

The Real Jesus, Mark 6:30-44, The One with the Loaves and Fish

We are back in our series walking through the Gospel of Mark. A few weeks ago, I shared a quote for John Mark Comer, “The greatest threat to Christianity in America is a DIY Faith.” We pick and choose which parts of Christianity we like based on our moral preferences, political ideologies or cultural assumptions. I would add that we also therefore are prone to a DIY Jesus. We take the parts of Jesus we like and absorb them, and the parts that we don’t- the things he says or does that don’t fit our worldviews- we minimize, reinterpret, or ignore. And the problem with a DIY Jesus is he will be a Jesus of your own creation, not the real one, and that version of Jesus will never change you. In this series we want to encounter the Real Jesus, not a DIY Jesus.

So turn to Mark 6:30. One of the great things about going to Holy Land is how much the Bible, particularly the gospels, come to life...In a place called Tabgha in the Northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, there’s the 4th century ruins of a little church, and archeologists uncovered a marvelous mosaic floor [Picture], centerpiece is two fish and basket of bread, commemorating this famous miracle of Jesus “feeding of the 5000”, the story we are going to study today. Of course, Jesus didn’t do this miracle just so we can make nice art in churches. He did it, just like everything he did to communicate to his original followers and to us today deeper spiritual truths within the miracle so that we would experience true life in Him.¹

Mark 6:³⁰ *The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught.*

³¹ *Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”*

³² *So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.* ³³ *But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them.*

Ministry up to this point was moving at a frenetic pace. The disciples were sent out on 2 by 2 mission, healing, teaching, spiritual battles with the pharisees. And Jesus discerns that it was time for an R&R day, to press pause, rest, reenergize, and honestly, just get a decent meal together. But when you are Jesus, there’s just no getting away...I’ve seen previews for the movie Elvis, similar maybe to the experience of being of constantly being followed and bombarded by people with all kinds of agendas at every turn. Now how would you have felt if what you were exhausted, hungry and just wanted some time with your friends but you just couldn’t get away from all these needy people? There’s a term for this: Hangry. Jesus, in his humanity, had every reason to be hangry, to be annoyed, to view these people as a nuisance, as problems to be avoided...but that’s not his response.

³⁴ *When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.*

¹ Thanks for the ideas from Lon Solomon in “People Jesus Met: Feeding of the 5000.”

He has compassion. And let me just say, that is Jesus' heart toward every one of us, no matter how far away you are from him, how much you've messed up your life and have come crawling back, how needy you are of his help...you are never a nuisance, never viewed as a problem, his heart is full of compassion toward you. And Jesus' compassion isn't just feelings, it's action. He teaches them- feeds them spiritually, and as we will see also feeds them physically.

³⁵ *By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late.*

³⁶ *Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.* [Jesus might not be hangry, but his disciples are. This would have been my response....5 Guys is calling my name. This seems like a very reasonable solution.]

³⁷ *But he answered, "You give them something to eat."*

They said to him, "That would take more than half a year's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?" [Have you ever taken this tone with God? The disciples are flustered by Jesus. Sometimes Jesus just doesn't seem to be practical and reasonable. "God, you just aren't on my agenda here, if you would just see things my way everything would be fine." But while we're busy playing checkers, God is playing Chess.

³⁸ *"How many loaves do you have?" he asked. "Go and see." When they found out, they said, "Five—and two fish."* [These loaves- Not talking about Booths Corner loaves....would have been essentially hand-sized flat pitas, and not talking about Giant Tuna Steaks...small salted fish...this would a common meal for parents to send with their child for an afternoon, which makes sense because we know from Matthew's Gospel it was a boy who offered his lunch.] Feeding upwards of 15,000 people with a school boy's box lunch?? We all see that Jesus is going out of his way to be absurd in his request! According to human logic this is insanity. According to the natural laws, this is impossible, unless of course you aren't dealing with the human logic and nature.

³⁹ *Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰ So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties.*

⁴¹ *Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves.*

Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. ⁴² They all ate and were satisfied, [John's gospel says, until they were gorged. This was a Fogo De Chau day...or if you are frugal like me- a Golden Corral day...eat till you can't eat any more] ⁴³ *and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. ⁴⁴ The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.*

How do you explain this? You don't! It's a miraculous suspension of the natural laws of the universe. But if you believe who Jesus is, it's not a problem. If you believe he created the natural laws, then suspending them is no problem.

So you say, "Hey that's great. Jesus has amazing powers, I'm glad he fed those hungry people, that was a nice treat for them...but what does any of this have to do with my life today?" Great question. Everything! With Jesus- nothing is just what it seems on the surface. This isn't about physical hunger, it's about spiritual hunger. There is a lesson here for both the disciples and the seekers- **he satisfies our deeper hungers: adequacy in ministry and acceptance in eternity.**

Our Hunger for Adequacy in Ministry.

As much as 85% of people suffer from low self-esteem and imposter syndrome.² We feel inadequate. And there are millions of self-help books, gurus who will tell you the answer is to look inside and find your inner tiger, your inner flower...daily self-affirmations. You can do it! And some of that is helpful. But Jesus' methods of dealing with inadequacy are quite different.

Did you notice not just that Jesus fed the crowd, but how? He says, "You feed them." He intentionally made the disciples face their utter inadequacy for the ministry at hand. If you've ever had the stress of having more people over at your house than you anticipated and then realizing you don't have enough food...it's a terrible feeling, imagine 15,000 hungry people and all you have is your kid's snack pack...the disciples are completely inadequate to do the work, they aren't good enough, smart enough and people aren't going to like them... and so they are completely at the mercy of Jesus to do what they can't. And that is precisely the place Jesus wants them to be. It's only when the disciples place their inadequate resources, inadequate abilities and ingenuity, inadequate wisdom and winsomeness in the hands of Jesus that it becomes they become adequate. Does this sound familiar? Isn't this the exact point of the John 15 about abiding in Christ...without me you can do nothing! **2 Corinthians 3: ⁴Such confidence we have through Christ before God. ⁵Not that we are adequate in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our adequacy comes from God. ⁶He has made us adequate as ministers of a new covenant.**

I look around at our world, our own city, our own church families, our vision...it can be overwhelming as a pastor. I feel like the disciples- "Jesus, this is absurd for you to expect me to do this! How are we going to this?" Only when we say, "God you have to do the impossible does he begin to work." Commentary: **"God wants us to be inadequate. If we only accept the tasks that we think are adapted to our powers, we are not responding to the call of God. The church is always in a crisis and always will be.**

Difficulty, limitations, lack of people and money, a menacing outlook, endless misunderstandings and misrepresentations. We are not only to do our work in spite these things. They are precisely the conditions requisite for the doing of it."³ Only the inadequate are

²<https://www.trackinghappiness.com/cope-with-feelings-of-inadequacy>

³ Unknown Commentator as quoted by Tim Keller

adequate. That's true for you today as well. If you are a Christ follower you are a minister- a minister in your school, to your spouse, your friends, in the workplace, here in the church.... You look at the state of your marriage and you say, "I am completely inadequate to love my wife or husband, God you are going to have to do it." "I'm inadequate to share my faith with my neighbor." "I'm inadequate to possibly parent my teenager." Where are you finding your adequacy? Are you placing it in Jesus' hands to do what only he can do?

Our Hunger for Acceptance in Eternity

Mark's gospel, in his drive-by style, goes onto the next event, but in this account from John's gospel we see that Jesus wasn't just offering to satisfy their physical hunger. The very next day, Jesus used this miracle as the foundation for an extensive teaching about how to be accepted by God in eternity forever. Excerpts...

John 6:35 *Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."*

⁵⁰ *But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die.*

⁵¹ *I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."*

Jesus tells us about the nature of saving faith that is acceptable to God. Throughout this whole teaching Jesus repeats interchangeably- "Whoever believes in me will have eternal life." And "Whoever eats my flesh will have eternal life." Now this is critical, because Jesus isn't saying two different things. He's saying that the kind of believing that leads to eternal acceptance by God is like taking and eating the bread that Jesus provides. What does that mean? Two things: **Saving Faith is Personal not just intellectual.** We don't just know about food, we experience it. If all we did was know facts about food we would starve to death. We eat, we take it in, we absorb it, it goes to everywhere into our body, we depend on that food to sustain us. We have an experiential relationship with food, not merely an intellectual relationship with food. It means that saving faith isn't just head knowledge about Jesus. It's taking it into not just our heads but our whole being. Jesus is a personal savior, ingested and absorbed into every part of your being. Not just the savior, but my savior. Not just the world's sins, my sins. Redeem the world, Redeem me. This is the kind of faith in Jesus that God accepts. Often said that- The greatest distance in the world is the 18 inches from our heads to our hearts. Some of you are 18 inches from eternity. Lots of info you know, but you have never moved it into your head. People going to church all their life and yet never absorb the reality of Jesus for us.

Saving Faith is By Grace not By Works. The disciples wanted to send people away to make their own bread and eat it, and were completely unwilling to buy the bread for all these people. What did Jesus do? He fed them by his own hand, he provided what they could not provide for themselves. Saving faith begins with acknowledging that we can't make our or pay for our own acceptance in eternity. We can't make our own bread. We must take the free gift of Jesus.

Communion-

He blessed and broke- same to verbs as Lord's Supper. Jesus was foreshadowing what would happen to him in Jerusalem not long after this moment. Jesus was broken and torn to pieces so that we can be eternally accepted, eternally adequate, eternally whole.