

Fish & Bread Lessons

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. And we just want to say thank you for tuning in to this radio broadcast today.

We are all about preaching the Word, getting into the Word, and letting the Word of God get into us, transform us, and make us more and more into the image of Christ.

Now, life has a way of teaching you some lessons along the way. Would you agree with that? I remember growing up, my mom was always listening to the local Greensburg station, AM 1330 WTRE, and she was constantly active in different games that they would play on the radio.

And I remember this one time they were doing a challenge where you had to tell how much a certain grocery item cost at Aldi's. And they would have two people call in, and whoever was the closest would win whatever prize they had to give away.

Well, one time I called in, and my mom knew the price, like right on. And so I won a pair of monster truck tickets for me and my dad. So pretty cool. So another time, maybe a year later, my mom tells me, because none of them wanted to be on the radio and I didn't care.

[1 : 13] So my mom tells me, hey, won't you go ahead and call in? And I have no idea why. I was just assuming, big mistake, that I was trying to win a prize again.

But it must have just been maybe where they wanted the public's opinion on something. So here's what a sane person would have done that day. You would have called in, gave your answer to whatever question it was, and then hung up.

But not me. I was ready to win some more monster truck tickets. So I call in, and they answer live before all 26 people listening. And I say, hey, you know, here's the answer.

And my mom's telling me to say this. So I say it. And the host thanked me and was ready to move on to the next caller. And that's when I blurted out, well, did I win? And I think I kind of threw the host off for a second.

And I just kept saying, did I win? Did I win the prize? Was I right? Not having a clue that there wasn't a winner. There wasn't a right or a wrong answer. And my mom's over here just dying, embarrassed, saying, just hang up.

[2 : 17] Just hang up. And I think the radio host made a joke about me and eventually hung up on me after about 30 seconds of me acting a fool. But you know what? Lesson learned.

Listen to your mama and just hang up. My dad's favorite life lesson to share is don't eat yellow snow. Or here's another one. No matter how hard you try, you can't baptize cats.

I like this one, too. And you women and you girls will understand this better. When your mom is mad at your dad, don't let her brush your hair. Or what about this one?

Never ask your three-year-old brother to hold a tomato. Important life lessons. But then there's some serious ones, too. Spiritual greatness is achieved through serving others and being humble. Or losing your soul to gain the world isn't worth it. Well, today I want to welcome you back here to week five of our series called Disciple. If you want to go ahead and turn or click to get to the Gospel of Mark, that would be great.

[3 : 20] Probably about three-quarters the way through your Bible. Second book of the New Testament, right after Matthew. And we're going to be in Mark chapter 6 today. And let me just remind you that the main theme of this book, the reason John Mark wrote this, was to show primarily a Roman audience that Jesus Christ was the servant-hearted Son of God.

And one of the main threads that we see running throughout this book is Mark teaching us what a disciple of Jesus really looks like. Why is that important? Because there are so many misconceptions out there of what it means to be a Christian.

What it means to be a disciple of Jesus. Some people think because they were raised in the church and Daddy was an elder and Grandpappy played the piano and his dad helped build the education wing, that somehow that automatically makes us a disciple.

And while you should be proud of that heritage, and if your last name goes back six generations in a church, I think that's awesome. But that doesn't automatically make you a follower of Christ.

That's a commitment you have to make. You just had a great example and a foundation laid before you, and that's something to be thankful for. Some think that giving money to the church or going on a mission trip or holding an office or playing an instrument makes you a disciple.

[4 : 39] Others get baptized because Grandma nags them about it to get kind of their get-out-of-hell-free card, and then you only see them at Christmas or Easter. And while my words may come across a little strong right now, the book of Mark makes it very clear that a disciple of Jesus actually denies their self.

They die to self, they pick up their cross, and they actually follow Jesus every day. Not our version of Jesus, but the biblical version.

So we're not looking at how we can try harder to follow Jesus. We're talking about what it looks like to surrender more, to surrender everything to his lordship, where the daily goal is less of me and more of Jesus.

