

Our Compassionate Provider

Scripture: Mark 8:1–10

Code: 41-36

For this morning, we're concerned with the eighth chapter of Mark verses 1 through 10.

Now in the passage before us, we are really looking at the last recorded event in that several month period in which Jesus takes His Twelve into the Gentile nations that surround Galilee. He first made that move in chapter 7 verse 24 when Jesus gathered the Twelve and went to the region of Tyre. That would be a city on the Mediterranean coast north and west of Galilee, Israel, in the area called Syrophenicia, ancient Phoenicia had been annexed to Syria to the east and it was now one great Syrophenician Empire. It actually extended all the way east and all the way down south, a southern eastern portion of the Galilee region was also under the control of Syria. So this is Gentile area. Our Lord takes the disciples into a several month foray into that area. There's really only just a couple of incidents that are recorded, verses 24 to 30 of chapter 7 tell about a woman who had a daughter with a demon and she lived in Tyre and the Lord delivered that daughter from the demon and the woman exercised saving faith which in Matthew's account of that Jesus called mega-faith, great faith.

And then we find, having left that city of Tyre, went to Sidon and He crossed the north, the mountains of Lebanon, and headed east, all the time we have no record of teaching, preaching, healing. This is time for intensive training of the Twelve. What's the theme of the training? It should be pretty obvious. He's getting them ready for the Great Commission. What is the Great Commission? Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. They need to understand that salvation is for the Gentiles, that it's for the world. You can't just drop that on them in the Great Commission because they've been raised in Israel and Israel's belief was that the Gentile are outside the Covenant, outside the compassion of God, outside the salvation purpose of God and Israel alone is the nation which God has favored. And that's what they've been taught. That's what they've been trained to believe, that Israel is the beginning and end of God's purpose. Our Lord is showing them by the faith of that Gentile woman in Tyre set against the unbelief of the leaders of Israel and most of the people of Galilee who had heard and seen Jesus, that Gentiles are going to be incorporated in salvation. And so I think that was the teaching theme as He moved through the Gentile areas cause everywhere they went, they would be aware of the fact they were not in the land of Israel.

They finally end up, several months after they began the journey, down on the southeastern shore of Galilee, having gone west, north and a big loop and down to the bottom of the Sea of Galilee in an area called Decapolis, made up of ten cities, Gentile cities full of idol worship and typical Gentile life. There a massive crowd comes to Jesus by the Lake of Galilee and He heals them all...absolutely all of them, according to Matthew 15:29 to 31, He healed everybody who came and they were bringing all kinds of injuries, illnesses, diseases, etc. And this is all to demonstrate the healing purposes of God, the compassion of God and the salvation of God is intended for the world and for Gentiles. And this is sort of a microcosm lesson on this, which I am confident was reinforced as they moved those hundred and twenty, to a hundred and fifty miles over a period of several months in the presence of the Lord.

As we come to the eighth chapter and the first ten verses, though it's a beginning of the chapter, it's the end of this period. Actually, chapter 8 verse 11 picks up back in Galilee, back in Capernaum again for a final ministry in Galilee before Jesus heads south ultimately to the cross and the resurrection. But chapter 8 verses 1 to 10 describe an event that ends this foray into the Gentile world and it's really very, very important, because it demonstrates the compassion of God to the Gentiles which was something that the Jews didn't really understand. They had great animosity toward Gentiles, and it was reciprocated because the Gentiles knew how they felt about them and, of course, the Gentiles were always indicted by the Jews because they were multi God, oriented where the Israelites were monotheists with the one God. And so they were at odds with each other and that was fine with the Jews, that's the way they liked it, like Jonah, he didn't want to see Gentile repentance. And when it came, he would have rather been dead than to have to experience it. That was kind of the general attitude.

But here our Lord is showing something completely different, getting them ready for the time when He says, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel," when the Spirit of God comes and they have power to preach in Samaria and the uttermost part of the earth, they need to be ready to know this is within the saving purpose of God.

