

# Facts and Faith

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[ 0 : 00 ] You may be seated. Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's word to you today.

A special welcome if you're new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats but because we're following Jesus together as one community.

And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced that there's no one so good. They don't need God's grace. And no one's so bad that they can't have it, which is why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in his word.

We're continuing our series in the Gospel of Mark. You'll remember that the Gospels tell the story of Jesus and his life and his death and his resurrection. And as we go through this Gospel, in particular, we're asking two questions.

First, who is Jesus? And second, how do we respond to him? Who is Jesus, and how do we respond to him? These are questions that we don't put from the outside into the text, but they're actually questions that come from the inside of the text that we pull out, and we're going to see those questions again repeated shortly later in chapter 8 as we begin that chapter this morning.

[ 1 : 13 ] It's tempting as we read through the Gospels to see them as isolated stories with interesting points and to miss the bigger picture that's at work that the Gospel writer wants us to see.

Part of the reason that we go through books of the Bible from beginning to end is so that we would understand that greater picture, that greater story. And we're in a broader section in the Gospel of Mark about what it means to have faith.

Last week, we saw that Jesus had to perform a miracle. He heals a man who is mute and deaf, which is this picture of how radical a miracle we need to be able to understand the Gospel.

And then two weeks ago, we saw the Syrophenician woman's faith. She was this model of faith to us, as she had faith that was both persistent and humble. She was persistent in the sense that she didn't give up, even when Jesus seemed to push her away.

And she was humble in that she appealed not to anything she had, but to Jesus' character. She understood God's mercy, and so she threw herself on it. This week, we're coming back again, and we're going to look at different aspects of faith.

[ 2 : 21 ] We have a picture here of unbelief, and so we'll be talking again about the difference between faith and unbelief. What does it actually look like on the ground to believe and take God at His Word?

It's with that that I'm going to invite you to turn with me to our passage in Mark 8, starting at verse 1. Remember, as we turn, that this is God's Word. And God tells us that His Word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold, and it's sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb.

And so that's why we read now Mark 8, verse 1. Verse 4.

And His disciples answered Him, How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place? And He asked them, How many loaves do you have? 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.

[ 3 : 45 ] 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 four thousand people. And He sent them away. And immediately He got into the boat with His disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha. Verse 11.

The Pharisees came and began to argue with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven and to test Him. And He sighed deeply in His spirit and said, Why does this generation seek a sign?

Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation. And He left them, got into the boat again, and went to the other side. Verse 14.

Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. And He cautioned them, saying, Watch out. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.

[ 4 : 47 ] And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread?

Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember?

When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up? They said to Him, Twelve. And the seven for the four thousand, 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? I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's Word.

Our Father in Heaven, we thank You again that You are not absent or distant. You're not distracted by many other things going on in the world like we are.

[ 5 : 51 ] But instead, You're focused on speaking to Your people. We confess this morning that we need that, that we are like sheep without a shepherd, unless You help us and intervene.

And we also know that You do speak to us clearly. And so we ask that You would do that this morning, that You would cut us to the heart with Your Word. You would encourage us.

You would challenge us. Most of all, You would show us Jesus, that we would see Him as more glorious and beautiful than ever before. You'd grow our love and affection and our reverence and our all for Him.

We thank You that we are not worried this morning about whether we have earned these things or whether we deserve them. But instead, we simply ask them in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The story is told of a young boy who was in foster care and he was placed in a new home.

[ 6 : 50 ] And this new family that he was with was very surprised by one of his habits. In fact, they weren't quite sure what to do with it. Every day, no matter how much milk was in the refrigerator, this boy would drink all of it.

And so if they'd just been to Costco, you know, they'd bought a lot of milk. Didn't matter how much it was. Now, you might be saying, I have teenagers, I understand. But this was actually an eight to nine-year-old boy.

