

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

They are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye mistakes can be found. So he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at pastorpat@waukeshabible.org.

Date: February 8, 2009

Title: Developing a CHRISTian Worldview - The Feeding of the Four Thousand

Text: Mark 8:1-9 (Gospel Parallels – Matt. 15:32-39)

Theme: God loves people impartially and unconditionally.

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Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in the Storyline of the Bible. She is determined by design to have a God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching focused on personal discipleship through intentional and systematic instruction; a Global-impacting mission that resolves to be a church planting church; and a Grace-based fellowship where disciples are invited to live under a reigning grace characterized by a Gospel-driven sanctification that celebrates a divine monergism to the Christian life.

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Introduction:

I believe it is important to keep our Lord's movements in mind when reading the various stories. Jesus is in the Decapolis and is speaking to a predominately Gentile audience. It is important to remember the continued conflict with the religious leaders and political authorities. He has come to His own people first, and then begins reaching out to the Gentile world. In the world Jesus lived, everyone who was non-Jewish was Gentile. Mark shows how Gentiles are included in the story of God. Mark opens this idea with Jesus addressing the Pharisees on the topic of "clean versus unclean." He then heals a Canaanite woman's daughter of a demon. He continues His handling of the unclean Gentiles by healing a deaf and mute man. To show equality among the Jews and Gentiles He repeats His feeding miracles among a predominately Gentile audience. His actions do not negate Jewish primacy. Jesus did not forget that it was to the Jew and through the Jew God's revelation and divine incarnation would take place. Such action on His part reflects an impartial worldview. In fact, His actions always reflect a Christian worldview. Often I think as Christians we need to be reminded that a Christian worldview is a Christ worldview. His worldview is to be reflected by and represented in our worldview. It is not the other way around. Sometimes I, we, confuse our nationalism, our patriotism, our tribal instinct, our religious experience for a biblical worldview. What is His worldview? What is a Christian worldview?

A worldview defined: "The overall perspective from which one sees and interprets (i.e., knows, understands) the world." "The overall perspective from which **CHRIST** sees and interprets (i.e., knows, understands) the world." How does Jesus Christ See and Understand the World?

- First, it is marked by racial, gender and geographical impartiality (v. 1).
- Second, it is marked by compassion for those who suffer (v. 2).
- Third, it is marked by the naturally impossible (vv. 3-7).
- Fourth, it is marked by lavish graciousness (vv. 8-9).

Regardless as to the context or circumstances, these four elements appear present. No matter what story we read, these elements are the fundamental components.

THE BIG PICTURE:

- Strategic Withdrawals from Galilee (6:30 – 9:29)
 - To the Eastern Shore of the Sea of Galilee (6:30-52)
 - To the Western Shore of the Sea (6:53 – 7:23)
 - To Syrian Phoenicia (7:24-30)
 - To the Region of the Decapolis (7:31 – 8:10)
 - To the Vicinity of Caesarea Philippi (8:11-30)
 - To the Mount of Transfiguration (8:31 – 9:29)

- The Pharisees Confronted: Clean vs. Unclean (7:1-23)
- The Healing of the Gentile (Syrophenician) Woman's Daughter (7:24-30)
- The Healing of a Deaf-Mute (7:31-37)
- The Feeding of the Four Thousand (8:1-9)
- A Sign Demanded in Dalmanutha (8:10-21)

Its Eternal Value:

Jesus is the full bodily expression of God. His Word is true and His embrace warm. Jesus loves you and cares for you more than you can possibly imagine. May we, as it were, unleash Him from our faulty and puny thinking.

The Problem:

Our familiarity with the text and the event deadens us to the strength of what is being said. I fully recognize the strong distinction the cross makes in my relationship to the Father, but this Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. We must not lose sight of who He is and what He has done. The gospel Jesus preached addressed the entire individual both body, soul, and spirit. We forget this to our harm.

The Storyline:

Jesus Christ is God in flesh. Who God is, is fully revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. If we want to know God, then we must know Jesus.

