

JESUS FEEDS THE FOUR THOUSAND

Mark 8:1-13

Key Verse: 8:2

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

It is worthwhile for all of us to review last Sunday's message for a minute. Last Sunday we saw how Jesus healed a deaf and mute man out of his mercy. Medically speaking, Jesus' way of healing the man's ears was very funny. When he wanted to give the man hearing, he put his fingers into the man's ears and began scooping. Jesus did not have medical tools; he did not have anything to help him with this. So Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears and kept scooping again and again until he restored the man's hearing. What a funny story in Jesus' earthly Messianic ministry. And at the same time, what a wonderful shepherd heart of Jesus. Jesus' broken shepherd heart and his unending compassion healed the deaf ears. We guess that the man, once deaf and mute, majored in music to appreciate the beauty of sound. He might have majored in piano and next conducting, and become a very famous conductor. It is also interesting to know that when he wanted to loosen the man's tongue, again Jesus confronted having no [medical instrument](#). He looked around here and there, and finally he found nothing. Then Jesus motioned for the man to stick out his tongue and [ordained](#) his tongue by spitting and touching it. We have never heard of this kind of funny treatment by anyone in history, except Jesus. But here we see that Jesus had a great shepherd heart. When he had a great shepherd heart, nothing was impossible. Jesus' scooping the man's ears and ordaining the man's tongue with spit healed him completely from his deaf and mute condition. In this way Jesus healed one person's deformity. In this way, Jesus helped him become a child of God by appreciating the grace of our Lord [Jesus Christ](#). We also learned that we have ears and tongues, but many of us are spiritually deaf and mute. God gave each person ears to understand the love of God and the grace of Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit. This is the reason we call human beings noble and all other animals ignoble. But these days many people have lost the holy desire and the holy quest to hear the divine voice. It is tragedy when we do not hear the voice of God; we cannot hear the glorious heavenly chorus; we cannot hear the word of truth, life and way. We become deaf by the sound of heavy metal music and mute when we see other people who have too much money while we have no money in our pocket. The power of money makes people mute and deaf. An office worker had many creative ideas for the company. But he could not tell any ideas to his boss in the fear of losing his job. There are so many crimes and there is so much bad news in the world. So people close their ears and become deaf to the world, also. But we must restore our spiritual understanding and insight and courage to speak to others the word of God. We must overcome our crippledness by faith in Jesus. To study about our Lord Jesus Christ is indeed amazing. Today we are going to study "Jesus Feeds the Four Thousand." In 6:30-44 we have already studied Jesus feeding the five thousand. Why did Mark repeat the same story again here with just a number difference? Let's dig something new from this repeated account in Mark's Gospel.

I. Jesus' unending compassion (1-3)

It was the time when Jesus healed a deaf and mute man out of his compassion. The news about the compassion of Jesus Christ shook all the towns and countryside. Around the time Jesus was healing and preaching the gospel, people wanted to see Jesus face to face and hear his word more than anything else. In the movie "Ben Hur," Ben Hur's partner Esther, the slave girl followed Jesus' footsteps and was attentive to Jesus' voice. Then Ben Hur, who came back from the galley after a long time, thought Esther was strange. But she looked noble. Ben Hur also felt that she was wholeheartedly longing to see Jesus and hear his word more than to rejoice at the reality of his presence after many years of heartbreaking separation. Shepheress Angela Fitch is a woman of God. The word of God was sweet to her soul. The word of God gave her joy of life and meaning of life very personally. She was as pretty as an angel. All the boys in the Chicago center had a joy of leering at her secretly. She was very popular. But she married a man of God with a pure heart. It is incredible that she married him, overlooking outward appearance. It was because she was like the gospel people in this passage who wanted to see Jesus face to face and hear his voice from their souls.