Now there are a number of features in this account that are familiar to us because of the feeding of the five thousand back in chapter 6. So this will sound a little bit familiar to you and I'll comment on that in a moment. But to begin with, I want you to look at verse 2...verse 2, the beginning of the verse, Jesus speaking says, "I feel compassion. I feel compassion." That is a very interesting statement because that is the only place in the four gospels where Jesus ever says that, "I feel compassion," first person singular. There are many references to His compassion third person. It is said by the writer, Mark, in Mark 1:41 that He felt compassion. Again in chapter 6 when He saw the hungry multitude, He felt compassion. In Matthew 9:36; Matthew 14:14; 15:32; 20:34; it says Jesus felt compassion. Jesus had compassion. Luke 7:13, He felt compassion on the widow of Nain. But this is the only place that's in the first person.

In all those other places, it's a human observation, that He felt compassion, only because it's manifested that He did compassionate things. You can determine that He felt compassion because He acted compassionately. So it's an assumption that He had compassion by behavior. This is a first-person declaration, "I feel compassion." Three words in English, one word in Greek, *splanchnizomai*, it's a long word, *splanchnizomai*. *Splanchna* is the root and the word means "bowels, inner organs, heart, some would say gut," where you feel things emotionally. Sometimes you get caught in something that's either producing fear or producing terror or producing anxiety and your stomach begins to churn and your heart begins to beat and you feel those emotions in your...in your midsection. That's exactly what this word came to mean. The word *splanchna* means inner organs. But it is used to express feelings of emotion, affection, sympathy, pity, kindness and compassion.

In Luke 1:78 when Zacharias gives his *Benedictus*, he speaks of the tender mercies of our God and he uses *splanchnizomai*, God feels compassion. Our Lord then is declaring, "This is an attribute which I possess. Compassion is an attribute of God." And aren't we glad for that? That is to set God apart from every other false deity on the planet. Satan, having no compassion, doesn't invent deities that are compassionate. So you will not find in the religions of the world any deity by the manufacture of Satan that is by nature compassionate. That is a distinctive attribute of the true God. The compassion of the Lord Jesus Christ is shared by the Father and the Spirit. He is the Father of all

comforts, the God of all comforts. The Holy Spirit is Himself the Comforter. Divine compassion is an attribute of God.

If you go back to 2 Kings 13:23, you would read about the compassion of God toward Israel after the death of Elisha when the nation was oppressed. In 2 Chronicles 36:14 and 15, you see in the days of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, they are prophesying to Judah and to Israel under the tyranny of the wicked kings at Achaia. At the time there were evil priests and apostate people and still the Lord sent His preachers because 2 Chronicles 36 says, "He had compassion on the people."

One of the sweetest statements of divine compassion is found in Psalm 78. This is certainly to be celebrated by all of us because it is behind God's interest in saving us from the disastrous results of sin. His compassion is what moves Him. Psalm 78:35, "They remembered that God was their rock and the Most-High God, their Redeemer, but they deceived Him with their mouth, they lied to Him with their tongue, for their heart was not steadfast toward Him, nor were they faithful in His Covenant. But He being compassionate forgave their iniquity and did not destroy them and often He restrained His anger and did not arouse all His wrath, thus He remembered that they were but flesh." That's why Psalm 111:4 says, "The Lord is gracious and compassionate." It's His nature.

You love the familiar comforts of Lamentations 3:22 and 23, "The Lord's loving kindnesses indeed never cease. His compassions are new every morning. Great is Your faithfulness." Micah 7:19, the prophet says, "He will again have compassion on us," Romans 9:15, "He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion."

Compassion from the Latin, "to suffer with." Compassion meaning to suffer, to feel, Com, with, along with. Divine ministry marks the ministry then of Christ because it's an attribute of God. All His healings, all His deliverances, all His acts of resurrection, all His relief in feeding people, all of it is a demonstration of divine compassion and it's what behind the incident before us today. Our Lord has been gone from the frenzy of Galilee now for several months. He is about to return. He will at the end of this passage head back into that chaos and frenzy of Galilee where He's been ministering for well over a year. But in this intervening time, He has been circumventing the Gentile region immediately around the area of Galilee and He's been communicating to His disciples and to the Gentiles that the Kingdom is for them as well. Salvation is for them as well because God feels compassion toward their needs as He does the Jews.