Less of me, more of him. And today we come here to Mark chapter 6, where Jesus has just sent the disciples out two by two to preach a message of repentance.

And he basically tells them to only take a staff and the clothes on their body. No money, no belt, no bag. And to a planner like me, man, that seems fairly irresponsible.

[5 : 52] But we know that he's showing them how God is going to provide every time when we follow him by faith. So we fast forward past the passage where John the Baptist was killed for preaching truth.

We know that Jesus took that pretty hard. That was an emotional time of mourning for him. And then if you flip to Mark 6, verse 30, here's what God's word says.

It says, The apostles gathered around Jesus, and they reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.

So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. I heard someone make this statement years ago. And I'm realizing more and more every day just how true it really is.

They said, Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is take a nap. Can I get an amen to that one, right? Go ahead and grab your outline for me.

[7 : 01] And by the way, you can always do that by going to the YouVersion Bible app.

Y-O-U-Version Bible app. It's free. You can download that on your phone, your tablet, whatever. YouVersion Bible app.

Bottom right-hand corner, there's three lines. Click on that. Hit events. Hit First Christian Church of Greensburg, Indiana. And you'll get to our outline that way. But here's the first thing I want you to see. The first fish and bread lesson for today.

A disciple knows when to rest. A disciple knows when to rest. Now, don't misunderstand this. This is not an endorsement for laziness.

There is way too much of that in our world today. And God's Word makes it clear that laziness is not a mark of a disciple of Jesus. And just to be real with you, growing up in a very blue-collar family, as the son of a mechanic and a son of a cleaning lady, man, I wouldn't change it for anything.

My parents started with absolutely nothing and worked their tails off to provide for their family. And that work ethic was instilled in us as kids as well.

[8 : 04] We never had a 40-hour work week. Man, that would have been like vacation, okay? But as an adult, I've wrestled a little bit with being a workaholic. And I'm not, you know, here today claiming to have this balance between hard work and rest, just completely healthy at all times, because the Lord knows how hard this one is for me.

In fact, I wrote this message on a day that was supposed to be my day of rest. So, this is my confession booth, okay? And my wife's probably over here nodding her head like, yes, he should have been home.

But there's no question as you read through the ministry of Jesus, He was always making time to get away from the crowds, to secluded areas, to recharge with the Father, to rest from His ministry,

so that He could truly impact lives for the kingdom.

And in this passage, from verses 30 to 32, we see that the disciples had just gotten back from a tour where they were preaching, they were healing the sick, they were casting out demons.

I mean, God was using them in awesome ways. This would have been a kind of stretch you way beyond your comfort zone type of trip. They had to completely trust God to provide for them, to protect them, to lead them.

[9 : 24] And here they are probably on this spiritual high because they've made this big impact, and yet Jesus can also see that they're tired and they need rest. See, all of us are called to use our gifts to serve our Lord who has set us free.

Some of us are called by God to do that full-time or part-time vocationally. Others are called to do it as a volunteer apart from your regular job. And yet ministry can be exhausting.

Even when God is moving and doing great things, you're going to still need to rest in Christ or you're going to head towards burnout and you're not going to be good for anything. And sometimes that means disappointing some folks.

Sometimes that means saying no to some things, even good things. But I love this quote by Steve and Mary Farrar in their book called *Overcoming Overload*. They compare our lives to a song when they say it's the rest that make the difference in the music of our lives.

They really are the pauses that refresh. And I'd never really thought about my life as a song before. And I know you music people can probably describe this better than I.

[10 : 37] You probably use music terminology as you do. But this makes sense to me. It's the ebbs and the flows. It's the powerful moments and then the lighter moments. It's the rest or the pause that all work together to make a song absolutely beautiful and impactful.

And it's when we get the rest we need in Christ, that's when we can be recharged and truly serve Jesus the way that he calls us to.

For many, many years instead of burning out and only being good for a short period of time. So I guess you can say that your preacher gave you permission today to take a nap.

