

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that **all Men are created equal**, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness—

Says the first line of the American Declaration of Independence from Great Britain. Of the three unalienable rights Americans have never been very good at preserving life and liberty but we have excelled in the Pursuit of Happiness.

With all the pursuit of happiness is it a simple thing to find fulfillment? Does that pursuit lead to satisfaction?

Harriet Rubin says no, quite emphatically:

“Of all the subjects we obsess about...success is the one we lie about the most [we lie to ourselves and say] that success and its cousin money will make us secure, that success and its cousin power will make us important, that success and its cousin fame will make us happy. It’s time to tell the truth: Why are our generation’s smartest, most talented, most successful people flirting with disaster in record numbers? People are using all their means to get money, power, and glory - and then self-destructing. Maybe they didn’t want it in the first place! Or didn’t like what they saw when they finally achieved it.” Harriet Rubin.

She’s right. The never ending pursuit of happiness does not end in satisfaction. How many people feel a raging emptiness inside?

How many of us do?

Is there any way to satisfy the ache of emptiness? To find robust and sturdy satisfaction?

We look again to Jesus.

As we continue to follow him throughout Mark, we are going to see not only that he gives satisfaction but also we will peek into HOW he does it.

PROP: Stop the pursuit and receive from Jesus.

We join Jesus once again as he sees another crowd hungry and without help arrayed before him.

And as we watch what he does for them, we will see how he can and does fill the emptiness for us. But we must watch and listen to Jesus—

“In those days, when again a great crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat, he called his disciples to him and said to them, ²“I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. ³ And if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way. And some of them have come from far away.” ⁴ And his disciples answered him, “How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?” ⁵ And he asked them, “How many loaves do you have?” They said, “Seven.” ⁶ And he directed the crowd to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves, and having given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and they set them

before the crowd. ⁷ And they had a few small fish. And having blessed them, he said that these also should be set before them. ⁸ And they ate and were satisfied. And they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. ⁹ And there were about four thousand people. And he sent them away. ¹⁰ And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.” Mark 8:1-10

PRAY

You might say—“Wait a second this seems very familiar.” If you said that the reason is because it is familiar.

If you have been with us you remember that Jesus was met with a multitude of people in Mark 6. He fed them from very little and everyone went away satisfied.

Why include a story like this again? As we watch and listen to Jesus we will see why.

1. Jesus sees — (8:1-3)

Vs. 1,

“In those days, when again a great crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat, he called his disciples to him and said to them, ² “I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat.”

This crowd differed greatly from the crowd before Jesus in Mark 6. The prior crowd was Jewish, the crowd we

see before Jesus today is Gentile. Jesus is with his disciples in the Gentile regions.

Given who we have met in Mark it makes sense that this crowd throngs to him. Let's recall together some of the friends we have made along the way—

- The demonized man: He had legion and Jesus sent legion away. That man told everyone about Jesus.
- The Syrophenician woman: And her daughter told a story about a Jewish Rabbi who cared about the hated Gentiles.
- A Formerly deaf man: He was touched by Jesus and healed, he could hear. His tongue was loosed and he told others about Jesus.

The crowd that thronged about Jesus that day heard the reports and they wanted to meet the man. And so, presumably, Jesus taught them. Jesus ministered to them. Jesus was with him.

As we have seen this goes counter to the Jewish mores at the time. Jews counted all Gentiles spiritually contaminated.

But the King of the Jews did not. He is showing us that he came for them too.

Jesus surveys the crowd that has been with him for three days and he knows they need to eat. When last Jesus was with a crowd, the disciples interrupted Jesus—let's look back:

“And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, “This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late.

[36] Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." [37] But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." And they said to him, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?" Mark 6:35–37

Good news: At least the disciples didn't interrupt Jesus and then mock him. This time, they were quiet and Jesus was the one who looked upon the hungry crowd and wanted to satisfy them.

Throughout this book Mark has so very clearly shown us that Jesus is not merely a good teacher, not merely a prophet, not merely a miracle worker, not merely a moral example—but he is something much more.

Jesus is God the Son.

The gospel of Mark shows us what happens when God becomes man and comes to men and women.

I want us to notice what Jesus sees.

He looks out on the crowd gathered—a crowd of idol worshipers. A crowd who had people who dabbled in witchcraft. A crowd with people who were adulterous. A crowd with people who included prostitutes. A crowd with people like us—sinners.

At a glance he sees and does not see the anger but explodes in compassion.

Why do I draw your attention to the way Jesus thought about the crowd?

Because that is the way he sees you too.

The eyes of Jesus are upon you and I just the same today. And he sees us not with anger, frustration, ridicule, exasperation but compassion.

These eyes are the same eyes that see everything. There is nothing that these eyes miss. These eyes are able to see into the very thoughts and intentions of all our minds.

