

Anglican Church Noosa
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I Can See Clearly Now - Looking into Mark
Mark 8:1-10 - Hunger Satisfied
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Hunger is a devastating affliction.
Today we're looking at how Jesus can satisfy hunger.

In the biblical story, God being a God of provision is nothing new.

Remember back in the OT when God brought Israel out of Egypt and they were wandering in the desert? Hungry? What happened?

God dropped a miracle of food upon them every morning. No food in the wilderness - unless you've got God. The miracle of manna came every day. Exodus 16.

Fast forward to the prophet Elisha. 2 Kings chapter 4.
100 men need food. A man comes along bringing 20 barley loaves, and Elisha tells him to give them to the 100 men. The man couldn't see how it would work, but he did it, and the loaves multiplied, everyone ate, and there were left overs. Bear that in mind.

For the majority of us in the west, particularly for us here across the Noosa and Peregian region, being genuinely hungry is an absent and foreign concept.

Isn't it so easy for our default place to actually be gluttony? Gluttony comes out of easy excess.

This past week Chris and I have been at the northern region clergy conference. We had to travel a huge distance to the RACV resort, and of course we got our food provided. Hot breakfast, hot lunch, hot dinner, with dessert provided at both lunch and dinner, and you could even say that dessert was provided at breakfast too, disguised as danish pastries. Suffice to say that hunger was not what we experienced.

And I would think that for any of us, even if we might occasionally get very hungry, food isn't far away, or too difficult to get. Generations past would be horrified, at what we eat. So for this miracle and others like it, to speak into our lives and minister to a felt need in our experience, is probably unlikely.

I'm not saying that therefore we could fall into the temptation of dismissing this miracle, but I do think that we need to see afresh, what it's saying, what it's teaching us.

The hunger in this miracle wasn't brought about through economic crisis, or mismanagement, or corruption. These people were hungry, because it would seem, that they were so captivated by Jesus, they didn't want to leave to get food. What might they miss? Missing the food of Jesus' words and actions was worse for them than missing a meal.

Mark is loading us up with miracles in his Gospel. We're up to chapter 8 and this is the fourteenth miracle. And there's a few more to go through the rest of Mark as well. This miracle is very similar to the feeding of the 5,000 in ch 6.

The feeding of the 5,000 and the feeding of the 4,000 are very similar events, and there's even some scholars who say that there aren't two events, it's the same event told in different ways.

I don't accept that at all, not only because the circumstances are quite different, but also because Jesus sees them as two different events. A little later in this chapter Jesus refers to them separately when he asks the disciples to remember both times in vv. 18-21. He says: Don't you remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, and the seven loaves for the four thousand.

So let's tease out this miracle of 'hunger being satisfied'.

I did a little examination of the differences between the feeding of the 5,000 and the 4,000.

Firstly, it could be several months between these two events. Between chapters 6 and 8, Mark tells us about a lot of travelling and a lot of ministry.

The other important thing to remember is that with the 5,000, in Mark we are told that there were 5,000 male human beings, which likely represents households, which would give the total number to be many many thousands. Some scholars even suggest it could have been up to 250,000 people. The reason I'm saying this is that even a crowd of 50,000 being fed by one man, isn't something you forget in a hurry. But it seems, by the disciples reaction to Jesus suggesting that they feed a measly 4,000 people that the disciples **have** completely forgotten that Jesus was able to feed that number, and more, before, and now they're questioning. The disciples aren't seeing clearly, even though they have experienced a similar thing previously.

Other points to note between the two miracles are:

5,000 is with a Jewish crowd

4,000 is in Gentile country.

5,000 - Jesus had compassion on them because they were leaderless, so he taught them. The hunger came later in the day

4,000 - Jesus had compassion on them because they were hungry **after** being with him for 3 days. They'd stayed, their food had run out. It's obvious they were hungry for **Jesus**, before they were hungry for food.

5,000 - The **disciples** told Jesus the crowd would be hungry and he'd better send them away to get food

4,000 - **Jesus** told the **disciples** the crowd was hungry

5,000 - Jesus told the disciples to feed them

4,000 - Jesus didn't tell the disciples to feed them, he told them the problem. Maybe hoping they'd work out what might happen here.

5,000 - disciples balked at having to spend so much money, and how could they do it anyway

4,000 - disciples were incredulous at how to feed this crowd in the desert

In both miracles Jesus asked the disciples how much food they already had

5,000 - Jesus organised them into very specific sized groups to enable distribution, that's because the crowd was so large

4,000 - it just says the crowd sat down, likely nowhere near as many people

5,000 & 4,000 - Jesus blessed and broke

5,000 & 4,000 - Jesus involved the disciples in the miracle by getting them to distribute the food

5,000 & 4,000 - everybody was full; everybody was satisfied

5,000 and 4,000 - there was abundance, there were left-overs; Jesus provides more than was needed.

I want to share with you a little about the Greek words used in some of the places here.

