

## The Gospel According to Mark - The Miracle Behind the Miracle

**February 3rd, 2019**

**The Miracle Behind The Miracle Mark 8:1-13**

Almost every week the lyrics of the songs have application to my message in some way. However, the song we just sang, the lyrics actually explains the title of my message today, "The Miracle Behind The Miracle!" Here's the words: "And my life will burn for You, 'Cause Your light shined in the darkness! I was hopeless and You lifted up my head to sing for joy with a song that broke the silence of my worship!" That is the miracle behind the miracle! Let's pray and I'll explain. Pray!

According to the Bible, how many different times does Jesus feed large crowds with a few fish and a few loaves of bread?

Twice

However, some theologians and historians want to say that Jesus only fed large crowds once and try to explain away the differences in the two accounts. I sometimes wonder why some folks can't just take things at face value especially when things are rather obvious. Mark's gospel plainly states in Mark 8:1, our text for today...

Mark 8:1 "During those days another large crowd gathered."

And not only does Mark's gospel record two different occasions of Jesus feeding the masses, Matthew does the same thing in his gospel. We're going to talk about the differences between the two miracle feedings in a moment, but let me give you another reason I know there were at least two miraculous feedings. Listen to Jesus' words to His disciples in a conversation found in Matthew's Gospel and in Mark's Gospel where He used the two miracles to make a point.

Mat 16:9 Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered?

Mat 16:10 Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered?

So how do you explain Jesus' words if there weren't two different miracles? We're going to talk about the context of Jesus' question to the disciples next week. Of course He may have fed large crowds more than twice! John made the following statement in His Gospel...

John 21:25 Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

But today, our main point is not how many times Jesus fed the multitudes, but the miracle behind the miracles, plural.

So let's go ahead and read the story found in our text in Mark 8:1 and following.

Mark 8:1 During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said,

Mark 8:2 "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat.

Mark 8:3 If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance."

Mark 8:4 His disciples answered, "But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?"

Mark 8:5 "How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked. "Seven," they replied.

Mark 8:6 He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people, and they did so.

Mark 8:7 They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them.

Mark 8:8 The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

Mark 8:9 About four thousand men were present. And having sent them away,

Mark 8:10 he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha.

Let me just point out a few of the differences between the two miracle stories of Jesus feeding thousands of people with small amounts of food, which are both found in Mark's Gospel as well as Matthew's Gospel. You'll see why it matters when we discover the miracle behind the miracle!

Location and context

First story was in a Jewish context  
Second story was in a Gentile context

Timing

First story Jesus had just begun to teach the people  
Second story Jesus had been teaching the people for three days

The reason for the Lord's compassion

First story sheep without a shepherd (Israel)  
Second story people have been with me three days and are hungry

Differences Continued

First time to invite Jewish people to feast on God's spiritual provision  
Second time to invite gentiles to feast on God's spiritual provision!

Differences Continued

In the first story the disciples wanted Jesus to send the people away to towns and villages so they could fend for themselves  
In the second story Jesus preempts any such statement by saying that the people would faint if they had to travel

Differences Continued

First story the disciples complain about the cost of feeding so many  
Second story the disciples simply ask where they would get enough food to feed so many

Opinion time! If we could only read the body language! It may very well be that the disciples were growing in their faith and may have had a little grin on their faces when they asked the question in the second story...

Mark 8:4 His disciples answered, "But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?"

I sometimes think of the disciples a little bit like I think of the group who were in the fictitious story by JR Tolkien "The Fellowship of the Ring" A very diverse group indeed. I can picture and hear a couple of the disciples whispering to each other when that question was asked, "I bet He'll do another feeding miracle like He did before!" Again, I'm not sure, but I think that certainly could have been the case or it could have been that the disciples were just that forgetful and hard of believing or they just didn't think He would ever repeat a miracle like they had seen at the first feeding. Or maybe, just maybe, they were thinking He might do a repeat! He did!!

More Differences

The amount of food picked up in the first story was 12 baskets. This may have been symbolic of the twelve tribes of Israel since the first story was in a Jewish location.  
The amount of food picked up in the second story was 7. This is the number of completeness and since the second story was in a Gentile region, it may have indicated that God's plan to change the world would be complete once the Gentiles were included.

