

# ENCOUNTER.

*Meeting Jesus in the Gospel of Mark*

## **Lesson Four: Encounter His Provision Mark 5-6**

The God who feeds “the birds of the air” and clothes “the lilies of the field” (Matthew 6:25-34) will provide for His children. However, we often do not recognize God’s gracious provisions because they come wrapped in ways we aren’t expecting. Learn to trust Him. He is faithful!

### **I. A Hurtful Rejection (Mark 6:1-13)**

Jesus traveled to His hometown, Nazareth. His hometown crowd turned up to hear Him teach in the synagogue. While the listeners were astonished by His teaching, “they took offense at Him” (Mark 6:3), not for what He said, but for who He was. He was a craftsman, a common worker with no formal education. Who did He think He was?

Even His relatives refused to believe His claim of deity, causing Jesus to declare, “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household” (Mark 6:4). The unbelief in the community limited His ability to do the miracles He was willing to do. He was willing; they were not. How tragic!

Consider this commentary:

Christ did not lack power; rather, the absence of faith caused God to withhold supernatural work. The Messiah was in their midst, but they missed His work in their lives because they refused to believe.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus gathered the twelve and sent them out in pairs. These men were about to have a crash course in the cost of discipleship. Dual lessons would be learned by the young men. First, they were dependent on God for their provisions and power – a lesson necessary for every Jesus-follower. The second lesson would be in regard to rejection. If Jesus had been rejected by His family and His hometown crowd, they could expect the same. So “they went out and preached that men should repent” (Mark 6:12).

R. Utleigh gives us helpful insight:

Repentance is crucial for a faith relationship with God. The term in Hebrew meant a change of actions, while in Greek it meant a change of mind. Repentance is a willingness to change from one's self-centered existence to a life informed and directed by God. It calls for a turning from the priority and bondage of the self. Basically it is a new attitude, a new world view, a new master. Repentance is God's will for every human being, made in His image (cf. Ezekiel 18:21, 23, 32; Luke 13:1-5; and 2 Peter 3:9).<sup>2</sup>

## II. A Painful Recollection (Mark 6:14-32)

At this point, Mark recalls the martyrdom of John the Baptist, perhaps to remind his readers of the high cost of serving Jesus. The miraculous ministry of Jesus, and His disciples, came to Herod's attention. Herod had been responsible for John's imprisonment and beheading and was haunted by what he had done at the insistence of his wife. Many, including Herod, thought Jesus was John the Baptist raised from the dead. This thought surely tormented Herod.

As the disciples rejoined the Lord, they reported to Him all that had happened. Jesus called them to come away to a secluded place to rest. While many believers find it difficult to work margins of rest into their busy schedules, God Himself rested on the seventh day of Creation to model this much needed rhythm. Psalm 23:1-3 says, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He *makes me* lie down in green pastures; He *leads me* beside quiet waters. He *restores my soul*" (emphasis mine). Learn to rest and allow the Lord to restore your soul, especially after times of ministry when "virtue has gone out" (Mark 5:30, KJV) of you.

## III. A Miraculous Multiplication (Mark 6:33-52)

They were rowing to a secluded area but were recognized before they reached shore. A great crowd of desperate people ran after them. Despite the fatigue, the Lord felt compassion on the crowd, and climbed out of the boat to begin teaching them. An estimated five thousand men gathered, but Bible scholars estimate the crowd may have been as large as 15,000 if the women and children were counted.

As the daylight waned, the issue of feeding the people came up. While the disciples wanted to dismiss the crowd, the Lord was preparing to teach His disciples-in-training a lesson about God's miraculous and mysterious ways. The Lord took a little guy's lunch of 5 loaves of bread

and 2 fish and miraculously fed the people. Mark 6:42-43 says, “They *all ate and were satisfied*, and they picked up twelve full baskets of the broken pieces, and also of the fish” (emphasis mine).

Beloved, when we feast on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life, we will be satisfied in Him and there will be plenty of leftovers! In John 6:35 Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.” Sadly, many in the crowd enjoyed the bread and fish but overlooked Jesus’ mission and discounted His deity.

