

Sunday October 10, 2021

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome & Prayer (Greg W)

In 2016, former American President Barack Obama told attendees at the Democratic National Convention that he believed that; "A lot has happened over the years. And while this nation has been tested by war, and it's been tested by recession and all manner of challenges - I stand before you again tonight, after almost two terms as your president, to tell you I am more optimistic about the future of America than ever before." Little could he know of the testing times ahead, not just for America but for almost every nation as a result of the coronavirus. It's fair to say that most people have been impacted in some way by Covid related restrictions and many may have seen their faith in God and His Sovereignty tested by not being able to meet in person for church each week.

As we join together today for church, it is timely to remind ourselves that the bible has much to say about the place that being tested plays in refining our faith. In James 1:2-4 we read; "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."(NIV)

Having finished our sermon series on Ezekiel last week, today we will be turning our attention to what Mark Chapter 8 has to teach us about trusting in God's promises as we consider how the disciples' trust in Jesus was tested and as the Pharisees test Jesus. Well friends, Martin Luther, the 16th Century Protestant Reformer said; "As is the business of tailors to make clothes and cobblers to make shoes, so it is the business of Christians to pray. Let us pray now..."

Father God, we give you all the glory because you are the King of kings and the Lord of lords. You are worthy of all our praise and worship, and we are filled with awe when we think about the great things you have done upon the earth. You are holy and righteous and you rule your people with justice. We praise you because you are faithful and true, and we know that we can always trust in you.

Lord, we lift up our hearts to you in love and adoration, and praise you for your greatness. You are the great and mighty King and all glory belongs to you. Words cannot describe how awesome you are. There is no other god that can be compared to you and there is none above you. You are the Creator of heaven and earth, and everything belongs to you.

Heavenly Father, we praise and thank You for the glorious victory Christ gained through His death, burial and resurrection, breaking the power of Satan and sin in the lives of all who trust in Jesus' name and banishing death and hell forever in the lives of all who believe in Him. Father, we acknowledge that the victory is Christ's alone but thanks be to God, that by Your great grace You have given us that same wonderful victory, through our Saviour, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Father, although this glorious triumph was completed 2000 years ago, nonetheless it is as potent and powerful in the lives of believers today as it was when the angels declared, & "He is not here - He is risen. "Keep us ever looking to Jesus, knowing that this glorious victory has not lost any of its ancient power, but is the single means of overcoming the world, the flesh and the devil, for all believers who choose to abide in Him and He in them.

We pray that we will run the race that is set before us looking only unto Jesus, and that we may finish the course that You have given to us, as we yield through word and deed to the working of the Holy Spirit

within. We pray all these things in Jesus' name, Amen

Song – Let your Kingdom come

[Let Your Kingdom Come - Sovereign Grace - YouTube](#)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Your glorious cause, O God
Engages our hearts
May Jesus Christ be known
Wherever we are
We ask not for ourselves, but for Your renown
The cross has saved us so we pray
Your kingdom come</p> | <p>2. Give us Your strength, O God
And courage to speak
Perform Your wondrous deeds
Through those who are weak
Lord use us as You want, whatever the test
By grace we'll preach Your gospel
Till our dying breath</p> |
|---|---|

Chorus

*Let Your kingdom come
Let Your will be done
So that everyone might know Your Name
Let Your song be heard everywhere on earth
Till Your sovereign work on earth is done
Let Your kingdom come*

Bible Reading – Mark 8:1-13 (NIV)

During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, ² "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. ³ If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance." ⁴ His disciples answered, "But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?" ⁵ "How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked. "Seven," they replied. ⁶ He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people, and they did so. ⁷ They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. ⁸ The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ⁹ About four thousand were present. After he had sent them away, ¹⁰ he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha. ¹¹ The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. ¹² He sighed deeply and said, "Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to it." ¹³ Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side.

Announcements for 10th October

Focus for the month – Generosity.

