

Jesus Cares
Mark 8:1-10 (05/03/15)
Ernie Godshall
Faith Bible Church
Evansville, Indiana

We live in a fallen world with fresh heartaches and tragedies every day. From riots to beheadings to earthquakes killing thousands. I am thankful we have a sovereign and compassionate Savior who cares for us more than we can imagine. We lived just 13 years in North Vernon, IN, and saw more tragedies than I care to remember. Our neighbors across the street had a grandpa with a three-wheeler Harley, extended forks, loud exhaust, the whole deal. One night he was tooling along Rt. 50 toward Versailles when a deer crossed his path and killed him instantly. Just up the road from our home lived a brother of one of the ladies in our church. He was known for his greeting of "Praise the Lord!" to those who walked by his home. One night around 2 a.m. he took his shotgun and shot his son in bed, then shot and killed his wife and himself by the time the police arrived. And that same lady in our church had a grandson named Josiah. He had just received a new bike for his tenth birthday and was excitedly peddling down their lane. For some reason he didn't stop at the end, but rode out onto the main road into the path of an oncoming car and was killed. A fellow named Brian Armstrong came to our church, professed faith in Christ, and later shot himself in a motel room in Columbus, IN. That was one of my most difficult funerals to conduct.

We live in a fallen world and each of us know or have personally experienced hurtful, hard things. And when those things visit your life, one of the most comforting truths about our Lord is that He knows what you are going through and He feels compassion! He cares for you in your distress more than anyone else. He even cares for His enemies. So even if you don't love and worship Him, He is caring for you right now. Psalm 145:15-16 says we all look to Him; He feeds us, and satisfies the desire of every living thing! Every human being is sustained by Christ. All things were created by, through, and for Him, and He holds all things together. Even with all our heartaches, we live in a paradise of Jesus' compassion and care. Don't take His compassionate care for granted. To live in His care and reject His Lordship over your life is like cutting off the hand that feeds you. To reject Jesus' compassion is to spit in His face and it is high treason against heaven. And there is no compassion in hell.

Let's turn to Mark 8. We've walked with Jesus in Galilee and now we are with him in Decapolis, a Roman controlled area with ten cities east of the Sea of Galilee, what is present day Jordan. It is a vast area with a majority of Gentiles. It's the area where Jesus saved that lunatic who lived among the tombs. When he was saved and in his right mind he wanted to go with Jesus, but Jesus told him to go home and tell the people what great things God had done for him, and that's what he did. Eric described him as the first cross-cultural missionary to the Gentiles. His witness may be the reason for this gathering of thousands of people to hear Christ.

In verse one we catch Jesus wrapping up a three day Bible conference. Thousands had come to hear Him and some had traveled a great distance. If you've ever been to the Together for the Gospel conference in Louisville you have an idea of how many people are gathered here. And they had been here for three days. I imagine food was getting scarce by now, hunger was setting in, and Jesus noticed. Let's wrap our thoughts around four lessons from this account of Jesus feeding the four thousand.

You should never think that Jesus doesn't care about you – vv. 1-3

In those days, when there was again a large crowd and they had nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples and said to them, "I feel compassion for the people because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way; and some of them have come from a great distance."

Critics of God's Word say Mark and Matthew got mixed up with these accounts, that there really was only one feeding of thousands and somehow things got confused. No, there were clearly two feedings. In Mark 6 Jesus fed 5000 Jewish men and their families in Galilee on a grassy field and here Jesus is feeding

4000 Jewish and Gentile men with their families in Decapolis in a rugged, dry area. If you look at Mark 8:19-20 Jesus Himself reminds His disciples of both incidents. The critics are wrong.

So thousands of people have been out here for the better part of three days and their supplies have vanished. Jesus knows everybody is very hungry, to the point they would not have strength to return home. Then Jesus calls His twelve men to gather around and He opens His heart to them with His inner feelings. Spurgeon says, "Stop a moment. Prepare your ears for music. He said, 'I have compassion on the multitude.' Oh, the sweetness of that word!" Look at Jesus' compassion for people in Mark 6 and Mark 8.

MARK 6 - COMPASSION FOR SHEEP WITHOUT A SHEPHERD

Jesus cares, people! What is God like? You see Him right here, full of compassion for us sinners. Jesus felt compassion for them back in Mark 6 because they were like sheep without a shepherd, so He began to teach them many things. God's compassion is seen in His teaching us His truth! Without the Scriptures we know nothing of God's wonderful compassion and plan of salvation. Without the Scriptures we have no protection in our souls from the ravages of the devil as he dances across our land through the internet and cable with his secular atheism, evolution, religious and moral confusion, and lies being taught to our children. Satan keeps those media tongues parading through the earth brainwashing people! Psalm 73:9 says their tongues strut through the earth! Bible commentators Keil and Delitzsch note, "Everywhere disparaging that which exists and giving new laws!" Wow, is that prophetic!

Jesus' blood boils hot against false teachers who lead the people into hell. But He has compassion on the masses because He knows they need truth. He sees our nation of lost sheep wandering around in the darkness, deceived and clueless to the true meaning and purpose of life, and He feels compassion on them! Every church teaching and shepherding God's people with God's Word is a display of His care and compassion.

