

More Than Plenty

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Date: 09 December 2012

Preacher: Canon David Short

[0 : 0 0] sermon we're going to be looking at those three paragraphs deb read so well for us in mark chapter seven and eight page 842 and 843 one of the friends of sam in the baptism group it's a little girl who wants to dance on the stage here and i think it'd be very good for us all if she did but she's disappeared seemingly page 842 and 843 if you you might need to share i want to begin with a bit of a tiny confession i have had a life-long love affair with bread white bread when i was a kid my mum used to take me to the bakery and you could smell it about a hundred yards away and my mouth would be watering and we buy the bread and by the time we got home i'd eaten half of it when i was a teenager i'd come home from school i'd come home from sport and i'd eat an entire loaf of white bread and then all my dinner as well there's nothing so satisfying and i've noticed in the real estate websites in vancouver that if you really want to sell a new home what you do is you paint it whatever the season's colors are you put minimalist furniture in it great art on the walls and at the center of the photo is a little table with a beautiful plate with bread rolls on it i gotta buy that place my wife and i had our cholesterol test recently and my wife eats very carefully and abstemiously and i eat anything that's put in front of me and she has high cholesterol and i don't have any and it feels really good and i'm going to write a book on it every culture uses bread as a staple we live in the land of plenty and so we've got so much choice when it comes to bread wheat rye bread marble bread pumpernickel tortilla pita mozza sourdough cornbread baguette chapati focaccia brioche ciabatta and of course my favorite white bread and for those people who first heard jesus bread was literally a matter of life and death and what jesus does he takes this very delicious and necessary thing and he makes it a picture not just of life but of eternal life of all his blessing and he makes it a picture of the fact that he can satisfy the deepest longings of our hearts by his grace if you've been with us for a while you'll know that chapters 6 to 8 is dominated of mark's gospel is dominated one thing by one thing it's dominated by bread and every time jesus speaks about bread and every time he does something with bread he doesn't just do a stingy miserly little tiny portion of it he does something abundant and overflowing and excessive and constant and the point that we are the point that mark is trying to get to us is the sufficiency of god's grace in jesus christ but here's the strange thing we resist his grace last week jordan who was preaching for us left us with some of the most challenging words jesus says about his view of humanity they're the very words before our passage starts let me just remind them i remind you of them verses 20 to 23 of chapter 7 sorry i'll start at verse 21 he says from within out of the heart of man and woman come evil thoughts sexual immorality theft murder adultery coveting wickedness

deceit sensuality envy it's the evil eye slander pride foolishness all these evils come from within and they defile a person i just want you to feel this i mean that is almost impossible for us to swallow today isn't it and have we not been taught to look for the best in others that people are fundamentally good and that it's our job to bring out the best of them and don't you love watching those videos online random acts of kindness how we possibly accept what jesus says here and i just point it out to you because jesus view of humanity is completely different from every other philosophy every other worldview every other ideology every other religion i mean the conservative or traditional view is that the problem is out there you know it's people who've lost their values and lost their moral standards there's no respect for tradition or for morality or authority that's the problem out there or closer to home in a liberal culture like ours the problem is still out there it's bad people it's bad people who oppress others who victimize others or it's bad social structures poverty it's lack of education it's lack of freedom it's lack of self-esteem and jesus says yes no actually he says the problem is in here and if jesus is right it means that every other worldview and every other philosophy is superficial and shallow and if you think about it if jesus is right it means that both the conservative and the liberal worldview ends up being the worldview of the pharisee and the basic statement of the pharisee is i thank you god that i'm not like other people and i think the issue is one of desire and satisfaction so striking about that list that scary list jesus gives us is it perfectly describes the false utopias we love to set up for ourselves let me just take a couple of illustrations sexual immorality it's the word pornea in greek from which we get pornography it's any kind of sex outside marriage and it's what jesus is driving at is how we build up a false world by seeking to fulfill ourselves and imagining this is going to meet my needs no matter the damage or coveting it's just the insatiable desire to have more stuff and it can be material possessions it can be that great job it can be that great person and if i if i just have it then i'm truly going to be satisfied it's a false utopia or take pride in the original it literally means high appearance how i come across to others i'm going to base what you think of me and my acceptance and my security based on how i come across and the externals and i'm going to take an exceedingly high view of myself compared to others to hide my insecurity it's a false utopia the question the passage today puts to us is there one thing that can satisfy the one person who can fully satisfy overflowingly abundantly satisfy and that's where the picture of bread comes in because jesus doesn't just tell us this terrible diagnosis he shows us that there is one thing in all the world which has the riches and depth and overflow and the fullness and i think if i could say it this way if jesus were here what he would say to us is the trouble is our desires are not too are not too large they're too small he wants and they're fixed on the wrong things

