

Handout 6: Gospel of Mark Notes (Talk 17)
Ryan Carroll, Reformation Fellowship, May 30, 2021

Summary: Mk. 6:33-52 AND 8:1-26

Mark records Jesus miraculously feeding large multitudes on two different occasions. Just as the eye witnesses/disciples were forced to grapple with the implications of the two parallel miracles, so too the narrative placement of the miracles invites readers to compare both events and grapple with the implications for what the miracles meant AND why it was the disciples were so slow to understand.

Outline:

1. Review leading up to this week:

- a. Jesus' true identity: one of Mark's thematic threads
 - i. The "Mystery of the Kingdom" (4:11): a question of Jesus' identity
 1. But do the disciples understand that mystery?
- b. Activity (in order) that leads to BOTH questions and proposed answers about Jesus' identity:
 - i. Stilling the storm (4:35-41)
 - ii. Exorcising the demoniac (5:1-20)
 - iii. Healing the woman with a 12-year hemorrhage (5:25-34)
 - iv. Raising Jairus' daughter from the dead (5:35-43)
 - v. **Feeding 5,000 (6:33-44)**
 - vi. **Walking on water AND stilling another storm (6:45-52)**
 - vii. Pronouncing authority over Clean and Unclean (7:1-23)
 - viii. Exorcising a demon from a Gentile girl (7:24-30)
 - ix. **Healing a man who was both deaf and dumb (7:31-37)**
 - x. **Feeding 4,000 (8:1-10)**
 - xi. **Healing a blind man (8:22-26)**
- c. Questions about Jesus' identity arise as he continues miraculous deeds:
 - i. The disciples: "Who then is this?" (4:41)
 - ii. Jesus' hometown crowd: "Isn't this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" (6:3)

- d. Some onlookers venture answers about Jesus' identity along the way:
 - i. Herod: "It's John the Baptist risen from the dead!" (6:14)
 - ii. "Others": "He is Elijah!" (6:15)
 - iii. Still "Others": "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets *of old*" (6:15)
- e. Culmination of thematic thread: Jesus' forces the issue of his identity
 - i. Jesus finally turns the question on his disciples (Near the end of Jesus' Galilean ministry)
 - 1. "Who do people say that I am?" (8:27)
 - 2. "Who do YOU say that I am?" (8:29)
 - a. Mystery of the Kingdom Solved: "You are the Messiah"—Peter (8:29b)

2. Background: Mark's Feeding Miracles (Ch. 6/8)

- a. Other Gospel's Feeding Miracle accounts:
 - i. Matthew is only other Gospel that includes both feeding miracles of 5,000 and then 4,000 (Mt. 14/15)
 - 1. It's Matthew's account that leads us to assume that the feeding miracles fed thousands more than the traditional number given by the Gospel writers.
 - ii. Luke includes only one feeding event: Feeding of 5,000 (Lk. 9)
 - 1. Unlike in Mark, it's the feeding of 5,000 (not 4,000) that immediately precedes Jesus questioning disciples about his identity (Lk. 9:18-21)
 - iii. John includes only one feeding event: Feeding of 5,000 (Jn. 6)
 - 1. John's unique record:
 - a. Only John's account highlights the multitude's response to the miracle:
 - i. "This is truly the prophet who is come into the world!" (Jn. 6:14)
 - 1. Therefore: "They wanted to make him king" (Jn. 6:15)
 - ii. No other account includes any mention of a response on the part of the recipients OR...
 - iii. Even an acknowledgment that a miracle occurred.

