



DEXTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

7643 Huron River Drive

Dexter, MI 48130

734-426-8480

Feeding of the Five Thousand

February 21, 2010

Dr. Matthew J. Hook

Mark 6:30 - 44

Here's one thing I love about the Olympics: Besides the fact that what they do is amazing, violence isn't the main focus. Neither are taxes and war, extremists and terrorists, conservatives versus liberals, bail outs and ignorance. But are the Olympics just inspirational escapism? Some people think Christianity is just that.

Brian McLaren writes how Christianity is *not* us escaping these troubled shores, but God's will being done on this troubled earth as it is in heaven. Even though some writers are using metaphors for today's problems like the "Perfect storm of global crises, or a spreading disease (Remember "humanity is virus"?) Or our society as a whole has become an addict. Or the image of a suicide machine

Whether it is

- Environmental breakdown from our unsustainable global economy,
- Economic breakdown from the equity crisis causing envy, hate, and fear,
- The Security crisis from resentment and fear among various groups and tribes within the human family, or
- The Spiritual breakdown meaning the failure of religion to provide the story capable of healing and reducing the previous 3 crises. No direction for people. No values getting transferred, no vision, and no inspiration for people by providing the God-given framework for their lives.

It makes me appreciate reading through the accounts of Jesus all the more.

But what can I do? What can one church do? First, care. It boils down to that. Can you look at people and feel compassion for them? 5,000 people and 5 little wafers of barley and 2 little anchovies. Even each one getting a crumb wouldn't feed them. It's just like here: there are thousands of people in Dexter, AA, Chelsea, Pinckney, etc., and only a handful of whole-hearted Christians who desire to see their towns converted to Christ. There are billions around the earth, and just a few missionaries bringing to them the Bread of Life. This is a huge problem. The difference between supply & demand would have been even more visible if we were there, in that crowd at Bethsaida.

Mark 6:34 *"And when He went ashore, He saw a great multitude, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things. 35 And when it was already quite late, His disciples came up to Him and began saying, "The place is desolate and it is already quite late; 36 send them away so that they may go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." 37 But He answered and said to them, "You give them something to eat!" And they said to Him, "Shall we go and spend two hundred denarii on bread and give them something to eat?" 38 And He said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go look!" And when they found out, they said, "Five and two fish." 39 And He commanded them all to recline by groups on the green grass. 40 And they reclined in companies of hundreds and of fifties. 41 And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed the food and broke the loaves and He kept giving them to the disciples to set before them; and He divided up the two fish among them all. 42 And they all ate and were satisfied. 43 And they picked up twelve full baskets of the broken pieces, and also of the fish. 44 And there were five thousand men who ate the loaves."*

Jesus was equal to the emergency. (DO YOU BELIEVE THAT?) No one went away without sharing in

His abundance. They were filled. Jesus has more, not less, power. Jesus doesn't deal in "lack." Jesus can use our paltry means to accomplish His purpose. Even in the perfect storm.

These loaves and fish had a previous history. Think about it:

- God brought the boy there. Have faith in God, because God has brought you here. God has an opportunity for you.
- This boy with his loaves was brought to Jesus. Don't be afraid of being obscure. If all you have is a little, then use it and use it properly, and you will serve God! God knows how to find you.
- The loaves and fish were judged insufficient for the need. It's like Satan saying to you "What good could YOU do? You're just getting your act together now, and you're 60! Why should you try to do anything for God? You're a housewife! You don't have any talent! You aren't trained! You're not good enough to be used by God! That's because Satan is afraid of what you can do, if you would just do what you can—because Satan knows that you do that, and God will come to you and help you do what you can't yet do. The devil is afraid of even the little that we *can* do now. Because if it's directed toward God, that little snowflake you bring could be added to an avalanche for God!
- Realize that it was Jesus' *disciples* that were saying "It's not enough."
- Notice one more thing. The boy was willing to part with them. Jesus wouldn't force the boy to part with them. **The people that God uses aren't selfish.** A lot of us think "I have to take care of #1 first. I have to have what I want first, *then* I can get serious about God." If I were the boy who brought the loaves and fish, it would have been the story of "the 4 loaves and 1 fish," because I'd have kept some back. But the people that God uses aren't selfish.
- Mark records this story to remind us that looking out only for your own interests doesn't lead to much interesting. But bringing them to Christ, now you're talking! 1,000s are fed, and he gets as much as he would have eaten, plus 12 baskets besides! Imagine taking that home to your mother!
- Anything you take away from yourself and give to Christ is well-invested. Even to the tune of 10,000%. The Lord knows how to give such a reward to unselfish followers that they feel that the person who saves their life loses it; but the one who is willing even to lose his life is the one who is truly saved.
- Do you see Jesus' invitation here? Whether you are a boy or girl of 10 years old, or 80, get this: you who think you have very little ability for this stuff: Come, and bring what you do have to Jesus. We want you. Times are hard. People are really struggling. Who knows? Though nobody seems to need you, you have come here, called by God for such a time as this! Can you be generous?

41 And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed the food and broke the loaves and He kept giving them to the disciples to set before them; and He divided up the two fish among them all.

- Have you transferred your "loaves & fish" to the hands that would one day bear the nail-prints?
- The loaves and fish don't really symbolize the boy's sacrifice as much as the Lord's power. How weird that Jesus would associate himself with our skimpy talents and weakness! Yet he does. But, as Philippians 4:13 says, "*I can do all things through Him who gives me strength.*" When our "loaves and fish" are out of His hands they're just barley cakes, but in his hands, they are the food that can feed 1,000s.
- Think about bringing your all you possess to him: Your brain—that it can learn of God's truths. Your heart—that it can be moved by what moves the heart of God. Your personhood. That your whole life might be transformed by Christ.
- And look how he's blessed what was given to Him. And look what happens: After God blesses them, he "kept giving them" to the disciples. What you give to God increases... It may not sound like a mathematical truth, but it sure is a spiritual one.
- Do you see? There is no limit, when we give what we can to Christ's work. He blesses our gifts, and multiplies them, and invites us to help distribute them, and we could meet the needs of this area: 5,000 worth. 5 million worth. If all God's people get moved, get motivated, get inspired, and get generous for the things that really matter. Imagine the good that could be done! Imagine the people that could be fed!

