

JESUS OVER NEEDS

+ **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

Jesus's compassion led Him not only to meet but surpass the needs of others.

+ **BACKGROUND PASSAGE:**

Mark 8

+ **SETTING:**

In the past three sessions, we've looked closely at three stories of Jesus's miracles: His power over the storm (Mark 4:35-41), His power to forgive sin (Luke 5:17-26), and His power over sickness (Matthew 9:18-31). Today's passage is another miracle that shows another element over which Jesus is Lord, but the setting is different. The last three weeks, Jesus revealed His power inside the traditional borders of Israel; the audience that watched and listened to Jesus had Jewish lineage and knew the Old Testament laws and prophecies. Today's passage takes place outside those boundaries.

DAY 1

READ:

Exodus 34:1-8

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Exodus 34:6-8

NOTES

“Now Jesus I like. He loves me. But I don’t think God looks at me like Jesus does.”

That’s a direct quote I heard from a woman who was attending a Tuesday morning ladies’ Bible study that I was leading. She was faithful to any study as long as Jesus was the focus; she wouldn’t sign up if our studies were from the Old Testament.

I’m not sure how I responded to her statement. That was fifteen years ago, and I would bet that my twenty-something self wasn’t as confident as my forty-plus self now. But if she’s out there reading this, I hope she can hear me clearly today: the Jesus who loves you is the God who also loves you.

It might seem that the God of the Old Testament is different from Jesus, who is fully man and fully God, but there is only one God, and He exists in three Persons. Jesus is as fully God as the Father is God and the Spirit is God. Each Person is full of the glory of the Godhead, and each Person is full of the mercies and compassions of the Godhead. The holy and eternal Trinity has existed before time and will continue to exist forevermore.

In this passage from Exodus, Moses had come up Mount Sinai with cut stones ready to receive the law from the Lord. Moses asked to see God’s glory, so God gave him a glimpse. The Lord came down in a cloud with all His glory and proclaimed that He is a compassionate, gracious God who is slow to anger and full of faithful love and truth (v. 6). The God who handed down the law and the blessings and punishments that go with it is the same God who has compassion on us today.

What are some of the characteristics of God, as described of Jesus?

DAY 2

READ:

Mark 8:1-10

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Mark 8:1-3

NOTES



KEY DOCTRINE #94: SOCIAL CONCERN

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the Spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. (continued)

If you're a parent, the situation in Mark 8:1 might ring familiar where Jesus with the crowds had nothing to eat.

I'm a mother of two, and though that's not like the large crowds Jesus was with, I've certainly been in situations where it's dinner time, everyone is hungry, and I have nothing ready. Many times, after being out for the afternoon, we'd arrive home and realize there was nothing "fast" for dinner: no bread for sandwiches, no noodles for pasta, and no other ideas. Cereal became an exciting choice for our family in just such an occasion.

Hungry kids become grumpy (or crazy) kids in a hurry. The same is true for adults; we are just as guilty of being "hangry" as children. So if we step into the crowd around Jesus for just a moment, we can imagine the impatience, the growling stomachs, and the wondering if this miracle-worker would really do a miracle for them. Perhaps the kids were getting restless and the crowd was unsettled.

In the midst of it all, Jesus had compassion. Might we take a page from this example He set?

We could each take just a moment to choose compassion in the face of waiting, in the face of hunger, and in the face of frustration. It might mean we hand over our granola bar or go buy the hospital waiting room a twelve-pack of water. We may need to rock a fussy baby or cook a meal for the family who can't seem to catch a break. Each act of compassion softens hearts and causes an impulsive smile.

How can you live out compassion, knowing God gives abundantly?

DAY 3

READ:

Mark 8:1-10

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Mark 8:4-7

NOTES



KEY DOCTRINE #94: SOCIAL CONCERN

(continued)

We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends, Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth (Micah 6:8; Ephesians 6:5-9; 1 Thessalonians 3:12).

Years ago, I heard a Bible teacher explain that she loves to read direct quotes from the Bible using different attitudes, moods, and facial expressions. I started doing that on my own, and I realize that a situation really comes alive in different ways when I do.

So in today's passage, I considered different ways to read the disciples' question to Jesus about where and how they were to find any bread to feed the people (Mark 8:4). The first time I read it, I pretended to have a chip on my shoulder. I felt annoyed by the preposterous notion that I, a disciple of Christ, should be shouldering the responsibility of feeding a crowd. Not in the job description, Jesus.

Next I read the same question with wide eyes and an incredulous voice. I felt the tension of the disciple who would really like to help but realized there simply was no answer to the problem. I felt the stress and the pressure of trying to please Jesus but thinking it was impossible.

The last time, I read it dejectedly: hopeless and defeated, I spoke the words slowly with my eyes low. I felt like I'd failed, but I didn't even know what I did wrong.

Though we will never know for sure how they actually said it, we can understand that it may not be the way we thought or the way we would have asked it.

But the focus really is about Jesus and His response. When He asked, "How many loaves do you have?" (v. 5), everyone knew He was about to do something. He was about to perform a miracle. He was about to act on His compassion for the people. He was going to do the impossible.