The disciples gathered up twelve baskets of leftovers, one for each of them. As they loaded into the boat, Jesus told the young men to go ahead of Him to Bethsaida, while He went to the mountain to pray. Somewhere in the fourth watch, which was between 3:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m., a storm arose which threatened these seasoned fishermen. Jesus saw them straining against the high winds. Utley writes, “It is uncertain whether this was (1) physical sight or (2) supernatural knowledge. ‘Straining at the oars’...comes from Greek into English as ‘torture.’ It was hard rowing against the wind.” <sup>3</sup>

The Lord Jesus came to them, walking on the water. As the disciple fought the high winds and crashing waves, they could barely make out the figure approaching them. They assumed it was a ghost and they were terrified. R. Cooper notes:

Sailor stories about ghosts and supernatural figures were numerous. There was a Jewish superstition that ghosts seen at night foretold destruction and disaster. No wonder the disciples were afraid. <sup>4</sup>

Jesus immediately spoke words of comfort to them and climbed into the boat. The contrary winds ceased and “they were utterly astonished” (Mark 6:51). Despite all they had seen and experienced, despite an overflowing basket of provisions at the feet of each disciple, and in spite of Jesus regularly pouring truth into them, they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves. They were spiritually dull and slow to comprehend Jesus’ divine power. Failing to reflect on the Lord’s past provision, left them fearful. They were astounded when Jesus showed up in the midst of the storm that He effectively sent them into!

#### **IV. Hope for the Hurting (Mark 6:53-56)**

Jesus and His young disciples traveled and moored at Gennesaret, primarily a Jewish area, where He was immediately recognized. Having

heard of Jesus' compassion and His divine ability to heal, they ran to Him, carrying the sick and infirmed on pallets, believing if they could touch just the hem of His garment they would be healed.

In Jewish culture, the hem or fringe of a garment was known as the *tzitzit*. This referred to the ritual tassels worn on the corners of a Jewish man's outer garments. Touching the fringe of Jesus' cloak signified a deep, desperate, and faith-filled recognition of His authority and messianic identity.

Charles Swindoll helps us visualize this moment:

Picture the scene: roads in cities and throughout the countryside lined with the sick. As He walked along there was no fanfare, no announcement, no crusade meeting; they just touched His garment as He passed by. And following Him were those standing to their feet, now instantly whole.<sup>5</sup>

## V. Religious Rituals (Mark 7:1-23)

A delegation of scribes and Pharisees traveled some 80 miles from Jerusalem to Gennersaret apparently with a mission to trap Jesus and discredit Him. These religious rulers upheld manmade traditions as authoritative over the commandments of God. They observed the disciples eating with unwashed hands, violating their rules for ceremonial washings that they had established as additions to the commands of the law. The Pharisees viewed this omission as spiritual defilement and disobedience to their religious customs.

A confrontation was brewing between the pious religious rulers and Jesus and a verbal showdown ensued. Jesus rebuked them stating they were guilty of "neglecting the commandment of God, [to] hold to the tradition of men" (Mark 7:8). His message was clear: True defilement comes from within. It issues forth from the unbelieving heart full of selfishness and sin, not from conforming behavior to a strict adherence to rules.

The Pharisees, in their misguided sense of devotion to God, had set aside His inerrant Word in favor of man-made rules and rituals. Swindoll says, "In fact, they had strayed so far from the truth that when Truth incarnate stood before them, they condemned Him as a heretic!"<sup>6</sup>

## VI. Feral and Friendly Dogs (Mark 7:24-37)

Sometime after His confrontation with the Pharisees, Jesus traveled to the region surrounding the Gentile city of Tyre. There Jesus had an encounter

with a Syrophenician woman, perhaps the sole reason for His journey to the Gentile region of Tyre.

