

SLIDE 1. Series: Who Is this Man?: A Study of the Gospel of Mark

Teaching: *Food Truck, Yeast, and a Blind Guy.*

Sunday March 23, 2025

READ: Mark 8:1-10

Jesus is at it again: feeding a multitude of people with almost nothing.

The human food truck.

Why?

Because He had *compassion* on the crowd!

Always considerate!

Jesus considered: the crowd had been with him for 3 days – they were in the middle of nowhere – He was concerned they might collapse on their long walk home.

That same Jesus sits at the right hand of God-the-Father today (Acts 7:53-54; Ro. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Hebrews 1:3, 8:1, 10:12, 12:2; 1 Pt. 3:22; Rev. 3:21).

He has and always will have *compassion* on the crowd. You... and me.

The One who is called THE BREAD OF LIFE (Jn. 6:35) taught His disciples (us) to pray – in part – *give us this day our daily bread* (Mt. 6:11).

SLIDE 2. Do we appreciate and appropriate God's concern for us in the Lord's prayer?

Do we thank God for our daily bread? Do we ask Him to meet our needs of the day?

He sees us, and He has *compassion* on us.

I was playing pickleball on Monday night this past week – and playing... poorly.

In my exasperation – I threw my arms in the air and just-more-than-whispered to myself, "Rob... what are you doing?!" I'm a smidge competitive :)

By the end of the night – I was pretty frustrated with myself – not making shots I knew how to make – my body letting me down – bad knees, bad back, numbness in my right foot. Genetics and a life of sport catching up to me.

I moaned a prayer, "Jesus, would you help me with my pain?"

In the car – on my way home – cooling down and in some quiet – I seemed to hear Jesus say to me with a compassionate inner voice, "I see you're frustrated. You're going to be o.k."

The next day a CT scan revealed that I have a pinched nerve in my lower back – relating to my right knee – causing sciatica. Which was oddly comforting - to have a reason for my pain! My doctor prescribed a nerve blocker to help me through however long it might take for my body to correct/to heal itself.

Even then – on the phone with my doctor – who prays for me and calls me “friend” – I seemed to hear Jesus say to me with a compassionate inner voice, “I see your pain. You’re going to be o.k.”

He sees us, and He has *compassion* on us.

SLIDE 2. Do we appreciate and appropriate God’s concern for us in the Lord’s prayer?

Do we look to see how God answers our prayers to meet our daily needs?
Do we stop to thank Him?

The Pharisees looked to Jesus for a sign.

READ Mark 8:11-13

The tendency of Jesus’ age was to look for God in the supernatural. People believed that when the Messiah came – jaw-dropping things would happen. And so there were many false Messiahs at the time who appealed to this hope: they lured people to follow them by promising astonishing signs – like parting the Jordan River in two with a path through it or make the city walls fall down with a word.

And so the Pharisees demanded a sign from Jesus to authenticate his Messiahship. They wanted to see something spectacular.

To Jesus – such a demand wasn’t due to their deep desire to see the hand of God – it was due to the fact that they were blind to his hand in the first place. They looked but they did not see.

To Jesus – the whole world was full of signs: the corn in the field, the leaven in the bread, the flowers on the hillside. Jesus didn’t think that God needed to break into the world – He knew that God was already in evidence for anyone who had the eyes to see.

SLIDE 3. I believe it is as William Barclay says, **“The sign of the truly religious man is not that he comes to church to find God but that he finds God everywhere, not that he makes a great deal of sacred spaces but that he sanctifies common spaces”** (*The Daily Bible Study: The Gospel of Mark*, William Barclay, p. 186).

SLIDE 4. And as Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote, **“Earth’s crammed with heaven, and every common bush afire with God; but only he who sees, takes off his shoes, the rest sit round it and pluck blackberries.”**

SLIDE 5. And finally, as the apostle Paul wrote: ***For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse*** (Ro. 1:20).

If the Pharisees couldn't see God in the world or in their own history of God interacting with the nation of Israel (which are the stories of the O.T.) or in what they saw and heard about the ministry of Jesus – what spectacular sign could Jesus now affect that might convince them that he was the One sent by God to save them?

"If only God wrote my name in the sky, I'd believe in Him!"

"If only God would heal me, I'd believe in Him!"

"If only God would help me master my backhand down the line, I would believe in Him!"

But would we?! Wouldn't we just explain these things away. "That's just a jet stream."
"That's just good medicine." "That's just a function of practice."

It might be that God – that Jesus – can't win for losing – when signs are demanded by people who look but don't see – who desire to see the extraordinary hand of God but miss it right in front of them in the ordinary.

Jesus did not give them a sign!

READ Mk. 8:14-21

Think back to a time when you were in school.

What was your worst subject – the one you would have given up in a heartbeat?

For me – it was trigonometry! The best – and maybe only good thing about that class – was the guy that sat behind me, Jeff Gibbons. Though we weren't allowed to chew gum in class – he always had a pack of Thrills Gum - the one that tastes like soap – and he'd share them with me.

Now, try to remember what it might have been like for your teacher to explain something to you in that subject you loathed for the 20th time?

There's a special kind of sorrowful look that comes over a teacher, isn't there? - when they have explained something as clearly as they can, time and again, and the student still doesn't get it.

I think Jesus might have had such a look on his face at the end of this conversation in the boat!

SLIDE 6. Things were heating up. Kingdoms were colliding.

It is reasonable to think that Jesus took the Pharisees asking for a sign to be a sign of its own – a sign that - though His Jewish contemporaries would hear and see his message – they'd go their own way – struggle for a kingdom on their own terms vs. His – a kingdom that was different than His – than God's – on a collision course that would reach its climax in Jesus' crucifixion.