Now on to the moment we've all been waiting for...

**The Miracle Behind the Miracle - God Cares!**

If we look closely at the New Testament we do find an interesting similarity between the two stories beyond the feeding of many with a few loaves and a few fish. The miracles are recorded almost matter-of-factly. There's not a lot of "Wow," or "can you believe that!" I believe the miracle that began to catch the disciples' attention over and over was the miracle that God cared enough to intervene in the lives of human beings. They were, I'm quite sure, amazed at the miracle of the feeding of thousands with such a small amount of resources. However, the miracle behind the miracle is how much Jesus cared for the needs of the people both Jews and Gentiles! He was concerned about them, and worried about them, both spiritually and physically! He cared that they were hungry and cared they might collapse from fatigue. And in the first miracle of feeding the multitudes He cared that they were like sheep without a shepherd. Remember our song...

"And my life will burn for You, 'Cause Your light shined in the darkness! I was hopeless and You lifted up my head..." Jesus cared about the hopeless situation the people were in. He cares about you the same way, whatever it is you are facing. I read the following verses recently, but listen to what the Psalmist said about the miracle of God's concern for people...

Psa 8:3 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,

Psa 8:4 what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?

Have you ever considered or thought about how insignificant we must seem when compared with the expanse of the universe? And when we compare ourselves with the infinite, almighty, all-knowing God of the universe we would have to be smaller than an ant. Compare Mount Everest with an ant hill, and then think about how small an ant is. But let me tell you about the miracle behind the miracle! You are not insignificant to God! You are not a little ant on a little ant hill. To God you are the crowning achievement of all of His creation! In fact, listen to the rest of the Psalmist's words in Psalm 8...

Psa 8:5 You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.

Psa 8:6 You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet:

Psa 8:7 all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field,

Psa 8:8 the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.

Psa 8:9 O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

And listen to these words in Genesis...

Gen 1:25 God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

Gen 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

Gen 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Gen 1:28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

So we know God's view of us is extremely high. He doesn't see us as little, tiny, meaningless creatures in the sea of the universe! He created us in His image and breathed into us the breath of life and we became a living spirit, a living soul, a human being with an eternal spirit! He respected us so much that He set things up so we could have free will and make choices and that reality is found in the book of Genesis.

Unfortunately Adam and Eve made some really bad choices. They chose not to trust God's word to them and listened to the enemy of their souls. But before you blame everything on them, remember this...

Isa 53:6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

And just who is this One whom the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all? None other than Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, the Messiah, sent to be our Savior. He was God in the flesh who came to show us the miracle behind the miracles, that God really does care about us! Jesus came to show us the Father's heart. He would later tell the disciples that He came to show them the Father! Listen...

John 14:8 Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

John 14:9 Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

John 14:10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.

John 14:11 Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.

Jesus wanted the disciples to understand who He was and what He had come to do. He hoped the miracles would help them understand the miracle behind the miracles. The Miracle that God cared so much about us He took on flesh by sending His Only Begotten Son so that we could know Him and believe in Him, and trust in Him, and follow Him, and be saved by Him. And if you need more proof of God's heart for humankind, look at the things that motivated Jesus in His life! Look at our text. Jesus said...

Mark 8:2 "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat.

Mark 8:3 If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance."

And look at what happened just before He fed the crowds the first time...

Mark 6:34 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

Mat 14:14 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

And listen to this in Matthew's Gospel with two blind men...

Mat 20:34 Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes.

And then in Mark 1:40, remember...

Mark 1:40 A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."

Mark 1:41 Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!"

And when we grieve and wonder if God even cares, we must never forget this story...

John 11:32 When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

John 11:33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.

John 11:34 "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied.

John 11:35 Jesus wept.

Paul makes this statement in 2 Corinthians 1:3...

2 Cor 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort,

But here's the tragedy! God has compassion on us in our troubles and wants to comfort us and help us, but many times we only want the miracle and refuse the miracle behind the miracles. Jesus wanted to give the world His love but much of the world only wanted His miracles. They didn't want the relationship God so desired to have with them. They were focused on the things of this world.

Mark 8:11 The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven.

Mark 8:12 He sighed deeply and said, "Why does this generation ask for a miraculous sign? I tell you the truth, no sign will be given to it."

Mark 8:13 Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side.

Was Jesus angry with them. I don't believe so. I believe He was heart broken over them, but knew their hearts were not open to Him so He got into the boat and crossed to the other side of the lake. In a couple of weeks we'll see why He went to the other side. There was a blind man on the other side of the lake who wanted physical healing but who was also open to the miracle behind the miracle, a personal relationship with God. But again, let me remind you, Jesus cared for the spiritually blind people, but He simply refused to

force them into a relationship. It was their God-given choice. Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew's Gospel...

Mat 23:37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.

And listen to these words found in Luke's Gospel...

Luke 19:41 As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it

Luke 19:42 and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace--but now it is hidden from your eyes.

What are you seeking from life? Where are you searching?

How's the search going? Is the truth hidden from your eyes?

Are we willing to learn from the life of Christ where real peace comes from?

Peter penned these words...

2 Pet 1:2 Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

2 Pet 1:3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

The Holy Spirit wants to fill your heart and your life with . . .

God's presence/God's purpose/God's peace/God's power

God wants a personal relationship with you! Personal! He wants to be your God, your Savior, your Lord, but He also wants to be your friend! Jesus made this abundantly clear when He had this conversation with His disciples in John's Gospel...

John 15:9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.

John 15:10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

John 15:11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

John 15:12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

John 15:14 You are my friends if you do what I command.

John 15:15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last...

What did Jesus mean when He said you did not choose me, but I chose you? Simply this: God takes the initiative in pursuing a personal relationship with you! When you weren't even thinking about God or seeking God and living in your sinful ways, God chose to love you and reach out to you! Listen...

Rom 5:6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

Rom 5:7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die.

Rom 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Rom 5:9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

Rom 5:10 For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

The Miracle behind the Miracles! Jesus has chosen you! What will be your response to Him? What do you say today to God's invitation to experience the miracle of a personal relationship with God Almighty? Years ago, on the very night I chose to announce to my parents that the God thing was not for me, I heard a message on the brutality of the cross and realized God had chosen to love me even though I had rejected Him and was so lost in my sin. I made a decision that night to ask for forgiveness and chose to place my faith and trust in the One who bore my shame and my sin on the Old Rugged Cross! I'm not perfect, but I've

never been the same since that night! I want to end with this statement and a song God gave me that explains my thoughts on the miracle behind the miracle.

If I got a diagnoses of terminal cancer tomorrow, of course I would ask God for a miracle of healing. Who wouldn't? However, I know that I already have the miracle of a personal relationship with the Creator God of the universe and that most fantastic miracle is the miracle that gives me peace, hope and joy no matter my earthly circumstances. Why? Because no matter what physical miracles a person might receive in this life, they are only temporary. But a relationship with God last forever and allows God to someday bring ultimate healing to anyone who trust in Him. And do you realize the wonderful impact a personal walk with God has on your day to day life here on earth? Sometimes it's God's will to work a miracle, and other times, for reasons I cannot comprehend, God chooses not to answer prayers for a miracle, and sometimes calls people home. It's in those times I depend on the miracle of God's relationship to give strength, and comfort, and the peace that passes all human understanding. But I know this, when I trust my relationship with God to guide my life, if it takes another miracle for me to accomplish His will, He will do what it takes.

Listen to the words...

"If I were captured and imprisoned, yet You had other plans for me, You could set me free, yes You could set me free, You could set me free, yes You could set me free.

If I were sick and diseased, the doctors had no hope for me, You could heal me, yes You could heal me, You could heal me, I know that You could heal me.

Cause if it be Your will, You can do anything, You can do anything, if it be Your will. And I want Your will, more than anything, yes more that anything in my life!

If I had a work to do I didn't know how to do, yet You had instructed me, You would teach me, yes You would teach me, oh please teach me, I know that You'll teach me!

And if I didn't have the means or the where with all, there was no way for me, You would provide for me, yes You would provide for me, You would provide for me, I know You will provide for me.

Cause if it be Your will, You can do anything, You can do anything, if it be Your will. And I want Your will more than anything, yes more than anything in my life! And if it be Your will, I can do anything, I can do anything if it be Your will. And I want Your will, yes more than anything, more than anything in my life!"

Prayer!