- b. John records miracle as a “Sign” that spoke to a deeper reality: Jesus did not come to provide bread, but Eternal Life (seen through ensuing discussion between Jesus and the multitude who witnessed/experienced it)

3. Feeding the multitudes 2x: A Parallel Look at the Gospel of Mark’s Feeding Miracles of Chapter 6 and 8 (see handout)

- a. Mark’s narrative invites readers to compare the two incidents
 - i. Based upon the similarities between the two events
 - ii. Based upon their relative proximity to each other within the narrative structure
 - iii. Based upon Mark’s introduction to the second feeding miracle: “When there was **AGAIN** a great multitude with nothing to eat”
 - iv. Based upon Jesus questioning the disciples about the two events and whether they had “understood” the events (8:17-21)
- b. What are the similarities between both events?
 - i. Lots of repetition of key words and actions (see bolded words/phrases on handout)
 - ii. Loaves and Fish used
 - iii. “All ate and were satisfied”
 - iv. Several baskets full of extra bread/fish leftover
 - v. No response/acknowledgment on the part of the crowd OR disciples that a miracle had taken place:
 - 1. Compare the non-response on the part of the eye-witnesses to the feeding miracle with every other miracle that Jesus performs in Mark’s gospel: (some examples repeated by Mark two or more times)
 - a. “And they became very much afraid”
 - b. “And they were all amazed”
 - c. “And they were astonished”
 - d. “And they were offended at him”
 - e. “All were amazed and glorifying God”
 - f. “They wanted to kill him”

- g. “and he went out and proclaimed it freely”
 - h. “and they were utterly astonished... He has done all things well”
- c. Interesting differences between both accounts:
- i. Mark’s introduction to second feeding focuses on the reality of the similar nature of the event: “In those days, when there was **again** a large crowd without anything to eat...”
 - ii. Initiating the discussion about food:
 - 1. First feeding: the disciples initiated with Jesus to have him let multitude go to find food
 - 2. Second feeding: Jesus initiates the conversation with the disciples about feeling responsible for the crowd to eat after having remained with him for three days
 - a. Presumably Jesus is testing disciples during second feeding?

4. Deaf and Blind disciples?

- a. Consider the following:
 - i. The disciples see with their own eyes the first feeding miracle
 - ii. The disciples hear with their own ears: (1) Jesus question them about what is to be done for the hungry multitude, (2) Jesus ask about how much food is present to work with, (3) command the multitude to recline on the grass, (4) bless God for the food, etc...
 - iii. The disciples actively participate in the process of helping feed the 5,000
 - iv. The disciples are presumably also sated by Jesus when he feeds the 5,000.
 - v. The disciples help to gather the leftover food into 12 baskets after feeding the 5,000
- b. Therefore, when the second event occurs:
 - i. So... “when **AGAIN** there was a multitude without food”
 - ii. AND when, Jesus (having fed the first multitude) says to the disciples, “I feel compassion for the people who have nothing to eat”

1. The reader is dumbstruck by the disciples' response to Jesus (after all of the above):
 - a. "How will anyone be able to satisfy these men with bread in such a desolate place?" (8:4)
 - b. How indeed?!
 2. The reader is dumbstruck by the disciples' discussion after the second feeding miracle about having forgotten to take more bread with them in the boat
 - c. Notice that the second feeding miracle is surrounded by Jesus healing a deaf/mute person AND a blind person
- 5. What details help to clarify the disciples "lack of understanding" about each incident**
- a. Boating incident after feeding the 5,000
 - i. "The wind stopped and they were greatly astonished for they had not gained any insight from the 'loaves' but their heart was hardened" (6:51-52)
 - b. Boating incident after feeding the 4,000
 - i. Do you have eyes but do not see? Ears but do not hear?
 - ii. How many loaves were left after feeding 5,000?
 - iii. How many loaves were left after feeding 4,000?"
 - iv. Do you not understand??
 - c. In both boating incidents, Mark leads the reader to ask important question: What is it that the loaves were supposed to help the disciples understand?
- 6. Narrative Context of second feeding miracle:**
- a. Preceded by a deaf man being healed by Jesus
 - b. Followed by a blind man being healed by Jesus
 - i. Notice how the blind man was healed
- 7. Question that must be answered: What purpose are the feeding miracles serving in Mark's narrative?**
- a. Related questions:
 - i. What do the miracles communicate about Jesus?
 - ii. What do the miracles communicate about the disciples?