It's powerful that both these miracles came out of Jesus' **compassion**. Look at v.2
The Gk word is a very descriptive word. It's more than just feeling sorry for people.
This word talks about the guts, even the entrails which are moved. It's a word used to describe the deepest seated place of the emotions. It's about feeling deeply for those that you would never naturally feel deeply for. And the feelings are so profound, that there there is no other response except action.
Jesus has compassion on the undeserving, the unlovable and he **MUST** act.

The other thing to notice about what Jesus says is the phrase, 'they have **already been with me 3 days**'.

This Gk word here indicates intensity, that they've had an intense time. It's as if he's saying, they've been with me day and night and really paying attention.
So he's being intense about the crowd, because the crowd has been intense about him. He even knows that some of them live great distances away. So he's obviously been having personal conversations as well as engaging with the larger numbers.

But where do we find the disciples?
They're in a state of misunderstanding.
Lots of people. Need to feed them.
How on earth are we supposed to do that??
Are the disciples seeing clearly? No they're not.
Haven't remembered anything.

So Jesus starts with what they've got - seven loaves - gets the crowd to sit down, gives thanks, breaks the loaves and gives them to the disciples to hand out.
Then he does the same with a few fish. And the multiplication comes in the handing out. The food keeps on coming.

And the result was not just that people ate, but they ate well. So well, that there were leftovers, leftovers from nothing.

Mark writes down his memories, and the memories of those around him, and doesn't just say, we had lunch. No, he says, we had a great satisfying lunch. 'The people ate and were satisfied.' v.8
Jesus has provided again. Just as God did in Exodus and 2 Kings and so many other places.

And the details are important. Mark tells us about numbers. Did you notice in v.1 he starts this story saying 'another large crowd gathered.' Another! This is becoming regular.
Here, as the story ends, he tells us the number, about 4,000. This is not your average short notice catering activity.

Jesus sends the crowd home, full.
They are full spiritually.
They are full physically.

He and the disciples get into the boat, and go back across the lake into Jewish territory.

Now it's interesting isn't to think about how this crowd reacted to Jesus.
They weren't learned in the faith, but they lapped up three days of uninterrupted interaction with Jesus. They didn't want to leave to go get food.

Compare that with the disciples.
They've been with Jesus for a while now, and they still don't expect the extraordinary. They were befuddled about how to feed this crowd. In fact their question is even worse than that.

Did you notice the question.

It wasn't just a question about where do you get bread in a remote place. But they're actually saying 'how could **anybody** do this'? v.4

And who are they talking to?

They're talking to the one who so far they've seen do - multiple healings, including a leper, a paralytic, a man with a withered hand, they've seen Jesus calm a storm, they witnessed him restoring a demoniac, they saw him bring a girl back to life, they saw him feed way more than 5,000 **and** walk on water, heal a deaf and mute man, and this day they say *But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them???*

What do you think is Mark's point with this?

If Mark just wanted to record what Jesus did, he could have just said, Jesus multiplied the bread and fed the crowd.

But he's telling us how dumb the disciples are. He's telling us that they aren't seeing clearly.

Compare that with the crowd. They are already realising the value of staying around Jesus for 3 days, and not even caring that they are getting hungry.

Can I ask you a question? And this is a question that comes out of my own experience.

How long does your quiet time last before you have to get up and get something to eat or a cup of coffee?

How long does it take before you are lost into a distraction that comes along.

Sometimes the longer we've been with Jesus, the less activated we are by him. The beeps on our phone take our attention before he does.

But this crowd **remained** with him.

For us, so often, the small things distract us from a big God.

Many of these people, from even far away, stuck around, and there are times when we find it hard, or inconvenient to get to church.

The crowd were taught, they were changed, they were provided for.

This is who Jesus is.

The disciples show us that it is possible to be with Jesus, even listening to Jesus, and not hear what he's saying. They demonstrate to us that you can be with Jesus, and forget him.

If you were Jesus, and you heard the disciples ask that ridiculous question - where in this remote place can *anyone* get enough bread to feed them - what would you have done?

But Jesus points them to what they had, and takes control.

The disciples then just had to run with that.

My friends, are you realising in fresh ways, are you remembering, who Jesus is?

Are you convinced, and remaining convinced, that Jesus is the one who fulfils your need, whatever that need is.

From this point on in Mark's gospel, we actually get to the crux of Jesus' ministry. The culmination point is coming.

Our greatest need is not physical hunger, even though Jesus can provide that. Nor is your greatest need, whatever it is that you need in life right now, even though Jesus can provide that too.

Friends, our greatest need is for our sin to be dealt with.

We need the provision, the abundant provision, the overflowing provision of a Saviour from God.

The eating of food in the garden is what took Adam and Eve away from God. It's what broke that perfect relationship.

It is now Jesus who comes alongside us and says, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall never be hungry.

It is Jesus who gives himself willingly and dies on the cross to bring us forgiveness, this is where we see the generous and lavish provision of God for you and for me.

My friends, do you see clearly now. Amen.