If God has been generous to us, how might we be generous back to God? He doesn't need anything from us, for he created and runs the whole world! But he does want to see in us a thankfulness, and a generosity that reflects all that he has done for us. So what might that generous attitude look like in your life? In terms of how you worship the Lord, how you serve Him and how you cheerfully and sacrificially give to ensure that others know his amazing grace given to us all?

Pledges for our future ministry facilities. Last Sunday our Church launched an anonymous pledge campaign to help update our Ministry Facilities at Charlestown. Please spend some time this week thinking and praying about your response. We want to be able to help grow God's Kingdom in this place and one way we can do that is invest money into our buildings to make them spaces where God's word can be preached and God's people can help encourage each other and evangelise those who currently don't have a personal relationship with the Lord. Our pledge campaign ends on Sunday 24th October.

Opening Up. Session met on Wednesday night and decided that our normal four church services will resume once the double vaccinated levels in NSW reaches 80%, most likely on Sunday 31st October. The elders made this decision because they wanted to prioritise the unity of the body of Christ and were willing to wait an extra two weeks in order that everyone might be able to come and worship the Lord together. Some of our small groups might begin to meet up beforehand if all are double vaccinated and desire to meet again face to face. But that is a decision each group can make. The elders appreciate all who have prayed for this decision and we encourage each one of us to *“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace”* (Ephesians 4:1). For more information, please check the email that Stephen sent to all of us in the last couple of days.

Keeping in Touch. Is there someone you could ring today to see how they are going? Maybe someone that you haven't spoken to for last few months?

Christmas Boxes for Operation Christmas Child. Today is the last day to organise your Christmas boxes. With us not being able to meet this year, there has been no opportunity to pick up and drop back boxes filled for kids which have way less than us this Christmas. Thus, the only way to support these children this year is to transfer \$20 per box to our church bank account BY THE END OF TODAY. This will provide a child with a box put together by a local Newcastle representative and sent overseas in time for Christmas. To participate please transfer \$20 to Charlestown Eastlakes Presbyterian Church BSB 062 829, Number 1019 4850 Reference: OCC and you name (name is optional).

Facebook/Video Services. If you have enjoyed a sermon or service why not post a response? Or tell us what you liked about it. The more we interact in this way, the more we encourage those who are working hard for each other and the way the Facebook algorithm works, the wider the video is distributed to others.

Giving. If you would like to support the work of the Church, the best way is to make a deposit in our Church Bank Account. (Charlestown Eastlakes Presbyterian Church BSB 062 829, Number 1019 4850) No need to tell us who you are, better if it is anonymous!

Song – A Christian’s Daily Prayer.

[A Christian's Daily Prayer \[Official Lyric Video\] - YouTube](#)

1. As morning dawns and day awakes,
To You I bring my need
O gracious God, my source of strength,
In You I live and breathe
Each hour is Yours by wisdom planned,
Each deed empowered by sovereign hands
Renew my spirit, help me stand;
Be glorified today

2. As day unfolds, I seek Your will
In all of life’s demands
And though the tempter tries me still,
I cling to Your commands
Let every effort of my life
Display the matchless worth of Christ
Make me a living sacrifice;
Be glorified today

3. As sun gives way to darkest night
Your Spirit still is here
And though my strength fades like the light
New mercies will appear
I rest in You; abide with me
Until our trials and suffering
Give way to final victory
Be glorified, today; be glorified, I pray

Family Matters (God's Generosity).

The rock star Bono once said "The God I believe in isn't short of cash, mister." And he is right, The Psalmist says, the Lord owns the cattle on a thousand hills. The Lord isn't short of money or resources. He can make anything he wants happen. As the missionary Hudson Taylor once famously said "God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply."

So that means we don't ever need to talk about giving because God will always supply our needs? That means we don't need budgets or plans for the future because if we are doing what God has called us to do these things will be magically supplied in his time? Right? Not entirely!

In 2 Corinthians 8, Paul is reminding his friends in Corinth of the need for them to be generous in their giving. For Paul is organizing for all the richer churches of Asia to help out the poorer church in Jerusalem. You see there has been a famine in the land and the people of God in that place were hurting so Paul had got a number of volunteers from a number of Churches in the region to collect money so that they could share in the service of the saints.