Questions:

1. Are we safe in assuming Jesus is still regionally in the Decapolis? The crowd would have been predominately Gentile.
2. Do you not get the impression that 8:1 was a common occurrence? Although we only have two of these types of events, they might have been something that happened regularly.
3. Why did Jesus have compassion for the people?
4. If the people had not eaten for three days, is it safe to assume that Jesus had not eaten for three days?
5. What did the questioning by the disciples reveal?
6. What are the parallels between Mark 6:34ff and this passage?
7. Why do we have this repetition?
8. Is there significance in Jesus organizing the people, giving thanks, breaking bread, and distributing it through His disciples?
9. What is the significance of the extra baskets?
10. What does an impartial love look like in your life?
11. How can you exercise Christian charity?
12. How can you guard yourself from becoming jaded toward those with genuine need?
13. How do you express a belief in the God of the impossible?
14. How can you do to guard yourself from becoming consumed by all things temporal?
15. How can you live with a lavish grace?

The Holy Spirit is calling to us from this passage to consider three ideas.

To Know: The Holy Spirit desires for us to know the largeness of God's love.

To Choose: The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose Jesus above our own fleshly appetites.

To Feel: The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of resting in Him for our worldview.

For just a moment let us consider these four ideas as they are present in our passage.

Outline:

- I. A Christ worldview is marked by racial, gender and geographical impartiality (v. 1).

Is it possible that we are to see in the feeding of the multitude in Mark 6 the coming of the bread of God to the Jews, and in this incident the coming of the bread of God to the Gentiles? When we put these two stories together, is there somewhere at the back of them the suggestion and the forecast and the symbol that Jesus came to satisfy the hunger of Jew and Gentile alike, that in him, in truth, was the God who opens his hand and satisfies the desire of every living thing? (William Barclay, *Mark*, 185).

My studied answer is yes to the inquiry of William Barclay. In the historical context in which this story unfolds, I do not believe we can overstate the bitter hatred between the Jewish community and everything non-Jewish. This can be seen by noting several passages in the New Testament. The original commission of the twelve disciples by Jesus marks a distinction between the lost sheep of the house of Israel and the Gentile people (Matt. 10:5, 6).

⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: "**Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans;**" ⁶ but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. (Matt. 10:5, 6)

When speaking to the Canaanite woman with the demonic daughter our Lord refers to the non-Jew as a "dog" (Mark 7:27).

But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, **and to cast it unto the dogs.** (Mark 7:27)

When Jesus sought to overthrow the racial, gender and geographic bigotry of His audience, He told the unlikely (and shocking) story of The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37).

But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion. (Luke 10:33)

Because of His association with the unclean and Gentiles, He was accused by the religious establishment of being “a man who receives sinners and eats with them” (Luke 15:1, 2).

¹ Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. ² Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, “**This man receives sinners and eats with them**” (Luke 15:1, 2).

When confronted by the religious establishment, He was accused of being a Samaritan and thus, “having a demon” (John 8:48).

The Jews answered and said to Him, “Do we not say rightly that **You are a Samaritan and have a demon?**” (John 8:48).

All of this clearly shows an inbred animosity existing between the Jew and the non-Jew. Although God has a love for everyone, there is little question as to God’s command to terminate the people of Canaan in the Book of Joshua. We would be wrong to assume the situation in the Middle East is simply one of misunderstanding. Regardless as to the nation, if a nation seeks another nation’s destruction, then they should do what is necessary to stop the aggression. However, we would be wrong if we simply assumed that the land conquest in the Book of Joshua was because of racial reasons. God’s love is impartial as it relates to racial, gender or geographical qualifiers.

I will comment on this a little later, but the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10) and of Lazarus and the Rich Man (Luke 16:19) were intentionally told to take current and prevailing opinions and drop them on their head. It is not by accident we are told as “Christians” to “love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us” (Matt. 5:43). Again, such radical ideology is still difficult to completely grasp. Paul goes further and says, “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse” (Rom. 12:14). Before we are Americans, we are Christians; before we are Republican or Democrat, we are Christians; before we are Bible Church, we are Christians; before we are Jew or Greek, free or slaves, male or female, we are Christians (Gal. 3:28). Being a follower of Christ dominates whatever else exists along ethnic, gender or geographical lines.