MARK 8 - COMPASSION FOR THE HUNGRY AND FAINTING

Now Jesus has compassion for them because He knows they are hungry! Does Jesus care about our physical needs? Of course He does! Listen, He created our bodies. He knows what we need and He cares about what we are going through physically. Paramount to God is our spiritual condition, but He also knows and cares for us physically. Christianity does not regard matter as evil and spirit as good, like Gnosticism does. Christ created the body and the soul in Genesis 2. And He's not a politician or CEO looking at people as useful units for His cause. No, He genuinely cares for these people who are hungry enough to possibly faint on their return home.

And just as He cared for the sheep without a shepherd and for the hungry and fainting, He cares for you. Your physical situation calls out to Jesus' compassion and care. He knows what you are going through. He knows every ache and pain and disease and loss, and He cares! Imagine a world of pain and suffering with no God in heaven who actually cares! How cruel. How lonely and miserable and hopeless. But that isn't reality. The truth is you can count on the fact that Jesus, our Savior and God-Man, cares deeply for you and yes, He even cares about your physical needs. Here's something to remember. Christ created all things, visible and invisible. There's nothing wrong with enjoying the physical. 1 Timothy 4:3-4 says marriage is good, which includes physical intimacy. 1 Timothy 6:17 says God has richly given us all things to enjoy, which includes food. Heath Bar Blizzards are okay! Let's just not enjoy all these things too much.

In our passage today Christ has compassion for this large group of people because He knows they are hungry; if they left like this they well may faint on the return trip. The word compassion has to do with feeling it in the gut, which is basically what the Greek word for compassion, *splangchnos*, means. When you see someone being mistreated or really suffering, you feel compassion, you feel it in the gut. And Jesus felt it in His gut. Driven by His love and kindness and mercy, He felt compassion.

We see His compassion throughout the Gospels. Luke 7 gives the account of Jesus seeing the funeral procession of the only son of a widow. Verse 13, "and when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, 'Do not weep.'" Then he walked over to the stand where the dead man lay and told him

to get up. The dead man sat up and began to talk and Jesus gave him back to his mother. He felt compassion for that poor widow whose son had just died. Jesus thought about her, that she had lost her husband, and now the grieving lady had lost her only son! He felt compassion for her and gave her son back to her. That's a window into the heart and soul and thought process of our Savior! He cares for us!

Let's just repeat it, no matter what has come into your life – your loss, your struggle, your spiritual or physical needs – Jesus cares for you! Charles Weigle was an evangelist from Lafayette, IN. One day he came home to find a note from his wife – she left him. Devastating news. Later in his life he sat down and wrote these words, "No one ever cared for me like Jesus. There's no other friend so kind as He. No one else could take the sin and darkness from me; O how much He cared for me!" You won't find a Muslim writing that about Mohammed. MacArthur put it like this, "This is the general kindness and compassion of the heart of our God for which there is no parallel in any religion or all religions of the world."

You should never think that Jesus is limited in His care for you – vv. 4-10

And His disciples answered Him, "Where will anyone be able to find enough bread here in this desolate place to satisfy these people?" And He was asking them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven." And He directed the people to sit down on the ground; and taking the seven loaves, He gave thanks and broke them, and started giving them to His disciples to serve to them, and they served them to the people. They also had a few small fish; and after He had blessed them, He ordered these to be served as well. And they ate and were satisfied; and they picked up seven large baskets full of what was left over of the broken pieces. About four thousand were there; and He sent them away. And immediately He entered the boat with His disciples and came to the district of Dalmanutha.

Jesus' care for you is unlimited. Maybe it is time to remember all of His kindness and compassion to you. Think on these things. He has totally transformed your life, raised you up from all kinds of struggles, given you victory over sins and temptations, provided your financial needs when you prayed and wondered how you'd get through. But then, just like these disciples who had front row seats in the theater of Jesus dazzling displays of Jesus power, healing people, calming storms, even feeding thousands of Jews back in Galilee, we forget and begin to doubt God's ability. Do you hear yourself as we listen to them say, "Where could anyone possibly find food to feed these people?" John Calvin is rather direct when he says, "These disciples manifest excessive stupidity in not remembering."

But look at us. Do we remember? Every day we need to look out that window and see those leaves providing oxygen, the sun warming us, the rain refreshing us, and rejoice in this paradise of Jesus' compassion. This was Paul's message to the people of Lystra in Acts 14:17, "He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." That's God's kindness, designed to lead us to repentance.

Verse 4 bulges with sermons:

"Where?" From what source could we possibly get enough food for these fellows? There aren't any Food Trucks out here, Jesus!

"Anyone?" Who on earth could feed all these people?

"Able?" Who has the power to feed this vast crowd?

"Here?" Of all places, way out here in the boonies, in this desolate place where there isn't even grass! We aren't even close to a Panera Bread.

"Satisfy?" To give them enough to fill them up? No, Jesus, you may feel compassion, but there are limits to what we can do here!