So how were people to give to this gospel project?

- They were to remember the grace of giving. God had been gracious to them and because of that, this sort of graciousness should rub off on the believer so they also gave to others graciously.
- They were to give willingly & cheerfully. Not out of guilt or compulsion, they actually wanted to give.
- They were to give sacrificially, not giving out of their excess but giving till it hurt.
- For those who sow sparingly would reap sparingly. But those who sowed generously would also reap generously.

Last week we launched an anonymous pledge campaign at our Church asking people to give generously so that we could better do the work of the gospel in this area by improving our ministry facilities at Charlestown. For we have all inherited our current Church and ministry facilities. Someone else gave them to us and we are using them to the best of our ability. But it is time that we did something for the next generation of believers. And we did something for those outside the church that don't currently know Jesus as Lord. And we do something for those in our midst that don't have what we have but need the preaching of God's word and the fellowship of the saints to help them make their next steps of faith.

So can I ask you to all consider giving a pledge to this appeal. But please do it cheerfully, enthusiastically. Sacrificially. Graciously. Generously. If each one of us can do that, and then if each one of us keeps the work of the Kingdom at the forefront of all we do, then we will be doing God's work in God's way. Which means we will never, ever lack God's supply.

Pastoral Prayer (Simon Mulready)

Heavenly Father,

We thank you for your word read to us today, of your Son, feeding the four thousand, teaching his disciples, giving sight to the blind. Lord we know we could travel to Israel and Jerusalem and walk the streets Jesus walked, to stand on the Mount of Olives, and swim in the Jordan River, but we long to see our saviour face to face, to hear him welcome us into heaven, saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Lord, we thank you that we have been clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and that our saviour is in heaven, interceding for us. We thank you that we do not need to fear the Accuser, but that Christ's death has taken the full penalty for our sins, so that before you, we are robed in white, as if we had never sinned.

We ask for your mercy and help, for the power of your Spirit, that we may walk as Jesus did, living as those who have been brought from death to life.

Lord we pray for those in our church family, who feel their faith is weak, who may not have connected with our online services, who may have lost touch with others at church. We pray for those who are struggling with doubt, for those who are struggling with loneliness, for those struggling with mental health, for those are struggling with temptation. Lord we ask that Satan not be given a foothold. Protect them Lord, by the power of your name. Strengthen them, encourage them, draw them to your word. May their hearts be captured, by the love of our saviour, Jesus.

Father we pray for the marriages within our church. May they be characterised by love, kindness, patience and forgiveness. Where there is bitterness, may there be forgiveness. Where there is anger, may there be gentleness. Where there is sadness, may there be joy. Lord we ask that Satan not be given a foothold. Protect our marriages Lord, by the power of your name.

Lord, we thank you that there seems to be an end in sight for when we are able to return to church. We pray for wisdom for our leaders and elders as they plan the logistics of our return. We pray for safety, grace and unity as we come together again, even through we each may have different opinions on what that should look like. Lord we ask that Satan not be given a foothold. Protect our church Lord, by the power of your name. May we be a light to our community, as we bring a message of hope and forgiveness. May we be challenged in the current season to be a people of generosity and love.

And Father we pray for the new leadership in our state government. We pray for diligence, strength, compassion and integrity for our new Premier, Dominic Perrottet, that he would lead with wisdom and justice, that we might live peaceful and quiet lives, and that the gospel would move freely throughout NSW. We pray these things in the name of your Son, and for his glory. Amen

Bible Reading – Mark 8:14-26 (NIV)

¹⁴ The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. ¹⁵ “Be careful,” Jesus warned them. “Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod.” ¹⁶ They discussed this with one another and said, “It is because we have no bread.” ¹⁷ Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: “Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? ¹⁸ Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don’t you remember? ¹⁹ When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?” “Twelve,” they replied. ²⁰ “And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?” They answered, “Seven. ²¹ He said to them, “Do you still not understand?”

²² They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. ²³ He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man’s eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, “Do you see anything?” ²⁴ He looked up and said, “I see people; they look like trees walking around.” ²⁵ Once more Jesus put his hands on the man’s eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. ²⁶ Jesus sent him home, saying, “Don’t even go into the village.”

Sermon – The Test (Stephen T) <https://youtu.be/p0JKwSOX-44>

At the end of this sermon, I am going to give you all a test based on this passage. Just like your teacher at school once gave you a test or maybe even your professor at university. Just like your boss sometimes tests you to see if you truly understand his directions. Just like members of family often test us to see if we are

listening to what they are saying. I am going to give you a test at the end of the sermon. And the only clue as to the nature of the test I will give you will be found in the passage we are looking at today, Mark 8:1-26.

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We are going to pick up where we left Mark at the end of term 1 last year. So, a quick recap. Mark has introduced us to the one promised by John the Baptist, Jesus, who has preached about the kingdom of God by saying, "Repent and believe in the good news."

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He has then shown evidence that Jesus really is bringing in God's kingdom by healing a paralysed man, claiming to forgive the sins of a paralytic, shown authority over nature, demons, sickness and death. He has even fed 5000 people with just 5 loaves and 2 fish before walking on water. But despite all that he has done, not even his closest followers, his 12 disciples, seem to understand who he really is.

So, like a good teacher, Jesus gives his disciples some revision. He places them in a situation very similar to a previous one, a desolate place, thousands of people and no food and puts

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1. His disciples to the test (verses 1-10)

"During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, ² 'I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. ³ If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance.'"

Now let's set the scene. At the end of Mark 7 we are told that Jesus is in the Decapolis, which is largely Gentile country. Up until recently Jesus had only ministered to the Jews and so when he last fed a crowd of 5000 people in Mark 6, it would have been by and large a Jewish audience. But now a mainly Gentile crowd have followed him and listened to him and been with him for three days and they are now really, really hungry.

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So, they must be pretty keen on working out who this Jesus is. If they are willing to put everything on hold for a few days, even skip meals and sleep rough, that's a pretty good sign, isn't it? Jesus looks out on this vast crowd and he has compassion for them. Jesus cares. He is not just about teaching & spiritual knowledge, he also cares about their physical hunger.

And that compassion led him to think about giving them something to eat. Now I find that interesting because in Mark 6 when there were 5,000 people in the desert, hungry, Mark also says Jesus had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd so he taught them. At that time he shows he cares by teaching them about where they can have their spiritual hunger fed. And in John 6, the apostle John hears Jesus say to these 5000 people *"I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me will never be hungry."* And this reference to teaching is consistent with Jesus' priority in wanting to speak the Word.

So one way to care for people is to provide them with words that will fill their deep spiritual hunger but another way is to provide them with food that will help fill their physical hunger. Both are important to Jesus. The outward and the inward. The physical and the spiritual. And that is something we need to remember also. The gospel is good news for the whole person. And we as followers of Jesus need to be ministering to the whole person as well.

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But do Jesus disciples understand that? ⁴ *"His disciples answered, 'But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?'"* ⁵ *"How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked. "Seven," they replied."*

Its de ja vu over again, isn't it? Jesus is testing his disciples. He has put his disciples in a situation where they should have remembered the feeding of the 5000 and known that Jesus can stretch any amount of fish and bread to feed even a multitude. But they are blind to what they should be seeing. They are deaf to what they should be hearing. They don't understand the nature of the test that Jesus is giving them.

Now let's not be too hard on the disciples because I know that I have often failed to remember the amazing things that God has done in my life. And I have often not had the faith to trust that Jesus would provide when I look all around me & there is just not enough to go around. Often in my life I have failed to get what God wants me to do. And so I need a second, third and maybe even a hundred time of revision. And I am sure you are the same.

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⁶“He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves & given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people, and they did so. ⁷They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. ⁸The people ate & were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ⁹About four thousand were present.”

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Jesus cares and then Jesus provides. He can actually stretch a snack for a few men into a feast for 4000 people. For He has power over nature. He has the ability to feed a crowd. But it is not just all about him. Notice he thanks God for the bread and then he thanks God for the fish. His heavenly father is the sole and sufficient source of this food. God is able to provide for both the Jew and the Gentile. And so, when he does so and even before he does so, Jesus models for his followers an attitude of gratitude, a disposition of thanks.

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Many years ago, when Rudyard Kipling was a popular writer, it was reported that he was getting 10 shillings for every word he wrote. Some students at Oxford University, who were not impressed with Kipling, sent him 10 shillings with a request that he send them one of his very best words. He cabled back one word - “thanks!” When you and I see that Jesus cares and that Jesus provides we should also be filled with thanks.

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Jesus cares, Jesus provides and then Jesus satisfies. He doesn't just provide these people with a snack but their stomachs are filled and there are even 7 basketfuls of leftovers. What abundance. What super abundance! The size of the task was huge but Jesus' provision is even bigger. He is God after all. He is all powerful, all knowing, all sufficient. He doesn't need our help to do God's work. He knows that most of the things he asks us to do are beyond our ability. That's when we need to remember his availability.

And the disciples have forgotten that, so Jesus' test brings that to light. They could have answered Jesus' concern for the crowd by asking him to do what he has done before and give them manna from heaven. But instead, they look at their own feeble resources and say this is too big for me. They failed to remember that nothing is too hard for the Lord!

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2. Jesus tests the disciples and then secondly **the Pharisees test Jesus**

*¹¹“The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. **To test him**, they asked him for a sign from heaven. ¹²He sighed deeply and said, “Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to it.” ¹³Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side.”*

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The focus now shifts from the disciples to the Pharisees. They test Jesus, they ask him for a sign from heaven. Not so they might believe but because they want to trap him. You see the disciples do not see what God is doing through Jesus but the Pharisees don't want to see!

You see Jesus has already given them a sign. The feeding of the 4000 in the wilderness is a sign of God's care and God's power and God's abundance delivered to people through Jesus. And the incident before that Jesus had given them another sign, he had healed a deaf and mute man. And both of those miracles were fulfillments of Isaiah 35 where the prophet had predicted that the Messiah would open the eyes of the blind and unstop the ears of the deaf, that the lame would like a deer and the mute tongue shout for joy and that water would gush forth from the wilderness and streams of life from the desert.

If the Pharisees wanted to see, it was all there right before their very eyes. But they don't want to see. And they continue not to see even when Jesus gives them his most definitive sign, his death on the cross and his resurrection back to life. In this amazing miracle he shows God's power over sin, over Satan, even over death. He shows how he cares for the Jew & the Gentile & provides them with the salvation they can't obtain by themselves. And he doesn't just give them the bare minimum, he gives them life, life to the full, eternal life.

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The Pharisees want a sign from Jesus and his response is a sigh. Their response brings him deep grief and disappointment. How tragic that God's own chosen people would test their Messiah. How heart breaking that God would send them a Saviour and they don't even want to see what God's agent is doing right before their very eyes.

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That just reminds us all that if you can't see God at work in the person of Jesus Christ, no evidence will ever convince you otherwise. If you can't see God's care, God's provision, God's abundance in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, you are so blind you will never, ever see. And we know that, don't we? We can see so much when we look at Jesus & yet many others can see so little. He is the author & perfecter of our faith & others see him as a waste of space. The Pharisees test Jesus but in the end, they are not the one writing the test, Jesus is. They are the ones failing the test. But so too are the disciples, for as we go on, we see that

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3. The disciples fail the test (verses 14-21)

¹⁴ "The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. ¹⁵ "Be careful," Jesus warned them. "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod." ¹⁶ They discussed this with one another & said, "It is because we have no bread."

Bread. Why are they worried about bread? If you were with someone who could feed over 4000 people & have more bread left over than the amount you started with, would you worry about not having bread as you crossed the sea of Galilee? No, you wouldn't worry.

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But it is not just about bread, Jesus wants to talk to them about yeast. ¹⁵ "Be careful, Jesus warned them. "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod." ¹⁶ They discussed this with one another and said, "It is because we have no bread."

No, it's not about bread, it's about yeast. It only takes a tiny bit of yeast to fill the whole loaf and get it to rise. And it is only takes a little unbelief, like that of the Pharisees and King Herod to affect the whole of the Christian life. Sin is like that. If we have an unrepentant heart, if we think we don't need Jesus at all, if we fail to see or don't want to see what the Lord is offering us through his Son Jesus, then sin will creep into every corner of our lives.

And it is a real warning for isn't that what happened to Judas. He is one of the 12, he sees everything that all the others see and yet Satan enters into Judas. The little bit of yeast has taken over the whole loaf of this disciple. For it is not about seeking signs. It is not about craving after proof or miracles. It is listening to

what Jesus is saying, seeing what Jesus is doing, understanding who Jesus really is. Which is why Mark continues,

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¹⁷ "Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened?" ¹⁸ Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear?" Slide 18 ¹⁹ When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" "Twelve," they replied. ²⁰ "And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" They answered, "Seven. ²¹ He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"

Do you not understand? The disciple's inability to understand puts them in the same boat as the Pharisees and as Herod. But notices there is no problem with their memory though. They can quote all the stats about what happened with the two feeding miracles. But they are still blind, for they have failed to pass Jesus' test. They haven't put two and two together and got four. They still don't realise that Jesus can provide all the bread they need. Because he is not the just the bread of life, he is also the master baker.

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And the only way that the disciples, the Pharisees, Herod or even you & I can understand, will ever understand, is if God miraculously does something in our lives, if God reveals himself to us, if God opens up their eyes. Which is what he will do next to a blind man.

But before we get there, I am just wondering is that something you prayed for this morning? That God would reveal himself to us and those that we love this morning? That God would open up our eyes, that God would give us all understanding, that God would enable us all to see who Jesus really is? Because all human beings are blind without the influence of the Spirit of God. Many of us can't see and others don't want to see. So, what do we need to do? What are we going to do? To see, to hear, to understand? Let's see what happens next.

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4. The Ultimate Test (verses 22-26)

²² "They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. ²³ He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes & put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?" Slide 21 ²⁴ He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around." ²⁵ Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, & he saw everything clearly. ²⁶ Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't even go into the village."

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The blind man came and begged Jesus to touch him. He couldn't see by himself. He couldn't make head nor tail of what is going on all around him but Jesus can. So, he begs Jesus to touch him. That's it, isn't it? That's apparently what Jesus has done for others before him. One touch of Jesus and whammo everything is different, everything has been transformed. Yes, Jesus please, please, please touch me.

And our text says that Jesus takes him by the hand. But nothing happens. He led him outside the village & still nothing happens. He put spit on his eyes. Still nothing. And then he puts his hands on him & he can see people but they are like trees walking around. What is going on here? Has Jesus lost his power? Is this case too difficult to him? Houston, we have a problem.

No, we don't have a problem. This is a visual parable. A picture that is summarising this part of the gospel of Mark. Yes, human speaking we will never see or understand without the help of Jesus. But that seeing, that hearing, that understanding, doesn't come straight away but gradually. As Jesus touches us, once, twice, many times, our sight can be restored, our ears can be opened and our minds starts to grasp the things of God.

You see God has sent us his son Jesus. Jesus is the one who can feed the hungry, both those who are physically hungry and those who are hungry for the things of God. Jesus can give sight to the physically blind and those who are spiritually blind. Jesus can open the ears of the deaf and those who are deaf to the call of the Lord on their lives. And Jesus can give us both brains to know what is going on around us and understanding & perceive what God is doing all around us. But all these things don't happen straight away but over time. And they only happen to us if we come to him and let him work on us, on his terms and not on ours.

So often we test God or we tell him what to do in our lives. we make long prayer lists or set out demands that he must do this for us if we are going to believe in him or if we are truly going to trust in him. In the words of preacher Kent Hughes

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"We ought to come to God for his gracious healing power but we must not tell him how to do it. We may and must ask for spiritual growth but we must not lay down guidelines as to how God ought to produce this. We must for example ask God to develop our spirit lives & then when he pulls out the shears & begins to prune say "No Lord, you can't do it that way!" Do not ask the Lord to make you sensitive to others & then resent the difficult person who crosses your life at work or in the Church. God often circumvents a presumptuous, proud spirit whereas spiritual grace may be mediated by a friendship, a discipline or a hardship."

