

Another Feast in the Desert

Mark 8: 1-9

In our text today we read of the second time our Lord miraculously fed thousands of people with a meager supply of food. Like the previous encounter, a multitude had followed Jesus and were in desperate need of a meal. They were in an isolated area, outside the city, unable to provide for themselves. Like before, Jesus met their need through His grace and power.

While there are many similarities, there are also a few differences. We must remember that Jesus and the disciples remain in the region of Decapolis, an area largely populated by Gentiles. Although this may appear to be a small detail, it reveals great significance. Prior to coming to this area, Jesus had granted a request for a Gentile woman in the region of Tyre and Sidon. When they arrived in Decapolis, He healed a man there. It seems apparent that Jesus is beginning to instill in His disciples the need to minister to all men, regardless of their nationality or ethnicity. The feeding of this multitude takes place in that predominately Gentile area.

As we examine this encounter in relation to the pervious feeding of the multitude, I hope we will see the [similarities](#) and be challenged to share our faith with all we can, regardless of their background. I want to preach on the thought: [Another Feast in the Desert](#).

I. The Prompting of the Miracle (1-3) – As the passage opens, we find the details that prompted this great miracle. Notice:

A. The Circumstances (1) – [In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him.](#) Like the previous encounter, a large multitude had followed Jesus. We know through Jesus' statement in the following verse that they had now been with Him for three days. While the text doesn't specifically say, it seems apparent that Jesus had been teaching the crowd, and quite possibly continuing to heal the afflicted among them. They were in an area outside of town, and had no way or providing for themselves.

- The circumstances surrounding this miracle are comforting and challenging as well. Regardless of the need we have, Jesus is well able to provide. He is able to our needs, according to His divine will. Also the multitude remained faithfully with Jesus for three days. Many today have trouble committing an hour on Sunday morning. We must abide with the Lord, continuing in faith and prayer, if we desire to have our needs met. I know I grow impatient at times, and fail to remain as committed as I should.

B. The Compassion (2) – *I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat.* As Jesus encountered the 5,000, we find that He was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd. Here Jesus declared that he had compassion on this multitude as well. Jesus used the same word in both situations. This has the idea of “*feeling deeply, to yearn; feeling sympathy while showing compassion and sympathy.*” Again, Jesus didn’t just sense their need, He actually felt their need and was compelled to act on their behalf. He was moved with compassion toward the spiritual needs of a predominately Jewish multitude and He was also moved with compassion for the physical needs of a predominately Gentile multitude. Jesus is able and willing to meet whatever need men have, regardless of their race.

- We typically feel compassion for those who are similar to us, but we tend to allow prejudice and preconceived notions hinder our compassion for others. We must see people as our Lord does. He provided redemption from sin for the human race, not just white, middle-class Americans. We need to do all we can to minister to the need of people, as much as possible, spiritually and physically, regardless of who they are!

C. The Conclusion (3) – *And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far.* Jesus knew the need was great and immediate. Many of them had traveled a great distance from home to follow Him. He could not send them away without providing something for them to eat. They would not have been able to endure the journey physically without having a nourishing meal before they left. He knew their need and fully intended to provide for them.

- I have said many times that Jesus knows exactly where we are in the journey and the specific needs we have. Passages like these affirm that line of thought. He knows where we are today and exactly what we need. You may feel at times as if no one knows or cares, but Jesus always knows and He cares for you. If He was willing to meet the physical needs of this multitude, how much more willing would He be to meet the varied needs of the redeemed? You are never alone or beyond His ability to reach.

II. The Pessimism in the Miracle (4-5) – Mark also revealed the pessimism among the disciples regarding this great need. Consider:

A. The Doubt (4) – *And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?* Just like the previous miracle when Jesus fed the 5,000, the disciples questioned how such a meal could be provided in the wilderness. Now, some estimate it could have taken several months to make the journey from the region of Tyre and Sidon to Decapolis by foot. It is entirely possible that almost a year had passed since the feeding of the 5,000. Surely during that time Jesus had taught and developed the disciples for ministry. Although some time had passed, I am certain they hadn't forgotten the miracle with the 5,000. This is a situation very similar to the previous one. Then they doubted and yet the Lord provided. Here we find the disciples responding in almost the exact same way. Again they are doubtful and pessimistic about feeding such a large number in the wilderness.

