

# Savior of the Nations

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 12 March 2023

Preacher: Nick Lauer

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good morning, church. Would you turn with me to Mark chapter 8? Our sermon text today is Mark chapter 8, verses 1 through 10.

You can find that on page 792 in the Pew Bible. Mark chapter 8. Let me pray for us, and then I'll read.

Amen. Our Father in heaven, we ask that as we come to your word now, your spirit would come and guide us into all truth.

Lord, help us to see clearly who you are and who you've revealed yourself to be and who you've called us to be in your word. Lord, we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

All right, Mark chapter 8, verses 1 through 10. Let me read for us. And his disciples answered him, How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?

[ 1 : 26 ] And he asked them, How many loaves do you have? And they said, Seven. And he directed the crowd to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves, and having given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people.

And they set them before the crowd. And they had a few small fish. And having blessed them, he said that these also should be set before them.

And they ate and were satisfied. And they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. And there were about 4,000 people.

And he sent them away. And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha. Well, if you've been following Mark's gospel up to this point, his account of the life of Jesus, this particular story probably sounds familiar.

There's a great crowd in a desolate place. Jesus is teaching them. The people are hungry. And miraculously, thousands are fed with just a meager amount of food.

[ 2 : 40 ] Very similar story to what we heard back in chapter 6. Some lessons, it seems, have to be learned more than once. And so again, we see the compassion and the power of Jesus to work savingly and satisfyingly for the hungry crowds.

We're told again, they ate and were satisfied. But if we are careful readers of the gospel of Mark, we realize that this isn't just a retelling of the same story that we heard before back in chapter 6.

There are differences. There, the crowd was 5,000 men. Presumably plus women and children on top of that. Here, the total crowd is 4,000.

There, the disciples raised the issue of the hungry crowds. Here, it's Jesus who takes the initiative.

There, the leftovers filled 12 small knapsacks, which is what the word basket means in chapter 6.

Here, the leftovers fill seven large bins. It's actually a different word for basket here in this story. But perhaps the most significant difference between the feeding of the 5,000 and the feeding of the 4,000 is found when we consider the context.

[ 4 : 02 ] In chapter 7, verse 31, remember, we learned that Jesus has been ministering at this part of his ministry in the region of the Decapolis. That is an area on the northeastern side of the Sea of Galilee that was known to be a largely Gentile region.

And as chapter 8 begins, Mark says, So consider then what Mark is showing us.

And it's something that's actually been brewing all of chapter 7. Remember, in chapter 7, Jesus was debating purity laws with the Pharisees, and then he was commending the faith of a Syrophenician woman, and then healing a man in the Decapolis who was deaf and unable to speak.

What we see here is the compassion and the power of Jesus extending beyond the boundaries of Israel and reaching to the nations. Of course, this is just a foreshadowing of what was to come.

You know, the Gentile mission won't begin in earnest until after Jesus' resurrection and ascension to the Father's right hand. Then the risen Jesus tells his disciples to carry the gospel, the good

news of the forgiveness of sins, to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.  
[ 5 : 34 ] But that mission to the ends of the earth is seen even here. Jesus is the Savior for the whole world, not just for Israel.

The bread he came to supply wasn't just for insiders, for religious people, for folks who knew their Bibles and lived what seemed to be a good life. No, Jesus had come for everyone, for the outsiders too, for folks who didn't know much about religion or God, for folks who couldn't find their way around the Bible unless someone gave them a page number, right?  
For folks whose lives were mixed up and broken and in obvious need of help. Jesus came for everyone. He's the Savior of the whole world.

So consider what this means for us today. You don't need me to tell you that we live in a city where most people aren't really that familiar with Christianity or with the Bible and not really familiar with what it means to live a life in line with the truth and goodness of who God is in Christ.

And maybe that's you this morning. Maybe you're just beginning to explore spiritual things and maybe you're not sure what to make of God or Jesus or any of it. Well, if you get nothing else from your time this morning, I hope you see this from Mark chapter 8.

[ 7 : 03 ] That Jesus sees you, loves you, has compassion on you, and is willing to feed your hungry soul if you come to him.

It doesn't matter where you're from, which side of the lake or tracks or what side of the educational spectrum you're from. Whether your life has been good or bad or in between.

Of course, if there is a God, he sees everything about you. Everything that's beautiful and everything that's selfish and petty and broken. And you know, the truth is, we humans, we're actually much worse than we think we are.

But what we see in Jesus Christ is that we're also much more loved than we think we are. Jesus knew how far away some of these people had come to be with him.

And he knows how far away you've been and how far away I've been. And how does he view us?  
With compassion and with mercy.

[ 8 : 15 ] You see, this is the great truth that every follower of Jesus learns sooner or later and that all of the apostles came to learn in time, certainly. That what puts someone right with God isn't their pedigree or their family history or their law-keeping or their moral record or their religious fervor.

It didn't matter if you were from the heart of Jerusalem or from the pagan cities of the Decapolis. None of that put them in a right relationship with God.

At the end of the day, the most devout, law-abiding Jew and the most pagan, immoral Gentile were both utterly and equally lost.