And so it was very confusing that he would have sort of this obsession with milk. And so they were scratching their heads, wondering what is it that's going on? Well, they discovered one important detail that seemed to solve it for them, which is that in his previous home, he had been in a place where there was never enough milk.

There was always anxiety around it. There was bickering and fighting over who got the milk. And there was rarely any in the house. Now, this new family was extremely wealthy.

And milk for them was never a problem. But this child in his mind was still living under the pattern and the paradigm of this old family that he was in. He was still convinced at a visceral level that there would never be enough milk.

[ 8 : 05 ] And so every day, his goal was to make sure he got as much as he could before it was gone, before he was in a position where he had to fight someone else for it.

In the passage before us this morning, the disciples are also living according to an old paradigm, even though there's a new pattern that's presenting itself. As we begin in chapter eight here, we see the second time that Jesus has fed a large crowd.

The disciples saw a large feeding of the 5,000 in chapter six, and now they're seeing a large feeding of the 4,000 in chapter eight. We could draw many of the same points from this second feeding that we did from the first.

Verse eight, once again, these people get dinner portions rather than lunch portions. Once again, they're able to go home with doggy bags.

Now there's lots of similarities between this story and the previous one. There's a few dissimilarities. We could go down into the weeds if we wanted to, but what I want you to see this morning is that the main point of the second feeding is that it is the second feeding.

[ 9 : 14 ] The main point of the second feeding is that it is the second feeding. In other words, it was not a fluke the first time. Jesus clearly has the power to do this again and again.

His power is not something that comes in one moment and leaves the next. And so it's not a coincidence in this passage that the bickering, the discussion that the disciples have is about not having enough bread.

Verse 14, they forgot to bring bread. Of all the problems that they could have, they have a food problem. And all of this is driving to verses 17 through 21, where Jesus here appears to get frustrated with them.

Verse 21, do you not yet understand? What Jesus is saying is this, don't you get bread is the last thing that you need to be worried about.

Both the Pharisees and the disciples have the same problem in this passage, which is that they are unable to translate Jesus' actions into understanding.

[ 10 : 25 ] They are unable to translate Jesus' actions into understanding. So with the Pharisees, verse 11, we learn from these words that they have here, argue and test, that they are not asking these questions out of this sincere desire for understanding.

They're not seeking to grow and learn. No, instead they're trying to trap Jesus. Jesus' response here, verse 12, helps us understand that he believes they need nothing more than what he's already done.

If they can't believe based on what they've seen and heard about Jesus, there is nothing else that is going to help them. Their problem is not that they don't have a sign, but they can't understand what they've already seen.

That's what Jesus is warning the disciples about in verse 15 when he says, watch out, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod. Leaven, here's another word for yeast, which is to say this is something that's so threatening that it can take over a whole community, just like yeast will spread through bread and make it rise.

In the same way, this unbelief that the Pharisees and Herod have is something that is a threat to you as well. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod.

[ 11 : 43 ] It's contagious. And so there's one dissimilarity between the Pharisees and the disciples, but they have this overlapping problem. Yes, the Pharisees are hostile to Jesus and trying to test him, but both groups are looking at things right in front of them that they seem incapable to understand and interpret.

The Pharisees are hostile to Jesus even though they have all the proof that they need right in front of them. The disciples are worried about bread even though they are sitting with the man who fed the 5,000 and the 4,000.

And so there's this irrational fear, this anxiety with them that misses the basic realities of the situation in front of them. Neither the Pharisees nor the disciples know how to read.

They can't read the room. They can't understand the actions that are happening right in front of them. And so that's why we see Jesus here in verses 19 and 20 decides it's time to review the facts. When I broke the five loaves for the 5,000, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up? 12. Verse 20. And the seven for the 4,000, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?

[ 13 : 06 ] And they said to him, seven. The disciples know the facts of the past, but they do not understand its implications for the present.

The disciples know the facts of the past, they do not understand its implications for the present. Brothers and sisters, the point is this.