This is why Jesus warns His disciples against the “leaven” of the Pharisees and of Herod. He knew the time was coming soon for His disciples to choose – one kingdom over the other.

The Jews used leaven to make bread – but not at Passover time – to remind them of when they (as a people) were in such a hurry to leave their slavery in Egypt that they only had time to make unleavened bread.

Now – Jesus speaks of “leaven” – not to warn the disciples about the wrong kind of bread – but to put them on guard against the wrong sort of kingdom!

The Pharisees wanted God to set up a kingdom for the benefit of the Jews who observed the Law – not for the wider benefit Jesus had in mind – for the Jews *and* Gentiles. Herod wanted God to establish his royal family as the true Kings of Israel.

Neither of these comes near the mark of Jesus’ kingdom – which looked like extraordinary out of ordinary feedings of thousands – for anyone who was hungry to see the hand of God.

And it was urgent that they get the message – because the time will soon come when they will have to go to Jerusalem with a mission – not to feed hungry people – but to challenge political-religious system.

And the disciples might only be able and willing to go with Him if they “understand” that He isn’t just a healer – He isn’t just a prophet – but that He is something more – something that puts the Pharisees and Herod and their kingdom visions in a distant second place.

So – like a good teacher – Jesus doesn’t just give His students the answer – He makes them work it out for themselves.

“When I broke the five loaves for the 5000, how many baskets full of pieces of bread did you collect?”

Twelve?!

“When I broke the seven loaves for the 4000, how many large baskets full of pieces of bread did you collect?”

Seven?!

Sorrowful (maybe even sarcastic) teacher face and gesture!

Jesus was pointing to the evidence for them to draw their own conclusion.

Who is this man?

He reinforced his concern that they know Him and His kingdom and its urgency by quoting the prophet Jeremiah (5:21).

It was Jesus' way of saying, "You're in danger of going the way of the Israelites in Jeremiah's day!"

The way of being caught up with their own concerns, and so unconcerned about the injustice and wickedness around them that God had no alternative but to give them over to their fate at the hands of foreigners.

The way of thinking – as many Jews did at the time – that only they would be rescued and restored to power.

The way of dreaming – as Herod did at the time – that he would be the God-appointed king to lead them.

All of which could make us wonder...

SLIDE 7. What's our understanding of Jesus' kingdom? What might make Him say to us today like a frustrated teacher, "Don't you understand yet?"

READ Mk. 8:22-26

Only Mark tells this story – which has (at least) a few interesting observations to make.

1. Jesus again – as before – shows compassion and consideration – now, for this blind man. He takes him by the hand - out of the village.

By the hand. This would have been unusual for an Orthodox Jew during the first century - to take the hand of another Jewish man – but – we could guess – Jesus overruled a cultural rule out of kindness to this cursed man and out of practicality for his need to be guided.

Out of the village. Why? Well – we can only speculate – but it might be because Jesus (like a good teacher) knew what would work best for the blind man in that moment.

Let's think about this for a moment... This man was blind and apparently had been born blind. He knew only darkness, only not seeing his world, all his life. To see for the first time amidst a crowd would probably be bewildering (to say the least) – like it would be to restore the hearing of a deaf person at a Taylor Swift concert – it would be a lot (maybe too much) – and unnecessarily so – to take in, to absorb in the moment.

So why not do it somewhere quietly, with less people?

It's not unlikely that Jesus (as compassionate and as considerate as He is) - imagined what it would be like for the blind man to see for the first time and to chose a way to make that as easy as possible on him.

2. Jesus also used a method that the man could understand. He didn't use big words or dramatic movements. He did something simple and relatable. He used spittle – which to us is like – what?! – but the ancient world believed in the healing power of spit.

Which might not be as strange as we think when we remember that it is a first instinct to put a burned or cut finger into our mouth to ease the pain or to stem the bleeding.

Which I did this past week when I reached into our dishwasher to grab a broken glass – which – BTW - I predicted would happen some day when we (and by we, I mean, Jackie) bought said set of thin-glass wine goblets – that they would shatter with the merest of tinkling up against another glass made of thicker glass – like a mason jar.

After cutting the back of my hand – I immediately licked it to keep it from bleeding more and more – on my way to getting a paper towel to stop the bleeding – and then to get a band aid to keep it from bleeding.

And just in case you're wondering – I'm going to be o.k.

3. The last thing I'll note here – about this scene - is the uniqueness of the miracle itself – that it is the only one (we know about) to happen in stages.

Again, who knows why?

Some point out that Jesus didn't perform any miracle the same way – as if to say that the miracle is about the man not the method. And, of course, that is true.

And maybe in this instance – Jesus is again being sensitive to the man's photosensitivity as the miracle unfolds – letting the light in – gradually – to not overwhelm the him.

And maybe there is some symbolism here – as if to say that no one sees all God's truth all at once – that it is a life-long journey of knowing and following God.

We learn what we do to come to faith in Jesus Christ. That is not the end. We learn what we do to be baptized. That is not the end. We learn what we do to become a member of a community of faith – what we give and what we receive. That is not the end.

There is no end to knowing the beautiful, powerful and wonderful eternal God.

And – sometimes – we even forget what we know – or – at least – what we King and kingdom we have chosen.

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Sorrowful (maybe even sarcastic) teacher face and gesture!

SLIDE 8. Application Questions

- 1. Do you ask God for your “daily bread” and thank Him for meeting your needs or are you on some kind of spiritual cruise control?**
- 2. What is your understanding of King Jesus and His Kingdom? If you were to explain it to a child, what would you say? What does it look like in your life?**

SLIDE 10. Homework

Read Mark 8:27 – 9:38. Peter’s confession, Jesus’ death and resurrection predicted, a charge to take up your cross, the transfiguration, the power of faith over a demon, a second prediction, and who is the greatest?