

Mark 8:1-30

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Preacher: Nathan Raynor

[0 : 00] Now, this may seem to you like a rather large chunk of text, and admittedly it is. A little bit challenging to take a look at this and see why we should go this far.

And I've wrestled with that quite a bit over the last couple of weeks. But they are tied together thematically by both this reality and this metaphor of bread.

As God continues in Jesus' ministry to draw people to believe that He is the Christ. Jesus put it this way, John 6, verses 47-51.

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.

This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.

[0 : 59] And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh. So He's teaching us there that He Himself is the very sustenance, the very thing that we need for life.

And He's speaking of spiritual matters here. He uses this example of manna in the wilderness.

Again, I've talked to you guys about typologies. Manna being a type of Christ.

A way in which God met the physical needs of His people in the wilderness with this manna, this bread that came from heaven. But now He has sent a greater type, the anti-type.

He has sent Christ as the bread of life to meet spiritual needs. And so you'll see that this text is all tied together with this metaphor, even as there's some physical interaction happening with bread.

And that's important for us to see this morning. Now we see again a feeding miracle here. This is not a re-recording, as some people have suggested, of the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000.

[2 : 02] This is a separate instance. Some of the structure of the telling of it is similar, but it was a very similar miracle. We get different details, different region that it was happening in, a different report.

He actually then later asked questions of the apostles about when He fed the 5 and when He fed the 4. And so this is clearly a unique miracle, although there are some similarities with the one that happened previously.

We see in verse 1 that in those days a crowd had gathered. And Jesus now has returned from the region of Tyre and Sidon. He's been ministering primarily in Galilee, which is northwest of the Sea of Galilee.

He's been primarily ministering in this region. And He has now gone off. He's coming really rapidly, bringing to a close His ministry in this region. And He's gone off to the coast of the Mediterranean, which is where Tyre and Sidon are located.

Kind of a bit of a retreat. We see a couple of encounters in chapter 7 that happened. But the point was to get away from Galilee. And He's made this circuitous route to come around the region of Galilee and back into the Decapolis.

[3 : 09] You'll see that in chapter 7, verse 31. This is a region made up of 10 prominent Gentile cities. There were other cities there, but 10 prominent ones. Therefore, it's called the Greek Decapolis.

It was to the east of the Sea of Galilee. A region just to the east of the Sea of Galilee. And previously, Jesus fed the 5,000, which was primarily a Jewish crowd in Galilee.

We see that He expresses to them some of His Godhead. The way that He's come to lead them by having them sit in groups the way Moses did. And by having them, as Mark recorded, sit on the green grass to shepherd them.

We don't see those details here because this is a Gentile crowd. So God orchestrates here with the life of Christ, the apostles' work in this time, another feeding, but to a different audience, to a Gentile

crowd.

And we notice here in verse 2 a unique thing that happens. Jesus states that He has compassion on this crowd. Now, this is a crowd that has been with Him three days.

[4 : 14] They've likely run out of food. They've traveled a great distance to hear Him speak. And He states that He has compassion on them. Now, this is the only place around this account that He says that.

He Himself says that. Now, compassion is constantly attributed to Jesus as an observation of His actions. The recorders of the Gospel see the things He does, and they say He must have compassion for Him to act in this way.

But this is the only place we see Him say that He Himself has compassion. And this is important that He declares this because it fulfills prophecy. Isaiah 54, 7 and 8.

He is declaring Himself God. Verse 7, For a brief moment I deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the Lord, your Redeemer.

So Jesus cares about the physical things. He's primarily concerned. His major focus is on the spiritual things, those things that are eternal, but He is compassionate.

[5 : 22] We see Him not only caring about the Spirit, but also about the stomach. We see Him healing people miraculously. He's upset about deafness and the inability to speak clearly.

We saw at the end of chapter 7. He has compassion on people. He declares that here Himself. And then we see in verse 4, a rather miraculous display of unbelief.

And this is the verse that causes, some will call them quote-unquote scholars, to presume that this is a second recording of the first miracle of the feeding of the 5,000, because they just don't understand how these men could have possibly seen Him feed so many people before, not too long before, and now doubt that He could do it again.

We saw before, at the feeding of the 5,000, this is a record of the men, so it's likely a much larger group. There's no real way to know, but presumably men with families, so 20,000 to 25,000 people, quite possibly.

