

Introduction

1. How did you learn to multiply? Did you learn using a new method or the old method?
 - a. I learned it the old-fashioned way by memorizing my times tables.
 - b. There are new ways being taught in our schools today that can also help students with this life skill.
2. Jesus knew how to multiply using divine multiplication.
 - a. We have already seen the miraculous multiplication Jesus performed when He took five small loaves of bread and two fish and fed over 5000 people with them in Mk 6:30-44.
 - b. In today's passage, Jesus divinely multiplied seven loaves of bread and a few fish to feed over 4000 people in a mixed Jewish/Gentile crowd.
3. **Read Mk 8:1-13.**

A. The Need (1-3)

1. Jesus, as usual, drew a large crowd
 - a. The people had been listening to Jesus' teaching for three days and had run out of food.
 - b. Jesus had "compassion" (Gk., *splagchnizomai*) on them.
 - c. Jesus feared that they would collapse on their way home as many had come from long distances.
 - d. So, He worked with His disciples to get them something to eat.
2. This miracle is distinct from the Feeding of the 5000 in Mk 6:32-44 as Warren Wiersbe makes clear when he writes, "Those who try to find contradictions in the Bible often confuse this miracle with the feeding of the five thousand, which is recorded in all four gospels. Only Matthew and Mark record this event, and it is not difficult to distinguish it from the other miracle of the multiplying of bread and fish. The first miracle took place in Galilee, near Bethsaida, and involved predominantly Jews. This miracle took place near the Decapolis and involved mostly Gentiles. In the first miracle, Jesus started with five loaves and two fish, while here He had seven loaves 'and a few fish.' The five thousand had been with Him one day, but the four thousand had been with Him three days. Twelve baskets of fragments were left over after the five thousand were fed, but only seven baskets after the four thousand were fed. There were even two different kinds of baskets used; for the five thousand, small wicker lunch baskets (*kophinos*); for the four thousand, large hampers, big enough to hold a man (*spuris*, see Acts 9:25)" (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Diligent*, 94-95).
3. If there is any doubt about these miraculous feeding being two separate events, Jesus Himself indicates that there distinct the next passage which we will study next week. He reminds His disciples, "When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up? . . . And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" (Mk 8:19-20)
4. William L. Lane add an important insight about the unique purpose behind each of these miraculous feedings. "As for the composition of the multitude, it has been common since the time of Augustine to assign the first feeding to the nourishment of Israel and the second to the Gentiles. There can be no doubt of the Gentile associations of the Decapolis and of Mark's interest in the apostolic mission to the Gentiles" (William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 274).

B. The Resources (4-5)

1. Jesus had already called His disciples (v. 1) into a conference about the need of the people for food.
 - a. Jesus asked his disciples for an inventory of resources.
 - b. The disciples questioned the task - "But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?"
 - c. This is essentially the same question and the same thinking that they expressed before Jesus miraculously fed the 5000. They were slow learners.

- d. Wiersbe shares, “Once again, we are encouraged by our Lord’s compassion and His complete control over the situation. However, we are discouraged by the blindness and unbelief of the disciples. Had they completely forgotten the previous miracle? Let’s not be too hard on them. How many times have we forgotten the mercies of the Lord? We need to remind ourselves that Jesus Christ is still the same and has the solution to every problem. All we need do is trust Him, give Him our all, and obey (Wiersbe, 95).
2. Jesus didn’t get sidetracked by the disciples seeming lack of faith. Instead, He asked the critical question, “How many loaves do you have?”
 - a. The disciples answered “Seven.”
 - b. They also had “a few small fish.”

C. Divine Multiplication (6-9a)

1. Jesus had the people sit on the ground—It was a picnic!
2. Jesus followed a familiar pattern.
 - a. He took the resources available.
 - b. He “gave thanks” (Gk. *eucharistesas*).
 - c. He broke the loaves and gave them back to His disciples to distribute.
 - d. More resources—“a few small fish”—were discovered. Jesus also gave thanks for them and gave them to his disciples to distribute.
 - e. Jesus took what little they had, applied divine multiplication, and made the little more than sufficient to meet the people’s need.
3. About 4000 men were present for this miracle. The total number fed was most likely 10,000 counting women and children.