They've forgotten all they have seen and heard. Jesus is the source. Jesus is that Person. Jesus has the power. Jesus isn't limited by place. And Jesus satisfies. He is more than sufficient for our needs!

Jesus cares and nothing human limits His care. How many loaves? A mere seven very small thumb-size round things unlike Bunny bread loaves or even Italian rolls. We're looking at seven small rolls here. Jesus wants His men to enter into His compassion for the people. So Jesus has the people sit down on the ground – not on the grass this time. "Ya'all sit down, we're going to have a picnic." Ah, kids love

picnics and eating outside with the ants and worms and stuff. The eyes of those young boys and girls brightened at this. "I'm hungry, Mom." "Benny, let's see what this Man can do for us."

They are all seated and this vast sea of faces is looking up at Jesus. What a slice of life this was! Jesus takes the bread, looks up to His Father in heaven, and gives thanks! Jesus is fully aware that all food ultimately comes from our gracious God. This is why we thank God before we tear into the chicken strips and fries. Out on the farm the pigs just tear into the slop, but people made in God's image pause to give thanks. This may be the first time these Gentiles ever witnessed giving thanks to God for their food. And let us, creatures made in God's image, remember Jesus' example as we sit around our dining room tables, or at the restaurant, or students...when you're in the cafeteria. Take time to thank God for your food.

And then after Jesus prays, the miracle begins. Jesus does what only Jesus can do and out of His hands comes freshly baked bread for everyone. Someone found a few little sardines in verse 7 so Jesus blessed them and began to multiply "newly created dead fish perfectly edible." (Daniel Akin) You just have to love it as Jesus keeps cranking out more and more bread and fish and the disciples keep serving the crowd. What a picnic this was! Can't you visualize these servers hustling back and forth feeding every one. What fun! Wouldn't you love to serve a hungry crowd with Jesus Bread and Jesus Fish? "Yo, Andrew, got any more over there? We're running low here." Peter whistles like only a Galilean fisherman could and announces, "There's plenty more, people! Seconds and triples for all!"

There are no limitations to Jesus' compassion. And these people are mostly Gentiles. Jesus feels compassion for Gentiles! He cares about Asians and Indians and Africans and Hispanics as well as Americans. He sees them in their blind, lost, confused, deceived condition and feels compassion for them! What a picture of the gospel going out the four corners of the earth!

Clean up time. Bring out the baskets. In Mark 6 there was enough bread for 12 little hand baskets. Greek: *kophinos*. Not all that much. Now we're bringing out the big hampers, like really big clothes hampers. Greek: *spuridos*. These rope-entwined containers were big enough that Paul could get in one and be lowered from that Damascus window (Acts 9:25).

Everybody is satisfied and there's lots left over. Jesus cares for you and provides what you need every day. His grace is sufficient for every day. Don't ever think Jesus is limited in His care and compassion for people. Thank Him for it.

In verse ten they jump in a boat and head off to the western shore of Galilee.

As for us, let's look at two final thoughts about Jesus' compassion and care.

You should never think Christ isn't concerned about your growing in your compassion and care for others.

Are you a believer in Christ? Has His compassion melted your heart into repentance and faith in Him? When you think about growing and changing as a believer, how often do you think of growing in compassion or caring for others? Ephesians 4:31-32 says we are to rid ourselves of those soul enemies: bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice. Then God gives us three friends we need to live with every day, and we need Christ's power and grace for them: Kindness, or thoughtful for the good of others. Tender-hearted, or compassionate, feeling for others, knowing others are struggling in this fallen world like we are. And Forgiveness, since you need forgiveness every day yourself. Take these three friends with you to work, set them in your car, around your table, in your family room, with your friends and when you are among your enemies.

Jesus felt compassion even for His enemies. We need to learn to care about people while at the same time not agreeing with what they do. We need compassion with conviction to let people know we love them but do not agree with their sinful ways of living. How do you show compassion and still not attend your friend's homosexual wedding? How do you show compassion and yet not allow your daughter or niece to bring her lesbian friend home for Christmas? How can you be compassionate and yet not agree

with a homosexual work associate who is charging you with being hateful because you believe homosexuality is sinful?

We may be called bigoted or hateful, but compassion doesn't cave in and approve what God hates and what ruins people's lives. Godly compassion knows the truth, cares about people, and wants God's best for them. It's easy to get angry and disgusted with what we hear about today. But remember, Paul went into Corinth and preached to drunkards, fornicators, homosexuals, thieves and revilers. He saw past their sins to their spiritual needs, and many came to Christ and were rescued out of their sinful ways of living (1 Cor. 6:9-11). And never forget, Jesus came into this sin cursed world rotten with sin and wickedness. He came caring for sinners, sinners like us, and went to that cross paying the penalty we all should have paid. Jesus cares for us and intends for us to be growing in compassion for others.

You should never abuse or reject Jesus' care for you.

One final lesson. No one will ever care for you more than Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Don't spit on His compassion! Don't join the mob who mocked and crucified the very essence of compassion and care! Let His kindness melt your heart into repentance and faith. In His redeeming love He cared for and died to rescue sinners of all kinds. Will you bow your heart to Him and receive Him as your sovereign and compassionate Savior?