Okay? Now, let's talk about the second fish and bread lesson. A disciple leads with compassion. A disciple leads with compassion.

Now, once you get that filled in, go ahead and turn with me here to Mark 6, verse 33. As we see this attempt for them to get away and rest, it's actually interrupted.

[11 : 43] So they don't actually get to rest in that moment. And I don't know about you, but sometimes when my plans or my rest is interrupted, I don't always respond in the nicest way.

But Jesus responds in grace. He responds, as this passage tells us, in compassion. Look at verse 33. But many who saw them leaving recognized them.

So they're getting in the boat, they're leaving. And they ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. I think somebody said that like it was about a four-mile boat ride and about an eight-mile run or walk.

So they see which way they're headed, and they start darting that way, and they actually get there before them. Verse 34. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

So he began teaching them many things. A college professor met his new class on the first day of school. He stood before the students and gave a nice introduction to the class, even talked about his credentials.

[12 : 47] And when he was done, he looked around the room, and he asked kind of a weird question, at least to the students it was. He said, if any of you think you're stupid, go ahead and stand up. And as you can imagine, they were kind of surprised, and no one wanted to stand up.

So he asked it again. And he just kind of waited. And he looked around, and he looked all the kids in the eyes. And finally, a boy in the back stands up. And the professor says, so you think you're stupid?

And that's when this freshman said, no, I really don't. I just didn't want you to be the only one standing. See, compassion is stepping out of my own shoes to walk in someone else's for a moment, whether I agree with their actions or not.

And here Jesus looks out on this crowd of mostly people who are lost. And one unique thing about the feeding of the 5,000 is that it's only one of two specific miracles that's recorded in all four Gospels with the resurrection of Jesus Christ being the other one.

Okay? So, man, that's really important stuff. There's got to be a reason it's the only other one that God put it there. So, this word compassion in the Greek is more than just, I care about others.

[14:02] I have a heart for others. Jesus looked out among this crowd. And he saw people who were following just to be healed. He saw thrill seekers who just wanted to see the show.

John also records that there were those driven by political ambitions who wanted him to be their political deliverer. And yet, knowing that the motivation of most of their hearts wasn't good, knowing that most would soon reject him when he calls them away from their own agenda to a kingdom agenda, he still shows them compassion.

This word compassion, literally in the Greek, means to be moved in one's bowels. And I know that sounds kind of strange to us, but it's more than I feel sorry for you or I care.

It's this emotional response where you are truly moved. Okay? Emotional response to someone else's plight that I care so deeply that I am disturbed within and I'm going to act on it with compassion.

See, Kim Moore and Pam Melskog wrote this in their book. They said, True compassion must flow from a river of gratitude that swells its banks with thankfulness over sins forgiven, hope restored, and wounds healed.

[15:20] See, that means when I truly belong to Jesus, when the Holy Spirit lives inside of me as a child of God, I'm going to see this world differently. I'm going to see people and their actions differently.

I'm going to see beyond the thing that was just done or just said that wasn't real nice and see the heart that could be hurting, that could be lost. But here's the thing.

Compassion isn't always giving people what they want and making yourself a doormat to be used and abused. In fact, it's not much later in the Gospels that the crowds follow Jesus because they just want fed again, and he calls it out and he refuses.

And even in the verses that we just read, instead of giving into their agendas, Jesus teaches them the truth of God's word because compassion meets people in their needs.

I didn't say once, needs. And I'll tell you, it's so easy when you're a leader, it's so easy to become calloused. Any of us who've ever dealt with helping people have been burnt, we've been lied to, we've been manipulated.

[16:29] As you can imagine, when you work at a church, man, you get hit up all the time. And it's amazing when you help one person, you're going to expect to have 10 more calls the next couple days because they have an incredible network.

And some people are talented at crying and lying. And that's where discernment, the Holy Spirit's discernment and just following his lead has to come in.

And that's what I love about Jesus. He looked past the wrong motives and he truly helped people where they needed it the most. And the big C church, not just First Christian Church of Greensburg, but the church as a whole throughout the world, we have to do the same thing.