Jesus loved them. Jesus wanted to show them the kingdom of God and Jesus wanted them to have the privilege of entering the kingdom of God. So he gave his life telling them about the love of God, and God's plan of giving them the Paschal Lamb on the cross, and his glorious resurrection through which they could come to God's house. Jesus wanted to talk to them for a few minutes. But three days passed by. Jesus' compassion for them to bring them to God's glorious house was undying. When he spoke to them with great compassion and with his life-giving spirit, these four thousand ordinary people remained for three days. Verse 2 says, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat."

It was good that Jesus welcomed them, and they saw Jesus face to face and heard his good news for a full three days, day and night. But a problem happened. Jesus' attempt to speak for a few minutes extended longer and longer until three full days had elapsed. Jesus himself had no way to deal with these beautiful people. To Jesus, the most urgent problem was feeding them. Look at verse 1. "During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said...." Surrounded by a large crowd of people, Jesus said to his disciples, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance" (2,3). In these few verses, we learn Jesus' compassion and see how people now began to love Jesus. Jesus was all the world to them. When they heard Jesus, they could not feel hungry and forgot about their need for the washroom. After planting in them the gospel of the kingdom of God, Jesus realized they had not eaten for three days and that most of them had come from a long distance. This is the most beautiful scene in history and this is the most tantalizing story in history. This is the reason Jesus has been loved by many men and women for the last two thousand years. Some have given their houses. Some have given their family members. Some have given their lives for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Where there is the compassion of Christ, where there is the living word of Jesus Christ, people are fearless and become very sacrificial until the world can be changed.

II. Little matured disciples (4)

Look at verse 4. "His disciples answered, 'But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?'" We have a tendency to despise his immature disciples unconditionally. But when we read verse 4 very carefully, it was a kind of worry: "Well, we are ready to feed them. But it is a remote place and the reality is we have no money to feed them." If we compare this to the story in chapter 6, Jesus feeding the five thousand, we see that in the first event Jesus' disciples did not share Jesus' concern. They made many excuses to send the crowd away (6:35). But when we read verse 4 in deep meditation, we learn that this time they were concerned with the people who stayed there for three days and nights. The disciples also stayed with the crowding people, and they never complained. They also listened attentively to the word of God for a full three days. In chapter 6, when Jesus fed the five thousand, the disciples had no motivation. They wanted to escape from their responsibility. Then they wanted to rationalize their impossible situation. But this time, they were concerned together with Jesus and only worried about their own helplessness. They had grown up a lot.

Sometimes we see that our sheep are never growing. They have the image of Jesus in a way: they are the same last year and this year and seem to be the same forever. And we are greatly dismayed inwardly. But we have to be like Jesus. We have to have hope in these slippery sheep and wait on God and pray for them. One of our missionaries had a sheep who was like a deaf and mute man. He didn't express himself, whether he believed or not, even after studying the Bible for 17 years with his shepherd. After 17 years, he opened his heart and decided to marry in the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ. One of the missionary shepherd's other sheep is near 50. He has taken care of him for the last 23 years. But nothing happens except his bald head is shining. Still, his shepherd prays earnestly in the hope of Jesus that he will become a man after God's heart. Many people wonder whether his ministry is right or if something is wrong. But he never changes. This missionary shepherd was once a man on the third level. He liked foxy women and all kinds of gang movies. But now he sees the kingdom of God and he does his best to bring his sheep to the glorious house of God. He is indeed a saint in this generation. We have never seen a better person as a shepherd than him.

Sometimes we are very much discouraged by sheep. But when Jesus took his disciples around, only to hang around him while he was healing and teaching the crowding people, Jesus taught them by divine influence. His disciples had never looked as though they were growing spiritually. But here, through meditation, we learn that they were growing little by little. They were gradually learning the compassion of Jesus Christ. So let's not despair at our sheep who never listen or open their hearts to the word of God. Let's keep on teaching them until we go to heaven, the glorious house of God.

III. Jesus coworked with his disciples (5)

Jesus knew that his disciples had not many resources with which to feed the four thousand who were critically hungry, and who could collapse on the way home if they went without eating. But Jesus treated his disciples like coworkers and asked them their opinion. Look at verse 5. "'How many loaves do you have?' Jesus asked. 'Seven,' they replied." It

seems to be nothing to ask his disciples, who did not have any resources, how much they had. But it is the beginning point of coworking. To say something to others seems to be easy. But saying a few words to another remarkably creates a relationship between man and man and between man and God. There are many people who are very reasonable. They think, and come to the conclusion that it is not necessary to talk. There was a student from a rich family. He lived in the dormitory at NU. He had everything. He didn't care for his roommate. So he didn't speak even one word during one year time. They used the same room, but they were like animals in the zoo. In coworking, we must first pray together with our coworker and talk together about many trifles. We must talk about many humorous things to strengthen our relationship and the spirit of coworkership. Dwight Eisenhower was not such a highly learned person. But he knew how to talk to others. So he was promoted to be the Supreme Commander of the Allied Army during World War II. After that, he became the president of Harvard University. At that time, this school was known as the way to the White House. Finally he was elected as the President of the United States of America. On the other hand, Patton was a brilliant soldier. But he did not know how to talk with fellow soldiers who were senior soldiers. So he became useless after World War II. I don't mean that Patton was a poor soldier. He was the best soldier among soldiers. But in coworking with others he was not excellent enough.

IV. Jesus gave thanks to God for seven loaves (6)

Frankly speaking, this is the story of the coworking of Jesus and his disciples. After hearing that his company had seven Big Macs, he felt burdened by the four thousand people's hunger and exhaustion. What did Jesus do in this case? He depended on God and wanted to feed them. How? He prayed to God to feed these four thousand hungry people who were in a remote place. Here we learn Jesus' prayer. When it was impossible, he did not despair. He held seven loaves tightly in his hand and lifted them up to heaven and prayed to God that God would feed the crowd. Mark expressed his prayer, saying, "after he had given thanks." It means Jesus prayed in absolute faith. As we know, prayer is a Christians' most potent weapon. Without prayer we cannot do God's work. UBF ministry developed in the last forty years from a hermit country in a dark corner of the world. Korean students prayed and prayed. When they began to pray, they never stopped until they were convinced that God would grant them world mission vision and practically, in the near future, would send many missionaries to the whole world. Humanly speaking, they looked indeed foolish. One who asked prayer for world mission regretted that he had given them such a prayer topic and made students suffer to pray so intensively. The shepherd doubted from time to time. But the students never doubted. We see the early Christians' faith. Paul wanted to go to Eastern countries to preach the gospel first because he thought that devils were more vociferously stomping on that ground. But in his dream a poor Macedonian called him with drained fingers, "Come over to Macedonia and help us" (Ac 16:9). Paul thought it was the guidance of the Holy Spirit and went to Philippi in Macedonia and to Rome. God had a plan of evangelizing the Roman Empire first and through Roman roads, spreading the gospel to the whole world. Paul realized God's hope for him and he went to Rome and preached the gospel in confinement. The best chance to preach the gospel for Paul was to the prison guards, because they were always around him. His act of faith was not in vain. It was the prayer that God would evangelize the Roman Empire. Peter did the

same thing. If we go to Rome, we see Peter's Cathedral. It is the most gorgeous and elegant in the world. But there is no trace of the Roman Emperor, Julius Caesar. Peter and Paul's prayers were not immediately fulfilled. But their prayer was fulfilled at last. Here we see Jesus gripping seven loaves and lifting them up, and praying to God that he would distribute these seven loaves to four thousand people. Then God answered his prayer. He broke them and he could distribute them. We learn here that prayer is our potent weapon. We don't have to worry about anything, but only pray. Whether it is answered or not answered doesn't matter; whether we pray or don't pray matters. These days, we pray that God may make America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation once again. We pray that God may send one million American missionaries once again, instead of tourist missionaries or temporary missionaries with much pay. At first, we prayed this prayer with great doubt. But now there are many young people who pray with this prayer topic from their hearts and souls. Now what we expect is that God will answer our prayer and make America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation once again. This is precisely God's hope for Americans. Many Americans are deaf and mute, enslaved by earning money or managing it. They silently work hard day and night to make a little more money. Some change their job, even thirty times, to get a little more money. But they never make better money. Even if they make money, it cannot be God's hope. To pray that God may make America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation is God's hope and our meaning of life. In our generation, the work of God may not be too big. But God will surely answer our prayer.

