

"The Lord Did It Again!" - Mark 8:1-13

The Lord did it again! Why are we Christians so surprised when Jesus comes through for us?

Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22-23)

Jesus always comes through!

Chapter 7 of Mark ended with a statement made by the Gentile crowds on the Southeastern shore of Galilee.

And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak." (Mark 7:37)

Well, of course Jesus does all things well! In fact, He does all things perfectly. We can and should place our trust completely in Him.

For the previous 6 months or so, Jesus and His disciples had been traveling around in Gentile territory. First, they went up into Phoenicia, in the region of Tyre and Sidon. Then they traveled across the mountains of Lebanon, down the Eastern side of the Jordan River, through the region known as the Decapolis. They ended up on the Southeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. There, Jesus healed many, many people, demonstrating once again His power over disease, deformity, and the powers of darkness. For his part, Mark recounted the tender, compassionate healing of a man born deaf.

Jesus was serving Gentiles in exactly the same way that He served the Jews of Galilee. It was an object lesson for His Apostles. Jesus was not only the Messiah for the Jews; He is the Savior for the entire world.

As we open chapter 8, our Lord is still in the presence of these crowds of Gentiles. He is about to duplicate a miracle, or a sign, that He performed about 6 months previously. It is nothing less than an act of creation, a miracle of such scope, that it caused the Jews on the North end of the Sea to want to take Him by force and make Him King. The Lord is going to do it again! Let's begin reading about it now.

In those days, the multitude being very great and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples to Him and said to them, "I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And if I send them away hungry to their own houses, they will faint on the way; for some of them have come from afar." (Mark 8:1-3)

Jesus had a message for His disciples and He laid it out quite explicitly. "*I have compassion on the multitude,*" He said. Now, He gives the reason for His concern. They have been with Him three days. Many have been healed of various infirmities. Many probably just came to see the show because, as always, Jesus was the greatest show they had ever seen, but also, they had been listening to His messages. They were being taught by Him. After three days, it's no wonder they were pretty hungry. Since many had come from a long way off, Jesus was concerned that they might actually collapse on the way home.

But His core message to the disciples was the very fact that He felt compassion for these people. Jesus was unlike any other Jewish rabbi. No other rabbi would have given these Gentile "dogs" the time of day. The racial hatred they possessed even required them to

shake off any Gentile dust from their clothes and sandals when they returned to Jewish territory. No self-respecting Jewish rabbi would have spent three days with this mob, conversing with them, serving them, even touching them. (Ewww!) Let's be blunt: They were xenophobic! They were racist! They considered themselves members of God's covenant community and nobody else mattered.

Jesus is not a racist. His message of hope and salvation is for every nation. It is for every race. It is for every sort of people. It is for the most noble and for the humblest. It is for kings and paupers. Because every human being shares one, despicable trait: We are all sinners in the sight of Almighty God and every one of us desperately needs His grace, His forgiveness, His salvation.

Jesus communicated His desire ... His will to His disciples. He wanted to provide food. He wanted them to be filled and strengthened. Even though these were Gentiles, they were important to the Lord. What was the disciple's response?

Then His disciples answered Him, "How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?" (Mark 8:4)

Or, according to Matthew's account:

"Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude?" (Matthew 15:33)

Now, with the feeding of the 5,000 (or as I like to call it, feeding upwards of 20,000), at least they had a few things going for them. It was the early spring of the year. There was a town nearby and it was a fertile area ... there were probably farms about. And so, the disciple's question at that point had been:

"Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give them something to eat?" (Mark 6:37)

That was a lot of money that they probably didn't have, but at least it was theoretically possible to obtain enough food. But now, it is late summer or early fall. They are in a desert. The ground is parched and they are seriously out in the sticks. Even if they had unlimited funds, it would have been impossible to procure enough food.

Now, most commentators are pretty hard on the disciples at this point. Most say something like, "The disciples failed to take to heart the lesson they should have learned at the feeding of the 5,000." But, I'm not so sure they were quite that forgetful.

'Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude?'

That is a statement of absolute truth. The disciples couldn't get enough bread. They were helpless to remedy the situation. They knew the only solution was to rely on the Lord.

That's something every one of us needs to realize too. You can't save yourself; you have to rely completely on the Lord. You can't keep yourself saved; you have to rely on the Lord. And when you are called to work and bear fruit for the kingdom, you don't have it in yourself to accomplish the task. You have to rely on the Lord!

He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it. (1 Thessalonians 5:24)

"With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible." (Mark 10:27)

So, after the disciples express the fact they were helpless to remedy the situation, Jesus takes matters into His own hands.

He asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven." So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and they set them before the multitude. They also had a few small fish; and having blessed them, He said to set them also before them. So they ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets of leftover fragments. (Mark 8:5-8)

The Lord did it again! That amazing miracle up on the Northern Shore of Galilee was no fluke. Jesus could pull it off anytime He wanted to pull it off! Oh, there are a few, minor differences. The crowd wasn't quite as large, but it was still pretty big. Matthew tells us that there were about 4,000 men, besides women and children, so we're talking about 4,000 families here. Up North, they sat down on the grass; here, they sat down on the ground. (Remember, it's the dray time of the year.) In the first feeding, they gathered up 12 small baskets of fragments. Those baskets were like lunch boxes, just big enough to pack one lunch, but the word here is *spuris* (*σπυρίς*), which usually designates a large basket or a hamper. They had seven of those left over.

But the bottom line is, Jesus duplicated the miracle that was by far the largest in scope and He did it for a Gentile crowd! This proved once again, that Jesus is none other than the God of creation.

Now those who had eaten were about four thousand. And He sent them away, immediately got into the boat with His disciples, and came to the region of Dalmanutha. (Mark 8:9-10)

This is the only place in scripture where Dalmanutha is mentioned, so we don't know precisely where it is. But Matthew says they landed in the region of Magdala, so Dalmanutha was probably a seaport village a bit South of Capernaum. Recent archeology supports this theory ... they even found the remains of a 2,000 year old boat in that area. Bottom line, they're back in Galilee, back in Jewish territory.

Of course, it didn't take long at all before the religious elite showed up to challenge Him.

Then the Pharisees came out and began to dispute with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, testing Him. (Mark 8:11)

Seeking a sign from heaven? Really?

Even though Jesus quite often told folks to keep the miracles to themselves, everyone knew what He had done. Unless these Pharisees had been living under a rock, they had to know that for over two years, Jesus had been healing the sick, casting out demons, causing the lame to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear. He commanded the wind and the waves and they obeyed. He fed tens of thousands of people with just a few loaves and fish ... not just once, but twice. And He raised the dead to life.

All of the miracles Jesus performed were designed to authenticate His message. The signs were given to demonstrate the wonderful fact that He is Emmanuel, that He really is God-with-us.

To illustrate this, let me remind you that at one point, He told Philip, along with the rest of the disciples,

Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves. (John 14:11)

If I could paraphrase, it's like Jesus said, "Phil, Phil, I told you who I was. If you won't take My word for it, look at all the stuff I've done."

But miracles, signs and wonders will not convince a person who is simply predisposed to disbelief. This is exactly what they asked Him after the first time He fed tens of thousands of hungry folks.

*"What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You?
What work will You do? (John 6:30)*

Man, He just fed these huge crowds with nothing at all and their response is "Hey, show us another sign. Then we'll believe."

No, you won't. You don't want to believe! You want to go on pretending that you are in complete control of your life, that you are the master of your own fate, that nobody can tell you what to do. Well, let's see how that works out for you as you lie on your death bed!

*... it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,
(Hebrews 9:27)*

Your life is a vapor. The length of your days is absolutely inconsequential when compared to eternity. Jesus proved who He was, and He made sure it was written down for us. You need to accept the truth that is staring you right in the face. Don't be like these Pharisees, always asking for another sign.

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. He entered the world He created and lived a perfect human life. Then He sacrificed that life on the cross at Calvary, to pay for your sins, to atone for your cosmic treason. But you have to believe! The work of God is to believe in Him whom He sent. (John 6:29)

Don't ask for another sign!

But He sighed deeply in His spirit, and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Assuredly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation." And He left them, and getting into the boat again, departed to the other side. (Mark 8:12-13)

Jesus was exasperated with these guys! "I'm not going to give you another sign," He said. "Because no matter how many miracles I perform, you're not going to believe."

And then He went away.

You see, if you are unwilling to accept the truth, to love the truth of the Gospel, Jesus will walk away from you too. He will abandon you to your depravity. That's a horrible state to be in, but then He will do something even worse. Turn to 2 Thessalonians, Chapter 2.

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10)

I want to make sure you understand, here. Paul is talking about people who did not receive the love of the truth. They refused to accept, to believe, to love the Gospel and Satan has them right in the palm of His hand.

And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12)

You don't want to love the truth? Then God Himself is going to make sure you believe the lie. And that road ends at condemnation, an eternity of suffering in the Lake of Fire, a forever of the most excruciating agony, with no hope of escape.

Don't ask for another miracle. Just believe! Confess the fact that you are a sinner and stand guilty before God. Believe the beautiful truth that God loves you anyway. Humble yourself, and ask Jesus to be your Lord and your God. Beg Him to help you with your unbelief. And as an act of your will, believe that He was raised from the dead so that you can have a living, real-time relationship with the Creator of the universe. Stand firm in the promises of God. Because when you do,

... you are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 1:2-3)