

## The Cross Shaped Life: Shaped by Compassion (Mark 8.1-13)

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**Dominant Thought: Jesus welcomes outsiders with care.**

**Objectives:**

**I want my listeners to learn how Jesus cares for outsiders.**

**I want my listeners to feel compassion for those in need.**

**I want my listeners to care for someone who is not in the church yet.**

On Wednesday, I visited two men from our church, Blake Lucas and Earl Green. They both work at the school in Pawnee. I brought my lunch and I caught up with them both on Earl's lunch break. We sat down in Earl's third grade classroom. Blake prayed. We ate and had a life-giving visit over lunch. One highlight from our time together happened when a kindergartener wandered into the classroom. She came up to Earl and without saying a word gave him a hug. It was beautiful. Life-giving.

However, you may remember lunches at school were not so life-giving. I'm not talking about the food, but the tables. If I remember right, the lunchroom can be a depressing experience. Everyone has their special tables with their friends. It's like a social pecking order. Then, there's the table with the kid sitting alone. Everyone was afraid to be seen with this student, let alone invite them to their table. Do you know that kid? Were you that kid?

Mealtimes can be good times, or they can be bad times.

In our time together, I'd like to glance over the last part of [Mark 6](#) through [Mark 7](#), and then land with the opening verses of [Mark 8](#). This section, beginning in [Mark 6.30](#) and concluding with [Mark 8.21](#), is bookended by miraculous feedings. In [Mark 6](#), Jesus feeds 5,000 men, plus women and children. In [Mark 8](#), Jesus feeds 4,000 people. Both feedings are miraculous. Both feedings display the compassion of Jesus. Both have people satisfied with leftovers.

In [Mark 6:34](#), we read "When he [Jesus] went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had **compassion** on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things."

He feeds the crowds with five loaves of bread and two fish. They eat and are satisfied. The disciples pick up twelve baskets full of leftovers.

The scene changes with Mark's favorite word, "Immediately." The disciples get into a boat. Jesus goes up on a mountain to pray. Then, Jesus comes walking on the water. The disciples are terrified. Jesus reassures them. They are amazed. Then Mark gives this note of commentary in [Mark 6:52](#), "for they did not understand about the loaves, but their **hearts were hardened.**"

In the next scene, Jesus heals many people. They want to touch the fringe of his cloak much like the bleeding woman from [Mark 5](#). Mark states, "As many as touched it were made well" ([Mark 6.56](#)).

As we recap these three scenes: Jesus feeds 5,000 plus people, Jesus walks on water, Jesus heals many sick people. Then, the Pharisees come and ask Jesus a question in [Mark 7:5](#), "And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, 'Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?'"

Instead of focusing on the healings in their region, they are more focused on the rituals of their traditions. The food theme continues with the washing of hands, but Jesus says, "It's not about food or the ceremonial washings." It's about the heart. Jesus replies in [Mark 7:20–23](#), "And he said, 'What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, **out of the heart of man**, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.'"

In [Mark 7.24](#), we begin another series of three miracles. All three take place in Gentile territory, enemy territory of the Jews. The first story describes a Greek woman born in Syrian Phoenicia. She falls down at the feet of Jesus and asks Him to heal her daughter from an unclean spirit. Remember, the Pharisees asked about unclean hands. Now, Jesus in unclean territory encounters a woman who has a daughter with an unclean spirit. Jesus offers here a cryptic and strange answer. In [Mark 7:27](#), we read, "And he [Jesus] said to her, 'Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.'" Is Jesus calling this woman a dog? He seems to be talking about the difference between Jews and Gentiles. Maybe Jesus is trying to draw out her faith some more. She replies in [Mark 7:28](#), "Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Jesus affirms her answer and tells her to go

on home. The demon has left her daughter. She returns home and the demon is gone. Story one in this series concludes with an outsider getting some crumbs of compassion from Jesus.

In story two, Jesus returns to the Ten Cities area where Jesus cast out the legion of demons in [Mark 5](#). They asked Jesus to leave and He leaves. The healed man wants to come with Jesus. Instead, Jesus sent him to tell his friends and family about the mercy of God. In [Mark 7.31-37](#), Jesus heals a deaf man. More crumbs of compassion to outsiders.

Now, we come to [Mark 8](#), the third story in this series of miracles in enemy territory. Let's read [Mark 8.1-13](#).

I'm adapting two headings from Scot McKnight's book, *Mark: Living a Jesus Shaped Life*.

***First, Faith in Jesus reflects compassion.*** Throughout the gospel of Mark, we follow the disciples in their journey with Jesus. Their story may look a lot like our story. Much of the time, the disciples just don't get it.