Regardless as to whether or not a person is an American, ally or enemy, regardless as to what political party they are a part of, regardless as to whether or not they are socialists, communists, or a functional democracy, God is calling from all people groups worshippers and we must pray for them and love them as God would.

II. A Christ worldview is marked by compassion for those who suffer (v. 2).

“Over and over again we see Jesus moved with compassion for men. The most amazing thing about Him is His sheer considerateness. Confront Jesus with a lost soul or a tired body and his first instinct was to help.” (William Barclay, *Mark*, 182, 183).

“The heart of Jesus Christ was touched by the need of the multitude, and His heart ever controlled His hand.” (H.A. Ironside, *Expository Notes on Mark*, 118).

We have developed a significant degree of suspicion as it relates to those who are in need. As believers, it is biblical to honor those who work and bear their own burdens. It is equally true that nothing we do this side of heaven will wipe out poverty (Mark 14:7). There are those who will abuse Government programs and Christian charity, but this does not make the idea of having compassion for those in genuine need wrong.

Our cynicism should not harden our hearts toward those in need. Jesus saw those who were without food for three days and He was moved with compassion. Paul tells us we should be good to all men, especially those in the household of faith (Gal. 6:10). We must not allow our compassion to be defined by race or region. Many who suffer do so as a result of their poor choices. Some, however, suffer for providential reasons. Regardless as to why, we cannot afford to become hardened toward the suffering of others. As a community of faith, I take great delight in our collective generosity as it relates to our benevolent offering. I also believe it is right for us to be involved in our community in the various services it provides for those in genuine need. We must not allow the few who misuse the system to desensitize us toward those in real need.

III. A Christ worldview is marked by the naturally impossible (vv. 3-7).

“When Jesus had pity on the crowd and wished to give them something to eat, the disciples immediately pointed out the practical difficulty that they were in a desert place and that there was nowhere within miles where any food could be got.” (William Barclay, *Mark*, 183). Is this not our response to these kinds of situations? The first thing that comes to mind when confronted by need is, “I can’t, let someone else do it.” Whatever need exists, our first response is one of delegation and impossibility.

Although we live in a natural world, we are not bound by its components. You might believe such thinking is irrational, but there is another dimension that exists beyond the power of the simple eye to perceive. Our God, the God we individually and collectively profess, “Is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us” (Eph. 3:20). Our God is able to feed 5,000 plus people with five loaves and two small fish (Mark 6:34-44). He is able to feed 4,000 people with seven loaves and a few small fish (Mark 8:1-9). Our God is able to open deaf ears, loosen tied tongues, deliver the demon possessed, heal the lame, and cause the blind to see. This is the story told and preserved for us as His people. As Christians, as followers of the Christ, our hope lies forever and unchanging in the person and work of a God who is able to do the unthinkable. He can part seas, cause water to flow from rocks, walk on it when necessary, and cause it to rain with such force as to destroy that which He creates.

Because He is all-powerful our God is able to enable us to love our enemies and be moved by those in need. He is able to destroy our prejudices and make us just like

Jesus. Because He is able He can make from both Jew and Gentile one new man (Eph. 2:11-22). This is His mission; this is His goal.

Our Lord continues to work in and through His disciples. His purpose throughout Mark is to transfer His authority to them and through them to the people. "The Christian life, as a disciplined rhythm of following Jesus, involves not only being fed but becoming in turn one through whom Jesus' love can be extended to the world." (N.T. Wright, *Mark for Everyone*, 102).

Jesus used what His disciples had. "It was the provision they had made for their own need, but they were to have the privilege of sharing it with others." (H.A. Ironside, *Expository Notes on Mark*, 119). How many times do we look to others to meet needs when it is within our own power to do so?