So we take our resources, our talents, even when we feel like it's a snowflake's worth, and give them to Jesus, and He gives them back to us to pass out to people—even the lost, sheep-without-a-shepherd ones. And look what happens:

- People's misery would be removed. They were famished. I imagine there are some here who never woke up yet to the idea, that if they were to bring their small amount to Christ, he could make use of it in alleviating the misery of many wounded, hungry, lost people. God can use you! God can use you! God can use your gifts! The only question is: Whose hand has a hold of your gifts?
- Put everything in His hands. Let it be said of you "Jesus took the loaves."
- The next thing that happens is there were fragments to be gathered. There was more left than they began with! Don't you realize that's how it works, with our talents and abilities and with God's grace? The more you use it, the more there is to use. The most miserable people are the most miserly. The most blessed, happiest, most-like-God people are also the most generous. If you keep drawing on your mind, your heart, and your faith, the better it will be, and the more will come back as a result.
- NEVER forget how much God can do with little things. Besides the miracle of the resurrection, it is the only miracle all 4 Gospel writers record.

Listen—you young people. Don't wait long before you try to do something for Christ. And us older folks who have been trusting in Christ for a long time, but haven't begun to work, it's time! Get cookin' and attempt some service where you mention Him by name. Even if you are old, even if you are sick, you can find something to do! We may find some day that people the world passes off as too sick, or too weak, or too poor are the people who have done the most. May it be so with us.

Study Guide for Mark 8 – 12

Monday: Read Mark 8. Jesus Feeds 4,000 & The Yeast of the Pharisees (1-21). Do you sometimes doubt Jesus' ability to meet your needs? How are you discovering that he really can shepherd you? How can you recognize the "yeast of the Pharisees" today? What does hardness of heart mean to you? Healing a Blind Man, Peter's Confession, & Jesus Predicts His Death (22-38). In your understanding of Jesus, are you almost blind, seeing blurred shapes, or enjoying 20/20 vision? Do you ever really see others as they are, or do you just see trees? Recently, how has your relationship with Jesus affected your lifestyle? Relationships? Priorities? Politics? Please email me your stories: Matt@dexterumc.org.

Tuesday: Read Mark 9. The Transfiguration (1-13). What spot for you is most like the Mount of Transfiguration—where you grasped a bit of Jesus' glory in a special way? Healing a Boy (14-32). When have you felt like the father in v.24? "I do believe. Help me overcome my unbelief!" How do prayer and faith relate for you at those times? Who is the Greatest? & Childlike Faith (33-50). MLK said "Anyone can be great, because anyone can serve." Have you revisited your definition of weakness lately? What can you do to stay "salty" in your relationships this week?

Wednesday: Read Mark 10. Divorce, Children & Jesus (1-16). Jesus doesn't shy away from tough issues. Notice he's speaking with the Pharisees, not someone in a tough marriage situation. Does it make a difference? The Rich Young Man (17-31). What would Jesus point to in your life that is keeping you from Him? Jesus Predicts His Death, James & John's Request (32-45). Jesus sets himself to go to Jerusalem, though he knows it will be difficult. He doesn't run away. What do you need to set yourself at this time? What one way can you serve this week? Blind Bartimaeus (46-52). Bartimaeus must have been sitting on the side of the road for a long time, but saw his chance come, and went for it with gusto. What spiritual issue do you see God setting up right now? What's a timing issue for you?

Thursday: Read Mark 11. Jesus' Triumphal Entry (1-11). How did Jesus first ride into your life: Conquering hero-conquering you? Gentle King? Knight Rescuer? How does he come to you now? Jesus Clears the Temple & The Withered Fig Tree (12-19). What does this say about what angers Jesus? Does any of this relate to your own religious practice? Do you hold grudges? Pray to be let go of them. (And let go!) The Authority of Jesus Questioned (27-33). Why are these leaders concerned with Jesus' authority? In what ways does following Jesus feel threatening to you? Are there things you need to let go of in order to claim his authority?

Friday: Read Mark 12. The Parable of the Tenants & Taxes to Caesar (1-17). This parable is serious stuff—a reflection of the entire Old Testament. How is Jesus rejected today? Do you ever reject him? If it's the coin you give to Caesar, then what do you give to God? What often prevents you from giving to Him? Marriage & Resurrection (18-27). This is a little weird until you realize the Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection. Jesus says "God is the God of the living" (27). Have you really placed your trust and hope in His resurrection power? The Greatest Commandment (28-34). If only we could get this right. There are 3 love relationships here: with God, with neighbors, with yourself. Where are you the strongest? Where are you weakest? What most helps grow love in these areas for you? Whose Son is the

Christ & the Widow's Offering (35-44). Again, Mark shares how Jesus is the One, as opposed to those who use their "Spirituality" to look good. Notice how much care and attention Jesus gives widows (v.40-44). Who can you show this kind of love to? When it comes to the widow's sacrificial gift, why do you give to God's work?

By now, it is my hope that you are reading not just for information, but for the enjoyment of "stealing away with Jesus." My prayer is for your relationship with Him to grow and grow, and that you would just enjoy the time. God bless you in your reading and your time in God's Word! May you meet Christ in the pages you read this week.