

Mark 8:1-21

“Desensitized Disciples”

They say that before a child finishes elementary school that statistically he/she will have seen (on the average) over 8,000 murders on television. They will see approximately 1,000 rapes, murders or assaults each yr, 2,000 beer and wine ads and by the time they're 18 they will have seen around 200,000 violent acts and 16,000 murders. They become systematically desensitized to violence, as a society we've become desensitized to human tragedy, things that used to make national news may or may not make the local listing or have a mention on the evening news. Murder doesn't shock us (if it's not related to us), the mention of rape doesn't really stun us as perhaps it once did, we hear of various tragedies and we may issue a, “Man, that's too bad” and then it's, “Well, what's for dinner?” We're so overly inundated with violence and sinful situations that it's easy to become desensitized to it.

That's of course to the negative, but to the positive the same thing can happen. There was a time when we were so excited about the things God was doing that each time we learned of someone coming to Christ, or when you were present and seen someone respond to an invitation Sunday morning that your heart rejoiced, you were praying for the people who may not *know* the Lord, that they might come *to* the Lord. But now it's sorta like a routine, it's like you're glad that the opportunity is given but, “Man, I need to get, c'mon with this thing.” Or when you initially came to a fellowship that was teaching the word of God verse by verse, you were receiving illumination, revelation, and application, it was so fresh, just a joy to be there every week. Now you still come but the freshness, that sense of newness isn't where it was, what was once so exciting has become status quo, it's what's expected now, and we become desensitized to what a special thing it is to be under the waterfall of God's word, to just feed on His word and rest at His feet. and Because we're desensitized to the things *of* the Spirit having become familiar *with* the Spirit, we're in jeopardy of missing out on what the Spirit wants to speak *to* us, or work *through* us, the things He wants to show us and would have us to learn on a deeper level.

and It seems to me that perhaps that's where the disciples are at in this passage before us, they've been hanging with the Lord now for a couple years real tight. and At 1st they were taken in and blown away by the miracles, I mean who wouldn't be? and They were awed *over* them, learning *from* them, seeking the Lord for what He wanted to teach them *through* them. But now it's kinda like, “Well, He healed another blind man, He made the lame to walk, or the deaf to hear, He cleansed the leper, loosed the tongue of the mute, hey that's what He does...He's the Lord.” Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that they aren't overwhelmed by both His words and His works, they certainly are. But becoming familiar with His ways it's as though they're becoming desensitized to the deeper things that He's trying to *teach* them by the things He does while He's *around* them. Now that's not to say that God's always trying to teach us something deep out of a particular situation, however many times when the Lord was doing something for someone He was demonstrating something on a deeper level to His disciples. The miracles were almost object lessons for them, and if they would pay attention *to* them, there were things they could learn *from* them about humanity, the Lord and the purpose of His

coming. But that's just it, in order to learn you have to *pay attention*, and in the passage before us it's like the Lord is trying to snap them back into that learning curve. "You're right here with Me, pay attention *to Me* because I want you to learn both *from Me*, and *about Me*."

We just witnessed through the scriptures the healing of a deaf-mute, but I think it went beyond the simple healing of a man; the Lord was seeking to show us something there regarding reaching out and making a difference in an unbelieving world.

Those who are deaf (spiritually), unable to hear God's voice, those who are mute, unable to communicate with God, being separated from Him through sin; what did Jesus do, remember? When He had this man in front of Him He put His fingers in His ears, He touched his tongue, looked up to heaven and He sighed, then He said "Ephphatha" or "Be opened" and the man could hear and speak.

Here's the deal, Jesus employed touch, that is He was willing to *reach out* to this man. He looked up into heaven meaning He was going to pray for this man, that the work would be a work of God, not some sorta magic or hocus pocus. He sighed, meaning that He had compassion *upon* him, and He spoke, or to understand that another way He ministered the word of God *to* him.

Now, God's word alone is enough, the bible is clear that the word of God is like seed that's able to spring up into everlasting life in a person's heart/soul. But I believe that if we're to be effective in turning a non-believing world on to Jesus, that is open the ears of the deaf, and loose the tongue of the mute that they might hear the voice of God, and praise their Redeemer; Jesus is saying, "First of all you have to be willing to reach out *to* them, you need to be a person of prayer on behalf *of* them, and how can you really 'heartfully' pray for them if you have no compassion for them (the sigh, compassion/prayer), and you need to get the word of God out to them." My opinion won't help anyone, not ultimately, not eternally. The word of God...will. Remember what Peter said? "...*having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,*" 1 Peter 1:23

May the Lord grant us an ever increasing sensitivity to the things of the Spirit, those things on a deeper level that He wants to show us, or speak *to* us.

Vs1-10

Wait, why does this sound so familiar? Oh, yeah because just a few Ch's ago Jesus was feeding thousands of people in a similar way. and Because these events are so similar there have been all kinds of skeptics try and say that it's a simple re-telling of the feeding of the 5,000, but Mark confused the details,(and they use that to try and undermine the inspiration of the word of God, point out what they believe to be contradictions and all the rest). I'm not even going to entertain that notion because it's so absurd. They say, "Well, how could the disciples so readily forget what Jesus had done previously?" I guess the same way we all do. How many times has the Lord moved, or come through for you and for me in a miraculous, amazing way, but then the next time we're between a rock and a hard place it seems like we forget all about His past faithfulness and freak out or fear because of the present predicament or problem. The most mature of believers wrestle with that reality. So how can we blame them for failing in a similar situation? The Spirit hadn't been given in full measure to *them* yet, what's your excuse? What's my excuse?

There are a # of similarities, however there are several differences as well, and we'll point some of those out along the way.

Vs1-3

Couple things we want to note here briefly. As for differences between the 2 feedings 1st of all you should note that in Ch 6 Jesus was in Jewish territory, in Ch 8 He's still in Gentile area, we learned last week that He's currently ministering in the region of Decapolis.

and Jesus is seeking to demonstrate here (on a deeper level) that not only is He the bread of life for the Jew, but for the Gentile as well. That Christ would satisfy the deepest hunger of the human soul, Jew and Gentile alike, that He wasn't sent to be the Savior of the nation of Israel exclusively, but that the Gentile would find salvation in Him personally as well.

Forgiveness is available to any/all who will call upon His name, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."* John 3:16

Something else I believe that's worth pointing out is the fact that the desire to meet the people's needs *originated* in Christ, Christ concerns Himself with human need. In this case He didn't wait for someone to come to Him, to appeal (or pray) to Him, He just moved out of His sovereign grace. Whatever your need may be today you can rest assured that Christ is concerned for you, He has compassion on you, and He wants to move and minister *to* you right where you're at. Perhaps people have been praying for you, maybe they haven't I don't know, but that holds no bearing on Christ's concern and compassion. Jesus wants to meet the deep need of your heart and sovereignly He'll *do* it if you'll avail yourself *to* it. He doesn't always wait on a person's prayer before He sees the priority and meets the need. and That's good to know isn't it? God doesn't *need* me before He can move, oh often times He allows me to join with Him through the means of prayer, but He's not limited to my prayer request before He moves in a situation.

and I would term this miracle as more of a *preventative* miracle than a *curative* miracle. You've heard the expression, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Evidently Jesus subscribed to the philosophy from time and again as well. If He let these people go it would've been a problem on multiple levels, they hadn't eaten, they'd been with Him, learning *from* Him for 3 days now and they've had nothing to eat. Jesus realizes that if He let's these people go that perhaps hundreds of them, or thousands of them would wind up sick, or fainting from hunger and it's His desire to prevent that from happening.

By the way that's one of the differences in the 2 feeding miracles, in Ch 6 the crowd had been with Him for 1 day, here they've been with Him for 3. In Ch 6 it was mostly Jews, here it's mostly Gentiles.

and Once again in Vs 4 we see the Lord's disciples fail the test. Jesus says, "Guys we have a problem here, what do you think should be done about it?" He probably hoped they'd say something like, "Jesus, You've met needs on this scale before, we know You can do it again." and That they'd see His *past faithfulness* as a *present promise* to meet the need; God wants us to see His faithfulness to us in the past as a promise for the present when we're in need. He's not less concerned for you now than He was then, and if He was faithful to you then, He'll be faithful to you now. But the disciples being more like us than not said, "Jesus, we're

out here in the middle of nowhere, unless there's something that You know that we don't; nothing can be done. There's no way we can meet their needs, satisfy their hunger."

Now I think that's important, again I'm sure that to a degree Jesus was disappointed that the lights were on but no one was home in the hearts and minds of His disciples on that level of looking *to* Him and trusting *in* Him to do the impossible. But on the other hand what did Jesus do here? He made His disciples readily aware of the fact that they were completely incapable of meeting the need, that the need was greater than they were. The down side is that they failed to realize that He *could* and that in fact He *would*. But it's important that we realize that when it comes to satisfying the hunger of the human heart, the human soul, we're unable to meet that need.

I can't do that for you, no *body* and no *thing* can meet that need. We're all the time looking to this person, or that substance, the other relationship or career goal to meet the need only to come up empty. The people, places, and things of this world will not satisfy your hunger. That's something that only Jesus can do.

and So in Vs 5 Jesus says, "How many loaves do you have?" and They said, "7." Again couple differences here, in Ch 6 Jesus told them to "go and see" how many loaves they could come up with. Remember they found the little boy that had 5. Here Jesus tells them to pony up their own "dough." There's no, "Go and see" only what do *you* have? and Then of course here they have 7 in Ch 6 they were able to drum up 5. Perhaps you've discovered that it's a lot easier to entrust someone else's resources to Jesus than it is your own. Jesus says, "What do you got?" and We say, "Well, so and so has this, and the other person gave that, here You can have it all." It's easy to ask the Lord to have His way with someone else's resources. But there comes a time in our walk and relationship with the Lord where that won't fly anymore, Jesus kinda pins us down and says, "Ok, how many loaves, how much bread to *you* have?" and We're put to the test, will we really trust the Lord with what we have, or are we going to hold out on Jesus..." Jesus calls upon them to entrust Him with the loaves they have on hand.

Vs6

Now this is almost identical to the happening in Ch 6. The words, "took" "gave thanks" and "broke" are all in the *aorist* tense meaning they happened and that was it. However the word, "gave" when He began to distribute to His disciples is in the imperfect tense meaning that He just kept giving and giving and giving. So that the miracle of multiplication didn't happen in the hands of the disciples, He didn't pray and all the sudden there was a big pile of bread there, Jesus began to break the bread and as He was giving it to His disciples to distribute He just kept giving it to them and giving it to them and giving it to them. The miracle of multiplication took place in the hands of Jesus, and here's the deal; it *always* does. The multiplication of our resources being utilized to bless untold thousands doesn't happen through our holding back and seeking to manage things ourselves. The disciples *couldn't* make this happen. and Jesus *wouldn't make this happen* until they relinquished their resources into His care. and In *His hands* the miracle of multiplication took place. If our resources are to be used to meet the deep need of the human heart, we've got to surrender them to Jesus. He can take whatever we give Him, and multiply it to bless people in more ways than we could ever know. Now it's cool here because Jesus let His disciples partner with Him, He did what only He could do, the creative side of things. He multiplied the resource, but then He allowed them to participate in the

distribution of the bread. Jesus does the work, but He wants to use us, give us an opportunity to minister to people on His behalf and in His name. He wants us to relinquish our resources (time, effort, energy, finances, talents, whatever) into His hands, He'll do something amazing with them and then let us minister to others in His name through what He's done with what we've given Him.

The question is, do we really trust Him? "What do you mean Jeff?" Well, I'm not sure it went this way but Mark almost alludes to it as if it did. Did you catch Vs 7? It's like they told Jesus about the bread, watched Him work, realized it was safe and so then they said, "Well, we have a few fish to." It's as though they weren't really giving Jesus everything till they were sure of what He was going to do with what they'd already given Him. "We have 7 loaves." "Man, did you see what Jesus did with that, it's safe boys we can tell Him about the fish, uh, we have a few fish to."

That's so like us, we withhold from the Lord because we're not sure what He's going to do, we're afraid that if we give Him what we have for the sake of others that in the end we might lack.

"I know He wants to bless others, but if I give Him what's mine, then others might be blessed, but I'll lack." As if Jesus wants to take care of other people, but I can go with out. Isn't it funny how we think sometimes? We know He wants to take care of others, but we're not sure if He'll take care of us, He might just rather we go with out. Notice

Vs8-10

Back into Jewish territory; notice Vs 8 "They ate and were filled," Jesus is able to satisfy the hunger of all mankind. "and They took up 7 large baskets of leftover fragments." Don't be misled by the word "fragments" it's not talking about table scraps, but broken bread that hadn't been eaten or touched.