These eyes see through the façade some of us put up and he knows how we really feel.

These eyes see all we have ever done. These eyes see who we really are. These eyes have watched us with an unblinking stare our whole lives.

And yet—these eyes look upon us with unfailing compassion.

One of the great fears that we can all struggle with is—if people really know who I am they would hate me. And so, sometimes we hold a piece of ourselves back in reserve.

We hold something back for fear we might be rejected.

But no one earns the love of Jesus by being good—he sees us for who we really are and still feels compassion.

He sees you.

And he feels compassion toward you.

While we might not be able to see his face today we get the next best thing. Mark invites us to look through his eyes.

Just as he looks upon that crowd of people with compassion—he looks upon all of us with compassion.

Jesus sees us mired in all our problems and feels compassion.

Why does this matter?

In telling us this story Mark lends us Jesus' eyes and is showing us how he sees you and how he sees me.

Compassion.

He knows all you have done. He knows you at your best. He knows you at your worst. He knows you thoroughly.

And he cares for you.

Is that how you think of God?

Christian —

There is a pounding, repetitive drum sounding throughout scripture—God loves mankind. It pounds with such force because it difficult to believe.

But it is true.

Jesus loves you despite what you have done to him.

Jesus is unlike anyone you know. You have fallen short but it does not change his compassion for you. None one iota.

He does not remove his affection as punishment—love and compassion flow from now and always. I hope you NEVER wonder if Jesus loves you.

He always does.

Do you see the road to real satisfaction now?

You don't have to earn his love. You can rest in his love. You don't have to perform to be in his good graces. He loves you because of who he is, not what you have done.

When you know God loves you no matter what—you are closer to satisfaction in the depths of your soul.

Non-Christian —

Here is someone who really knows you and yet really loves too. He offers a love that is reckless and unending.

You don't have to earn this love. Jesus looked at this crowd with compassion because of who he is, not because of who they were.

Here is why that matters—if you begin to understand his love for you—it will be easier to trust him because trust follows love.

Jesus sees all things—sees all people and yet he is still a font of compassion.

He saw the crowd and their need, and now he acts. Jesus is not merely someone who feels compassion and does nothing.

Jesus sees AND Jesus provides.

2. Jesus provides (Mark 8:4-10)

The disciples respond a little better than last time when the topic of feeding the crowd comes up.

Vs. 4b,

“How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?”

That is a good question. How can one feed these people with bread in this desolate place? They are in the desert miles from any food.

The answer to that question is—no one person can feed these people with bread. Only God can.

Jesus answers their question with action—

“And he asked them, “How many loaves do you have?” They said, “Seven.” ⁶ And he directed the crowd to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves, and having given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and they set them before the crowd. ⁷ And they had a few small fish. And

having blessed them, he said that these also should be set before them.”

We must see how Jesus provides for the people.

He did not clap and have a pillar of bread appear. He did not whistle and have a heap of fish plop before him. Did you notice that?

He doesn't lay a buffet before them.

He breaks off some bread and tells his disciples to go and feed the people. The people sit down and the 12 keep going back to Jesus to get fish and bread for the people.

They sit on the ground and the people watch Jesus satisfy their hunger by means of the disciples. They come to him and then bring the food to the people.

Why?

He could have said to the crowd, “Hold out your hands...” said, “Bread and fish—NOW.” And each of them would have their hands filled with food.

But that is not how he does it.

Why?

He is training his disciples.

What is he saying?

He is giving them an object lesson here. Do you see it? He is showing them that they must come to again and again for real satisfaction. He is showing them that he is the only one who satisfies.

From basically nothing the crowd is completely satisfied—verse 8,

⁸ And they ate and were satisfied. And they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full.

When Jesus provides, there is always more than enough.

Jesus offers much more than bread for the stomach he offers bread (nourishment) for the soul. Just as Jesus satisfied a multitude of hungry people by his power alone—he offers nourishment for the soul by his power alone.

Do you see it?

With Jesus there is always more than enough.

The author of life in a desolate place fed 4000 people from basically nothing. He gave them bread. Mark gives us a cunning bit of foreshadowing in this passage. You know what foreshadowing is—right? It is a literary device when a writer gives his readers a peek of what is coming later.

Vs. 6b,

“And he took the seven loaves, and having given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people...”

That is nearly the exact same verbiage from Mark chapter 14, at the Last Supper.

“And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.” Mark 14:22

Why does Mark do this?

He is showing us HOW Jesus would satisfy the empty soul. How? NOT by breaking bread for people but being broken like bread for people.

In Mark 8, we find a great multitude in a desolate place coming and sitting at his feet, hungry and with no food for themselves. Jesus provides.

He not only provides but gives them MORE than they need.

Do you see the connection Jesus is making?

Did you see how he satisfies?