- This is often how our memory works as well. We tend to remember every detail of difficult events in life, but quickly forget the power and provision of our Lord. I cannot remember a time when the Lord has failed me, and yet I tend to doubt when faced with adversity. We must seek to live by faith, and learn to trust the Lord, regardless of the situation.

B. The Determination (5) – *And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven.* Just like before, Jesus already had a plan and knew exactly what He would do. He asked the disciples how many loaves of bread that had among them. This time they had seven loaves. There were also a few small fishes. Jesus was determined to meet the needs of the crowd before they departed.

- Walking by faith is often difficult. We must trust the unseen hand of God to provide for us. We need to be reminded of His great love and provision for us. We are secure in the mighty hand of God. Jesus loved us enough to die in our place. In Him, we are now part of His body. He has gone away to prepare a place for us, with a promise to return. He is determined to meet our needs and provide sure passage into heaven. What have we to fear? We are loved and kept by the Sovereign. He can take what appears to be inadequate and provide more than enough.

III. The Performance of the Miracle (6-9) – Again we discover a similar scene. Jesus determined to provide for the multitude, and He performed a great miracle in their midst. Consider:

A. The Arrangement (6a) – *And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground.* Just like before, Jesus commanded the people to be seated in preparation for the meal to come. He wanted to provide for them in an efficient and timely manner. It makes no difference what our Lord is doing, He always does it well.

B. The Appropriation (6b-7) – and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before *them*; and they did set *them* before the people. ^[7] And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before *them*. After the people were seated, Jesus blessed and broke the bread for distribution. The disciples served the people bread, blessed and provided by the Lord. Jesus then took the small fish they had, blessing and multiplying it for the people. Following the first course of bread, the disciples returned with a meal of fish for the multitude. From what appeared to be another impossibility, Jesus again provided a feast in the midst of the desert. He knows exactly what we need and is more than able to provide.

C. The Abundance (8) – So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken *meat* that was left seven baskets. Just like before, this was not a light snack intended to provide until they could do better. They all ate and were filled. Each one had all they desired and there were leftovers. This time seven baskets of fish were left over.

- This serves as a great reminder that Jesus is always more than enough. His power is never limited. He does not desire for us to barely exist. He wants every believer to enjoy life more abundantly in Him. He is able to provide a feast in the midst of our desert. He has the ability to meet multiple needs at the same time. If we will only come to Him in faith, we can receive more than enough to make it.

D. The Achievement (9) – And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away. Having met their need and fulfilling His desire, Jesus sent them away filled and ready to make the journey. He had fed about 4,000 people this time. With just seven loaves of bread and a few fish, Jesus provided for thousands.

- I am thankful to rest in the sovereign care of my Lord. He called me unto Himself in salvation and continues to provide for every need as I walk this journey of faith. There are millions walking with the Lord right now, and He is able to provide for each one. He will prepare and equip every believer to make the journey as we walk with Him through life. Our lives are often filled with doubt and fear, but Jesus will guide us safely through. We must trust Him to provide, even when it appears hopeless.

Conclusion: There are many lessons we could take from this passage. We discovered that our Lord has compassion for all men, regardless of their background. He provided redemption for

humanity and stands ready to save all who come to Him in repentance and faith. He has the ability to meet our needs and desires that we have abundant life in Him. Jesus is more than enough, whatever the situation. Have you come to Him for salvation, partaking of the Bread of Life that provides eternal life? Are you struggling today and unsure how you will make it? Whatever the need, come to Jesus. He is the answer for whatever problem you have.