The result of His deeds of compassion in the Decapolis at the end of those months, the very time we're looking at today, was that the Gentiles, according to Matthew 15:31, "Glorified the God of Israel." I'm sure that encompassed some true faith. I'm sure during the period of time that He was doing all the healing He was also doing what He always did, teaching concerning the Kingdom. And some of them were glorifying the God of Israel. And the only way you could really do that truly would be by putting your trust in His Son.

So here He is then in Galilee. The people are full of wonder. They're amazed, verse 37 ends chapter 7, they were utterly astonished. They were over the top, floored by all of this. They said He has done all things well. He makes the deaf to hear the mute to speak. It was more than just amazement. It was adoration. They gave praise to the God of Israel and in some cases surely it was even saving faith.

All this healing goes on over a period of three days...three days. At the end of that three days, the incident occurs in chapter 8. "In those days when there was again a large crowd and they had nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples and said to them, 'I feel compassion for the people because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them away hungry to their homes, they'll faint on the way and some of them have come from a great distance.' And His disciples answered Him, "Where will anyone be able to find enough bread here in this desolate place to satisfy these people? And He was asking them, 'How many loaves do you have?' And they said seven. And He directed the people to sit down on the ground and taking the seven loaves, He gave thanks and broke them and started giving them to His disciples to serve to them. And they served them to the people. They also had a few small fish and after He had blessed them, He ordered these to be served as well. And they ate and were satisfied and they picked up seven large baskets full of what was left over of the broken pieces, about four thousand were there and He sent them away. And immediately He entered the boat with His disciples and came to the district of Dalmanutha," which is back near Capernaum, back in Galilee.

Now I think it's important for us to remind you that in chapter 6 verse 33 we had the feeding of the five thousand which occurred on the northeast shore of Galilee in the region of Galilee near the town of Bethsaida. This is miles south, now you've left Galilee, you're still on the shore but down at the south end in a region known as Decapolis, named for the ten cities that made up that region and it was basically under the rule of Syria.

But any person, Jew or Gentiles, with a need elicited the compassion of Christ. This is quite remarkable because He demonstrates compassion here for something as simple as hunger after a few days. You can survive a lot longer than three days without eating. But the tender mercies of our God, the compassion of Christ are such that just to know that someone is hungry moves His heart. It's an amazing thing. And He has that compassion toward anybody. He felt compassion on the crowd up in the area of Bethesda in Galilee. He feels the same compassion toward hungry people here who are Gentiles. The lingering crowd has been lingering for three days. They've slept on the ground. There's no large city nearby and the cities of the Decapolis are scattered far apart, not like Galilee with two hundred and forty thousand villages close together. These people have come a long way. They've been sleeping on the ground. They haven't eaten. Why? Why such interest?

Because remember, this is the only time He ever went in to that area. Some of them may have crossed the border. We know some from Decapolis came and saw His miracles. But He's never been there before. This is compelling. This is stunning and staggering activity that they're watching as He heals all these people with all these disabilities and all these diseases. They've never seen anything like it, or heard of anything like it. And so they don't go anywhere. They put hunger aside. They're so overwhelmed by what is going on, I don't think they even felt hunger. But our Lord knew they would, as soon as they started to move back toward their homes.

So in verse 3 He says, "If I send them away hungry to their homes, they'll faint on the way." That's a vivid word, it means to collapse, to come unstrung like a bow, to be made limp. They'll drop like a bow string when you pull it off one end. That drew His compassion.

This is the general kindness and compassion of the heart of our God for which there is no parallel in any religion or all religions of the world. This is the true God, a God of compassion. "I don't want them to fall, collapse, faint on the way home because some of them have come from a great distance."

I don't know that there's a better illustration of the depth of compassion, of the extent of compassion, than to see that our Lord is compassionate for these people who haven't eaten for three days. Just the physical weakness was enough to draw out His compassion. This is our God.

"So His disciples answered Him," verse 4, "Will anyone be able to find enough bread here in this desolate place to satisfy these people?"

You say, "Well what in the world are they asking that for? It hasn't been that many months since the Lord created food and fed as many as 25,000 of them up on the northeastern shore by Bethsaida. What is this saying here? Where will anyone be able to find enough bread here in this desolate place to satisfy these people?"