Now with 4,000, this is probably a massive group, 16,000, 20,000 people. They've traveled away three days. Likely their families are with them. And the apostles say, how can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?

[6 : 44] What an incredible display of their unbelief. And then we see the details of this miracle. He asks them, how many loads do you have?

They say seven. They're asked to sit. There's small fish. It's kind of tacked on the end as if it's not really the important part of the story, and it's not. It's just another way they were fed, but the bread is the thing that we're meant to really notice here and to focus on.

And you'll see in verse 8 that they ate and were satisfied. They had plenty. In fact, they had stopped eating, and so there were leftovers. The type of basket here, is likely a much larger basket than the previous 12 baskets that were taken up.

The baskets that were generally carried in Gentile region were large baskets carried on the shoulder. You could put a small person inside of. So the point, though, is there's lots and lots and lots of leftovers that Jesus provided to them abundantly.

It was above and beyond what they even needed to be satisfied. And then we get the record that he immediately, this is, I think, Mark's favorite word, immediately got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.

[7 : 54] Now, the district of Dalmanutha is not mentioned much in history. You'll see in Matthew, it's recorded as the region of Magadan. So we've got the district of Dalmanutha, the region of Magadan.

It would have been kind of like saying, I'm going to Marietta versus saying I'm going to Cobb County. This would have been a similar thing. So these aren't contradictory accounts, but these cities and this region existing in the same place, back again on the west side of the Sea of Galilee. This region was south of Capernaum where he had kind of headquartered his Galilean ministry. So he's now entered into a new place. And we see in verse 11, the Pharisees. Matthew's account expands that for us a bit and says the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

And they immediately, they come up to him and they begin to argue with him. The Greek word would also mean dispute. Argue, dispute. Get into a debate from him.

And the record here in verse 11 is they were seeking from him a sign from heaven, not for the sake of belief, but to test him. To back him into a corner to prove that he wasn't who he says that he is. [9:03] That is the Christ, the Son of God. Now it's interesting that Matthew's account records that the Pharisees and the Sadducees came together because these two were on the opposite ends of the religious spectrum.

These groups of Jews. Opposite ends of the religious spectrum. In fact, they were religious enemies. They didn't really get along. They believed different things. If you'll allow, there were the conservatives and the liberals.

Not politically speaking, but the way they treated the law of God. The Pharisees were the legalists. They were the fundamentalists. They followed everything to a T. At least they believed they did. The Sadducees were a little more loose with that.

The Sadducees were primarily those involved in running the temple. They were extortioners. People would bring sacrifice to the temple. They would tell them that they weren't good enough and then they would sell them an acceptable sacrifice at a really high rate.

Often they wouldn't accept the money that they brought. They would make them exchange the money for the proper type of money. They would rip them off there as well. Horrible extortioners. Didn't care too much about defilement.

[10:07] They loved the Greek culture. The Pharisees hated it. But here we see them joining forces, which is such a fascinating thing.

Because they were still those. They were apostate. They had built structures for themselves, whether it was conservative or whether it was liberal. They still rejected Jesus as the Christ. They missed the point altogether, together.

You've heard the old adage, the enemy of my enemy is my friend. And this is what we find them, combining forces to come and to attack Jesus, to dispute with him and ask of him a sign from heaven.

Now there's a superstition in Jewish culture in this day that only God could do a miracle from heaven, and here we're speaking of from the sky, but demons could do earthly miracles.

So they're pressing him into a position where he either had to do it to prove who he was in their thinking, or deny doing it at all and then therefore deny who he is.

[11:11] They think they've got him backed into a corner with this request. We need a sign from heaven because this is only a thing that God could do to test him.

To test him. Now do you all remember the story of Nicodemus? Nicodemus was a leader amongst the Pharisees. John chapter 3 verses 1 and 2 records him coming to Jesus.

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God.

We know. Who is he referring to? He's referring to that group to which he belonged, the Pharisees. We know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.

So here you see Nicodemus. Nicodemus later gets this teaching from Jesus that he must be born again, must be born of flesh and the water of the Spirit. This is such a beautiful thing.

[12:13] I want to believe that Nicodemus is counted amongst the saints. We don't see his response to this teaching, but he says here, we know that you are a teacher come from God. And it's fascinating to see that there were groups of Pharisees that knew exactly who Jesus was.

So what was going on with these? These Pharisees and these Sadducees. And that is that they were just absolutely spiritually blind. They had no idea.

