

Jesus' Compassion for the Gentiles
Mark 7:31-8:10

“He does all things well.” – Many were saying that about LeBron James in the NBA Finals. **He led all players in scoring, rebounding, assists, steals and blocks. Unreal. That has never been done.**

Well, as amazing as it was, King James' feats pale in comparison to King Jesus. As we have seen in Mark, He teaches, heals, delivers, forgives, calls, feeds, calms storms, walks on water, and more. Jesus is in a category by himself.

Today we see Him doing all things well in *Gentile territory...*

These two miracles take place during Jesus' Gentile mission, which began in verse 24.

The Savior is demonstrating His love for the nations.

Jesus doesn't just drop Matt 28:18-20 (go into all nations) on the disciples out of nowhere. The disciples were very “Holy Land-Centric.” But Jesus demonstrated the Great Commission before giving the great Commission.

And the Gentiles – to the surprise of many – are not beyond the reach of Jesus' salvation, and they are very open to it.

James Edwards

“Like the book of Jonah, the three vignettes in Mark 7:24–8:9 reveal that supposed Gentile outsiders are in fact surprisingly receptive to the word of God in Jesus. The journey of Jesus to Tyre, Sidon, and the Decapolis proves that although the Gentiles are ostracized by the Jews, they are not ostracized by God.... There is a lesson here for the people of God in every age that its enemies are neither forsaken by God nor beyond the compassion of Jesus. On the contrary, the Gentiles, like others “a long distance” away, are the objects of Jesus' compassion.”

Let's consider Jesus' compassion for the Gentiles.

Jesus Heals a Gentile Man

This parable is unique to Mark. It doesn't appear in the other gospels.

1. Jesus Goes into Gentile Territory (7:31)

V 31: Jesus went north to Sidon before looping southeast to the region of the Decapolis (“Ten Cities”). All together this horseshoe-shaped journey was more than a 120-mile walk. **That's a long walk! That's a long drive! The disciples do cross-fit with Jesus.** It was a very unusual route also. **It was like going from Raleigh to OBX via Richmond.** I encouraged myself with Jesus' endurance over the past three weeks..

- Jesus could be escaping danger, but more likely, is intentionally extending his Gentile ministry.
- **More crumbs for beggars!**

Applications:

- **If you want to follow in the steps of Jesus, you too will engage the darkness.**
- **If you are going to follow in the steps of Jesus, you must have compassion for the enemies of the church.**
- **Don't follow Jonah; follow Jesus!**

2. Jesus Cares for the Impaired (7:32-34a)

Here we meet one of the “13” as CJ calls him – one individual that appears and then disappears in the gospel of Mark. He’s a supporting actor, to the main character, Jesus.

V. 32: We don’t know much about him, other than he is deaf and has a speech impediment (*mogilolos* – more on that in a minute – “mute” in verse 37). It seems as though he became deaf later in life. And we must note that this man has some wonderful friends!

- **These people obviously loved their friend.**
- **But how’d they even hear about Jesus?**
 - Remember the **Decapolis in Mark 5:20?**
 - **It appears that the first Gentile missionary is getting it done!**
- **The demon-possessed man went about talking to his friends about the Lord Jesus, and now they are bringing their friends to Jesus.**
- Previously in the Decapolis they were afraid of Jesus, but now they are grateful for Jesus.

V. 33: Jesus, in his kindness, uses “**sign language**” to communicate to him.

Little kids this is not a proof text for giving people a wet willy!

The fingers in the ear, the spittle, and the look up to heaven all communicate obvious messages.

- The touch also indicates **compassion...**
- The fingers in the ear: “I will open them.... I made them. I can open them!”
- The spittle: “I will loose your tongue”
- The look to heaven: “God alone does this, not my touch/spit”

V. 34: Jesus “**sighed.**” This is interesting. **Why did he not smile with joy?** After all, he knew what was about to happen! Jesus sighed because was **not indifferent** to this man’s condition. He was **not emotionless**. Jesus felt the ravaging effects of sin upon this man. He was moved by his condition.

- It’s that feeling you get one someone you care about calls and says, “**The cancer is back.**” That’s followed by an agonizing sigh.
- **Seeing. Hearing. Touching. And Grieving. That’s the ministry of Jesus.**

Applications:

- **We too should care about those who are afflicted in various ways.**
- **We should grieve with those who are afflicted and show compassion.**

- I want to do this better....

3. Jesus Restores the Impaired (7:34b-35)

V 34b: Jesus says Aramaic, “Ephphatha,” that is, “**Be opened.**”

V. 35: This is the first occurrence of the healing of a deaf man in the gospels.

- The Greek then says literally in v. 35: “**the shackle of his tongue was released.**”
- Jesus liberated this man. Then the man “**spoke plainly**” (Mark 8:32)
- **What was this like?! I would have loved to have been there!**
- The first person he heard was Jesus! The first person he could speak to was Jesus!

This story is only told in Mark. It could be of real significance to **Peter who saw a spiritual parallel to his own life.** He struggled to see and hear clearly (Mark 8:22ff). This miracle falls after Jesus’ word “Hear me, all of you, and understand...” (7:14)

- It seems like **there’s a parable in the miracle**, like the one coming in chapter 8.

Jesus wants the whole world – not just the Jews – to hear Him.

- **Only Jesus can open up our spiritual ears to hear His Word and be changed.**
- **If you’re a Christian, it’s because Jesus has opened our your ears!**
- **Elsewhere we read that opens eyes (Eph 1); hear we’re reminded that he opens ears.**

4. Jesus Astonishes the People (7:36-37)

V. 36: We can’t condone their disobedience, but we understand their response!

- **This is kind of funny. Parents certainly understand this phenomenon!**
- **Jesus will not be distracted. He’s going to the cross. Don’t crown Him King yet because of some miracles... There’s more work to be done.**

Application:

- **Proclaim the wonders of Jesus!** We haven’t been told to be silent!

(1) O for a thousand tongues to sing My great Redeemer’s praise

The glories of my God and King The triumphs of His grace!

(4) Hear Him, ye deaf; His praise, ye dumb, Your loosened tongues employ,

Ye blind, behold your Saviour come; And leap, ye lame, for joy!

(5) My gracious Master and my God, Assist me to proclaim,

To spread through all the earth abroad

The honours of Thy Name.

(Wesley, “Thousand Tongues”)

V. 37: Two Old Testament allusions that have theological significance:

- **Gen 1-2.** “He has done everything well [good]” contains an echo Genesis 1-2, where God surveys his work of creation and declares that it is good. The work of redemption is like the work of creation: It’s good.
 - The people are witnessing the creative power of God in Jesus Christ.
- **Isa 35:5-6.** “He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak” recalls precisely what Isaiah prophesied about regarding the coming Messiah in Isaiah 35:5-6:

Isaiah 35:3-6

3 Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.

4 Say to those who have an anxious heart,
“Be strong; fear not!
Behold, your God
will come with vengeance,
with the recompense of God.
He will come and save you.”

5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

6 then shall the lame man leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.

We should notice the word choice of Mark. He seems to be deliberately connecting this statement in Mark 8:32 to Isaiah 35 – **for the same word for “speech impediment” is only used in the Gk version of the OT in Isaiah 35:6 – *mogilalos***. And there’s more connection with Isaiah – for Isaiah speaks about the region of Lebanon rejoicing at God’s work. Gentile territory.

One more note. Look at the “grand redemptive storyline” in a miracle put on display.

- **Creation (what God does is good)**
- **Fall (a man deaf because of sin)**
- **Redemption (the Redeemer Healing/Saving!)**
- **Restoration (God’s kingdom has arrived in Jesus Christ, giving a preview of the ultimate restoration of all things). Beethoven said, “I shall hear in heaven.” While the deaf may not hear in this life, we can be sure that all who are in Christ, will one day hear Him!**

What’s surprising is that this mini-restoration happens right here in Gentile territory! The whole nations are included in God’s plan for restoration.

