

Déjà Vu

Mark 8:1-10

INTRODUCTION

How many of you have had a déjà vu experience? This is a moment in your life when you suddenly feel like you've experienced the present moment before.

As you read today's passage in Mark chapter 8, you may experience a déjà vu feeling. And you should. Mark emphasized this in verse 1 when he uses the word "again." This is something that has happened before, yet we're going to see that the disciples' seem to have forgotten everything.

You know, I'm a pretty busy man. I feel like I'm always running from one thing to the next. Of course, I'm a husband and a father, which always has its demands. In addition to the 15-20 hours/week I put in here at the church, I also teach piano to about 25 students, along with all the administration that entails. My wife and I own Nostalgia Entertainment for which we are performing 3-4 times a week now, along with all the rehearsing and administration. Sometimes I feel like I'm being pulled in a million directions.

And when you add a week when I have to prepare a sermon, boy, that demands a lot of time and preparation in my life. And this week I thought I was starting off pretty well. I was studying the text and I believe God really helped me in discovering the main point of this passage along with subpoints to support it.

So on Thursday night, I was at the point of just needing to sit down and write it. I had 3-4 hours on Friday morning before I would have to head out to perform the rest of the day. Then I would have all day Saturday to finish up things. But then I got called in to play piano downtown at a Mariano's Grocery Store which would take me out from about noon to 8pm on Saturday. So my time got cut short.

As I was thinking and writing frantically at Panera in downtown Batavia on Friday morning I was at a point when I had about 2 hours left before I would have to leave for the day. And I was feeling like I was not going to have enough time to finish. That's when God hit me over the head with the very passage I was preparing to preach from.

Just like Jesus had the ability to feed that large crowd in their time of need, Jesus has the ability to provide for me, even when it seems like I have limited resources. Déjà vu! This wasn't the first time I had been faced with that type of situation, and God had provided for me in the past. But yet, there I was, getting anxious and fretting over how I couldn't do it! I didn't have enough time! And God showed up to me and said, "Good!" Now trust in me!

And so I sat back down and kept writing, confident that God would provide for me—and he did. I got it done, and here is the message that I've come up with. Are you ready?

As we look at Mark 8:1-10 this morning, this is what I hope we will learn:

**Jesus,
the compassionate shepherd of *all* the nations,
has the power to provide for us
no matter the circumstances.**

There are basically four elements in that Big Idea statement: 1) Jesus is compassionate, 2) he's the shepherd of ALL the nations, 3) he has power to provide, and 4) that provision does not depend upon our resources or abilities.

Now—let me prove this big idea through the words of the passage this morning. Let's do so through the logical telling of the miracle story which 1st tells the setting, 2nd it sets up the problem, 3rd is the solution to the problem, and concludes with telling us the results.

The setting is set up very quickly at the beginning of verse 1, but it tells us a lot about the thrust of this passage.

SETTING (8:1a)

The text begins with "*in those days...*" This phrase links this story to the previous one in which Jesus is ministering within Gentile territory. I believe this fact presents us with the main reason this second feeding miracle is included. Jesus' mission is not just for the Jews. Sure, it starts there, but it will extend to the ends of the earth.

And that's really good news for us. Mark is telling us that Jesus is not simply *a* redeemer, or *a* Messiah. No! He is *the* Redeemer, providing redemption to the whole world.

In the first century Jewish mindset, associating with Gentiles, let alone eating with them, would be an awful prospect. Many Jews even began to believe that touching a Gentile would make them ritually unclean and therefore hinder their access to worship God in the temple.

So, the fact that Jesus is willing to feed this predominantly Gentile crowd is stunning. The Gospel of Mark has already been showing us that Jesus is willing to cross these purity boundaries to show that he can make all things clean.

And here, he is going to demand that his disciples serve and eat with this Gentile crowd. Amazing! The setting of this miracle is teaching us that:

Jesus provides for *the Gentiles*,
showing that the Gospel blessings
extend way beyond just "us."

And thanks be to God! Most of us here are recipients of those gospel blessings that extend to Gentiles. But we have to be careful here, don't we? We can easily become like those first-century Jews who disassociated themselves from those they deemed unworthy of God's help.

Are there people you deem unworthy? "Oh, those people have sinned way to much. They're beyond God's help now!"

Are there backgrounds or ethnicities you tend to look down upon? “They’re not educated enough” or “That race, or nationality is inferior.” We may think that we are past those types of insensitivities in this modern age, but we all have prejudices that cause us to look down on certain groups of people for myriads of reasons.