D. Questions, Questions (9b-13)

1. After meeting the people’s needs, Jesus departed with His disciples in a boat for the “region of Dalmanutha” (10).
 - a. Where is Dalmanutha?
 - b. James Brooks comments, “The location of ‘Dalmanutha’ is unknown. Matthew 15:39 has ‘Magadan,’ but its location is also unknown. ‘Magdala’ (among others) is a variant reading with fair attestation in both passages. . . . Magdala, on the western shore of the lake, was certainly in the right place for a landing following a crossing from the eastern side” (James Brooks, *Mark*, 126).
2. The Pharisees were ready and waiting for Jesus when He landed back in Jewish territory.
 - a. They began to question Him.
 - 1) No specific questions are given, but they were likely the same ones they had asked before.
 - 2) What or who is your source of power?
 - 3) By what authority do you teach and do the things you do?
 - 4) Why don’t you follow all the Jewish rules like us?
 - 5) Maybe they even asked, why did you help those Gentiles in Tyre/Sidon and The Decapolis?
 - b. The Jewish leaders planned to “test” (Gk., *suzetein*) Jesus.
 - 1) They may have thought they were following the law by testing a prophet (e.g., Deut 13:2-6; 18:18-22).
 - 2) However, what they proposed was more in line with the tests of Satan, which demanded Jesus to perform dramatic and selfish actions (cf., Mk 1:3; Lk 4:1-13).
3. The Pharisees demanded that Jesus provide them with a “sign from heaven” (Gk., *semeion apo tou ouranou*).
 - a. Brooks clarifies the type of test and sign they wanted when he writes, “What the Pharisees wanted was not another healing or exorcism or feeding or subjugation of nature but a ‘sign from heaven,’ i.e., an apocalyptic manifestation that would prove beyond all doubt that Jesus had God’s approval. The word ‘heaven’ is a Jewish substitute for the divine name. The Pharisees wanted God to vindicate Jesus before they would accept him. . . . Jesus’ refusal to provide a sign is quite in keeping with his initial call to ‘believe the good news’ (1:15). An irrefutable sign would compel faith. Commitment to Jesus must be voluntary” (Brooks, 127).

- b. Daniel Akin adds, “We have been here before (2:6-7,16,18,24; 3:1-6,22; 7:1-5). In spite of His numerous miracles and teachings that give evidence that He is the Messiah, they reject what they see and hear, and they raise the stakes in their confrontation with Jesus” (Daniel Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Mark*, 167).
4. Jesus had fulfilled the legitimate need of hungry followers for food, but Jesus would not fulfill the selfish request of these spiritually empty Jewish leaders for a sign.
 - a. Jesus sighed deeply (Gk., *anastenaksas to pneumatic autou* – “sighed deeply in his spirit”)
 - b. Jesus’ “sigh” here is described using the same word used to describe His sigh in healing the deaf mute man (cf., Mk 7:34).
 - 1) In healing the deaf mute man, Jesus’ sigh was an inner groan, a prayer, to the Father for the power to heal the man.
 - 2) Jesus’ sigh in this verse was also an inner groan but was a groan of frustration with the Pharisees’ lack of faith.
 - c. Jesus was perplexed with the Pharisees’ ongoing questioning and replied to their request for a sign by asking a question which included His response to their request, “Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to it.” (12)
 - d. The test they proposed would not be taken. No sign of the type they desired would be given, at least not yet.
 - e. The ultimate sign of God’s acceptance of Jesus would be given with His resurrection after the unbelieving Pharisees contrived His execution on a Roman cross (cf., Mt 16:4).
 - f. The Pharisees in their prideful unbelief would also reject this ultimate sign!
 5. Jesus left the Pharisees standing with their questions unanswered and departed with His disciples across the Sea of Galilee to the other side—back to the eastern shore.
 6. Akin notes, “Nothing more can be said. Abruptly, as if a sign of divine judgment, Jesus leaves them. These religious zealots were physically so close to our Lord, but they had never been further away where it really mattered: in their hearts. They have lost Him. Not long from now they will crucify Him. Unbelief is evil and tragic when it says no to the gospel and God’s Son” (Akin, 167).

E. Reflections

1. Jesus knows our needs and has compassion for us. He will provide what we need as we trust Him.
2. What needs do people have in our church and community?
 - a. What resources, perhaps undiscovered or unused, do we already have?
 - b. Will we give what little resources we have to the Lord for His use?
 - c. Will we allow God to apply divine multiplication on our little to make it more than enough for the need?
 - d. Will we faithfully distribute all that comes to us multiplied from Jesus’ hand?
 - e. Will we give thanks for divine multiplication of limited resources into more than we need?
3. We must pay attention and learn from “teachable moments” that Jesus brings into our lives.
4. Jesus still calls on us to meet the needs of others and to trust Him in the process to supply what is needed.
5. A little can become a lot in the hands of God, who applies divine multiplication. What little will you give to the glory of our multiplying God?
6. How many times have you forgotten the mercies of the Lord?
 - a. Remember and give Him thanks for those past mercies.
 - b. Remember and trust Him to provide the mercy you need for today, and tomorrow, and the next day.
7. Are you testing Jesus for a sign or trusting Him by faith?