he wants wants us to fix them on him he teaches us to have more desire through the agitation of our hearts and our restless resistance to the grace of jesus our constant drive to create false utopias fixing our hearts on things that don't satisfy comes says jesus fundamentally because we don't trust the goodness of god we just don't believe god is good enough kind enough loving enough powerful enough to really be trusted or perhaps you do somewhere up here believe that but you struggle with how how do we get access to that how can we be satisfied so these three little paragraphs today are literally a bread sandwich a white bread sandwich the first and the third section's all about bread and the middle section is about how we get that bread so the first little paragraph chapter 7 24 to 30 i've called bread that spills over bread that spills over and you may not be surprised to know the commentators are fixated on two things in this passage the first is the fact that jesus uses the word dogs in verse 27 and the second is how this poor plucky and clever woman defeats jesus who's so reluctant and unwilling to give her a miracle some years ago my wife and i and our two boys visited a church on a sunday morning in a different city and this is the passage the preacher was preaching on and he took exception to jesus use of this word dog and he said and i quote clearly jesus was not just a misogynist but a racist and sinned greatly so i started to lean forward to stand up thinking to someone should say something in jesus defense and the long arm of my wife bronwyn the long and strong restraining arm of bronwyn came across my chest like a seat belt and she said please don't please please don't so i didn't but i'm very glad today to speak on the passage the first thing you notice is that it doesn't take place in israel jesus is outside israel verse 24 in tyre and a woman comes up to him who's got a daughter who has some sort of unclean spirit a demon the woman in verse 26 is described as greek the word gentile is greek she comes from the old phoenician empire likely of syrian descent that means and the rest of the passage shows us she's not poor in fact the furniture in her house is described in luxury terms she's a highly cultured woman she's obviously wealthy she has the need with her daughter and she's part of a nation that oppressed israel i discovered this week i never knew this before that um during israel during jesus lifetime when there were food shortages in galilee the tyre army the army from tyre raced down to galilee and stole the bread from their tables and their storehouses which i find interesting background however all i'm saying is she's not part of an oppressed minority she's she's from the upper drawer and jesus is neither unwilling nor reluctant to help her it's not that she has to win an argument with him you know weedle something good out of him because of a shrewdness in verse 29 near the end of the miracle he says to her you may now go the demon has already previously left your daughter in other words jesus cast out the demon when she first came to him before their conversation began so you see this i think this is much more like what jesus does with the woman in chapter 5 who has the flow of blood

you remember she sneaks up behind him to touch him she's instantly healed but Jesus does not just want to be a dispenser of good health he wants to draw her out of her superstition to faith in him to give her more than she could imagine that's the way grace works and it's very interesting for those of you who are careful Bible readers that three times in this passage the girl that the little daughter is called a diminutive little girl little daughter and it's exactly the same word Jesus used of the woman with the flow of blood in chapter 5 the issue is Jesus is not callous and cold and closed to the needs of this woman or a daughter because they're racially different he first heals the daughter and then the conversation takes place so that he wants to draw her mother to true faith in fact the miracle's not even on stage is it we don't see the miracle we don't see the daughter and Jesus just heals her from a distance this is like the feeding of the 5,000 two chapters ago it's a feeding story where the key to understanding it is the abundance and plenty and richness and spilling over of Jesus' grace so look at what he says in verse 27 verse 27 in the left hand column he said to her let the children be fed first he's already healed a daughter he wants this woman to understand her true hunger and when he says let the children be fed first the word fed is not the usual word for eating this is important because I'm going to come back to this a number of times through the passage it's the word for being completely satisfied and filled it means overflowing satisfaction so Jesus says let the children be fully satisfied first he's speaking about chronology since the beginning of the Bible since Genesis 12ish God's priority and mission was first to the Jews then to the Gentiles Jesus is speaking about the timeline he's not saying no to her he's saying there is going to come a time when the bread of my grace is going to go all over the world what does she say verse 28 yes Lord yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs it's very interesting that she's very happy to be to use the doggy terms to describe herself and a daughter and the commentators say all sorts of things they say it's not the usual word for dog it's you know it's fido under the table the beloved pet or you know Jesus was winking and smiling as he said we don't we don't know what really happened there however she doesn't seem the least bit offended by this use which means it's terribly civilized of the modern commentators to be offended on her behalf but none of us were there so we don't really know how it's used but if you focus on that you miss what's really astounding she has grasped that the grace of God is going to overflow the boundaries of Israel and she becomes the first person in all of Mark's Gospel to hear a parable of Jesus and to believe it and to act on it isn't that great she's soft-hearted she knows she doesn't deserve anything from Jesus she doesn't come to him with her you know religious status she doesn't come with a theological question to throw at Jesus like the Pharisees she knows that apart from grace apart from mercy apart from Jesus absolute free love she and her daughter are lost and I think that's why she mentions the crumbs because the core of her grasp of the parable is that Jesus' grace is sufficient for even her it's very different from the disciples she shows up the disciples she says yes Lord