It is possible to know many facts about Jesus and to not be changed in our hearts and our lives and the very core of our beings.

It is not enough to simply know things about Jesus. Many people are proud of how much they know and knowledge is useless if we can't apply it or understand it.

Knowledge is useless if we can't apply it or understand it. And so here we have this picture of unbelief.

[ 14 : 17 ] This passage helps us to understand what it looks like when we fail to have faith. Unbelief cannot connect past actions with present and future realities.

Unbelief is incapable of connecting past actions with present and future realities. realities. Jesus was able to do this great thing feeding 4,000 and 5,000.

Now we're unsure if the 12 of us are going to be able to eat. That is what unbelief looks like. I want you to imagine it like this.

You get a rare dinner invitation. Paula Deen has decided that you are her guest of honor. Okay?

And while you're over there, Gordon Ramsay has also been invited.

Now, you're hanging out in Paula Deen's living room and you are consumed with fear and anxiety.

You have the very real and present danger that you are going to starve.

[ 15 : 26 ] This thought consumes you. It fills your mind. You begin to play out in your head the different scenarios. You're going to go into the table and there's not going to be any food.

Paula Deen's refrigerator is going to be completely empty. And so you sit there shaking in fear. You are legitimately worried about whether or not you're going to starve.

That is what unbelief is. Unbelief is sitting in Paula Deen's kitchen truly afraid at your core that you are not going to have enough.

And so we have this picture here in the Gospels to help us understand how irrational and silly unbelief is. The disciples are literally sitting with the man who fed the 5,000 and the 4,000 and they're worried that Jesus is frustrated with them for not bringing enough bread.

That is unbelief. That is lack of faith. Would you also understand if Paula Deen was offended and hurt?

[ 16 : 40 ] Haven't you seen my show? Don't you know who I am?

What an insult it is for you to be in my house and think that I would not feed you. You don't think you're going to get food?

My one question for you is this. Who hurt you? That's unbelief. Unbelief is knowing that you're sitting with Jesus comprehending his actions in the past and being filled with fear in the present that he is not going to do the things he said he would do.

Faith, on the other hand, connects the dots. Faith translates belief and understanding into action.

Faith connects the dots and acts accordingly.

Faith looks to what God has done in the past and takes hope and courage and faith in the present.

Jesus' statements about faith in the gospel follow bold actions, not dry theological statements.

[ 17 : 57 ] Jesus' statements about great faith follow bold actions, not dry theological statements.

Remember, it was the Syrophenician woman's persistence that showed her faith.

faith. She knew who Jesus was and he acted on it. Now, this does not mean that God will make all your dreams come true and give you an easy and comfortable life.

it does mean he will honor his promises. It does mean he will answer the prayer that we prayed earlier this morning in the Lord's Prayer.

He will forgive us our sins as we forgive our debtors. He will lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Who is Jesus?

Jesus is the one who is reliable and consistent in his power and his mercy. Jesus is the one who is reliable and consistent in his power and his mercy.

[ 19 : 05 ] How do we respond to him? Last week, we looked at the Syrophenician woman. Excuse me, two weeks ago, we looked at the Syrophenician woman. She was our model of faith in the fact that she took hope in the character of God.

She knew what type of person Jesus was. She said, even the dogs. I know that you're the type of person who has mercy even for pets. This week, we focus not in taking hope on the character of God, but in the actions of God.

We look to what God has done in the past. We draw hope. We draw confidence knowing what God has accomplished. We draw hope and faith knowing that God is the one who brought that person you needed to give you direction and wisdom and guidance.

You draw hope in the present knowing that God is the one who pulled you back from the disaster that you would have made out of your life on your own. You draw hope knowing that God is the one who preserved you like Daniel working in a hostile work environment.

God is the one who made you able to be wise as a serpent and innocent as a dove. You look back and know that God was the one who was faithful in bringing you to America.