Applications:

- **Rejoice friends, our God has come!**
- **Rejoice friends, one day Jesus will reverse the curse once and for all!**

Jesus Feeds the Gentiles (8:1-11)

Jesus compassion is on full display in this text also.... We move from individuals receiving mercy to a whole crowd of Gentiles...

Now, when we first read this story of the feeding of the 4,000 perhaps you thought,

“Haven’t we seen this movie before!” Didn’t this just happen in chapter 6?

- **Is this a biblical re-run?**
- **No! This is a sequel. But unlike sequels, this one doesn’t disappoint.**
- **No special effects needed; Jesus does it all.**

Is this really a second feeding? Yes. Here are some of the differences:

Feeding of the 5,000	Feeding of the 4,000
5,000 men + women and children	4,000 total people (v. 9)
5 loaves and 2 fish	7 loaves and a few small fish (vv. 5, 7)
1 day in the wilderness	3 days in the wilderness (v. 2)
12 basket full of leftovers	7 baskets full of leftovers (v. 8)
1 prayer	2 prayers (vs. 6-7)
Jews	Gentiles (v. 1)
Allusions to Moses and Others	No allusions to Moses

8:19-20: Clearly shows that these were two events.

Why the two feedings? There are probably multiple reasons, but two stand out:

- 1) To show Himself as the Savior of the whole world (not just the Jews).**
 - Jesus is in the “distant lands.”
 - **verse 3: from “afar off” is a phrase often used of Gentile foreigners in distant lands** (Is 60:4; Jer 46:27).
- 2) To continue training the disciples...**
 - **He’s demonstrating his compassion, and will be commissioning them soon to distant lands to love the world...**

1. Jesus Shows Compassion (Mark 8:1-7)

V. 1: “In those days.” This is the same region. Not sure how long he spent but it may have been considerable time.

“a great crowd gathered” – **this is the fruit of people talking!!!** Demoniac, the deaf man, the Syrophenician woman and others...

Jesus notices that the crowd is hungry... So he gets involved in the problem...

But the people aren’t complaining!

They are captivated by Jesus!

- **That’s the kind of thing that happens when Jesus captures your heart.**
- **You can imagine some people trying to temper their enthusiasm. You can imagine a mom saying, “Take a lunch Johnny. Do you think Jesus is going to just pulls sandwiches out of the air!” Then Johnny gets home and says, “You’ll never believe the supper we had.”**
- **They are enthralled with Jesus.**

Do you remember when Jesus called the disciples?... Mark said, “He called them that they might “be with Him” (3:14). A follower of Jesus is one who wants to be with Jesus. This crowd, these people, want to be with him.

- That’s still a good description of a disciple: We are with him, and we proclaim him.

2-3: In 6:34, Mark said Jesus had compassion because He acted compassionately. Now Jesus Himself says He has *compassion*. This is the only place in the 4 gospels where Jesus says this of himself – in 1st person singular. The other references to his compassion are in third person.

- *splangnizomai* – guts, intestines, insides
- Psalm 78, Lamentations 3:22-23
- A distinguishing mark of Christianity is the compassion of our God

It’s this compassion that prompted Jesus to feed people.

“Any person with a need elicited the compassion of Jesus” (MacArthur)

4: You could read this like the disciples are knuckleheads... And they may indeed be displaying great dullness here... But if you compare this verse to the previous feeding, there’s a **difference in tone and content**. In the previous account, their question is **sarcastic and skeptical** (see 6:37). But this is more of a **humble sense of “unless you do it Lord, it won’t happen... how can one feed this crowd?”** Also, **Jesus doesn’t correct them**. He doesn’t appear turned off by them.