Jesus had done time and time again things to prove that he was the Christ over and over again. He was the fulfillment of Old Testament processes. These men, these were the men that should have known the Scriptures and known who Jesus was.

They should have seen him for who he was. But they were spiritually blind and they asked of him this test. And his response to them is first that he sighs deeply.

It's the only place this compound Greek phrase is used in the New Testament. We see him sigh previously in chapter 7 verse 34 over the physical effect of sin but here we see him sigh deeply over the spiritual effect of sin.

[13:28] This is a remorse. This is a longing. This is a sad moment for him that these men are so blinded that they would ask this thing of him.

That they would come to him in this way, in this attitude and this manner. And his response to him is why does this generation seek a sign? And truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation.

A similar account is found in Matthew chapter 12 verse 38 through 41. And some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him saying, Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you. But he answered them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish so will the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. There's Jonah as a type. Verse 41, The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it for they repented at the preaching of Jonah and behold something greater than Jonah is here.

What is Jesus saying to them? This is a crooked, a perverse generation. When he says generation, he's just referring to the Pharisees, the Sadducees and everyone else who wouldn't believe.

[14:46] It's a very broad general term to those in that day. They were like Israel in the desert. They wouldn't believe. What is Jesus saying about himself?

That he himself is the sign. That he's standing right in front of them and all they have to do is believe that he is the Christ.

They're like Israel in the desert. These Pharisees and Sadducees, the rest of Israel in this day. Deuteronomy 32.5 records, they have dealt corruptly with him.

They are no longer his children because they are blemished. They are a crooked and twisted generation. So you see here the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees in their blindness coming to test Jesus and there's a very thematic dealing with blindness to the truth of God in the Scriptures. Lots of language about darkness, the inability to see and I want to take you through some of these together. If you have the stamina, I encourage you to flip with me to these places but I'm going to move fairly quickly for the sake of time.

[15:52] John chapter 1 beginning in verse 1 In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God speaking of Jesus. He was in the beginning with God.

All things were made through Him and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

Verse 9 The true light which gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world and the world was made through Him yet the world did not know Him. He came to His own and His own people did not receive Him.

We see evidence of that happening here in verses 11-13 in chapter 8 of Mark. Further on in the Gospel of John chapter 3 verse 18-21 Whoever believes in Him the Son of God is not condemned but whoever does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

And this is the judgment. The light has come into the world and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light lest his works should be exposed.

[17:12] But whoever does what is true comes to the light so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God or from faith. So here we see this metaphor this analogy for those who are in the dark are those who produce evil those who have evil hearts and that is humanity apart from Christ.

But those who are in the light who have been carried out their works in God by faith are those who are found in Christ. The darkness hates the light because light destroys darkness.

Darkness doesn't exist when the lights flip on. So it hates it. It abhors it. And people who live in the darkness want to avoid the light. This was certainly true of so many vast, vast numbers of the Jews in Jesus' name.

This is why we see in Luke 19 verse 41 Jesus drawing near Jerusalem and he weeps over it.

Verse 42 saying would that you even you had known on this day the things that make for peace but now they are hidden from your eyes.

[18:22] You are spiritually blind. You are in the dark. This is also true of the Gentiles. Paul gives us record of this in Romans chapter 1 beginning in verse 18 for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

Now this is an address to Gentiles because verse 19 says for what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them. They don't have the law but it has been made evidenced in the creation for his invisible attributes namely his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world and the things that have been made so they are without excuse.

For although they knew God they didn't honor him as God or give thanks to him but they came futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Dwelling in the darkness rejecting God. This was true before the days of Jesus. Psalm 82.5 says the wicked have neither knowledge nor understanding they walk about in darkness.

Proverbs 4.19 The way of the wicked is like deep darkness. They do not know over what they stumble. Isaiah 44.18 They know not nor do they discern for he has shut their eyes so that they cannot see in their hearts so that they cannot understand.

[19:54] This is true after the days of Jesus leading right up to the days in which we now live. Paul writes in Ephesians 4.17-19 Now this I say in testifying the Lord that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do just meaning those outside the faith in the futility of their minds.

They are darkened in their understanding alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

Again you see the darkness they are darkened in their understanding. Paul writes again in 2 Corinthians verse 4 excuse me chapter 4 verse 3-4 And even if our gospel is veiled that is hidden it is veiled to those who are perishing in their case the God of this world being Satan has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God.