Well first of all, just to note that it was a desolate place, it would be summer now, they're sitting on the ground, not on the grass anymore, it's all died. This is a barren area. The cities are separated. It's not easily accessible. They're not villages nearby. But I don't think this is despair. The word "desolate place" is *eremias* which is the Greek word for desert. I don't think that they're really in total despair. I think it's kind of a rhetorical question. I think it assumes that they hadn't forgotten the previous feeding. Would you forget it? No, you wouldn't forget it. So I think it's more of a question prompting the Lord, "What are You going to do?" And if there's any doubt in it, it's not doubt about His power, it might be doubt about His purpose. These are Gentiles. These are Gentiles.

They're also saying, "Look, Lord, it's beyond us...again, it was beyond us last time and it's beyond us again." There's nobody here who gets specific like they did last time. You know, "We only have two hundred penny worth, and that's not enough to buy bread." I don't think they're going down that trail, the trail of never having seen this before. They're simply saying, "Lord, look, You're worried about this crowd and we just need to remind You that we don't have any human resources here." I think they've already learned that He can supply if He chooses to supply. They're simply affirming that that's the only way it's going to happen. Which then raises the question, "But would you do it for Gentiles? Would you do it for Gentiles?"

I mean, for the Jews, if you went into Gentile land, you wouldn't go near a Gentile. You wouldn't have a meal with a Gentile. You wouldn't touch a Gentile. And when you left, back into Israel, you'd shake Gentile dirt off your garments and out of your sandals so you didn't bring any polluted corrupted defiled land back into the Holy Land.

They also implied by the use of the word "satisfy" here which is *chortazi* or *chortazo* in the Greek, that they didn't say there's not enough here in this desolate place to feed these people. But they said "to satisfy these people." Why do they use that word? Because that was the word that was used to describe the feeding of the 5,000 earlier and it means to fill them up, to totally satisfy them, to fodder them up like an animal whose had so much that it will not eat another bite. So they understand that if anything is going to happen, it's going to happen to the max, that the Lord when He feeds, feeds to the full and they're simply saying, "Lord, if it's going to happen, we're not going to do it. It's not coming from us, we have no resources. There are none available."

But then the doubt that would arise would be regarding the fact that our Lord would do this for Gentiles, would He really do that? They're outside the Covenant. They're strangers. They're aliens.

But now what have they been learning for the last several months on the road? What did they start learning when they arrived in Tyre and met a woman of great faith who was in a city that was given over to Baal worship and all kinds of other idols? They were learning that the gospel was going to extend to the Gentiles, to the ends of the earth, to get them ready to fulfill the Great Commission.

So they're simply affirming their utter inadequacy. We're not able and they're affirming that when the Lord feeds, He does it to fully satisfy so this is an impossible situation humanly. So in verse 5 He's asking them, "How many loaves? How many bread cakes do you have?" And they said, "Seven."

Now if you go down to verse 7, they also had a few small fish. You remember the last time they found a little boy with five loaves and two fish. Well here they managed to find seven loaves and a few small fish. Obviously that would be absolutely useless in feeding a massive, massive crowd.

They're not as skeptical. I mean, Andrew doesn't pop up again and say, "What are these among so many?" like he did at the feeding of the five thousand. I think they just want to wait and see what happens. They know He has the power to do it, He's done it before. Now they're going to learn about His compassion toward the Gentiles, toward the people that they've been trained to despise.

The real action starts then in verse 6, "He directed the people to sit down on the ground." This is what He did back in the feeding of the five thousand, sat them in fifties and hundreds so they could be served with aisles between. Perhaps in the same fashion to make serving easier, had them sit down on the ground. "And taking the seven bread cakes, the seven flat pieces of bread, He gave thanks and broke them." Which is what they would do. They would have a flat piece of bread, almost like a cracker. And some of you have seen that kind of Arab bread that... Middle eastern bread. They would break it, crack it and distribute it.

Started giving the pieces of these seven loaves to the disciples to serve to the people and they served them to the people. And what's going on here? He's creating all of this. Just creating bread from grain that never grew. This is...this is a sheer creation miracle.

