

# THE NEED FOR SPIRITUAL FOOD, COMPASSION AND EVANGELISM

## MARK 08: 01–09

### *Introduction*

Jesus was doing two things in this event.

1. As always, He was demonstrating His Messiahship in order to drive the truth more and more deeply into the hearts and minds of the disciples.
2. In a most direct way, He was teaching His disciples that they were to minister to the needy, no matter who they were. In this event He was ministering primarily, if not totally, to Gentiles. Jesus withdrew to Gentile regions. He withdrew to the northern border of Tyre and Sidon. The word *regions* (ta mere) means the ports or borders (Mt. 15:21-22).

Jesus was deliberately withdrawing to the borders of Gentile country. He needed time and quiet to prepare both Himself and His disciples for the end. The only place He could find freedom from the crowds and from His opponents was in the northern area, the area bordering Gentile territory. No Jew was likely to enter Gentile areas.

The Jews considered the Gentiles to be heathen, lost and despised by God. Jewish prejudice against the Gentiles ran deep. Jesus had come to save all men, not just the Jews. The disciples desperately needed to learn this truth, for they would need to minister to all men regardless of race after His return to the Father.

In a very simple yet forceful demonstration, Jesus revealed that the *whole world* has three great needs.

### The Need for Spiritual Food, Compassion and Evangelism

- I. The need for spiritual food (v. 1).
- II. The need for compassion (vv. 2-8).
- III. The need for evangelism (v. 9).

### **I. *Mark 08: 01 Spiritual Hunger – Witnessing***

The people were hungry for spiritual food. Note two facts.

1. The crowd was large, “very large.” Four thousand ate. This was an interesting number. The event occurred on the other side of the Sea of Galilee in Decapolis, a land heavily populated by Gentiles. These were the very people who had rejected Jesus earlier and had requested Him to leave their coasts after He had healed the demoniac (Mk. 5:1-20). What brought about this significant change? The answer is probably found in Jesus’ instructions to the healed demoniac. The demoniac had requested to follow Jesus, but Jesus had told him to remain in his own country to witness. Evidently his witness had borne great fruit and prepared the people for Jesus’ return. (What a lesson to us on the importance of witnessing!)
2. The crowd hungered spiritually, so much so they had gone without food for three days. Some may have brought some provision, but by now all the food had been eaten. The people craved the Word of God. The word of Jesus was esteemed more highly than “daily bread” (Job 23:12).

*Mat 5:06 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”*

*1 Pet 2:02-03 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

**Acts 20:32** *“Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”*

**John 6:35** *Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”*

## II. **Mark 08: 02–08 Compassion**

The disciples needed to have compassion for the people. The disciples looked upon many of these people as outcasts. They were Gentiles, aliens from God’s chosen race. They were even considered enemies by many of the Jews. There was nothing attractive or appealing about them in the eyes of the disciples. The disciples...

- had no compassion for them
- did not observe them at all
- were not concerned for them
- had no thought of helping them

Jesus had to teach His disciples compassion. He had already discussed the need for this with them (Mt. 9:36-38). Now He tried to stir their compassion for the lost and outcast. He did this by showing just what compassion involves.

1. Compassion involves seeing needs (vv. 2-3). Jesus had looked at and observed the people, and in doing so, He had seen their need. The disciples should have also looked and observed, but they had not. They were too prejudiced and too prideful. They felt the people were beneath them, not worthy of their time and effort. Therefore, the disciples never observed the people’s needs. They should have,

for Jesus had just taught the same lesson (Mk. 6:35-44); but their prejudice and pride blinded their eyes and hearts, even from the truth that had just been taught. This shows the great need for Jesus to repeat the same truths over and over.

**Thought 1.** Looking at and observing people are essential in order to see need, and seeing need is essential to stir compassion. Compassion is aroused by seeing and observing or studying the needs of people. If we never expose ourselves to the needs of people, we will never experience compassion.

**Luke 10:02** *He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”*

**John 4:35** *“Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.”*

**Rom 10:01** *Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.*

2. Compassion involves the use of resources (v. 4-5. See Mk. 6:37-44.) Needs can never be met apart from resources. The disciples wondered about the resources, where enough bread could be secured to feed so many; and they asked Jesus about the matter, offering every objection and excuse.

The place was a remote place, beyond reach (v. 4).

=> Their resources were too meager (v. 5).

=> The crowd and the need were too great (vv. 1, 9).

**Thought 1.** Too many use the same excuses to keep from becoming involved. Too many needs go unmet because of such flimsy excuses.

**Thought 2.** Note two significant points.

- 1) The disciples overlooked the resources they had.
- 2) Jesus did not ask the disciples to discuss how they could meet so great a need. He told them to check on what resources *they had*. What resources others had and just how God was going to meet the need should not have been their concern. Their concern should have been seeing just what they could do.

