

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

AUGUST 2ND–3RD, 2025 // GOSPEL OF MARK

FEEDING 4,000 (MARK 8:1–10)

Jesus is with His disciples in the region of the Decapolis (a mostly Gentile region) after the events of Chapter 7.

- This crowd that had drawn near to Jesus was so desperate just to be near Him that they had apparently not even concerned themselves over having nothing to eat.

- So, Jesus expresses privately to His disciples His compassion for this crowd's hunger (vs. 2–3).

After the record of Jesus feeding 5,000, it is baffling and a little bit humorous how the disciples could have questioned Him the way they did in v. 4.

- Did they really think Jesus was unable to perform the same miracle again? Perhaps.
- Or, maybe, they believed something much different that revealed something even darker in their hearts.

Maybe they assumed Jesus would only perform a mass feeding miracle among Jews in Jewish territory, since they were God's chosen people in God's Holy Land, and the symbolism of the messianic banquet seemed to apply only to Israel.

- His disciples might be having a difficult time accepting and believing that Jesus was also for ethnicities and nations that were not Jewish.

So, Jesus performs a powerful miracle to demonstrate that His plan is for people in all places, from “every nation, tribe, people, and language” (Rev. 7:9).

- Jesus blesses the food (the seven loaves and a few small fish), and it is distributed amongst the people by the disciples (vs. 5–8).

- Notice any similarities to the feeding of the 5,000 in Chapter 6?

One major difference between the two miracles is that when the disciples pick up the leftovers, they come up with seven “*spyris*” (a man-sized basket), as opposed to the 12 “*kophinous*” (handbaskets) that were left over for the disciples in Mark 6 (v. 8).

- The miracle in the first feeding was perfect provision; the miracle in the second was dramatic abundance.

It is almost as if Jesus is saying, through this miracle, “Not only am I willing to provide for and bless those who are not Jewish, there is ALWAYS more than enough of my grace for any who come to my table.”

- This miracle preaches a sermon on the generosity of God's grace!
- It is given to those who are undeserving, and it is given in abundance.

God's grace is not just for religious people who grew up in church and know the right phrases and rules.

- It is extended freely and in abundance to all people of all ages, ethnicities, and nationalities because of the goodness and kindness of God—not because of anything anyone could ever do to earn it.
- Jesus' generosity challenges our mindsets.

BEWARE OF THE LEAVEN (MARK 8:11–21)

As Jesus and His disciples are in a place called Dalmanutha, they are approached again by the Pharisees who have come to argue (v. 11).

- Even though Jesus had done many “signs” (miracles) to prove His identity as the Son of God, the Pharisees demand He perform a “sign from heaven.”

- The irony is that they are unwilling to accept the signs He has already performed.

Jesus' emotional response is telling. He sighs deeply in His spirit and announces to them that no sign will be given (v. 12).

- Jesus is not in the business of performing magic tricks on demand to prove Himself to His critics.
- When we demand proof of God's existence while ignoring the evidence of Him right in front of us, we're trying to control and make Him work for us.

Once again, Jesus and His disciples board their boat and cross the lake (v. 13).

- When they reach the other side, the disciples discover that they have forgotten to bring enough bread for all of them (v. 14).
- Seeing this as a teachable moment, Jesus uses the metaphor of yeast (leaven) to warn His disciples against the mindset and attitude of the Pharisees and Herod (v. 15).

In the Old Testament, yeast is a symbol of sin (Ex. 12:8, 15–20) in that sin has a pervasive, undercover influence and yet its effects spread everywhere at an exponential rate.

- Paul warns the Corinthians that “a little leaven leavens the whole batch of dough” (1 Cor. 5:6).
- Like yeast in a lump of dough, sin, false teaching, and a corrupting heart posture grow invisibly in the heart.

WHAT IS THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES/HEROD?

On the surface, these two groups had little to nothing in common.

- The Pharisees, a legalistic religious sect, trusted in self-righteousness and were confronted by Jesus for their hypocrisy and legalism.
- Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Galilee, trusted in worldly power and was confronted by John the Baptist for moral compromise and abuse of power.
- The subtle, corrupting influence (leaven) they both share is control and worship of self.
- It is self-righteousness (Pharisees) and self-indulgence (Herod).
- Both try to control and silence truth because it threatens their self-centered agendas.
- Beware of this self-centered, self-worshiping, self-promoting, and self-trusting mindset.

The disciples are a bit confused. They are still hung up on the fact that they do not have any physical bread (v. 16).

- Jesus is visibly frustrated by the disciples' lack of spiritual insight AND their lack of trust in His provision.
- Had they already forgotten the 12 baskets left from the feeding of the 5,000 and the seven left from the feeding of the 4,000 (vs. 17–20)?

They were apparently so preoccupied with their needs for physical provision and nourishment they were not thinking about their spiritual needs and their Provider.