And in addition, verse 7 says that He also had a few small fish and after He had blessed them, He ordered these to be served as well. So He takes the fish and He starts creating fish. Fish coming out of His hand, coming out of nowhere. Fish appearing on the scene, fully grown having never lived and never died. They're created edible...they're created dead. Got that? They're created dead.

This is a creative miracle. He gives thanks, always acknowledging that the source of power is heavenly. And then He does exactly what He did in six days when He created the Earth. He makes things from nothing...from nothing. Again and again He kept filling the baskets, filling the baskets, and passing them, filling the hands of the disciples to distribute. And Matthew says He kept giving to the disciples and the disciples, implied, kept giving to the great crowd...again and again and again He filled and filled and filled and filled and used the disciple waiters to serve it.

Verse 8 says, "They ate and were satisfied." They knew it. When Jesus makes the meal, two things happen. Everybody gets all they want and only the appropriate amount is left over. There's perfect precision again as well as perfect fulfillment. Everyone is totally filled, totally satisfied. Everything given away.

The disciples then gathered what was left over. They picked up, they knew to do this because they had done it last time, they picked up this time seven large baskets full of what was left over of the broken pieces.

Now that is a very, very important statement...very important. They automatically did that because they knew this was what they had been told to do before. None of this is going to go to waste. This is a...this is a meal for today and it won't survive the day...no part of it. Seven large baskets full of what was left over of the broken pieces, the remaining fish and the remaining pieces of bread are all collected.

Now I want to stop here and just say this. The critics, the people who love to attack the Bible have laughed at this account in Matthew 15, the parallel, and here in Mark 8 because they say this is proof positive that the Bible is not written by God. There are so many contradictions, there's so much confusion, there's so many discrepancies and here's a classic illustration of it. Chapter 6 you have the feeding of the five thousand, over here you have the feeding of the four thousand. Look, they're too similar not to be talking about the same event or they're two invented events, there's just...there's too many discrepancies. If it's the same event, then you've got twelve baskets and seven baskets and you've got these various differences. This is indication that Mark was not a writer who was writing an accurate history but this was written by a whole bunch of people after the New Testament period and they collected all kinds of stories and threw them all together and that's why there's so many discrepancies. There are people who argue rather violently about the fact that if it did happen, it happened once and this is a bad sort of second telling of the story.

Well there are some distinctions that I that I think will answer that if you happen to have that thought in your mind, that is this is just a repeat with some errors in it.

In chapter 6 verse 43, there is a word there, they picked up twelve full baskets...twelve full baskets. The word "baskets," *kophinos*, you will experience one of those at some point in your life...a coffin. That's the word, although in those days it meant a little tiny thing. It was a lunch pail. *Kophinos* was a very small basket, Greek *kophinos* means a very small basket. It was a little lunch pail, a little lunch basket you took lunch for one person or two people in. Small basket used by the Jews to carry food on a journey, used in all the accounts of the feeding of the five thousand and there are four of them in the New Testament, always uses *kophinos*, a small little lunch basket.

Here that's not the word. Here the word is *spuridas* and this means a very large basket, not the small Jewish lunch basket, but a large Gentile...more like a...more like a chest or like a hamper, I guess you would say, maybe that old word. This is the word used to describe the basket in Acts 9:25 that the Apostle Paul was placed in when He was lowered down the wall of Damascus. This is a very large, large container, very different. Seven of these would contain a lot more...a lot more food than twelve small lunch baskets. So whatever was left over was used for the disciples and Apostles and perhaps for...for some other folks who were there that may have been helping serving beyond the Twelve.

But it's important to note the difference in those baskets because it distinguishes these two events, and I'll show you why. Drop down to verse 16...chapter 8 verse 16, "The disciples began to discuss with one another the fact that they had no bread." This is really so interesting. "They...verse 14

says...they forgot to take bread.” This is a little bit later. They go away, across the little lake again after meeting with the Pharisees and they forget to take food. So they just had one loaf, one little piece of flat bread in the boat. And so they start to discuss, “We don’t have any bread.” And Jesus aware of this, I love this, said, “Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart? Having eyes do you not see? Having ears do you not hear? Are you people blind and deaf? What have you just seen? I just created bread. How much bread do you think is available? How could you be discussing you don’t have any bread?”