V. Jesus told the disciples to distribute them (7)

Look at verse 7. "They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them." The disciples were also hungry. They wanted to eat first, and next, distribute food to the annoying people, and in some ways crazy people who heard the gospel message from Jesus for three days, day and night. But the disciples did not eat first. Peter said, "Yes, sir! Aye, aye, sir! I will distribute them all, all by myself." James and John said, "Yes, sir! We will distribute them all before Peter does, because we brothers run faster than chubby Peter." Andrew picked up one loaf of bread and almost put it into his mouth, then hid the bread behind his back and said, "If James and John distribute together, I will distribute with Peter. I am slow but very steady. So my team will be the fastest distributor." Matthew went to Thomas and discussed coworking together, and they reluctantly agreed to cowork and began to distribute. In this way, they distributed the loaves to the people who were hungry until they were satisfied. The disciples were all very selfish and loners. They did not get along with their moms or their brothers and sisters. But even Matthew and Thomas coworked and the distribution of bread to the four thousand was done, probably in fifteen minutes. They distributed the bread while the bread was still warm enough to eat. Here we see the meaning of Jesus' cross. Jesus' cross is described with two lines. One is vertical, which signifies God to man. The other one is a horizontal line, which creates a cross when the vertical line and horizontal line come together. It is easy to cowork with God. But it is not easy to cowork together among sinful people. Each coworker looks like a bitter enemy. That's the common factor. Everybody feels this at the beginning. But we must draw a cross in our hearts. Without coworking, we cannot get God's help. Yvonne Timlin's help and coworking with Dr. James Joung is indeed beautiful. Dr. Harvey

Siy's family and the happiness between Dr. Harvey Siy and Samantha Siy is indeed beautiful. Without Jesus' cross there is no happiness, and there is no coworking for the glory of God. Jesus' disciples not only distributed bread, but in the second round they also distributed small fish to the crowd. Their coworking spirit was overflowing. One round was enough to make them conk out. But after two rounds of distribution they were full of power and had an energetic impression.

VI. God's blessing overflowed (8-10)

Let's look at verses 8-10. "The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. About four thousand men were present. And having sent them away, he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha." When Jesus prayed, and they coworked with Jesus, God blessed them. They could feed four thousand hungry people. What a great blessing to feed hungry people! Not only did they feed four thousand people, they also picked up seven basketfuls of left-overs. This shows us that when we pray and cowork and listen to Jesus' command, we are abundantly blessed. Most people do not know why they are working so hard. They sometimes think they are working to make a little more money. Sometimes they have to work because they have to support their families. These days people do not know what they are doing. So they call the end of the 20th century, "Generation X." "X" symbolizes crossing out something because something is wrong or because it doesn't make sense. We should not live in "Generation X." We must live in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must live with the assurance that God hears our prayer and we must seek first his kingdom and righteousness wholeheartedly. Then God will bless us abundantly, just as seven basketfuls of bread were left over after feeding four thousand people. Faith is not abstract. Faith is very practical. Faith is not losing business. Faith is indeed practical and beneficial. It is like giving seven loaves and becoming a person who can feed four thousand people every day. When we have faith in God and live by it, we are blessed even if we don't want to be blessed. When we believe, we must believe that God will bless us when we believe in him. Therefore, Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Some seek money, which is made of paper and will be eaten by moths or used by their uncles and nieces. But when we live by faith and cowork with our Lord Jesus Christ, even in distributing bread, God will surely bless us. Faith is practical, not an abstract theory. Faith is the source of blessing, not a sacrificing factor. We must remember this. Let's not talk about the Pharisees, so as not to cut the flow of this beautiful passage.