Both had sinned against a holy God and both needed a radical rescue that only God could provide. Now, that's hard to wrap our minds around, right?

I mean, does our moral record really not make any difference in getting us right with God? I mean, imagine a swimming contest, right, between me and an Olympic athlete like Michael Phelps or something.

[ 9 : 30 ] I know Michael Phelps is retired, but he would still like to totally trounce me in the swimming pool, right? Obviously, he would blow me out of the water. But what if the contest was to swim, you know, not a few laps in the pool, but from New Haven Harbor here all the way to London, England?

Well, on a good day, I might make it to East Haven, right? Maybe I'd hit Lighthouse Point. Probably not. But maybe a really great swimmer would go like 50 or 60 miles to Mystic, Connecticut.

And yet, neither of us have even made it out of Long Island Sound. If the goal is getting to England, we're both dead in the water.

Spiritually speaking, it's the same. The good swimmer, the bad swimmer, everyone falls short. You know, the real danger, the real danger is that sometimes if we think we're a good swimmer, we don't realize how much trouble we're really in.

If we think we can make it across the ocean without any help, well, we're actually in worse trouble than the person grabbing for the lifeline the first chance they get because they know they don't have a chance.

[ 10 : 56 ] In other words, perhaps the worst place you can be spiritually is thinking you have it all together. Better to be like these crowds. Better to be just hungry for the words of Jesus.

Better to know you need something you don't have and to look for it in Him than to think you have to perform and pretend to try to be accepted.

real salvation is always and only by grace through faith in Jesus, not by works and not by your ethnic background and not by anything.

He's not asking you to come to Him with a cleaned up life and a moral record. He's asking you to come to Him hungry and to let Him feed you with the living bread that only He can give.

Jesus is the Savior of the whole world and that means you too if you'll come to Him. Of course, this was God's plan all along, you know.

[12:01] God's plan was always to bring His salvation to the ends of the earth. So what we see here in Jesus is really the fulfillment, the beginning of the fulfillment of what God had planned all along.

It started all the way back with Abraham and Abraham's family. You know, the salvation story began with Israel but the goal was always to rescue the nations as well.

Consider the promise even to Abraham at the very beginning. Remember, God tells Abraham in Genesis 12, I'll make you a great nation and I'll bless you and I'll make your name great so that you'll be a blessing and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.

And when Isaiah foresees the coming Messiah, he hears God say of this coming servant of the Lord in Isaiah 49, it is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel.

I will make you as a light for the nations that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth. God's plan was always for his salvation to reach to the end of the earth.

[13:10] To be not just for Jews but to create a Jew plus Gentile people of God around the one Savior and Lord, Jesus the Messiah. The bread he came to offer, the people he came to create, the forgiveness and new life he came to purchase is for everyone who believes.

And so consider what Mark is telling us also here about the majesty of this Jesus. In the ancient world, you know, every nation, every people group, they had their own gods.

You know? And if you were savvy, like the Romans, for example, you would be quite pluralistic about it all. You know, you would say, well, that's fine. You worship your gods and you worship your gods and just make sure you acknowledge the Roman gods and we'll all be fine.

But Mark is hinting at something quite different here. Jesus isn't just one more cultural god to be placed alongside all the other gods that might have been worshipped in the Decapolis.

In fact, those so-called gods were just lifeless idols who will only leave you hungry. but there is one who can satisfy the hungry soul, one who is great enough and powerful enough and compassionate enough to meet the deepest longings of every culture in every nation in every human heart.

[14:45] And this is exactly who Jesus proves himself to be, majestic over all gods. Jesus is the savior of the whole world.

You know, it was just a few months ago that many of us were glued to our screens, our TVs or our phones or our laptops or our tablets or whatever watching the World Cup, right?

And as each round went by, we eagerly waited to see who would come out on top, who would be the world's best, who would get the glory of being crowned the World Cup winner, who would rise victorious above all the rest.

But notice the difference here. Notice that with Jesus, he shows his worldwide majesty not through conquest but through service.

He shows up on foreign shores amidst Gentile cities and how does he demonstrate his majesty and greatness. Is it a military campaign? Is it a political takeover?

[16:01] No. He has compassion on the crowds and he feeds them. He demonstrates his glory through service. Of course, the service he renders is miraculous.

Thousands are fed with just seven loaves and a few small fish. But even the miracle is surprising by its simplicity. He doesn't wow the crowds with a fiery display of cosmic power.

I mean, come on. If you had the kind of power of the living God and you showed up on earth and you wanted to demonstrate your greatness, you'd find some pretty awesome ways to do it.

Right? I know I would. And how does Jesus do it? He serves them their daily bread. And if we can start to see this, then we're starting to see the biblical Jesus in all his majesty.

The one Lord of all the nations powerful enough to make kingdoms rise and kingdoms fall. And yet he comes not to be served, but to serve.

[17:15] And as Mark will go on to show us in his gospel, to give his life as a ransom for many. Jesus is the Savior of the whole world who came to display his glory in compassionate service.

And if this is true of Jesus, then it ought to be true of his followers. Our glory as the people of Christ will not be seen in acts of power and deeds of conquest.

No, our glory is shown through Christ-like service and compassionate love. And notice, this service is not just for those who love us and who are like us, but compassionate service also for those who do not love us and who are not like us.

Many Jews consider the Gentiles their enemies. And yet, even to our enemies, we must show compassion and mercy and service.

This is greatness in the kingdom of God. That is real glory and majesty because this is what no other God has done.

[ 18 : 34 ] Plenty of gods tell a story of conquest and victory, of enemies slain and campaigns won. but what other God sends his only son not to destroy his enemies but to die for them?

What other God lands in outsider enemy territory and gives himself to be broken so that those very rebels might be made whole? Behold the majesty of the one true God in Jesus Christ, the Savior of the whole world.

And so we see then that the feeding of the 4,000 isn't just a repeat of an earlier story but a demonstration by Jesus that he is the Savior not just of the Jews but of the Gentiles too.

He's not just Israel's king but also the world's true Lord. And yet how often are we like the disciples in Mark 8?

We look at the size of the crowd, the depth of the need, the limitation of our own resources and we think there's no way we can feed this crowd.

[ 19 : 49 ] How could we possibly see spiritual renewal in our day? How will our friends and our neighbors and our co-workers ever come to know Christ?

I mean look at how far away they are. Look how stiff the cultural headwinds blow against the biblical gospel. After all, a lot of people don't just think Christians are weird, they think Christians are the problem.

How could we ever hope to see our city one for Christ? How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?

We shake our heads at the disciples because just a couple chapters earlier Jesus had done just that. You read the story and you think, come on guys.

In fact, Jesus fed an even bigger crowd with an even smaller amount of food just two chapters ago. How could they be so forgetful, we think? Don't they remember who they're with?

[ 21 : 00 ] Don't they remember who they're with? And in fact, this is exactly what Jesus will ask them in the coming verses. Pastor Matt will take a look at this next week.

But if you look ahead at verse 18, Jesus says, do you not remember when I broke the five loaves for the 5,000, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up? And they said to him, 12. And the seven for the 4,000, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up? And they said to him, seven. And he said to them, do you not yet understand?

Is any mission field too hard for the Lord? Is any cultural moment too irreligious for the gospel of grace?

Brothers and sisters, when the apostle Paul wrote that the gospel is the power of God for salvation to those who believe, to the Jew first and also to the Greek, he was not writing to a comfortable church in a nice moral city where everyone held mostly Christian beliefs.

[ 22 : 07 ] The city of Rome in the first century celebrated violence and sex and power and greed in ways that would make even the most libertine among us more than a little uneasy.

And yet, did that stop the gospel? As those Christians prayed and preached and took bread Sunday after Sunday and gave thanks and broke it and shared it, could even the Roman Empire stand up against the Savior of the whole world?

Could all the armies and the wealth and the decadence of Rome stand a chance against the risen Lord Jesus whose power is made perfect in weakness and who's made known to us in the breaking of the bread and in the proclamation of the cross?

how quickly we forget. How quickly we forget. Time would fail to tell us of great awakenings and revivals and movements of the Spirit that God has done again and again and again and yet how quickly we forget.

do we not remember who we are with? The Savior of the whole world. And so Jesus is asking us again how many loaves do you have?

[ 23 : 42 ] Show me what little you have. Give me all your weakness, all your failures, all your fears and doubts. Surrender it all to me and then like those loaves I'm going to bless you and break you and send you out.

And then you'll see in the words of Zechariah that it's not by might and it's not by power but by my Spirit says the Lord of hosts.

And then that verse from Isaiah that spoke first and foremost about the ministry of the Messiah now it will become true of you as well just like it became true of the disciples in Mark 8. I will make you as a light for the nations that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.

And if you think that's a stretch in applying that verse that way the Apostle Paul does the exact same thing in Acts 13. That he sees that in and through the church we're extending the mission of Jesus to be a light to the nations.

Are we forgetful? Yes. We must confess that too often we are. We are forgetful but the Lord never forgets.

[ 24 : 58 ] The Savior of the whole world will not forget his promise or his word and he will not forget his people. For as the Lord said to Paul in Corinth so he says to us today I have many in this city who are my people.

And so as we look at the crowds in this seemingly desolate place friends let us remember who we are with. The Savior of the whole world the crucified and risen Lord Jesus and let's pray that what was true that day in the Decapolis might be true in ours too.

That they all ate and were satisfied. Let's pray. Let's pray. Our Lord Jesus we pray that by your Holy Spirit you would come and you would encourage us with this text.

Lord for those who feel like they are far off would they be encouraged by your compassion and your love to draw near. Holy Spirit for those of us who are feeling weary and weak and battered down by the battle Lord would we remember who we are with.

The mighty one who can feed crowds and who can bring renewal and who can bring deep and lasting change.

[ 26 : 39 ] Lord Jesus we pray that you would be known in our midst as the Savior and as the Lord and we pray that many would come to taste and see that you Lord are good.

We pray this in your holy and mighty name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.