she's the first person in the gospel to call Jesus Lord she gets it she says I can't control Jesus with my cleverness I know Israel's in a privileged position gosh what other nation in the world was fed from bread with bread from heaven during the wilderness what other nation has a Messiah who can feed 5,000 people with bread out of nothing she stakes all her hope not on what she deserves nor even on her need but on the reality and sufficiency and abundance and freedom of Jesus' grace one crumb it's enough it will satisfy because Jesus is the bread of life and this cannot be confined with any culture within any tradition with any real boundaries it just can't do it and this is the point of the first bread piece of the sandwich grace is more than enough it spills over to those who believe all right so let's go to the third little story and I've called this the bread of Jesus' grace flows over so it spills over in the first part it flows over in the second part this is chapter 8 verses 1 to 10 another feeding story those of you who are alert will know in chapter 6 we fed the 5,000 and now in chapter 8 Jesus feeds the 4,000 you remember when he fed the 5,000 it was mostly for the benefit of the disciples and so Jesus again says to them you give them something to eat and what's their response verse 4 how can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place they mock him and in the original it says how can one person have the ability to fully satisfy these people they use the satisfy word again and some people say our disciples couldn't impossible for the disciples to be so thick you know weren't they there just last chapter feeding 5,000 and I think this is exactly like me and it's exactly like you we so easily forget the grace of God and we begin to imagine the grace of God there's not enough of it to go around we fall into difficulty we begin to pray and then God acts in an obvious way and we're very thankful for about six days and then we fall into difficulty again and we begin to imagine there's not enough bread for us and there's no accident that this feeding happens outside of Israel because Jesus is preparing the disciples for their mission after his resurrection and he wants them to know that his grace is sufficient not just for them but for the world for everyone so again he takes these seven tiny loaves and a couple of fish and he gives thanks to God and we read in verse 8 they ate and were satisfied there's the word again and they took up the broken pieces left over seven baskets full you understand the disciples said how can one man have the power to fully satisfy all these there is one man and his grace is more than plenty to satisfy and it has given and it will give satisfaction to thousands and thousands and millions and millions and the emphasis again here is on fullness and abundance the seven the seven baskets left over these are big baskets and they're full not just to the top they're brimming they're leaking bread there is excessive bread have you ever noticed this if you have your Bible open just turn over to chapter 8 verse well let's start at verse 18 this is very soon after this passage and Jesus is talking to the disciples about bread again he says to them having eyes do you not see having ears do you not hear they don't get it

[20 : 03] do you not remember here are the questions I wanted to ask you when I broke the five loaves for the four five thousand how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up they said twelve and the seven for the four thousand how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up and they said seven and he said to them do you not yet understand and I want to say I don't think I've ever understood what on earth Jesus was saying there he's not interested in statistics what's the one thing about the two feeding miracles he wants them to get it's surplus it's overflow it's abundance he wants them to trust his grace not just for themselves but for others here in Gentile territory where the mission will go Jesus' grace overflows and overflows and overflows and then thirdly and we'll go through this a little more quickly the miracle in between teaches us how we may receive this grace and it's about hearing verses 31 to 37 of chapter 7 hearing is so important people tell us that blindness cuts you off from things but hearing cuts you off from people again and again through Mark's gospel

Jesus has exhorted us to listen to him to hear him and the disciples don't this is the first time in the gospel Jesus heals a deaf man and it becomes it comes between these two pieces of bread where the woman from Tyre hears Jesus and the disciples don't hear him we're outside of Israel and some friends bring this man who's deaf and has trouble speaking it's not that he's silent he can make a noise he just can't find his voice he can't find himself because he can't hear properly and Jesus takes him aside privately and again this is the first time in the gospel he's done a miracle using a series of actions and they're very intimate he puts his finger he puts his two fingers in the guy's ears and that's a pretty intimate thing to do when we finish the service do it to the person sitting next to you then spit on the ground and touch their tongue see how that goes he doesn't need to do these actions the actions don't heal the man it's the word that heals him verse 34 looks up to heaven he sighs and says a father that is be opened and his ears are open his tongue was released and he spoke plainly a father he's not speaking to the ears he's speaking to the man it's singular he just commands the man open up and he does and the first thing the man hears and the first thing he sees is Jesus the bread of life and the crowd goes crazy and they use this amazing language they are astonished they are exceedingly overflowingly astonished and they say he's done all things well which in the Greek is a quote from