And then He says this in verse 19, “When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets, how many *kophinos* full of broken pieces did you pick up?” They said twelve. “When I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many *spuridis*, large baskets did you pick up?” They said seven. “And He was saying to them, ‘You don’t yet get it? You don’t have to worry about bread.’” Matthew 6 He had said, “Take no thought for what you shall eat and what you shall drink, Your Father knows you have need of these things. Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added.”

But please notice how He distinguished the two events. Jesus acknowledges these are two separate events and He uses the two separate words to describe the different baskets in the two events...evidence of two feedings, Jesus said so.

Well, go back to verse 9, there’s a note about four thousand were there. Matthew 15:38 adds, “Besides women and children,” four thousand head of households, that’s how they counted them. As there were five thousand men the first time, and add the women and children, you’re over twenty thousand. Here you had the women and children, you’re certainly up around fifteen thousand or more. This is a...this is a massive creative miracle. It takes a lot of...well it takes a lot of crackers and fish to fill up people who haven’t eaten for three days.

What is the message here? The message is that salvation is for the Gentiles. The divine compassion is for the Gentiles. That the compassion of God is not limited to Israel, that the desire of God to create whatever He needs to create to meet the needs of Gentiles is equal to the desire that He has to meet the needs of Jews. Profound lesson. And verse 9 says, “He sent them away.” That was it. Three days are over and it’s over, I’m done. And verse 10, “Immediately He entered the boat with His disciples and came to the district of Dalmanutha. Dalmanutha is back up on the northwest shore by the town of Gennesaret by Capernaum. So they were on the southeast, they had to take the boat diagonally across the whole lake to get to Dalmanutha.

Matthew calls it Magdala. Mark says Dalmanutha. Matthew says Magdala, or sometimes Magadan from...we know that from Mary of Magdala, Mary Magdalene. Is it Dalmanutha? Or is it Magdala, Magadan? The answer is, it’s the same region. It’s the same area. South of Gennesaret. Basically we know where Magdala is and we know where Capernaum is and it’s not too far separated. When the lake was low, some years ago, archaeologists discovered a little harbor buried under the water really, or submerged under the water, between Magdala and Capernaum which some archaeologists think was probably Dalmanutha, a little fishing stop of which there were many along the shore. They also found a cave in the area called Talmanutha that may be in view as well. So the region of Magdala, the region of Dalmanutha would be in the very same area.

So the record ends of Jesus’ foray into Gentile lands. And so the record also brings a kind of a culmination to His Galilean ministry. Oh, He’ll have a little more ministry kind of in the outlying areas

after He got to Dalmanutha, they confront the Pharisees again and He goes up into the north...out of the main stream area of Galilee for a little more ministry and finally heads down into Judea on His way to Jerusalem to His death and resurrection.

But this is a good point, because the Gentile experience ends in verse 10 and you're back to Galilee for the final opportunities there. It's a good point to say, "What are the great lessons we learn from our Lord's ministry in Galilee? His ministry to the Gentiles? What are the things that are taught to all of us? What did the disciples learn? What was Jesus communicating to them?"

The first lesson, the divine person...the divine person of Christ as indicated by His divine power. They were getting a lesson in Christology, that Jesus is God. In John 14 Jesus says, "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father." And in John 10:31 to 33, the Jewish leaders said, "We're not going to stone You for any other reason than that You make Yourself God." That's exactly right. He declared Himself to be God. He was God. That is the first great lesson. He is the Creator, the Word, without Him was not anything made that was made, and He shows His creative power. So we see the divine person. They are to know that this is God in human flesh because of the massive displays of power over disease, demons, death and even nature, creating food, stilling storms, stopping winds, stopping waves, walking on water, all evidences of His divine person.

Secondly, they're to learn the truth about divine healing...divine healing. There are so many phony healers around, there always have been, there always will be because sick people are desperate and you can get rich promising sick people even when you can't deliver. Their desperation reaches enough proportions that they'll pay money for quackery, they do it all the time. And the latest and dominant kind of quackery that we're exposed to in America are all the phony Charismatic healers on TV who take advantage of tragically disturbed and fearful and worried and suffering people. That charlatanism, that deception isn't even close to the kind of thing that Jesus did. In fact, one word out of Matthew 15:31, it says, "They brought to Him various kinds of people and...it says...some of them maimed." Just take that one word, *kullos* in the Greek, maimed.

