

Men as Trees Walking

Mark 8:1 – 38



~ We left the deaf and dumb man astonished in the last leg of our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God. Everyone is astonished at His healing power now. The apostles now know unmistakably that Jesus is the Christ; the anointed One promised in the Old Testament by the prophets; the One in David's line Who would rule the entire world - but they did not comprehend how the cross could fit into that plan. When Jesus mentions it again, Peter rebukes Him and the Lord, in return, rebukes Simon Peter that what Peter was saying was satanic. See, if you talk about what a wonderful Man Jesus was to heal everyone and then deny His death upon the cross for your sins - and His resurrection for your justification – then it's not a Biblical theology you have – it's a satanic doctrine! Peter learned that lesson the hard way.

Mark is a Gospel of action, and we are moving through it fast. Our theme in Matthew was 'moving through Matthew' – well, we could certainly say that here for Mark, too. Mark is only highlighting things that would have been important to the Romans in his day and, interestingly, this is what is important to the strong man today. The only question all the way with us so far in this leg of our expedition is: can the Lord Jesus save to the uttermost? Can Christ do the job as the Servant of God? So far, the answer is an undeniable yes.

Alright, we need to feed the four thousand in Decapolis and, of course, the Pharisees were dogging the trail of Jesus as He went to do so. I guess they figure they might as well have a free meal at His expense while plotting His murder! Of course, even that's not enough, so, the Pharisees ask for a sign; tempting the Lord their God. Jesus was very busy, and He is covering a lot of land. I think the Pharisees were intentionally trying to slow Him down by wasting His time with this type of nonsense.

The feeding of the four thousand seems like a duplication of the feeding of the five thousand. As a result, it is highly neglected as a miracle of the Lord Jesus. The critic seeks to rid the Bible of the supernatural at this passage, and his explanation is that this was added to strengthen the claim of the feeding of the five thousand. Well, I have never known man's exaggerations to be expressed in restraint; and that would make this miracle greater than the five thousand! These two miracles are strikingly similar; but there is a definite contrast in several features. I'll name the seven points of dissimilarity that you need to be aware of:

- 1. The number of days the multitude had been with Jesus is different.*
- 2. With the five thousand, they had to go see what food they had; but, here, they have that information readily available.*
- 3. The numbers of loaves and fishes.*
- 4. The five thousand were told to sit on the grass but these people are told to sit on the earth.*
- 5. With the five thousand the Lord blessed the loaves but, here, He gives out the loaves and later blesses the fish!*
- 6. The number of baskets of fragments that were taken up after they ate.*
- 7. Naturally, the number of people fed was different.*

These are all sharp contrasts between the two accounts, and another is found in the time of day and the timing of when Jesus taught. This is the first hour of the day, but the feeding of the five thousand was an after-dinner event, so to speak. The crowd here has not come out to eat; they have come to hear the teachings of Jesus. Are we using church dinners and potluck suppers to get crowds to church or Bible study? If so, the motive is just all wrong. Unfortunately, it's about the only way anyone will go out in the middle of the week. Most Bible classes, especially in-home Bible studies, depend on snacks and other entertainment to get people to show up. Can God use that type of thing? I don't know. The ends do NOT always justify the means. There are other distinctions, and we'll note some of them as we go along...

1 In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them,

2 I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat:

3 And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far.

4 And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?

5 And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven.

6 And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people.

~ It looks as though the apostles have forgotten all about the feeding of the five thousand. I think many of us have the same problem; that is, God does some very gracious and good thing in our life, but we have totally forgotten it when some other need arises later. We find ourselves neophytes; that is, all the old stuff is just brand new to us again. That has certainly been my experience in life. Yes, there were more loaves amongst fewer people in this account, but the question was the same, "... what are a few loaves amongst so many?" The numbers aren't important, friends; and we're not counting fish! There's always a surplus when God is in the giving! These people didn't just get a snack to hold them over until dinner, either. They were filled and full! We don't even know who brought the loaves; maybe that person didn't want anyone to know who he was at that time. So many questions....

7 And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them.

8 So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets.

9 And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away.

10 And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha.

~ Our safari is, actually, lost now - because all we know is that Dalmanutha was on the coast of the Sea of Galilee - and since they had to cross the sea by boat to get to it, that means they landed on the west side. Well, the Pharisees just won't stop chasing after them, and here they come again, tempting Jesus and asking for a sign – again. Apparently, they approached Jesus several times about this business of a sign....

11 And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him.

12 And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.

13 And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.

14 Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf.

15 And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.

16 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread.

~ We considered this matter of leaven properly, correctly and completely in Matthew - and it's not that complicated - so we'll basically just say here that leaven is always a symbol of evil in Scripture. Leaven as a symbol of the Gospel is ridiculous because the Gospel isn't hidden! Leaven is to make the bread taste good to the natural man who is not partaking in any spiritual consumption – but merely stuffing his face with pious pretense! Liberalism came into existence with the church trying to appease and please – and

attract and retain – the unsaved church member. Most churches are trying to please a small segment of their congregation by putting leaven in their message because they just aren't going to eat unleavened bread. Those who pay the bills generally feel like they have the right to prepare the bread, unfortunately! Unleavened bread does not taste good and people do not want to eat it, but leavened bread does taste good; and the Bible can be made to be super sweet and perfectly palatable. All you have to do is hide a little leaven in it and people will buy it from you and eat it all day long! Doing so will also absolutely harden your heart to the Gospel, though. I've witnessed to MANY apostates, my beloved; and I have never seen a single one come out of their apostasy....

17 And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?

18 Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?

19 When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve.

20 And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven.

21 And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?

~ So many people miss the point of the Word of God completely because they refuse to feed on Christ! Bible study is feeding on the Bread of Life. These men are His Own apostles that He is speaking to. The Word of God reveals the Lord Jesus Christ; we are to feed on Him - and beware of the leaven. That is clear to me and I hope it is clear to you in the teaching of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ at this point on safari. There's quite a bit more we could say, and will say in Luke and John, about this incident; but this is about as much time as we need to hang around here today....

22 And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him.

23 And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought.

~ The man asked Jesus to heal him and Jesus ascents to the request; but Jesus leads the man out of town first because Bethsaida had become another place where Jesus could no longer perform mighty works. Remember, Bethsaida has already had judgment pronounced upon it. I think there is a spiritual truth in the spitting ritual, too. Jesus could have healed this man in the same way as at other times - without all the performance. Well, there was a lesson for this man and there's a lesson for us, too. The first stage in this miracle is the blindness. We were spiritually blind, and we can say we were once blind but now we see. Mark is the only one that points out the partial sight healing and this is exactly the condition of man today.

Now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face. I don't really care who you think you are with whatever great spiritual discernment you think you have – and some of you think you are in the top ten – but you only see through a glass darkly. There are many things I don't understand and there are many things you do not understand, either. I think most people don't make that realization, unfortunately. I think most people really believe they know all of the things we are to know – ESPECIALLY from the Bible! That's the biggest reason for the stunted growth of the church as an organization, without a doubt. There are many people who wouldn't dare read any of these reports because they assume they already know more than I do. Most self-professing believers literally do not know ANYTHING about the Bible when they think they know everything, and it is as tragic as the tale of Lot. They absolutely do not realize their total ignorance; and therein is the state of Christianity today. Socrates stated, "... I am the wisest of the Athenians." Socrates shocked the known world with that statement; so much so that he was forced to clarify it by saying, "... the Athenians all believe they know something whereas I know that I do not know anything;

and since I know that I do not know anything, that makes me the wisest of the Athenians....”

24 And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.

25 After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.

26 And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.

27 And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?

28 And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.

29 And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.

30 And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.

31 And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

32 And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.

33 But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

34 And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

38 Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

~ So, our Spiritual Safari trails off from this report in a wonderful passage of Scripture. The Lord Jesus did not reveal His Person apart from His work of redemption. This is not a condition of salvation; it is the position of those that are saved. Are you the type of Christian that acknowledges Him and glorifies Him in your attempts to serve Him? Those questions are all important in your life as a Christian. That leaves us right back at the question: who is Jesus? What think ye of Christ? The test is to try both your state and scheme and, until both of those are right with God, you cannot be right in the rest of your life; and until you believe rightly of Him you are simply not saved! Being united to Christ and joined to Him are the two single most important things in a right relationship to God. The finest statement I can find from Peter is when Peter said to Jesus, "... Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God" ~