By giving himself. He was broken on the cross for our sins. He was treated by God as if HE were spiritually desolate so that WE might live.

Jesus looks upon all of us with compassion and is eager to forgive our every sin. No matter who you are and what you have done.

Jesus created all things good but the paradise of earth was transformed by sin into a spiritually desolate place.

Mankind is naturally bent toward sin and evil. From birth everyone instinctively knows how to rebel. Not only that, but we are desolate because we are unable to feed ourselves spiritually.

So, mankind is spiritually desolate living in a desolate place. We cannot find the food for the soul that satisfies our yearning and longings.

- Money cannot satisfy
- Work cannot satisfy
- Family cannot satisfy
- Fitness cannot satisfy
- Food cannot satisfy
- Education cannot satisfy
- Spouses cannot satisfy

Only Jesus and the life he offers can satisfy.

Let's put this together—

Jesus sees you—and loves you.

Jesus sees you, loves you and has provided for you.

How?

What do you have to do?

Nothing.

Actually you do the same thing the crowd did—they came to him and received the gift he offered. He did all the work, they just accepted and ate and were satisfied.

The same is true today.

Jesus offers satisfaction by simply if you simply ask him to help and save you. He will.

He will not send you away empty. Any who come to him, hungry and looking to him for satisfaction, he will satisfy. No matter how desolate you feel.

No matter what you think about yourself, he looks upon you with compassion. All you need to do is accept it.

How silly would it be for someone sitting in that crowd so long ago—with a growling stomach—how silly would it be to reject the bread from Jesus?

It would make no sense.

Jesus offers something much more satisfying than food for your stomach. He offers food for your soul. He is the one who gives life.

In another place, we read:

“Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.” John 6:35

Any who receive the free offer of his love will be satisfied.

Non-Christians—

Thank you for being here. And maybe you aren't used to sitting through a sermon already this long! Jesus loves you better than you can love yourself.

Jesus can provide for you better than you can provide for yourself.

He sees you now.

He has compassion on you now.

He has provided for you.

You can come to him.

You can stop the punishing pursuit of happiness and find satisfaction in Jesus.

Christians—

1) Keep going to Jesus:

Only he satisfies.

When trouble comes like a clap of lightning we can feel that we are in a desolate place with no hope of help. But we always have Jesus.

Go to him again and again. He always has more for us than the day before. He will always provide and satisfy.

He may not provide in the way that you expect.

Actually, I can almost guarantee that he won't provide in the way that you expect. He is not going to give you all you need to face everything in one lump sum.

He is not going to say, “Here is all the strength, poise and provision you will need from now until the end of your days.”

No, you have to keep coming back.

Sometimes Jesus gives more than we can handle alone to remind us that we can handle nothing without him.

Just as the disciples had to keep coming to him for more bread, Jesus has structured our lives in such a way that we must come back to him again and again and again.

I’m no different.

When I have hardship hammer against me, I go to Jesus and am reminded that he really is my refuge and my strength. I find that he really does help me when I am so weak. I find that he really does provide for me.

All of us need Jesus to help more than we know.

Is your trouble putting you in a desolate place?

- Are the kids running you over?
- Is death staring you down?
- Does fear constantly hover?
- Is your marriage rife with trouble?
- Are you facing a future alone?
- Is an enemy plotting against you?

All of those things and many more can put us in a desolate place. When you feel desolate, remember the gaze of Jesus from this morning.

Never ending compassion.

And

Always faithful provision.

Only Jesus satisfies.

Some of you need to just rest. Read Ephesians 1 and let the truth of who you are and how you are loved burrow into your inner being.

And remember only Jesus satisfies.

Not only should we keep going to Jesus—we need to keep giving others bread from Jesus.

2) Keep giving others bread from Jesus—

Did you see that the disciples were merely go-betweens? Jesus would break a bit of bread and they would deliver it to the people.

That is what we are to do as well.

We can give the people in our lives the bread of life of Jesus Christ.

Let's remember together—

None of us have wisdom sufficient to repair a broken soul. None of us have the power to win over a doubting heart. None of us have all the answers to a questioning minds.

But Jesus is different—

He DOES have wisdom to repair a broken soul.
He DOES have power to win the doubting heart.
He DOES have all the answers to questioning minds.

The unbelievers in your life need to hear from you that
Jesus loves them and has provided for them.

You can give them that bread. The bread of Christ.

You can tell them that he—

Loves them so much so that he died in the place of a
multitude of sinners. He died not because he had to but
because he looked up on the multitude of humanity
with compassion.

His body was broken. And blessings eternal are doled
out from him.

He gave his life so that any who come to him hungry
can be satisfied. But his story does not end in death. He
lives. And he lives to ensure that we can always come to
him again and again no matter our desolation.

You can stop pursuing and start receiving.

Only Jesus satisfies.

PRAY

(May) the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:7