As we get ourselves involved in a particular social concern in the world, how do we show that our trust is in Jesus, not in our own efforts?

DAY 4

READ:

Mark 8:1-10

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Mark 8:8-10

NOTES

There was an ad campaign from years ago in which the marketing team from a specific candy bar assured us that this particular product really satisfies. I'm not sure if trademark issues allow me to write the name of the product here, but if you were watching commercials in the 1980s, you remember it.

My dad loved that candy bar. He would probably tell you that it was true. It really satisfied him when he wanted something sweet. I, on the other hand, was not a fan. That candy bar wouldn't have satisfied me unless I was about to pass out from a lack of calories. Our tastes were different, so our opinion about the product varied wildly.

But the satisfaction of God is different; it's not dependent upon your taste or your opinion. God satisfies, period. He satisfies the parched wasteland (Job 38:27), He satisfied David (Psalm 63:5), and He satisfies the desire of every living thing (Psalm 145:16). He promises always to lead us, satisfy us in a parched land, and strengthen our bones (Isaiah 58:11); He satisfies the thirsty and feeds the weak (Jeremiah 31:25).

God satisfies us with good things (Psalm 103) if we are willing to accept them. The food Jesus offered was common and unadorned, but it satisfied those who were willing to be seated and accept it. His satisfaction is thorough and free, but only if we're willing to take it. He satisfies our minds, our hearts, our bodies, and our souls.

What about God or His provision satisfies you?

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Do you think that the infinite God cannot fill and satisfy your heart?"¹

—François de Fénelon
(1651–1715)

DAY 5

READ:

Mark 8:1-21

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Mark 8:11-21

NOTES

When you study a passage of Scripture, be sure to read a little before and a little after in order to catch the context and setting. In this week's study, Mark 8:1-10 is the focal passage, and it covers the feeding of the 4,000.

But if you read the next few verses, you'll see that "happily ever after" is not how this story ends. Jesus and His disciples head back to the Sea of Galilee and immediately encounter Pharisees (again) who want to argue (again). Ironically, they were wanting "a sign from heaven" (Mark 8:11), which is hilarious to consider when He'd just split up seven loaves for 4,000 people and satisfied every one of them.

Jesus and the disciples left and got into a boat, only to realize they had forgotten to take bread and "had only one loaf with them in the boat" (v. 14). Jesus used the topic of bread to remind them that the "leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod" (v. 15) was real. He then pointed out their own short-term memory and their hard hearts: He'd fed 5,000 and then 4,000 with meager supplies, and yet, they were worried again about having enough bread.

This passage ends with a poignant question. Jesus asks in verse 21 if the disciples still didn't "understand." Obviously, the answer was "no." May we not find ourselves in the same situation. Let's pray that as the Lord opens our eyes and hearts, we don't forget how He's proven Himself faithful.

What memories of God's faithfulness do you need to recall today?

GROUP

NOTES

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"If the vision of Christ be before his eyes, and the love of Christ be in his heart, the man of wealth will give his large offering, the man of learning his dear-bought knowledge, the man of business his hard-earned leisure, for the glory of God."²

—John Ellerton (1826–1893)

POINT 1: The Lord extends compassion to those in need (Mark 8:1-3).

Jesus saw the _____ needs of the crowd and had _____ on them.



How do we grow in compassion for others?

Jesus called His disciples to faithful _____ when reflecting on the _____ of others.



What should faithful action look like in the church?

POINT 2: The Lord calls His followers to serve those in need (Mark 8:4-7).

Though the disciples _____, Jesus took the little they had and used it to _____ others.

KEY DOCTRINE #94: SOCIAL CONCERN

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human _____. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the _____ grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the Spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose _____, every form of greed, selfishness, vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government,

and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends, Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth (Micah 6:8; Ephesians 6:5-9; 1 Thessalonians 3:12).

? How can you act on one of these social concerns?

POINT 3: The Lord satisfies completely those in need (Mark 8:8-10).

Jesus _____ all our needs, and He calls us to share in His _____ with others.

? From Day 2: How can you live out compassion, knowing God gives abundantly?

Jesus performed a miracle for the _____, because His _____ extends to all.

? Who might seem foreign to us, but we still need to love and share Jesus with?

MY RESPONSE

Because God has met our greatest need in salvation through Christ, we seek to meet the needs of others—physical, emotional, and spiritual—through Jesus.

- **HEAD:** How does Jesus’s compassion for all people encourage and comfort you?
- **HEART:** Where can you confess that you’ve had a hard time having compassion for others?
- **HANDS:** What need can you meet in Jesus’s name in someone’s life this week?



Scan this QR code to access this session’s Scripture passages.

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

“Let us come to Holy Communion in charity with each other and with all; determined henceforth to feel for each other, and with each other . . . so much so that God shall give us that great grace; . . . to give and forgive, even as God gives and forgives, for ever, that so we may be indeed the children of our Father in heaven, whose name is Love.”³

—Charles Kingsley (1819–1875)