I believe throughout Mark there is an intentional theme of transfer from Jesus to and through His disciples. He fully expects them to do what He did. Not because of who they are, but because of who He is. It is because of this idea that they will be able to do greater work than Him (John 14:12). Our doubt comes because we look at ourselves and like Paul we say, "Who is sufficient for these things" (2 Cor. 3:5, 6)? Yet how are we to view this simple principle? N.T. Wright provides this thoughtful application.

"Of course our resources will seem, and feel, totally inadequate. That is Jesus' problem, not ours; and these stories indicate well enough that he will cope with it. Our task,, as has been said often enough but still needs to be heard and acted upon, is not to bemoan how few loaves and fishes we have for the crowd, but to offer them to Jesus, to do whatever he wants with them; and then to be ready to distribute them, to our own surprise, at his command." (N.T. Wright, *Mark for Everyone*, 102).

Let us not underestimate what God chooses to do in us and through us to those around us. Let us not forget the earlier incident in Mark 5 with the delivering of the demoniac. Listen to Mark 5:14-20.

¹⁴ Their herdsmen ran away and reported it in the city and in the country. And the people came to see what it was that had happened. ¹⁵ They came to Jesus and *observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the "legion"; and they became frightened. ¹⁶ Those who had seen it described to them how it had happened to the demon-possessed man, and all about the swine. ¹⁷ And **they began to implore Him to leave their region.** ¹⁸ As He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was imploring Him that he might accompany Him. ¹⁹ And He did not let him, but He *said to him, "Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you." ²⁰ **And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.** (Mark 5:14-20)

There were at least 4,000 plus people present. Why did they gather? "Is it just possible that part of this great crowd was due to the missionary activity of the healed demoniac? Have we got here a glimpse of what the witness of one man can do for Christ? It may well be that there were many that day in that crowd in Decapolis who were there

because they had heard a man telling what Jesus Christ had done for him.” (William Barclay, *Mark*, 184).

The miracle that we crave often comes through normal everyday people. “Jesus has no time for the spirit which waits until all the circumstances are perfect before it thinks of helping.” (William Barclay, *Mark*, 183). May God open our eyes to see the miracle and to be the miracle.

IV. A Christ worldview is marked by lavish graciousness (vv. 8-9).

It is interesting to see how in Mark 6 there are twelve small baskets and in our passage there are seven large baskets.

“In chapter six, after feeding the five thousand, there were twelve hand-basketsful left over – such as folk carried with them when traveling on foot. In the second instance, there were seven hampersful left over. These were large baskets such as were often used for carrying fish or transporting other goods.” (H.A. Ironside, *Expository Notes on Mark*, 120).

The abundance of the miracle in Mark 8 celebrates the rich and lavish nature of God’s grace towards those who are non-Jewish. The audience that was the recipients of His miracle did not deserve what they received. In fact, just the opposite would have been true. They deserved isolation, rejection, and condemnation. But God is God and as such He is lavish in the dispensing of His gifts. Not only was everyone fed, but they were satisfied. And not only were they satisfied, but there was excess. This lavish graciousness is also noted in our Lord’s words when He said, “But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you” (Matt. 5:39-42). What we do as Christians, individually and corporately, should be markedly different that what we might do as a nation. It is impossible to be a Christian nation as it relates to a fallen world, but it is not impossible to be Christian in our response toward evil.

I cannot fully process the abundance of God’s grace, but I am glad for it. In principle I can state these four thoughts and show the necessary connection between what is stated and the story before us. I can even support it with other passages. However, what I know in principle is still a genuine struggle in practice. It is my prayer that I would not seek to fit God into my presuppositions or prejudices, but would rather see Him mold my will so that my worldview is thoroughly Christ-like. May this be our collective prayer before the God whose grace is without partiality and always superabundantly dispensed.

Shepherding the Sheep (What's the NEXT STEP?)

1. Who do you need to love whom you consider unlovely?
2. Who do you need to help whom you consider helpless?
3. Who do you need to assist who is unworthy of your assistance?
4. When we are confronted by the uncomfortable and unpleasant, we should ask ourselves the question, "What would Jesus do?" God is living His life in you and through you to those around you. May we be for our community, the visible and tangible body of Christ.