God has the power to save the Gentiles. He has enough grace to change the least among us. He even has the desire to save even me! Praise be to God! Jesus is the Lord of the nations, so may we also embrace him as *that* Lord, and may we desire to spread his Gospel blessings to ALL people.

So the Gentile audience is part of the setting of this miracle. The next phrase tells us that this story takes place where “*a great crowd had gathered...*” Jesus is again teaching in a remote place to a very large number of people. And this setting directly leads us to the...

PROBLEM (8:1b-5)

The problem is presented when Jesus’ speaks of His attitude towards this large crowd. He calls the disciples to him and says, “*I have compassion on the crowd...*” Isn’t that beautiful? When Jesus fed the 5000, it also says that Jesus had compassion upon the crowd. Jesus is not aloof and uncaring about the needs of people. Instead, he knows our needs and cares DEEPLY about providing for our needs.

Verse 2 goes on to tell us reasons for Jesus compassion and the urgency of the problem. It says that “*they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat.*” I find this amazing! The crowd has been with Jesus for three days and have presumably eaten everything that they brought with them. Jesus is *so* amazing to be with that they found it impossible to leave his presence, even in the absence of food.

“*Three days*” emphasizes the great need, along with the fact that they “*have come from far away,*” as it says in verse 3. And unlike the feeding of the 5000, when there were nearby villages to go get food, now they were in a very remote place, making the situation even more perilous. But again, we’re going to learn here that...

Jesus’ compassion propels Him to provide for the needy,
while we sometimes forget His ability
or worry over our inadequacy to provide.

I find it interesting that when confronted with this problem with the 5000 in chapter 6, it is the disciples who first express concern that the crowd needs to eat. Here, however, it is Jesus who brings up the issue, possibly indicating the disciples’ indifference or lack of desire to help these Gentiles.

And when Jesus does bring up the need, the disciples respond in verse 4 with “*How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?*” Come on! I mean, when Jesus fed the 5000 earlier, the disciples lack of understanding that Jesus could feed the crowd is reasonable, but now this question is inexplicable. How could they not see what was coming?

The Gospel of Mark presents the disciples as those who have some understanding, and then a moment later they show that they don't get it at all. That theme is going to really get emphasized in the next couple of chapters.

You see, they believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, but they completely miss the boat because they want to put Jesus in *their* framework of what the Messiah should be and do. They want a militaristic Messiah who will throw off the yoke of these Gentile oppressors, while Jesus insists that he is going to deal with a much more serious problem: our captivity to sin and death. And to deal with that, Jesus is going to have to die. And they don't like that.

The disciples know something awesome is happening in their midst. But whatever is happening, it's so much bigger and so very different from what they had been expecting that they simply can't take it all in.

But let's be honest, we're not all that different from the disciples. We forget too. We follow Jesus with selfish attitudes and motives as well. When we're presented with a problem in our lives, we too tend to first turn to our own meager resources rather than remember that Jesus is the one who has, can and will provide for us.

As we move on in the passage, I find it interesting that Jesus doesn't call the disciples out here in verse 5. He doesn't rebuke them for their lack of faith and their forgetfulness. He merely asks them, "*How many loaves do you have?*"

Jesus wants the disciples to share in his compassion for the people. Jesus is trying to awaken in his disciples their responsibility to help serve this crowd. He wants them to say, "It is *our own* problem. *We* must do something about it."

And what is the reply to Jesus' question? "*Seven.*" They have a meager seven loaves to feed a crowd of 4000. I think Jesus wants them to fix the number "seven" in their minds. They DO NOT have enough. Living Hope Church, you DO NOT have enough. Your personal resources to live out a godly life are grossly inadequate. Let the knowledge of your inadequacy drive you to Jesus. 1 Peter says *he* has given us all we need for life and godliness. Paul wrote in Ephesians that we have been blessed with EVERY spiritual blessing.

Be reminded today that when you're at the end of your rope, when you don't have enough energy, or enough money, or enough whatever, Jesus comes to you and asks you to give over to him whatever it is you have, and he will transform it, AND transform you.

I don't know what that may look like for you. Maybe it'll be a box of crackers that seems to last forever. Maybe it's an unexpected check in the mail. Maybe it's a friend that comes to lift you up. Or maybe it's just God's peace that surpasses all understanding. Just know the Jesus cares for you and has the power to provide exactly what you need at exactly the right time.

SO—the disciples' meager supply of seven loaves should easily convince them that the task of feeding this crowd is impossible. But it's only impossible when Jesus is not part of the equation. Which now leads us to the...

SOLUTION (8:6-7)

So just like the feeding of the 5000, Jesus directs the crowd to sit down, he takes the seven loaves, breaks them and starts handing the pieces to the disciples to set before the people. He does the same with a few small fish they had on hand.

It's wonderful to see that Jesus involves his disciples in the feeding. Living Hope, if we are to follow Jesus closely, he will call us to share in the work of His compassion. Tom Wright wrote that, "Following Jesus involves not only being fed but becoming in turn one through whom Jesus' love can be extended to the world."

If you call Jesus your Lord, and Living Hope Church is your church, Jesus calls you to serve in some way. Be the answer to how Jesus provide for the needs of people in this community. In the next month, we're going to be making a push for AWANA. We made it work last year, but barely. We need volunteers...

Now, the wording in verses 6 and 7 is interesting. He took the loaves, *"and having given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples."* Does that language sound familiar? I think it should definitely remind us in the here and now of the bread and cup—of the body broken and the blood shed—that provides salvation for us, a precursor of what is to come...

Does the fact that this miraculous feeding of a large crowd happens in the wilderness remind you of anything? It should remind us of God's provision of manna to Israel as they wandered the wilderness after the exodus from Egypt. God had the power and compassion *then* to provide, so why should we doubt that he can do so again today?

The great overabundance of food should also point us forward to the messianic banquet, symbolic of God's final salvation and eternal provision for his people. Mike Mudry read for us from Isaiah 25, but hear again the words of verse 6: *"On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined."*

Isn't that beautiful? As we think about what is going on in the miraculous feeding, I believe that...

This miraculous provision should cause us
to reflect upon the past, present, and future
provisions God has for us.

Why? Because we can so easily forget. When we are in the midst of a "situation" in our lives, we begin to get anxious. We begin to depend upon our own resources, and we get ourselves into a lot of trouble, don't we?

1 Corinthians 10 says, *"Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction..."*

We need to reflect upon the God we serve, along with all He has provided for us and others throughout history. When we're going through something that causes us to get anxious, we merely need to look to God and his faithfulness to realize we have nothing to fear.

So—we've looked at the setting to this story, along with the problem and Jesus' solution. Finally let's look at the...

RESULT (8:8-10)

And the overarching theme of the result here is that...

Jesus provides for us
in superabundance.

Look at verse 8: *"They ate and were satisfied."* This wasn't a feeding where you just kinda take the edge off your hunger. NO! This was a full meal where you end and say "Ahhhhh!"

In the second part of verse 8 we read that the disciples took up the leftovers that filled seven large baskets. Jesus doesn't just feed the crowd until full, he shows that he can provide for people who aren't even there. There's always room for more.

And verse 9 is where we learn that the crowd was made up of about 4000 people. This isn't a crowd of 50 or 100 people. This is *thousands* of people that were fed from the supply of seven loaves and few fish that the disciples had.

Listen, Living Hope Church, even with the meager supplies that you have to offer, in Jesus you have enough to feed the entire world.

CONCLUSION

So indeed, I think we have proved through this passage that...

**Jesus,
the compassionate shepherd of *all* the nations,
has the power to provide for us
no matter the circumstances.**

And the fact that this is the *second* miraculous feeding found in Mark shows us that Jesus is able not only *to perform* but also *to repeat* his mighty works. And he can do it again for us.

I had a wonderful example of this just happen to me yesterday morning:

Over the past month, my family has had quite a few unbudgeted expenses. With summer, we wanted to put Cam and Caleb in some camps and such. Not cheap. We had a tire blowout on our camping trip that we had to get fixed. My air conditioner went on the fritz and created a huge bill.

A couple weeks ago, I thought we were just not going to make it this month. I don't like carrying credit card debt, but I was kinda resigned that we were going to have to until later this year when we have a little more money come in.

Well, yesterday morning I was putting in some expenses and stuff into our registry, and when I calculated it, we had enough to pay for the air conditioner bill and the tire, and we'll still have some left over to help with some of the other expenses we've accrued.

And to be quite honest, I'm not sure how that happened. Maybe we brought in more than I thought this month. Maybe I miscalculated things previously. I don't know. All I DO know is that God has multiplied what we had in order to provide for our needs. And that's a miracle! He provided what we needed at the right time!

Living Hope Church, be encouraged today! Jesus is compassionate towards you and desires to take care of your deepest needs, especially your need for eternal forgiveness. I don't know all the details of how it will happen for you, but I know that when you humble yourself and offer up your meager resources, he can transform you into a thing of beauty! Let's pray...