**Acts 20:35** *“In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”*

**Rom 12:13** *Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.*

**Gal 6:10** *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*

**1 Tim 6:17-19** *Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.*

3. Compassion involves orderly arrangement (v. 6). Note that meeting the people’s needs was not done in a disorderly, haphazard way. The people were arranged to receive the provision.

There is the attitude of organizing what resources one has so that they might be used. This is an important step Christ takes, and it should be well noted. The hour was late. Darkness was rapidly approaching. Distribution could have easily become a problem. The people had to be organized into small circles or rows which left room for the disciples to walk between them to distribute the food.

**Thought 1.** Our resources, whatever we give and do, should be used in an organized fashion. Organization, arrangement, and orderliness were always God’s will in the meeting of needs and the handling of resources.

**1 Cor 14:40** *But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.*

4. Compassion involves giving all, taking all, and using all that one has to meet the need (v. 6). Note that all seven loaves were *given to Jesus*, then Jesus *took all* seven loaves and *used all* seven to meet the need. Nothing was held back. All the resources available were used to meet the need. Compassion will always give all, and then take all and use all to meet the need.

**Thought 1.** How often we hold back, store up, even deceive, lie and cheat about our resources just to keep from having to give. Christ teaches that we are to give all our resources to meet the needs of a desperate world. Then we are to make sure that all we gave is *taken and used* in meeting the needs. Such is *true compassion*.

**Mat 6:20** *“But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.”*

**Luke 12:33** *“Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.”*

**Luke 14:33** “In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.”

**Acts 11:29** The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea.

5. Compassion involves thankfulness to God. Jesus “gave thanks” for the resources (v. 6). The point is striking. What the disciples had to give was small, really insignificant in meeting such a mammoth need, and what Jesus held in His hands was so meagre it was impossible to meet the need. Yet Christ gave thanks for the meagre resource, for what He held in His hands.

**Thought 1.** Note something. The resource had been given to be used; therefore, Jesus was able to use it despite its smallness. If it had not been given, it would not have been used. And most tragically, the need would not have been met. Christ is forever thankful for the resource given Him, no matter how small; and He is able to use the resource to meet the need - no matter how insignificant the resource and no matter how mammoth the need may seem.

6. Compassion involves saving and preserving whatever resource is left over (v. 8). Resources are to be handled carefully. Nothing is to be wasted. Whatever is not used in meeting one need is to be used in meeting another need.

There is the attitude of being careful in the handling of resources (Mk. 6:43-44). Very simply, Christ teaches that resources are not to be wasted. They are to be used day after day. When there is more than enough to meet one need, what is left over is to be gathered up to use elsewhere.

**Thought 1.** Note three lessons.

- 1) There is no room in Christ’s economy for extravagance. When there is more than what is needed, the excess is to be saved for another need.
- 2) There is no room for wasting. No resource is to be wasted; it is to be used elsewhere.
- 3) There is no room for resources to be stored and banked; there is not any excuse for allowing resources to lie around unused. All resources - abilities or money - are to be used to meet needs as long as needs exist (see Mt. 19:21-22; 19:23-26).

### MATHEW 09:36 COMPASSION (SPLANCHNISTHEIS)

*When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. **Mathew 09:36***

Compassion means to be moved inwardly; to yearn with tender mercy, affection, pity and empathy. It is the very seat of a man’s affections. It is the deepest movement of emotions possible, being touched with the deepest feelings possible. It is being moved within the deepest part of a person’s being.

**Rom 8:35** *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?*

**Heb 4:15** *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin.*

**1 Pet 5:7** *Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*

**Psa 78:39** *He remembered that they were but flesh, a passing breeze that does not return.*

**Psa 103:13** *As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him.*

**Psa 103:17** *But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children.*

**Isa 63:9** *In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them: he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.*

**Lam 3:22** *Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. □*

### III. **Mark 08: 09 Evangelism and Witnessing**

There was the need for evangelism, for moving on. Remember this crowd had hungered for the Word of God, hungered for spiritual food, even putting the spiritual before the physical. Now Jesus sent them away. The idea is that He sent them away as a group, as a body of people who had hungered spiritually and had been fed. As they went, they would certainly bear witness to their glorious experience of having been fed by Jesus, both spiritually and physically.

**Thought 1.** Christ has sent us, too, to proclaim that He alone can feed the soul of man.

**Thought 2.** There is a time to sit at the feet of Jesus and be fed, but there is also a time to be sent away, to go forth carrying the glorious

message that He feeds the hungering heart.

**Mat 9:31** *But they went out and spread the news about him all over that region.*

**Luke 8:39** *“Return home and tell how much God has done for you.” So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.*

**John 20:21** *Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”*

**Acts 4:20** *For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”*

**2 Cor 4:13** *It is written: “I believed; therefore I have spoken.” With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak.*

**2 Tim 2:02** *And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.*

**1 Pet 3:15** *But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*

**Isa 63:07** *I will tell of the kindnesses of the Lord, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the Lord has done for us - yes, the many good things he has done for the house of Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses. ■*