Because a disciple of Jesus must lead with compassion. Now, here's where I want us to camp for the rest of our time as we look at the actual miracle here of the fish and bread.

So, here's what I want you to see third. A disciple follows the God of the impossible. A disciple follows the God of the impossible. So, pick back up with me here in Mark chapter 6, verse 35.

[17:38] Give you just a second to get there. Mark 6, verse 35. And here's what it says. And just stay with me. We're going to read a little bit here together.

This is the rest of the story. It says, By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. This is a remote place, they said, and it's already very late.

Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat. But he answered, You give them something to eat. They said to him, That would take more than half a year's wages.

Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat? How many loaves do you have, he asked. Go and see. When they found out, they said, Five and two fish.

Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties, taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven.

[18:36] He gave thanks and he broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to all the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and they were satisfied.

And the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. And then it says, The number of men, just men, who had eaten was five thousand.

So Jesus had been teaching them, giving them spiritual food all day long. But now his disciples come and you know their request makes sense.

Man, that's a lot of people. If you add women and children to the five thousand men, I mean, we're talking between 15 and 20,000 people. Easy.

Maybe more. They need to eat. And it's somewhere between three and six o'clock at this point. And they're in the boonies. So they need time to walk to local villages and to buy some food to get some rest.

[19 : 35] And then he looks at his disciples and he says something crazy. He says, You give them something to eat. Now, let's just think about this. On the low side, let's say there were 15,000 people.

Okay? I think that's low. I think that's definitely low. But let's just be conservative. That means for every man, there was a wife and one kid. Okay? And if each of those people eat one third of a loaf of bread, and their loaves were a little smaller, so one third of a loaf of bread, which is probably about right, then that's 5,000 loaves of bread.

That's more than a semi-truck trailer today could hold. 1.2 trailers to be exact. And then you add in the crazy number of fish that may take up around the same amount of space.

And that's how much food it would have taken that day for those people to eat until they were full, until they were satisfied. And yet Jesus takes five loaves and two fish.

He prays. He thanks God. And he makes a little boy's sack lunch multiply to feed every single person there. Man, I wish this passage told us exactly how he did that, what that process looked like.

[20 : 43] But all we know is that he miraculously provided that food. So think about these disciples. Man, they've been on a journey with Jesus. And when he called them, they were pretty raw.

They knew something was special about this guy, but they weren't quite ready to see him as he really was, the Son of God. So they were kind of working up to that. They weren't quite ready to see him as Messiah and Lord.

And as we talk through the pages of Mark up into our passage today, Jesus starts off with his call on their lives, just like he calls you to be his disciple.

He loves you that much. And then he showed him how awesome he is by healing and driving out demons, by eating with the lowest of society and having compassion on them, by confounding the hypocritical religious leaders with his wisdom that the sharpest minds couldn't stand against, by calming the waves and making nature bow in obedience, by raising a little girl from the dead, by providing everything his disciples needed on their evangelistic tour.

And now he reinforces to them again that he's God. Because no one else, no one else can multiply a little boy's lunch into enough food to satisfy a crowd big enough to fill Mackey Arena or Assembly Hall on game day.

[22 : 07] No one can do that except for my Jesus. And I'll tell you what, there's a lot of competing for your affection in this world. And man, it can be tempting. If only you rise to this level and make this much money and have this many people call you boss, then you're a success.

And yet you can interview thousands of people who fit this bill and have been very successful according to those standards. And when they're honest, they'll tell you that they're empty and not satisfied.

It didn't satisfy like they thought it would. If only you meet the one, okay, that's another thing that's told to us. If only you meet the one and you get married, then that loneliness and that emptiness will go away.

And you'll be happy all the ding-dong day. And while I'm so thankful for my wife, God has blessed me with her. It is unfair to expect her to fill that God-sized hole in my heart that the famous mathematician Blaise Pascal said, only Jesus can fill.