So here we see all these different things at work individuals we see God at work we see Satan at work and these people are darkened and they are blind to the reality of Christ. And here in this text there seems to be a turning point as Jesus deals with the Pharisees and the Sadducees moving on in the gospel of Mark he doesn't show much mercy to them he doesn't seem to put up with them much at all he doesn't really seem to entertain their questions he's very forward with them he speaks boldly out against their sin it seems here that they as a group have made it evident that they never intend to leave the darkness and Jesus treats them as such as those who have spiritual influence over their communities he begins to call them out and tell them exactly who they are moving forward in the gospel of Mark he turns his attention away from the crowds he turns his attention away from redemption of Pharisees and Sadducees he begins to really pour his energy and his efforts into the apostles and he just doesn't hold back it seems up to this point some punches were held now he lets them fly there seems to be expressed here by the Pharisees a degree of unbelief with finality an unbelief with finality all of us didn't believe at one point none of us were born in belief we were all born in sin we had to believe at some point they seem here to express that they will never believe and Jesus then treats them as such now we move beyond them and we see them again hopping in a boat and moving they get back in a boat probably heading back again to the other side although they don't arrive right this story takes place in the boat and we see the apostles unbelief the poor pitiful apostles this group of men that's just confounding when you look at them on the surface and then when you actually begin to apply the way that they act and the way that they respond to your own heart you'll find that you're so much like these men and I am certainly much like these men they have now been with Jesus for approximately a year they have seen him do first hand accounts of him do just some incredible things healings in the thousands it was said that Jesus eradicated illness in the places that he went we just get some particular records of that all of these stories that are meant to point us to the reality of who he is but he healed far and wide remember they're on the sea of Galilee and there are ten foot waves coming and Jesus speaks and it's calmed he's done incredible things in their presence now for a year and they get into a conversation about bread they only brought one loaf with them in the boat and they're concerned about their hunger

Jesus had just fed sixteen to twenty thousand as an approximation with seven loaves and here we have a group we don't know exactly the number in this case but a much much smaller group with one loaf and they're concerned about this oh we forgot to bring the bread and Jesus cautions them

with an interesting statement watch out beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod now this obviously the encounter that had just happened is still fresh in Jesus' mind should have been fresh in theirs as well as he has encountered the Pharisees and the Sadducees in this question that they had now leaven if we're going to beware of something leaven we must understand was like yeast was the thing put in bread to have it rise it was a bit of bread a bit of dough from a previous batch that had yeast in it and if you don't know yeast is a bacteria that gives off carbon dioxide

[24 : 56] I think I hope I'm getting that right and causes our bread to rise which makes those little air pockets inside our bread I think I hear whispering from our chemistry teacher it doesn't matter this is what happens to bread and they in this day they would save a little bit of dough because they didn't have a little yellow packet of yeast that they could rip off the top and mix in water to add it to the bread so they would save a little bit back and they would add it to the bread so he's been doing miracles with bread he's been talking a lot about bread he's saying that he is the bread of life and here he says watch out beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod now this this idea this metaphor of leaven is used all throughout the scriptures used throughout the Old Testament as well and it's most commonly used as a metaphor for sin not in every case it doesn't unilaterally represent sin but it is most commonly used as a metaphor for sin this is why the Passover feast that you celebrate is done with unleavened bread it's intentionally meant to represent that in fact we probably more accurately should have unleavened bread during the

Lord's Supper it'd probably be a better picture of that we won't be too concerned about it the gluten free stations I think a little more holy than the other ones because I don't I don't think there's any yeast in that maybe there is I don't know Galatians 5 7-9 Paul writes to the Galatian church which was dealing with taking on circumcision they were replacing this gospel of grace with the gospel of works and Paul says to them you were running well who hindered you from obeying the truth this persuasion is not from him who calls you being God a little leaven leavens the whole lump Matthew 16-12 the same account that we're studying in Mark it ends with verse 12 then they understood that he did not tell them to beware the leaven of bread but of the teaching of the Pharisees and the Sadducees so he's warning them as they are not believing that he is who he said he is that he is the son of