Whatever the case, Jesus involves the disciples in this feeding again.

5-7: Jesus quickly moves into action.

- He finds out just what is available (5).**
- He seats the crowd, blesses the bread, and gives it to the disciples to distribute (6).**
He’s a great host throughout the gospels! I want to do hospitality like Jesus. This is not a buffet, the people are seated! This is not Golden Coral.
- A few small fish (sardines?) are discovered. He blesses these too, and has the Twelve pass them out as well (7).**

This miracle also “foreshadows the gathering together of those from every nation under heaven to the heavenly feeding of God’s people” (Ferguson, *Mark*, 119).

2. Jesus Satisfies the Hungry (Mark 8:8-10)

V. 8: While there are some obvious differences in this feeding, this is an obvious similarity: the **people went away satisfied when fed by Jesus!**

- The language is essentially: **full to the max. They couldn’t eat any more.**
- **“He opens up his hand and satisfies the desire of every living thing” (Ps 145)**
- We too feast on the saving bread of Jesus in the gospel.

V. 9: They gathered the leftovers...

9b: Jesus sent them away – no small task!

10 – Jesus on the move... Goes back to the NW side of Galilee

Conclusion:

Paul Tripp argues that this is the math equation throughout Mark:

“Jesus’ compassion + his power = everything we need.”

What does this mean practically?

1. Trust Him.

- **He provides.**
 - **Matt 6 – He knows your needs.**
 - **Mark 8 – You don’t have to worry about bread!**
- **He saves**
 - **Jesus’ compassion is seen most fully at the cross, where he dies for sinners. What compassion!**
 - **Trust Him for salvation!**

2. Be Satisfied in Him.

- **You are made for this Savior.**
- **Jesus liberates the captives, and satisfies the hungry...**

Why does sin have power over you?

- **Because at one level you love it.**

How can you overcome it?

- **You need a surpassing love.**

When your love for Christ transcends your love for sin, you begin to change. And you begin to find life that is truly life.

3. Worship Him.

- **Jesus loves the nations.**
- **Jesus opens his had and feeds the hungry.**
- **This should move us.**
 - You can respond to this account in the following ways:
 - **Like Skeptic** – “This didn’t happen. There has to be some other explanation. Maybe they all had a pocket full of Vienna sausages and they just looked like sardines...”
 - **Like Bored guy** – “Jesus moved with compassion fed a multitude!” **“Oh, I gotta go see Ironman.”**
 - **Like Child** – **Marveling... Imitating...**

4. Imitate Him.

- **The hard part of this story is that it doesn’t require a great deal of interpretive skills. Jesus loved the Gentiles and fed them.**

- **The hard part is acting on it!**
 - **Don't respond like Joshua said, after reading Psalm 139. How should we respond? "Amen!?"** – Yes, but how about we think about some ways we can act on this...
- A. **Imitate his ministry to the nations – salvation is for the Gentiles!**
- B. **Imitate His compassion**
 - **This is our vision for this new building... We could display great compassion to the city...**
 - **Would people describe you as a compassionate person or a complaining person?**
 - **Story of Jared, who works for Compassion... On his way to an event, was complaining because his sandwich from Starbucks was cold in the middle... He has food but is complaining about it... Can you relate?**

Let's not be a complaining people; let's be a grateful people and a compassionate people.

Jesus compassion + his power = everything we need.

Lord's Supper:

- **6:41 – Jewish blessing [Gk. *eulogein*],” 6:41),**
- **8:6 *eucharistein* (“given thanks,” 8:6), from which Christians derived the name *Eucharist* for the Lord's Supper.”**

We weren't there when Jesus fed the 5,000 or the 4,000 but he continues to feed his church.... We continue to give him thanks...

And we give thanks knowing that one day we will enjoy the great feast in the kingdom of God – where the lame can walk, the deaf can hear, the blind will see, and we will forever be satisfied in the presence of the King – who does all things well!

Let's pray.