Whatever the way God does things, he will do things. The important thing is that he is working on us, changing us, giving us the eyes and the ears and the understanding that we all need to see the works of God all around us.

Slide 25

Perhaps you've heard the story about the three blind men Jesus healed who got together at Maccas for a cup of coffee. They talked about how wonderful it was to see now. They marvelled about the colour of flowers, the beauty of a sunset. They were all laughing and having a great time together, when the guy we read about here in Mark 8 said, "Do you remember when Jesus first spit and put his saliva on your eyes?" One of the other guys said, "No, he just said to me, 'Receive your sight' and I could see." The third guy said, "Wait a minute. With me he put mud on my eyes." Suddenly they start looking at each other distrustfully. This guy says, "If Jesus didn't use his saliva, then he didn't heal you. You're still blind!" One of the other guys said, "Mud? Who ever heard of using mud? That's the dumbest thing I've ever heard. You're still blind." Right then they formed three different denominations: The mudites, the spitites, and the speakites.

How crazy is that? Thinking that the way God works on us is the only way that God ever works. Thinking that the work of God, of holiness, of spiritual insight comes to us straight away. Thinking that God can't and won't lead others on a different journey than the one we are embarked upon. Yes, it is only the Lord who opens up our eyes and removes our spiritual blindness. And the Lord only does that when we come to Jesus, there is no other way that through Jesus. But just as Jesus uses a variety of means to heal people, he uses a variety of means to make us holy as well.

And that is the journey Jesus has taken me on and I am still a long way from getting to the destination. I am still far to self-sufficient & independent. Often, I don't think I really need Jesus, for I can do this part on my own Lord. For I am so much like the disciples and like the blind man. I am still hungry for the things of God. I am still blind to what he is doing all around me. I am too often deaf to his voice speaking to me through his word. And my understanding is far from perfect. And Jesus knows this. And he has compassion on people like me and you. And he wants to provide the things we need and share with us out of his super abundance. Which means each and every day I need to come to Jesus, look to Jesus, listen to Jesus and follow Jesus.

So this is the test that we are being set by our passage today, made up of just four questions

1. Do you have eyes to see? If so, what is he doing around you today?
2. Do you have the ears to hear? If so, what is he saying to you today from his Word?
3. Do you understand what God wants to teach you today, if so, what have you learnt?
4. And lastly the answers will not be written on a piece of paper but on the canvas of your life today. So, the last question is, at the end of today will you and will others and will the Lord see that God has been at work in your life? If so, what is he doing to make you gradually, oh so gradually more like his Son Jesus?

Song – This Life I live

[This Life I Live \(Song Leading Video\)](#) [Emu Music.mp4 - Google Drive](#)

1. This life I live is not my own,
For my redeemer paid the price.
He took it to be his alone,
To be his treasure and his prize.
The things of earth I leave behind
To live in worship of my King.
His is the right to rule my life,
Mine is the joy to live for him.
2. I died to sin upon the cross
I'm bound to Jesus in his death
The old is gone, and now I must
Rely on him for every breath
With every footstep that I tread
What mysteries he has in store
I cannot know what lies ahead
But know that he has gone before.
3. There is a voice that pierced the grave
A power that rolled the stone away
A sound of life, I know I'm saved
The voice of God has called my name
So I will rise, and in the air
Behold the glory of the King
I will not fear to meet him there
I know my life is hid with him.

Benediction

“With every footstep that I tread
What mysteries he has in store
I cannot know what lies ahead
But know that he has gone before.”

Morning Tea

Why not join our ZOOM morning tea at 10:45?

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86821167331?pwd=dTZ6ekZsU09CblZPTHlrdktBYWJodz09>

Meeting ID: 868 2116 7331

Passcode: 305559