Cooper R. writes:

Note that this encounter of Jesus with the Syrophenician woman came on the heels of a major conflict with the religious leaders about ceremonial uncleanness. Jews normally did not have any contact with Gentiles because this made them ceremonially “unclean” according to Jewish tradition. Jesus showed by example that “it’s what’s in the heart” that matters. He showed the absurdity of the tradition of the elders by making contact with this Gentile woman. Mark also wanted to emphasize the mission and inclusion of the Gentiles in God’s plan of salvation. The gospel of God’s love and his kingdom are not limited to Israel, even though Jesus showed that Israel must have the first opportunity. By using the example of the Syrophenician woman, Mark wanted his Roman (Gentile) readers to realize that the good news was also for them.<sup>7</sup>

The woman repeatedly implored Him to deliver her little daughter from an unclean spirit. When she was not silenced, Jesus responded with the most peculiar retort, “Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” But she answered and said to Him, “Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table feed on the children’s crumbs” (Mark 7:27-28).

Now, on the surface, this text seems to paint a picture of Jesus contrary to what we know of Him through His Word. Therefore, we must dig deeper knowing that He is good and only does good. There is something at play here, something more than meets the eye.

In the Greek here, the word for “dog” is rendered in the diminutive sense, so that what Jesus is talking about here are small dogs that are at the table in somebody’s house. In addition to those scavenging dogs that you find outside eating the carrion and the garbage of the city, there were domesticated dogs in antiquity. These little dogs were brought into the home and functioned as household pets.<sup>8</sup>

So, in context, Jesus’ current mission centered on the “lost house of Israel.” The children He referenced referred to the privileged position of Israel in hearing the gospel first. He could not feed food that was designed for the children (Israel) to the little house pets (Gentiles). He implied that there was a place for Gentiles in the future when they would

“feed on the children’s crumbs” (Mark 7:28). The woman took no offense to the Lord’s characterization of the Jews or the Gentiles.

Her response was: “Yes, Lord, I understand. I have no prior claim to your mercy. I am not numbered among your children. I don’t want that. I’m satisfied, Lord, with the crumbs. All I’m asking is that You would just let one crumb that falls from Your table come into my mouth, and I’m satisfied. Heal my daughter, please. I know she is not in Your family. I know she is not numbered among the children. We are the dogs who wait for the crumbs, but one crumb is all I am asking for.”

Jesus had not found faith like that in Capernaum. He hadn’t found faith like that among the Pharisees or among the rabbis. By the spoken word, by the giving of a command, without even going home with her, He said to her: “You can go home. It’s okay. Your daughter is healed.”<sup>9</sup>

Undeserved mercy. Unfathomable grace. Beloved, like the Syrophenician woman, we too are the recipients of the crumbs that have fallen to the Gentiles. Hallelujah!

Jesus and His disciples returned to the Jewish region where a deaf and mute man was brought for healing. The Lord opened his ears and implored him not to tell anyone for He feared the Jews would attempt to take Him by force and make Him their King. This would interfere with God’s timeline for His death, burial, and resurrection, which is God’s perfect Provision of salvation for all — Jew or Gentile — who repent, believe, and receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior!

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<sup>1</sup> Evans, T. (2019). *The Tony Evans Bible Commentary*, p. 932. Brentwood, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

<sup>2</sup> Utley, R. (2000). *The Gospel according to Peter: Mark and I & II Peter: Volume 2*, p. 73. Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International.)

<sup>3</sup> Utley, R. (2000). *The Gospel according to Peter: Mark and I & II Peter: Volume 2*, p. 77. Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International.).

<sup>4</sup> Cooper, R. (2000). *Mark (Vol. 2)*, p. 10. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>5</sup> Swindoll, C. (2016). *Insights on Mark*, p. 177. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>6</sup> Swindoll, C. (2016). *Insights on Mark*, p. 177. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>7</sup> Cooper, R. (2000). *Mark (Vol. 2)*, p. 120. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>8</sup> Retrieved from: <https://learn.ligonier.org/sermons/mark-syro-phoenician-woman>.

<sup>9</sup> Retrieved from: <https://learn.ligonier.org/sermons/mark-syro-phoenician-woman>.