God he's already evidence that he can feed them to plenty to overflowing there's way more available for them right he asks them the question later on does he not he says how many baskets did we have left over we had twelve this time we had seven this time don't you think I can feed you right don't be like the Pharisees and the Sadducees don't be like Herod who was afraid of what people would think of him so he put John the Baptist to death don't let that untruth that unbelief work in you because here we see these men are still apparently in darkness let's say there's a dawning light they've obeyed they've followed they've left things behind for Jesus they've seen miraculous things happen but yet they still respond in these bizarre ways Jesus asked them scathing questions do you not yet perceive or understand are your hearts hardened hardened and I don't think Jesus asked these questions are your hearts hardened but in what is wrong with you guys have I not displayed for you the power of God have I not shown you that I am the Christ and he asked them questions that they would know the answer to how many baskets full of pieces did you take up they said twelve and the seven for the four thousand how many baskets full of pieces did you take up and they said seven and he says do you not yet understand now there are a number of again quote unquote scholars that play around with the significance of the numbers of baskets twelve times of Israel seven represent something to the Gentiles I don't remember what it was but there's absolutely no way to prove that it meant anything at all and I don't think it means anything at all for this text I really don't think that Jesus is trying to teach them anything other than I provided beyond because there was a lot left over to them abounding provision to them see the apostles were always so concerned with physical things physical provision as they're traveling around Jesus was primarily concerned with the spiritual things the account of the same story we see in

Matthew prior to that Jesus preached a sermon that we call the Sermon on the mount in which he said do not be anxious saying what shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we wear for the Gentiles again meaning those outside the faith seek after all these things and your heavenly father knows that you need them all but seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness seek first those things that are spiritual those things that matter most those!

[29 : 52] things that are eternal and all these things these temporal things will be added to you do you not yet understand and it hangs there for us today at very least I hope you will read on eagerly waiting for Peter's declaration of verse 29 of chapter 8 you are the Christ as the spokesman of the apostles we know they didn't all come to believe in him Judas betrayed him right but as the spokesperson for the apostles you are the Christ the anointed one!

of God so we see these two stories really of unbelief following this miracle of the feeding of the four thousand and the tying together of all that with Jesus being the bread of life the source of sustenance the very thing that sustains us to the end as well as the one who provides the temporal stuff for us right let's go hard after those things that are spiritual!

the temporal will come along beside so what is the application of this text well if you're not a believer if you don't have a confidence that you have placed your faith in Christ if you don't have evidence of the spirit working in you to bring about righteousness to hate sin to love the ways of God do not a believer do not be like the Pharisees and the Sadducees do not wait for a sign from heaven it has been given to you do not be like Voltaire the French man that did not believe in God he said that if a thousand people witnessed a miracle he would be more likely to doubt their senses than to believe that a miracle had actually happened do not be darkened like the Pharisees and the Sadducees do be like the apostles there was at least a dawning light here in their story they still got into the boat with

Jesus they weren't his enemy at this point they weren't seeking his death as the Pharisees and the Sadducees were and finally make the declaration you are the Christ be like the apostles to the end follow him wherever he takes you and even to the point of death on his behalf so do be like the apostles if you are a believer hope and pray that everyone in this room is can say that with confidence see evidence in their life of that you have the light you're not in darkness do not be like the apostles in this case we can take an example because our hearts are fickle in this way we have been brought into the light we have had hearts made new we are different now in status we are no longer enemies of God we are children of God we don't differ in degree but in type we are new creations and yet we so often don't function out of that reality I am a child of God how then should I live in response to that reality in the power of that reality but we drift back to that old self we have dark corners of our hearts that we want to hide away and not expose to the light we are ashamed by our flesh there are so many things that we need to improve there is so much sin that we need to cast off I know this of myself I know this of you we have so far to go and in that shame we hide away we keep the darkness in those moments it's the same it's unbelief we forget the gospel we forget the reality of it if you hide away from God and shame for dark parts of who you are you forget that you have been redeemed in Christ it's not your righteousness it's his there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in

[34 : 05] Christ song that we sang! or! haven't! sang it at some point this morning when God sees us he sees Christ what a beautiful truth that is for us so we can bring it all out into the open and let the light expose it and chase it away Jesus is the Son of God and he was given on our behalf this is where we operate from this is who we are and beloved we need to live that way we need to give evidence in all aspects in all arenas of our life that is who we are we don't need to put it into a segment Sunday is my holy day the rest of the week I go off to work everything that we have everything that we are should be permeated by the reality that we are now found in Christ we are in him!

and! he you pay attention to the unbelief ask that God would apply it to your own heart let's pray together