Genesis 1 he created all things good and then they say he even makes where is it he even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak and he's quoting from Isaiah 35 and I want you to turn there if you have your Bible open turn backwards in the Bible to Isaiah 35 please Isaiah 35 is a beautiful passage it's about when God comes when God comes he brings salvation and salvation is a Christian word it's a word we use as Christians and it's full of meaning and here the picture in Isaiah 35 of what salvation is is overflowing and abounding deep permanent satisfaction and joy look at verse 1 please the wilderness and the dry land shall be glad the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing verse 3 strengthen the weak hands make firm the feeble knees say to those who have an anxious heart be strong fear not behold your God will come with vengeance with the recompense of God he will come and save you then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped then shall the layman leap like a deer and the tongue of the mute sing for joy and the last verse of the chapter verse 10 and the ransomed of the Lord shall return come to Zion with singing everlasting joy shall be on their heads they'll obtain gladness and joy and sorrow and sighing will flee away and that is what

Jesus has come to do so please take this and reflect on it and I just I want to guide your reflection with two simple questions as we finish two simple questions I ask myself as I ask you the first is this is God's grace sufficient for you is it sufficient for me I have a friend in Australia who I spoke to yesterday and two weeks ago he had a went to the doctor he had something in his chest and the doctor said we think you have asbestosis which will mean a painful and certain death so for a week while he waited for test results what was his mind full of his whole heart was full of fear and dark thoughts it drove everything out of his life everything else out it was an overflow of fear if you will an abundance of fear he went back to the doctor a week later and the doctors gave him a clear bill of health and this week he said my whole life has been overflowing with relief something better it's been flooding everything else out and that's the way grace works see it's only the flood of grace which can change our hearts it's only the overflow of grace that can help us deal with our false utopias it's only as we grasp that in him we have this ongoing full satisfaction that it can change what's inside us some people think that Jesus just brings us forgiveness you know a clean slate and a fresh start that's not it

Christianity is not you know I'll forgive your sins now try harder next time Christianity is not forgiveness plus moralism when the grace of God starts to pour into our life it creates in us a deeper desire a desire for something bigger and better a desire for the one who can satisfy it's not it's bigger than the desire for money or a luxury retirement or a perfect spouse or even a spouse or a perfect job it's a desire for the bread of life so individually the way you and I deal with ingrain and stubborn sin and our false utopias is not just looking at it and facing it and trying to stop it's by taking it and then looking into the gracious face of God and drawing on the fullness of his grace and taking our satisfaction from him it's why it's only the overflow it's only the abundance it's only the plenty of his grace that can overcome foolishness and pride and what he has what he offers is more satisfying it's never going to run out and I think if we begin to understand how sufficient his grace is if you become growingly satisfied with the bread of life in Jesus Christ you don't have to have the biggest house in the street and you don't have to have the wealthy barber retirement you don't have to have the top grade you don't have to have that affair you don't need to feel insecure about yourself his grace is sufficient for us as individuals and secondly finally is God's grace sufficient for others it's one thing it's one thing to start to believe his grace is sufficient for me individually but can we trust the sufficiency of

[28 : 54] God's grace for other people can we trust his grace for others in our family for our spouse can we trust him for one another in the church here in this building in this room can we trust him for those in Vancouver in the city of Vancouver see if Jesus is right here the overflow of his grace is more than sufficient not just for our lives but for our community for those in Vancouver we love for those in the city of Vancouver have no idea of the bread of life I mean is there enough is there a sufficiency of God's grace for us as a church community to forgive one another to love one another to have hope for one another you can see in the parish life notes today don't get it out this is where we're going we desperately desire to be a community gripped by the grace of God in the gospel we're never going to begin thinking generously or kindly or missionally unless we're resting on that bottomless supply of grace it's only when we begin being satisfied by grace that we change from being mean hearted complaining self-focused entitled

Pharisees it's only the overflow of his grace that can strengthen us so that we're not fearful and sheepish and embarrassed about being Christian it's only the power of something more wonderful that can depose our idols we need someone who can deal with demons and who can deal with our darkness and who can deal with death itself and I think it's only in the overflow of his grace that we as a church can recover our missionary vocation to be gripped by the gospel of his grace and then the wilderness and the dry land shall be glad and the desert shall rejoice and blossom and then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped and then the ransom of the Lord will return and come to Zion with singing and everlasting joy shall be upon our heads and we shall obtain gladness and joy and sorrow and sighing shall flee away Amen

Amen Amen Amen Bye Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen