happened to turn his Gospel into a bestseller?

No, and we'll see why as we examine the passage.

But, if this Biblical account is different, why do the Disciples respond the same way?

Answer The Twelve have a bad case of the normals/being human!

The same thing happens to me and you.

We're financially stuck, and we have no idea how the mortgage will be paid on time—and we pray and pray and pray.

We have family issues and relationship problems, and we have no idea how there ever could be peace in the family again—and we beg and beg and beg the Lord to do something.

We are in a career crisis and have no idea how we will provide for our family—so we pray, fast, and beg the Lord for a new job.

We have a health issue, and we don't understand what's going on because it's this kind of stuff that happens to other people—not us—and we fight being angry with God, we battle depression—because the doctors don't know what to do.

over time, we learn that
~~Evidently~~, God is the only one who can solve the ^{se} problem. *S*

And then, guess what?

The Lord blesses us by having compassion on us—somehow and in some way, we didn't see the answer coming out of left field.

We can all look in the rearview mirror and testify to this in some way.

→ doesn't have to be a miracle
God's provision is made, and His grace is revealed.

And we praise God for answering our prayer.

similar
But...something happens a month, a year, or a decade later.

And we start freaking out again.

Then...we remember—“Oh! I forgot how the Lord answered that prayer.”

We all have a bad case of the normals from time to time.

We all listen to the radio station WHYDFML (What Have You Done For Me Lately).

So let me ask you: Did the Twelve Disciples forget what happened three or four months prior with feeding the 5,000 Jews?

Maybe—they had slept since then.

Even if the Twelve did forget, it was only temporary.

Matthew 15:33—“Where could we get enough bread in this desolate place to feed such a crowd?”

It's like when one of the Twelve asked that question, the light bulb went on—DING! They remembered. Where — The Lord Jesus.

They remembered that somehow and somehow, Jesus multiplied five loaves and two fish to feed over 5,000 men, not including the women and children.

This is a special moment for the Twelve.

The Disciples may have been caught off guard that Jesus would perform that kind of a miracle again—at that scale—especially in Gentile territory.

Certainly, Jesus won't do a miracle here. This is heathen/Godless territory. Most of this crowd is Gentile. The Lord isn't going to feed these people. This is the wrong place. These are the wrong people. This is the wrong time.

But ~~these~~ they're the ones who are wrong. God's ways are not like ours.

So to understand the power of this Biblical account, we have to read it with the correct tone of voice.

The tone of the question is everything...

Matthew 15:33—Jesus, I wonder “Where could we get enough bread in this desolate place to feed such a crowd?”

The Disciples are not stumbling idiots as most people portray them.

Their question is good—once again, it reveals their lack of resources.

In other words, Lord, we can't feed this crowd—just like we couldn't feed the first one.

The Twelve are admitting to Jesus that they don't have the money, the resources, skill—let alone the patience, compassion, or mercy to feed all these people—why?

Because the Twelve are... oh so human/earthy—just like us.

However, they knew Jesus had all those resources and more.

Matthew 15:33— “Where could we get enough bread in this desolate place to feed such a crowd?”

Jesus responds, maybe with a smirk on his face, with the same type of question as when feeding the 5,000.

Jesus has a discipleship opportunity—Jesus is changing the Twelve Disciples ^{into} the Twelve Apostles—so they must learn compassion.

↳ Which is a divine attribute

Matthew 15:34— “How many loaves do you have?” Jesus asked them.

BAM! The disciples are off to the races—they go see how much food they actually have.

they know what's getting ready to happen!

I want you to notice that Jesus always starts with what His disciples have.

Yes, the Lord Jesus can make something out of nothing—He did it in Genesis 1:1.

Genesis 1:1—In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

And He did so from nothing.

But now God chooses to work through His people.

The Lord has always done this—

Jesus has always existed

When the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ (Jesus before Christmas) introduced himself to Moses, He asked:

Exodus 4:2—The Lord asked him, "What is that in your hand?"
"A staff," (Moses) replied.

And the Lord used that staff/stick to reveal His power to Pharaoh.

What did young David have in his hand when he brought down Goliath?

1 Samuel 17:40—... (David) took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones from the (river) wadi and put them in the pouch, in his shepherd's bag. Then, with his sling in his hand, he approached the Philistine.

And the Lord turned David into a sharpshooter that day.

The prophet Elijah saved the life of a widow and her son—what did she have?

1 Kings 17:12—But she said, "As the Lord your God lives, I don't have anything baked—only a handful of flour in the jar and a bit of oil in the jug. Just now, I am gathering a couple of sticks in order to go prepare it for myself and my son so we can eat it and die."

Did they die? No.

KEYPOINT: 2
The Lord uses what we have and multiplies it if we're willing to give it back to him!

We are often so fearful of the future that we can't let go of the present.

And if we can't let go of the present— we can't receive what the Lord has planned.

Matthew 15:34— *"How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked them. "Seven," they said, "and a few small fish."*

So we have the same scenario as feeding the 5,000 but with a much better attitude from the Twelve.

They have learned compassion from the last feeding miracles.

Do you remember what the Twelve told Jesus to do last time?

Matthew 14:15— *Send the crowds away so that they can go into the villages and buy food for themselves."*

So, we have 4,000 men, meaning if you add a wife and two kids, you've got 12,000 hungry people.

Most of them last ate something three days ago.

Matthew 15:35— *After commanding the crowd to sit down on the ground,*

That's interesting—in feeding the 5,000, Jesus told the Jews to sit on the grass (Matt. 14:19).

Why did he tell them to sit on the grass?

Because there was grass to sit on.

Today, however, Jesus says to sit on the ground—why?

This is late summer—all the grass has been scorched by the Palestinian sun.

Details matter—this is an example of the extent of the details that Matthew took in writing his Gospel.

Four to six months have passed between the two feedings.

The feeding of the 5,000 was in early spring—now, this feeding of the 4,000 is in late summer.

So everyone sits on the ground...

Matthew 15:36— *(Jesus) took the seven loaves and the fish, gave thanks, broke them, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds.*

How Jesus performed this miracle is not mentioned.

The picture here is that Jesus “kept giving” the food to the Twelve.

This whole scene implies that Jesus took his time feeding the crowd while the miracle was happening in His hands.

Just as the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus had compassion on the Israelites in the wilderness—providing fresh manna every single morning for nearly 40 years—

Jesus now shows compassion to the Gentiles and teaches the Twelve how to have compassion on them as well.

In a way, this miracle to the Gentiles is a precursor to the Great Commission in Matthew 28—where the church (you and me) is commissioned to share the Gospel and make disciples all over the world.

Matthew 15:37— *They all ate and were satisfied.*

I bet so! That was the best fish and chips dinner anyone could ever have!

Matthew 15:37—They collected the leftover pieces—seven large baskets full.

Once again, Jesus has the Disciples pick up the leftovers. *like last time.*

Why? Wastefulness is sinfulness.

What a great reminder for us today to think that just because we've always had food on the table doesn't necessarily mean it will be that way in the future—especially if we're in the habit of wasting the Lord's provisions—we need to repent from that.

Now, some people see the number twelve as a symbol for Israel's tribes and seven as the number of perfection—both are true—however, the passage doesn't say or even hint at that.

So we don't want to read too much into these numbers.

What the passage does say is that the baskets were different from the feeding of the 5,000.

The type of basket used at the previous feeding was a small Jewish container.

They carried it when they traveled, which would hold enough food for one or two meals.

The baskets used here in the Decapolis, however, were much larger.

They were so large in fact, that you could hide a grown man in them.

Do you remember when the apostle Paul ran for his life in Acts 9?

Acts 9:23—After many days had passed, the Jews conspired to kill him,

Acts 9:24—but Saul (Paul) learned of their plot. So they were watching the gates day and night intending to kill him,

Acts 9:25—but his disciples took him by night and lowered him in a large basket through an opening in the wall.

This is the same kind of basket that the Twelve were using to pick up the leftovers.

Matthew 15:38—Now there were four thousand men who had eaten, besides women and children.

There is no mention of how the Gentiles responded to the miracle itself.

The Jews, on the other hand, wanted to force Jesus to become King.

I mentioned how some scholars think this miracle is a fabrication of the first.

You may run into someone who thinks that, so let me show you the facts listed in Scripture so you can share the truth. *W/ GRACE*

Here's a graph of the differences between the two feedings.

	Feeding 5,000	Feeding 4,000
<i>Audience</i>	Primarily Jews	Primarily Gentiles
<i>Location</i>	Galilee, near Bethsaida	The Decapolis
<i>Food</i>	5 loaves, 2 fish	7 loaves, "a few fish"
	12 baskets over	7 baskets over
	Crowd with Him 1 day	Crowd with Him 3 days
	Spring of year (green grass)	Summer season
<i>Response</i>	Tried to make Him King	No popular response

This is a separate miracle because the Holy Spirit, who inspired the gospels and wrote through Matthew, wouldn't allow Matt to lie in any form or fashion.

↳ impossible

Lastly, Jesus Himself confirms that these are two separate miraculous events—

Matthew 16:9—Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand and how many baskets you collected?

Matthew 16:10—Or the seven loaves for the four thousand and how many large baskets you collected?

So Jesus confirms the two feedings.

Our last verse for today....

Matthew 15:39—After dismissing the crowds, he got into the boat and went to the region of Magadan..

The identity of Magadan is uncertain because no other biblical, historical, or archaeological information exists about it.

If you have an NKJV, the passage says Magdala, which is where Mary Magdelene was probably born and raised.

Some scholars believe Magadan and Magdala are interchangeable, but we don't have conclusive proof for that claim.

Mark's Gospel reports that they went "to the district of Dalmanutha" (8:10), but that location is also uncertain. — *Contradiction, Those Areas are yet to be found.*

So, ultimately, we don't know—but that doesn't mean the Lord will reveal it one day.

PREACH: (Please take notes:)



PREACH:

The Twelve Disciples had a *bad case of the normals* today.

Aren't you glad? I am. It shows me that I'm not alone.

The Twelve either temporarily forgot about the miraculous feeding of the 5,000—or they didn't recognize/understand God's compassion for all people—not only the Jews.

So let me ask you—what don't you understand today?

In what area of life are you having a *bad case of the normals*, today?

We are about six weeks away from the election primary—are you buying into what the world is selling?

Do you have a *bad case of the normals*—listening to all the talking heads—about how one party is going to save the nation and the other will destroy it?

Wow, I guess Almighty God is no longer on His throne.

Do you have a *bad case of the normals* regarding your own finances, career, retirement, relationships or health? Maybe all the above?

How do you know you have a *bad case of the normals*?

What are the symptoms of this *disease*?

The primary symptom is that we tend to worry about these things, which consume our conversations.

Worry is like a crockpot—it continues to cook these thoughts—turning them into anxiety—*anxiety turns to fear*—

And when we start to fear the future— we fear what people are doing or not doing —we tend to forget about God and His promises.

What's the cure for this dreaded disease of being normal?

Or maybe I should say, “Who” is the cure for this disease?

The Twelve Disciples asked, “Where could we get enough bread?” (Matt. 15:33)

The “Where” was standing right in front of them!

The answer was standing in their presence!

It's the same answer today—revealed in a different way.

Our answer to *having a bad case of the normals* —is also to be in the presence of God.

We first do that by acknowledging that we are a sinner—confessing our sins to God.

Secondly, we are to *believe* that Jesus is God's son who came from Heaven to take away our personal sins—that he was crucified, buried and resurrected from the dead.

If we believe that Jesus is Lord— we now have the peace of God.

God's wrath for our sins has been extinguished—which means that Jesus is not our judge but our Savior.

If that wasn't good enough, it also means that the Holy Spirit of Almighty God dwells within us.

God has given us a new heart, a renewed mind—and a new destiny.

We no longer live in the kingdom of this world—we live in the Kingdom of God.

Spending time with God’s Spirit and God’s Word is where we find the cure for our humanness, brokenness, worry, anxiety, and fear.

When we read the Word of God by the Spirit of God, the Lord teaches us, guides us, and rebukes us.

It’s also with the commitment to His church—these people sitting around you—where God provides additional antidotes.

It’s through the people of God—the community and fellowship of the saints—that we experience the hope that is found in His Word.



PRAYER

Thank you for the cure!

BENEDICTION

May the Lord bless you and protect you; may the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; may the Lord look with favor on you and give you peace.” ’ (Num. 6:25)

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