Here's what I want you to see, what did the disciples start with? 7 loaves and a few fish. After entrusting all that they had to Jesus what did they end up with? 7 *large baskets* of untouched leftovers; and the word *baskets* here is different than the word used in Ch 6. In Ch 6 they had 12 baskets (little wicker baskets) leftover, a lunch for each disciple. These baskets are large hampers, big enough for a man to fit in. Remember when Paul was let down over the Damascus wall in a basket because people wanted to kill him so he escaped by night? Same word used for basket both here and there. These were big baskets. When they finally came to a place whereby they trusted Jesus with their personal resources, He seen to it that they had more after He was finished, than when He began. They invested into His plan and He brought them a radical return. They were worried that they might lack if they gave to the Lord, He blessed their socks off for trusting Him. Jesus said, "*Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.*" Luke 6:38 and I'm not trying to propagate that if you give 10 you'll get 100, give 100, get 1,000, but there is a biblical principle that you can't out give God, He won't be a debtor to you or me.

You can't give to the Lord but that in some way, somehow He won't return it to you in ways unparalleled. Perhaps He'll return it in the form of you not having to pay a doctor bill because He just spared you from some sickness you never knew was upon you, what's that worth to you? In the house I lived in before the one I'm in now, I was there nearly 8 yrs and

only toward the end did I have about 2 bulbs burn out in my kitchen, I had several bulbs throughout the house that never burned out. At a couple bucks a piece over 7-8 yrs I considered that a gift from the Lord. God doesn't say He'll make you rich (though He certainly can if He desires) but some how and in some way you won't come out on the bottom if you're giving to God. Be it here or in eternity He'll see to it that you receive way more than you ever give.

Here's the principle, they scattered yet gathered more, had they withheld they'd have eaten their bread and had nothing. This way thousands were blessed and they had even more in the end. The bible says, *"There is one who scatters, yet increases more; And there is one who withholds more than is right, But it leads to poverty."* Prov 11:24 It's a simple question of trust, do we really trust the Lord with that which He's entrusted to us? Or do we think that if we give to Him we'll be left with out? What a sad indictment on our perspective of the heart of the Lord toward us.

Vs11-12

Why? Because Jesus never did a miracle, A.) To satisfy His own flesh, or B.) To try and convince the heart of a hardened unbeliever. Jesus did miracles to demonstrate the power of God in the context of mercy, to bring healing to the hurting, to bind up the broken, not to convince the skeptic.

Think about it, they had hundreds of undisputable miracles that He'd performed, He'd raised the dead, healed the sick, opened the eyes of the blind and unstopped the ears of the deaf. He'd caused the lame to walk, and made lepers whole, He fed thousands from a few loaves and fish. Yet that wasn't enough to convince them, they wanted a sign "from heaven."

They wanted Him to call down fire, or make manna rain down, perhaps write their names with the clouds, or cause some radical happening like the storm that Elijah prayed up. But the key here in Vs 11 is the word, "testing." It's the same word that's used to describe Satan's tempting Jesus in the wilderness, to do something spectacular to prove who He was.

Now I've discovered that Jesus always had time, and was always willing to engage an honest skeptic, "Lord, I believe help my unbelief." But He never entertained the one who was just looking for a loophole to bring Him down.

and It grieved Him that these guys who should've been the ringleaders sounding the horn that Messiah was here were so adamantly opposed to Him. I mean, the audacity of these guys, "You've done some small time miracles, show us something really big." But Jesus knew what we so often fail to realize and that is that signs/miracles do nothing to generate faith. Let's suppose Jesus would've done some great work here, lit the sky up with fire or something. How do you suppose they'd have responded? "Ok, now do something else so that we know it was really you?" Miracles just don't generate faith, they wet the appetite for more miracles. If miracles made for faith then during the Exodus the children of Israel should've had more faith than they knew what to do with because they saw some radical things! But it didn't cause them to hold firm in faith, because works don't create faith, what does? The Word; the bible says, *"... faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* Rom 10:17

The interesting thing is that *they did* get a sign from heaven at Jesus' baptism, remember? The heavens opened up to Him, the Spirit alighted upon Him, *"And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"* Matt 3:17 What that wasn't convincing enough? Apparently not.

Matt's gospel goes on to tell us that Jesus said there would be one sign that would be given to them, the sign of the prophet Jonah which was a reference to His death, burial and resurrection. But even though Jesus raised Himself from the dead, many still wouldn't believe.