If only I can get this nice house or drive that truck or that SUV, that sports car. If only I can look like her or be ripped like him.

[23 : 16] If only I can fit in with the cool crowd and be popular. And yet none of it satisfies. But when we do more than just a religion, more than just going to church, more than just some good deeds and throwing some money towards a cause, when we truly make Jesus Christ the Lord of our life, that's when everything changes.

Why? Because he is the God of the impossible. Who spoke and creation sprang into existence. Whose righteousness and love preserved Noah and his family and gave us another chance. Who displayed compassion on the Israelites in their constant wanderings. Who turned water into wine. Who healed the leper, the outcast, and made them clean again. Who called a flawed man to walk on water.

Who meets us in our junk and offers us forgiveness and hope and joy in his presence. See, we could go around every person listening to my voice today and we could probably hear story after story of God's grace and healing and power and strength and miracles that have met you right where you are.

That have changed your life. See, that's the God that you and I worship today. That's the God who breathed his word to us that can set us free.

[24 : 34] I love the story that took place many years ago when evangelist J. Wilbur Chapman sat down with an elderly William Booth.

And if you know that name, he started and he ran the Salvation Army for many years. Bringing Christ to the poor in London. Seeing God's provisions and miracles unlike many had ever seen before.

Just an incredible godly man. And as Booth's life was nearing to an end. Chapman asked him what the secret to his success was for all these years. And General Booth hesitated for a second.

Tears started to run down his cheeks. And he said, I'll tell you the secret. God has had all there was of me. There have been men with greater brains than I.

Men with greater opportunities. But from the day I got the poor of London on my heart. And a vision of what Jesus Christ could do with the poor. I made up my mind that God would have all of William Booth that there was.

[25 : 31] And if there is anything of power in the Salvation Army today, he said, it's because God has all the adoration of my heart. All the power of my will.

And all the influence of my life. Dr. Chapman said that he went away from that meeting with General Booth. Knowing this.

That this is the hope that we can walk in today. He said, the greatness of a man's power is the measure of surrender to Jesus. Let me say it again.

The greatness of a man's power, of a person's power, is the measure of surrender to Jesus. So, I hope today, as we kind of sit in the crowd and we watch five loaves and two fish turn into two or three semi-loads, I hope we can learn that these fish and bread lessons are going to truly change our life.

That a disciple knows when to rest. Because if you burn out, you're going to be good for nothing. A disciple knows when to rest. A disciple leads with compassion. And a disciple follows the God of the impossible.

[26 : 43] So, let's do this, okay? Let's trust this awesome God. And let's walk in the power of the Holy Spirit today. Pray with me. Father, thank you so much for these words of life that you have spoken right into our hearts today.

Thank you that you are a God of miracles. You are a God who is awesome in power. And nothing is too hard for you. And I love that you're a God who not only forgives us, but who transforms us more and more every day into your image.

So, Father, we just thank you for these lessons that you have taught us today. All that you are teaching us every day. And I just pray that as we got into the word today, that more importantly, this word will get into us.

And that it will stir and that it will change us from the inside out. So, Jesus, we just surrender our hearts, our lives to you. And we pray that you will deal with anything going on in our hearts that is not honoring in your sight.

That you will help us to lay that down at your feet so that it can be more of Jesus and less of us. More of Jesus, less of me.

[27 : 59] So, Father, thank you for your word. We give you praise. And we pray this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen and amen. Hey, let me share just a quick invitation with you.

Maybe you want to talk about what it looks like to follow Jesus. To surrender your heart to him. Maybe you just got some faith questions. That's okay. We would love to come alongside you and just be an encourager to you and help you to see what God's word teaches.

My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church here in Greensburg, Indiana. And I would love to walk alongside you on this journey. So, reach out to me. Email at ray at fccgreensburg.com. Or you can call us in the office at 812-663-8488. Thank you so much for listening to this message today.

And I pray that God will take his word, stir it in our hearts, and that you and I may follow him more faithfully every single day. God bless you.