What does it mean? It means mutilated...mutilated. That's...that's part of life. You lose a limb, you lose an arm, you lose a leg. Not too long ago, Mark Thallender who used to play the organ when Steve wasn't here, a fine young organist, had an auto accident, had his arm taken off, amputated in an auto accident, terrible thing for a young man who played the organ. We understand that that's the way life is. People have accidents. They have those kinds of things. War brought mutilations. Conflict brought mutilations. Accidents brought mutilations. There were mutilated people. I'll promise you this, you're not going to see those mutilated people in the TV healing lines. You don't see anybody getting a leg. You don't see anybody getting an arm. You don't see anybody getting an ear where there was none. You don't see scars being removed. But you see that with Jesus. Just take that one word, the ability to give a limb to a person who didn't have a limb, to give a fully functioning capacity to someone who had been mutilated. He demonstrates what real healing is. It's full and total and complete and genuine and we're all going to experience it in the glory of eternity, aren't we?, where everything is perfect.

What else did they learn? They learned that the goal of everything is divine worship, divine person. They learned about divine healing and they learned about divine worship. The purpose of everything was to worship God. The Father seeks true worshipers to worship Him in Spirit and truth, John 4. And the Gentiles even got it and they glorified the God of Israel. That's what it's all about. In the end we give all the glory to God. They did it. The Jews resented it, the leaders of Israel despised Jesus,

these Gentiles glorified the God of Israel. So they learn about divine worship, the purpose of everything.

They learned about divine resources. What a great lesson. My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father of lights in whom there is no variableness or shadow of turning. And they said that about Jesus, what He does, He does perfectly well. This was the best meal anybody ever ate in their entire life, everything is perfect. Everything is exactly what it should be, divine provision that the resources are boundless, that you don't have to quarrel when you're on the boat and say, "Where we going to get...where we going to get bread? Where are we going to get anything to eat?" when you've just experienced the Master's ability to provide anything and everything. And the supply is not superficial and it's not minimal, it's more than enough, it's full satisfaction.

What great lessons they learned about the divine person, divine power, divine worship, divine resources, divine generosity. But behind it all was that greatest lesson, divine compassion. He cares. That's the nature of God to care for those who have needs. His compassion reached its greatest point at the cross. Listen to Hebrews 2:17, "Therefore He had to be made like His brothers in all things so that He might become the merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God." He had to become a man in order that He might become a merciful, a compassionate, faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God. And how did He show that compassion? "To make propitiation for the sins of His people." It's one thing to feed a hungry crowd, it's something else to pay the penalty in full for their sins, right? It's one thing to satisfy three days hunger, it's another to satisfy a hungry soul for eternity. So when we talk about the compassion of God and the compassion of Christ, we're taken to the cross, the greatest display of His compassion. He was willing to go to the cross and bear the full weight of divine punishment for our sins in order that we might be delivered from hell. He is compassionate not only over our physical needs, more importantly over our profound spiritual needs. Let's bow together.

Father, we thank You for Your compassion toward us. I think of how many times You have demonstrated compassion toward Me and toward this beloved congregation, toward all of us, and we know Your compassion will be great toward our beloved Steve. We pray that he might experience that compassion, that tender mercy, that faithfulness even in the challenges that await him and we would pray, Lord, that You would restore him quickly to us. We ask that boldly and confident in Your power and yet we understand Your purpose and Your will. Give wisdom to all who care for him and fill him with grace, increase his faith for the struggles of the future that he will face, at least immediately. And we pray, Lord, that in all of this, Your glory and Your honor would be manifest in every way. We thank You for his faithfulness through the years. We thank you for the faithfulness of so many in this church. And, Lord, there are many here about whom we do not know whose needs are great and we ask, Lord, that again they might experience the fullness of Your compassion, that we who have received that compassion might be eager to give it to others. We pray, Lord, that we might be true children of God who are compassionate like our Father. Use us in that way, Lord, to make the gospel believable, to be received by those whom we can influence and we thank You in Christ's name. Amen.

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