- The leaven Jesus warns about is the mindset/attitude that refuses to believe, trust, and follow Jesus as Lord because we are trying to stay in control. The mindset that clings to self-rule will corrupt the entirety of our being!

A HEALING AND CONFESSION (MARK 8:22–30) PEOPLE WHO LOOK LIKE TREES (VS. 22–27)

Jesus can heal any way He wants to heal. He was there at the start of all things and spoke the universe into existence (John 1:2–3).

- Yet, for a certain blind man in Bethsaida, Jesus chooses to heal Him in a very unique way—gradually.
- The first time Jesus asks the man if he sees, he responds that he just sees fuzzy shapes.
- Some commentators believe that the healing of the blind man is a parable and prophecy of the gradual but inevitable opening of Peter's and all the disciples' eyes.
- For the moment, they cannot see the realities of the spiritual world—they are fuzzy.
- But soon, their eyes will be opened, and they'll see clearly the King and the Kingdom of God.
- As we begin our journey of faith in Jesus, our vision of the realities of Jesus and His Kingdom can often be quite blurry.
- Sanctification (where Jesus sets us apart and makes us like Him) is a process, not a moment.
- Jesus is not done with us! Somewhere between the first and second touch, grace is at work to open our spiritual eyes so we can see clearly.

Caesarea Philippi was 120 miles from Jerusalem in the northern part of Palestine and had been a center for Baal worship. At that time, there were shrines to the Greek god Pan and the emperor Augustus Caesar.

- It would have been a place of pagan sacrifices, cult rituals, debauchery, and idols.
- Surrounded by idols, monuments, and temples to pagan gods, Jesus asks a question.

“Who do people say that I am?” (v. 27). The disciples respond with a list of prophets, from John the Baptist to Elijah to another one of the prophets.

- The crowds knew that Jesus had to have some kind of spiritual authority and power, but they were all a bit confused about His identity.

- So, Jesus asks a more direct, pointed question: “Who do you [or y'all] say that I am?” (v. 29).

Notice that Jesus did not ask the disciples who they thought He was or even who they believed He was.

- He wanted to know who they said He was—if they were ready to verbally confess His identity. If we are not willing to commit to go public with our faith, it is dead (Js. 2:17).
- Peter affirms Jesus' identity as Messiah, but Jesus still insists to tell no one yet (vs. 29–30).

SUFFERING PREDICTED (MARK 8:31–33)

Jesus has declared His identity, and now He will declare His work and agenda. He tells His disciples that He will suffer, be rejected, be killed, and be raised on the third day (v. 31).

- Upon hearing these things, the disciples must have been deeply shocked and troubled.
- What most Jews were expecting in the Messiah was immediate exaltation and the inauguration of the Kingdom.

Peter, most likely speaking what the others felt, pulls Jesus aside to rebuke Him (v. 32).

- Even though Peter's concern seems to be for the honor of the Lord, he most likely responded out of fear for himself and the other disciples.
- Jesus responds by rebuking Peter and calling him “Satan.” Peter's remark was representative of the kind of thinking Satan used (v. 33).

Peter did not have the things of God in mind but “human concerns” (trying to stay in control).

- Human nature is that we want to escape hardship, suffering, and death, and we want the easiest, most direct path to victory and success.
- But the path of ease and least resistance is usually the path that is not worth following. It is most certainly not the path that leads to eternal life (Mt. 7:13–14).

Until we are willing to relinquish control, die to self, and see Jesus for who He truly is (not for who we want Him to be), we will remain blind, missing both His mission of redemption in the world and our place in it.

- The call to follow Jesus is a call to die to our self and surrender fully to Him, not to try and use Jesus to get something from Him so we can stay in control over our own lives!

BEWARE THE LEAVEN OF CONTROL

- The mindset, attitude, and heart posture that will corrupt the entirety of our being and prevent us from receiving Christ as Lord is the one that refuses to relinquish control to Him.
- At its core, it is idolatry and worship of the self.
- Even darker yet, this leaven can at times lead us to attempt to control Jesus and His message by trying to get Him to work for us!
- Whenever we choose convenient, highly selective, “churchy” moralism over whole-hearted surrender, we are trying to stay in control.
- Whenever we use Jesus to justify our personal agendas or participate in transactional religion, we are trying to stay in control.
- Whenever we come to Jesus with our demands, we are trying to say in control.

JESUS BRINGS THINGS INTO FOCUS

- A reality of the universe to which we are all a little fuzzy is that it does not revolve around us and that we are not God. He created us; we did not create Him, and He certainly does not work for us.
- It takes time, but Jesus opens our eyes to see that our level of peace is directly connected to our level of surrender and trust in Him as Lord.

BASKETS OF ABUNDANT PROVISION

- Why is the path to eternal, abundant life only found when we relinquish control and surrender fully to Jesus?
- Because Jesus is trustworthy, good, generous, and all-wise. He pours out His provision and abundant grace in ways that are surprising and amazing. In His care, there will always be more than enough. Do you trust Him?