Vs13

Sad is the day that Jesus gets so frustrated *with* you, so exasperated *by* you and your obstinate, stubborn unbelief that He turns His back *on* you and sails away *from* you. It doesn't have to be that way, don't kick against the goads, see Jesus for who He is, One who cares *about* you, gave His life *for* you and surrender to Him. How much better to have Jesus in the boat *with* you than watch Him sail away *from* you.

Vs14-15

You see, this is something that's still on the Lord's heart, He's wrestling (for lack of a better way to say it) in His mind with what just happened. and So He issues a warning to His disciples, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod." For time's sake let me get straight to it. Leaven in the scriptures is consistently a picture of corrupting influence, of sin. Because you would take a pinch of dough from the previous batch and as it putrefied it would permeate the present batch and make it rise, hence we have "sourdough" bread. It's influence (though just a little) would corrupt the entire loaf. and Because of that it makes for a perfect picture of sins influence in our lives personally, in our midst collectively as a body, and Jesus is saying be careful that you avoid the corrupting influence of these guys.

Hypocrisy, having a mouth of righteousness and a heart of wickedness; legalism, dotting your I's, crossing your t's thinking that because of your works you're right with God. Pride, which "puffs up," power, thinking your platform gives you special position; Jesus is likening the disciples to a pure/unleavened lump of dough, and He's exhorting to steer clear of ingesting (spiritually) things that would corrupt the purity and simplicity of their faith.

Vs16

They're not getting it. In Jesus' haste to move out someone forgot to get supplies. and They're thinking that Jesus is telling them to stay away from the Pharisee flat breads or the Herod's hoagie shops. They think He's telling them not to stop off at their supermarkets.

Vs17-21

Wow! Jesus is like, "Are you guys for real? Are you that desensitized to what's going on here?" "Is your heart really that hard, you can't perceive what I'm talking about, can't understand what I'm saying to you?" Don't you remember what I've done for you in the past, why are you worried about your needs being met in the present?" (Mark that, we don't have time for it but it's important, Jesus wants us to recognize His faithfulness in the past as a promise for our present needs).

"When I fed 5,000 how many baskets did you take up?" You can hear them sorta in that "I've been scolded" tone, "12" "When I fed 4,000 how many huge baskets did you have leftover?" "7" "When are you going to get it? I'm well able to take care of your needs regardless of how much you personally possess..." "How is it you do not understand?"

Here's what I want to leave you with. Vs17, Jesus makes it clear that there is a direct correlation between *perceiving* (that is seeing), *understanding* and a heart that is hard and desensitized Vs soft and sensitive to the things of the Spirit. Why do I so often not get it? Because my heart is hardened to Him *in* it, the Spirit is seeking to teach me, but my heart is

closed off and not open to being instructed. What causes my heart to begin to harden toward the Lord? Vs 18, “Do you not *remember*...” When we fail to remember His goodness *toward* us, the grace He’s poured out *upon* us, the sacrifice of the cross, that He hung there and suffered *for* us. Consequently Jesus in regards to the sacraments of communion, “Do this (what) in *remembrance* of Me.” Don’t forget, the bread that was broken for you and for me, His body, the cup that we partake of, His blood that was shed for you and for me, don’t become desensitized disciples; remember His goodness, remember His faithfulness, His mercy that’s new every morning, remember the cross; and return to your 1st love.

Prayer Points:

Lord help us to remember, it’s so easy, yet so shameful to become desensitized disciples, we get accustomed to your goodness when we should be on our faces in thanksgiving. We take for granted Your sacrifice when we should humble ourselves before you, avail ourselves *to* You and live our lives *for* You. Lord there’s nothing we can do apart from You, but we thank You for satisfying the hunger of our heart, and now help us to trust You, to give ourselves fully *to* You knowing that You are good, and You’ll take good care of us.

Perhaps you’re in a place where the Lord is dealing with you and He’s speaking *to* you right where you are wanting to know if you’re willing to trust Him. You’ve seen Him take care of other people, now He’s turning to you, will you place your life, your well being into His hands? Do you trust Him to take care *of* you, to be good *to* you and to forgive you of all your sin? Jesus wants to make you a new creation today, to erase your sin debt and give you everlasting life. Will you trust Him for it?