

## 丰盛的怜悯——马可福音 8:1-13

### Abundant Compassion—Mark 8:1-13

#### *Introduction, outline*

- Scripture reading: Mark 7:31-8:13;

**31** Again He went out from the region of Tyre, and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of Decapolis. **32** They brought to Him one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty, and they implored Him to lay His hand on him. **33** Jesus took him aside from the crowd, by himself, and put His fingers into his ears, and after spitting, He touched his tongue *with the saliva*; **34** and looking up to heaven with a deep sigh, He said to him, “Ephphatha!” that is, “Be opened!” **35** And his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was removed, and he *began* speaking plainly. **36** And He gave them orders not to tell anyone; but the more He ordered them, the more widely they continued to proclaim it. **37** They were utterly astonished, saying, “He has done all things well; He makes even the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

**1**In those days, when there was again a large crowd and they had nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples and said to them, **2** “I feel compassion for the people because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat. **3** If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way; and some of them have come from a great distance.” **4** And His disciples answered Him, “Where will anyone be able to *find enough* bread here in *this* desolate place to satisfy these people?” **5** And He was asking them, “How many loaves do you have?” And they said, “Seven.” **6** And He *\*directed* the people to sit down on the ground; and taking the seven loaves, He gave thanks and broke them, and started giving them to His disciples to serve to them, and they served them to the people. **7** They also had a few small fish; and after He had blessed them, He ordered these to be served as well. **8** And they ate and were satisfied; and they picked up seven large baskets full of what was left over of the broken pieces. **9** About four thousand were *there*; and He sent them away. **10** And immediately He entered the boat with His disciples and came to the district of Dalmanutha.

**11** The Pharisees came out and began to argue with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, to test Him. **12** Sighing deeply in His spirit, He said, “Why does this generation seek for a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation.” **13** Leaving them, He again embarked and went away to the other side.

- Have you heard of spiritual amnesia? Having just seen the faithfulness of God’s Word, we encounter circumstances and immediately begin to doubt God’s promises; Having just experienced God’s protection through a trial, we enter another trial and immediately begin to question if God can get us through this time; Having just been disciplined by God to see the spiritual damage of those anxious bitter thoughts, we immediately fall again into similar sinful thoughts when new situations arise... We all have spiritual amnesia, and so we all need to be constantly reminded by God’s Word of spiritual truths. The same was true for Jesus’ disciples at that time, and that’s why we see another miracle of feeding thousands in today’s text.

- Background: The third retreat from Galilee, taking the disciples to Gentile areas (7:24-8:10). The traditional Jewish concept discriminates against Gentiles and shows no mercy to Gentiles. However, the Lord Jesus' trip to the Gentiles showed His compassion for Gentiles in every aspect.
- Outline:  
Title: Abundant Compassion
  1. Compassion toward the Crowd (vv. 1-3)
  2. Compassion toward the Disciples (vv. 4-5)
  3. Compassion with Power (vv. 7-10)
  4. Compassion toward the Enemies (vv. 11-13)

### **Compassion toward the Crowd (vv. 1-3)**

- "I feel compassion for the people": The crowd here had just openly disobeyed Jesus' command (7:36), and Jesus still had mercy on them.

The Greek word for "compassion" literally means the internal organs which are easily affected by emotions. Compassionate people genuinely care about the suffering of others and feel for them. When they see others suffer, their guts can't help but stir within them.

**【Theology】** COMPASSION is an attribute of God. God cannot bear to see the people He created suffer, even if it is because of their own sins. God's heart cannot help but be agitated for them. If man can show any compassion at all, it is because man is created in the image of God. Jesus lived out this attribute in human flesh, so we may know God's compassionate heart through Him.

- "have nothing to eat": Last time at the feeding of five thousand, Jesus' compassion was because of the crowd's **spiritual needs** (6:34); this time, what stirred Jesus' heart was simply **the most basic physical need.**

**【Contrast】** The Pharisees didn't care about people's real needs at all! Things like hunger don't touch their hearts at all. They may even applaud because they enjoy fasting (cf. 2:18, 24; Matt. 6:16). **The Pharisees only had rules and no compassion. If they saw these hungry people, they would just applaud.**

- "If I send them away hungry to their homes...": Jesus said these words to challenge His disciples. It is not only to express his own compassion, but also to test how the disciples would react. You guys say, what should we do? What have you learnt after following me for so long? Have you learned where to get the resources to serve others?

### **Compassion toward the Disciples (vv. 4-5)**

- "Where will anyone be able to find enough bread ... to satisfy these people?": Serious spiritual amnesia. The feeding of five thousand was completely forgotten (6:30-44). They once again stood before the Creator of the universe and asked Him: Where will anyone be able to find enough bread? No growth at all. They still don't know Jesus is God...

【Analogy】 Aren't we often like that too? We have fears and worries over all kinds of things, and if we really know Jesus is God, then why aren't we praying to Him more fervently? Why we still don't trust and submit to His will after prayer? Why do we constantly question His work in our lives? Are we really that much better than the disciples?