Notice how long the crowds have been with Jesus. 3 days is quite a long stretch without any food. My son pointed out that at the first feeding in [Mark 6](#) in Jewish territory, they feed the people at the end of the first day. In enemy territory, three days go by before they are fed.

Jesus has compassion on these people for several reasons. It's been three days. They've come a long way. They may faint on the way home.

Jesus cares for people. We encounter the compassion of Jesus throughout Mark's gospel. He willingly touched a leper and cleansed him ([Mark 1.41](#)). Jesus had compassion on hungry people ([Mark 6.34](#); [8.2](#)). In [Mark 9.22](#), a father asks Jesus, "take pity on us and help us." The word compassion is related to the deep inside of your body. It's like your intestines, your bowels, your guts. Compassion is gut level care for people.

One of my favorite stories growing up with the books by Beverly Cleary was about the young girl, Ramona Quimby. I believe it is in the book, *Ramona the Brave*, Ramona finds herself in a situation where she needs to express herself. She feels overlooked. She thinks of a powerful word. The word she chooses is, "Guts." We may think of her as "gutsy." Guts, deep inside a person. Compassionate care. As followers of Jesus, our trust in

our compassionate Savior should reflect compassion and care for those who are outside of the church body.

### ***Second, Faith in Jesus gives satisfaction.***

With the bread and the fish, Jesus gives thanks, blessed them and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. The disciples were commissioned to participate in passing this blessing to the hungry crowd. I wonder if the disciples had a hard time handing food out to those who may have been perceived as enemies.

### **Mark: Living a Jesus-Shaped Life (New Testament Everyday Bible Study Series) Faith Elicits Satisfaction**

I can explain this only one way: God's provisions swell in the giving, and our gratitude grows in the receiving.

"The crumbs falling from the table ([Mark 7.28](#)) have turned into basketfuls of provisions" (Scot McKnight, *Mark: Living a Jesus Shaped Life*).

As God provided for His people the manna in the wilderness ([Exodus 16.14-15](#)), so Jesus, the Son of God, provided bread for the nations in this wilderness. The Psalmist described God's care for His people in the wilderness in [Psalm 78:25](#), "Man ate of the bread of the angels; he sent them food in abundance."

As we follow Jesus, we need to remember God is our provider. He can and will provide. He has provided for us. And He commissions us to show compassion on our neighbors and the nations.

**Jesus welcomes outsiders with care.** I think He expects His followers to do the same.

Fred Craddock, a preacher, tells a story in his sermon, "A Cloud of witnesses." He was leaving church one morning on his way to a meeting. He went out the back after the worship service where the choir members were putting away their robes. On his way through, he told one lady how he appreciated the anthem they sang. She replied, "Well, I hope so. That's it." "What do you mean, 'That's it.'" She said, "I'm hanging it up." You're hanging it up? I could see her hanging up her robe. "What's the matter with you?" I thought she was retiring. She's sung in the choir for about 103 years. Voice was beginning to crack a little. No, I'm not retiring. I'm quitting. I've finally accepted the question that's been haunting me for years. I sat up in the choir and looked

out and saw the minister, the elders at the table, the ushers. And it finally sunk in on me, "Who cares?" I said, "Who cares?" Yes, she said, "Who cares? Who cares whether I'm in the choir...whether I'm here or not." I told her she was probably having a bad day. I told her to go home and take an aspirin. But, I couldn't get it off my mind. I went to the meeting and couldn't focus because I was thinking about her. As a member of that church, she had indicted us all. We couldn't call ourselves a church and not care for her.

When Craddock returned home, he called her up to ask if he could visit her. She replied, "If you want to." I replied, "Yes, I want to." I told her she was wrong. I'm not wrong. You told me today that we are not a church.

Craddock told the story of visiting his father, who was dying of lung cancer. He was down to 70 pounds. His father was not a believer. When Craddock entered the hospital room, it was full of flowers. Flowers in all the windows. Cards stacked 20 inches. Even fresh cut flowers on the tray that moves over the bed. He checked the cards. Every card in the flowers and in the stack was from a person or group from the church. Cards from Christians.

There in the hospital. Unable to talk. His dad wrote on a tissue box the words from Hamlet, "In this harsh world, draw your breath in pain to tell my story." Craddock asked his dad, "What is it?" He wrote, "I was wrong."

I got up to leave the lady's house. I said, "You're wrong." In my work, I get to travel all over the country. I never go to a town big or small. Whatever find need, wherever you find need, a house in distress, pain, or bereavement. If you look, you find the footprints of Christians who came with something. A word, a pie, or a gift. Something. I said, "People everywhere care." She said, "Really." I said, "Yes." She said, "Name some." Name some. She wants names. May I give her your name? May I give her your name?