

Jesus Feeds the Four Thousand

Mark 8:1-10

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Introduction

Mark 8:1-10 *In 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. ³If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance." ⁴His disciples answered, "But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?" ⁵"How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked. "Seven," they replied. ⁶He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. 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. ⁷They had a few small fish as well; He gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. ⁸The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ⁹About four thousand men were present. And having sent them away, ¹⁰He got into the boat with His disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha.*

Today we will talk about one of the most misunderstood characteristic of God, His compassion. To many people in the world, they think of God's compassion as tolerance. They think that God is somehow accepting of their sinful behavior, or that God is ignoring what they do. We need to remember that God is the unchanging God. He does not change His mind on a whim. There is no shadow of turning with Him. He is holy—He cannot tolerate sin. He is Light—He cannot fellowship with darkness. We need to keep that in mind when we talk about God is that His compassion never contradicts His holiness or light.

With that said, we need to consider biblically what God's compassion is. In Mark 8:2, Jesus says that He feels compassion for the people. This is the only time in the gospel that He declares that He feels compassion. There are many references to Jesus feeling compassion, but those are in the third person. Those are observations based on His response to people.

Mark 1:41 *Filled with compassion...* (healed man with leprosy)

Matthew 9:36 *When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them...* (people in Israel—sheep without shepherd, so He taught them)

Matthew 14:14 *When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, He had compassion on them....* (The crowd brought the sick with them, He healed them all)

Matthew 20:34 *Jesus had compassion on them...* (Two blind men wanting sight)

Luke 7:13 *When the Lord saw her, His heart went out to her...* (Widow of Nain, raised her son to life)

Jesus says, "I feel compassion," which is one word in Greek—*splanchnizomai* (**splank-niz'-o-my...splank as in plank; niz as in busy; o as in hole; my as in my very own**). *Splanchna* means bowel, heart, stomach, or what we call the gut area. It is the area where you feel emotionally, like when you feel fear or excitement. When something scary or wonderful happens, your stomach churns and your heart beat races. It is an emotional response. *Splanchna* is used to express feelings of compassion to those who are suffering or vulnerable.

It is striking that no religion in the world has a god that displays compassion. That is because Satan is behind every false religion, and he has no compassion and certainly does not invent gods bent on compassion. Compassion is a distinct attribute of God (the Trinity). Jesus is the compassionate Savior. The Father is the God of all comfort, and the Holy Spirit is the Comforter. Compassion is God's character and His nature.

Exodus 34:6 *And He passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD (YHWH), the LORD (YHWH), the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness."*

This is God's very being—He is compassionate. What does this word mean? Compassion is a response to our helpless state. Compassion is His response to our reckless, headfirst dive into destruction. He does not want to see us die, so He intervenes. Compassion is God's interest in saving us from the disastrous result of sin.

Psalms 78:38 *But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and did not destroy them. Yes, many a time He turned His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath;*

Psalms 111:4 *The Lord is gracious and full of compassion.*

Lamentations 3:22-23 *Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. ²³They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.*

Lamentations 3:32 *Though He brings grief, He will show compassion, so great is His unfailing love.*

God has compassion on the Gentiles as well. This has never been more evident of His compassion to the Gentiles than this story of Him feeding the 4,000. This feeding is the culmination of why He went to the Gentile area. He did this to train the disciples to get ready for the Great Commission. For them to understand that salvation was not for the Jews only but for the whole world, Jesus has to travel through Gentile territory, healing them and feeding them, so that they will be ready when He sends them out into the world.

Let us pick up on the story.

1 *In 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."*

- Three days
 - What has Jesus been doing for three days?

Matthew 15:29-31 *Jesus left there and went along the Sea of Galilee. Then He went up on a mountainside and sat down. ³⁰Great 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. ³¹The 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.*

- Healing all kinds of sick and disabled people
- Massive crowds of people
- Crippled—KJV, "maimed"—*kullos* (***as in cull***) which means cut off (loss of limbs)

- Jesus healed creatively
 - 100% restored limbs, creation healing
- Gentiles were amazed
- People stayed with Jesus for three days
- I have compassion
 - Why?
 - They have not eaten in three days
 - They would faint on their way to home
 - The people were so intent in staying with Jesus that they ignored food
 - Faint—to collapse like string freeing from the bow
 - Physical weakness drew God’s compassion

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

- Remote place
 - Far from towns and villages (in Decapolis)
- Why did the disciples ask this question?
 - Did they forget what Jesus did in Mark 6 with the feeding of the 5,000?
 - Are they doubting Jesus’ power?
 - Not necessarily
 - The hungry people are Gentiles
 - Jews have nothing to do with Gentiles

Jonah 4:2 *He prayed to the LORD, "O LORD, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity."*

- Basically, the question is implied—would Jesus feed the Gentiles?
- This question is implied from the word “get enough”—*chortazo* (**chor-taz’-o; chor as in chord; taz as in talk; o as in hole**)
 - This word means satisfy to the full

Mark 6:42 *They all ate and were satisfied,*

- They knew that if Jesus feeds them...He would satisfy them to the full

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

6 *He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. 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.*

7 *They had a few small fish as well; He gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them.*

8 *The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.*

9 *About four thousand men were present. And having sent them away,*

- Just as He did with the 5,000, He did it with the 4,000
- Again, 4,000 men (head of households)—could be up to the 15,000 people
- Creating bread and fish—perfect amount for everybody and perfect amount of leftovers for the disciples

- Some scholars have confused the two feedings—thinking that these are the same events
- The events are completely different—Jesus recognized these two different events

Mark 8:19-20 *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."*

- These are two different events
 - Locations are different
 - Mark 6: Near Bethsaida, NE part of Sea of Galilee
 - Mark 8: In Decapolis, SE of Sea of Galilee
 - Time is different
 - Mark 6: They sat on green grass—spring
 - Mark 8: They sat on ground (no grass)—late summer
 - Number of people is different
 - Mark 6: 5,000
 - Mark 8: 4,000
 - Number of food is different
 - Mark 6: 5 loaves and 2 fish
 - Mark 8: 7 loaves and several fish
 - Number and types of baskets are different
 - Mark 6: 12 baskets—kophinos (kop'-i-nos....kop as in cop; i as in in; nos as in ought)—very small baskets
 - Mark 8: 7 baskets—spuridon (I'm not sure how the "ur" sounds in Greek!)—large baskets, like the one that Paul was in (**Acts 9:25**)

10 He got into the boat with His disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha.

- He is going back to the Jewish area
- NW part of Sea of Galilee (Map)

Matthew 15:39 *After Jesus had sent the crowd away, He got into the boat and went to the vicinity of Magadan.*

Application

- Jesus' divine power—Healing perfectly and feeding the people perfectly
 - When disciples healed—they healed in the name of Jesus
- Jesus' healing ability—Only Jesus could heal perfectly—bringing an arm back or leg back (no one can do that today)
- Goal of ministry is worship—bringing people to worship...the people were in awe of what Jesus did (the Gentiles) that they glorified the God of Israel
 - We are not here to make people happy—although it is a good goal
 - We are here to direct people's attention to God
 - We should not be offering the gospel simply what it can do for the person
 - But to offer the gospel for them to turn from their sins and place their faith in Christ Jesus