[ 20 : 20 ] You look back and know that God was faithful in the way that he preserved you and brought you to the state of Colorado. You look back on God's faithfulness as he delivered you from

patterns of sin and addiction.

You look back and know that God is the one who rescued you from a people and a place and a family that was filled with danger and brought you to a place of safety. We look back to God as he brought us out of darkness and into light.

You look back to God's faithfulness as he answered in a miraculous way after seasons of prayer. You look back and see that God may not have removed your suffering but he gave you what you needed to move forward.

We look brothers and sisters to God's faithfulness to us in the past and we're filled with confidence and hope and joy in the present. As you sit in Paula Deen's kitchen you don't worry about whether you're going to eat because you know for show after show what she has done and you know what she can do today.

When you follow Jesus as a Christian you're not filled with fear and anxiety and unbelief because you have seen over and over in your life and in God's word what he has done in the past and you know what he can and will do today.

[ 21 : 45 ] Past actions tell us about present circumstances. This does not mean that God will make your life easy and comfortable. It does mean he will answer what we prayed in the Lord's prayer he will give us our daily bread.

It does not mean that God is going to give you a second house. It does mean he's going to honor his promise in 2 Peter 1 that he will give you all things that pertain to life and godliness.

It means that we take Psalm 37 as an encouragement. I have been young and now I am old yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread.

And so if we want to have that kind of faith the kind of faith that is able to connect the dots we can come before God and pray in this way we can tell him look I have a challenge we have as a family have a challenge and we don't have any hope unless you show up and help.

And we have confidence that you will because of what you have done for your people and our family and me in the past. I have confidence that you are going to meet us and care for us just like you have met us and cared for us before.

[ 23 : 10 ] And we're going to recount those things we're going to remember those things we're going to list those things. We remember God's faithfulness to us and so that the opposite of verse 21 would be true of us we would be able to understand.

As we think about God's faithful acts in the past of course his greatest provision for us is his provision in Christ. God's greatest act of faithfulness was sending his son his only son to die the death that we should have died to receive the punishment that we deserve and to live the perfect life that we have not lived.

And so the promise of Romans 8 31 and 32 is true for us if he gave you his son will he not also give you all things? If he gave you his son will he not also give you all things?

One man illustrates it this way if a man gives a woman he loves an engagement ring will he not also give her the box it came in?

if God has given us his only son we have no reason to fear or to worry he worked to save you as we saw last week he worked to give you sight and you think he's going to abandon you now no he's been faithful in the past he is faithful in the present he'll be faithful to you in the future I know that many of you are investors and you know that with any investment there's always a legal warning as there are with many things in our world which tells you this past performance is no guarantee of future results Google and Amazon might be doing well this year that doesn't mean they'll do well next year

[ 25 : 29 ] Kodak was doing well 10 years ago they are not doing well today we live in a world where the past track record cannot guarantee what is going to happen in the future as we're at the mercy of variety of forces and personalities and storms there is one person for whom the opposite is true past performance is a guarantee of future results brothers and sisters that is our hope in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as we look to what he did on the cross as we look to God's faithfulness to his people throughout history and as we look to God's faithfulness to us in our lives we can take great confidence and hope and courage knowing that he has not left us or forgotten us the God who gave his son to die on the cross is the same God who is with you caring and protecting and providing even now who is Jesus

Jesus is the one who is reliable and consistent in his power and his mercy how do we respond to him we look to his actions in the past and we have faith in the present let's pray our father in heaven we praise you that you have given us a solid and reliable track record that you who gave us your son will also give us all things we ask that you would use this truth to stir up our hope and our faith in you that we would be filled with the confidence that comes from knowing that the things that you have given us cannot be lost that the words of the apostle Peter are true that you've given us an inheritance which is unfading imperishable untouchable we thank you that that inheritance doesn't rise or fall on us but instead it rises on our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and so it's in his name that we ask these things amen I invite you to stand for our closing hymn