- “How many loaves do you have?”: In response to such a bad answer, Jesus just said this calm word? No rebuke? Have you ever seen such a patient teacher? Jesus was still patiently guiding his disciples to know Him.

【Insight】 Have you seen Jesus' compassion towards his disciples? Gentle and patient, bearing with their weaknesses, no harsh demand for them to become perfect immediately. Of course, reproof is sometimes necessary (see verses 17-18), but even reproof is also out of compassion, in order to wake them up. Here, the expression of compassion is patient guidance.

### **Compassion with Power (vv. 7-10)**

- “Direct people to sit down on the ground...”: Almost exactly the same scene as last time.
- “Gave thanks”: a prayer to thank the Father for His gracious provision, similar to today's Christian thanksgiving prayer before meals.
- “Broke them”: Every bit of the food for the thousands was broken by Jesus' hands. Jesus did not say, “Let there be bread!” And there was bread. He wants people to see the process of creating food with his own hands, that they may see that these hands in front of them are the very hands that created the universe!
- “A few small fish”: not only carbs, but also protein; not only to get them fed, but to feed them well. Same as last time.
- “were satisfied”: Empty stomachs now filled to the full. Imagine four thousand people, with a buffet appetite, enjoy the delicious food that God created out of nothing. These bread and fish must've been delicious, for they had never been affected by sin. They were created out of nothing, just like when God first created the whole universe out of nothing. Before Adam sinned, God saw that everything was good.

【Insight】 We could make a spiritual analogy that the spiritual food is the Word of God. However, just the literal meaning is wonderful enough. In the future, all the redeemed will personally experience a similar feeding in the new heaven and new earth, not only the feeding of the soul but also full satisfaction of all the bodily needs. On that day, freed from all the curses of sin, we will be perfectly satisfied.

【Application】 Our eternal hope is very rich. Even physical food is much better in heaven! Don't minimize your eternal hope, for it is the direct motivation that inspires us to follow the Lord throughout our lives. **There is absolutely nothing in this life that is worthy for you to hang on to. Even the food in heaven is more delicious and satisfying!**

- “picked up seven large baskets full of what was left over of the broken pieces”: Last time it was twelve baskets, both numbers symbolizing fullness. Even the leftover is fullness, how much more will the complete provision be?

**Psalm 23:1** “The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.”

- “Sent them away”: They had received enough information, and Jesus must move on to his unfinished mission. Gentiles here can already be saved through true repentance. When the truth of the cross is fully revealed later, they will understand more clearly how God saved them. Now, all they had to do was go home and wait for the gospel message to be fully revealed.

## **Compassion toward the Enemies (vv.11-13)**

- “The Pharisees came out”: Having not seen Jesus for months, they immediately came out together to challenge Him when Jesus showed up.
- “Began to argue with Him”: Not really interested in the truth, but only to find fault with Jesus in order to prove Him a liar.
- "A sign from heaven": The emphasis is "from heaven" because they have concluded that Jesus' miracles came from hell. They said Jesus "was possessed by Beelzebub" and that He cast out demons "by the prince of demons" (3:22).

**【Think】** What do you think Jesus could do to convince them? **Nothing at all could convince them!** They would twist their interpretation of anything. “The heart is more deceitful than all else” (Jeremiah 17:9); no objective fact can convince a deceitful heart. A deceitful heart only wants to find fault with God and does not want to accept any objective evidence.

- “Sighing deeply in His spirit”: Not that the sighing was only internal and couldn’t be seen on the outside, but the intensity of the sighing was so much so that you can feel it’s coming out of the depths of his soul. It is still an expression of Jesus’ deep compassion. When Jesus saw the Pharisees were so blind, unable to see plain truths, He grieved and groaned for them.
- “Why does this generation seek for a sign?”: If there is any generation in human history that should the least ask for miracles, it is “this generation” that Jesus spoke to. No generation has ever seen more than what they saw!

**【Principle】** The question is not how much you see with your physical eyes, the question is whether you have spiritual vision. No matter how bright the light is, it is not bright enough for the blind, for they live in total darkness. What the spiritually blind need is not more light, but spiritual vision, which requires the regeneration of the Holy Spirit.

- “no sign will be given to this generation”: More miracles would only increase their punishment. So there is compassion even in His wrath, unfathomable compassion.

There are several more miracles in the remainder of the Gospel, all of which were shown to the disciples and others whose hearts were not yet so hard. For the Pharisees, **there was only one last miracle left, the “sign of Jonah”—the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.** (Matthew 12:40)

**【Insight】** The greatest demonstration of Jesus’ compassion is when he went to the cross and suffered in his true humanity to atone for the sins of all those who would believe in Him. As the sinless Son of Man bore the penalty of all sins for all believers, that’s when we truly see how great God’s compassion is. The Pharisees hard-heartedly rejected Jesus, but He still left them with one last miracle. If they’d reject even that one, then all that’s left for them would be the most severe final punishment.