

**Mark 8:1-13**      **A talk given by Rev David Eastwood on 26 September 2021**

Two feedings      The 5,000      The 4,000  
5,000, and 5 loaves and 2 fish, and 12 basketfuls left over  
4,000, and 7 loaves and a few fish, and 7 basketfuls over

Might there just have been one feeding, and the writers decided to tell it a bit differently?

No, I don't think so. Why?

Well, Jesus says there were two, and that's good enough for me – 'Don't you remember when I broke 5 loaves for 5,000 and there were 12 basketfuls left..... and when I broke the seven loaves for the 4,000, there were 7 basketfuls left over.' (8:19)

The miracles **are** very similar, but there are some striking differences  
For the feeding of the 5,000, the crowd had been with Jesus for a day  
For the 4,000, the crowd had been with Jesus for three days  
The 5,000 took place in a mainly Jewish location  
Here the feeding of the 4,000, takes place in a Gentile location

Two feedings.

Two remarkable miracles.                      Jesus fed a lot of people!

The feeding of the 5,000 is the **only** miracle recorded in all 4 gospels

This feeding of the 4,000, is recorded in just Mark and Matthew

The Gospel writers want us to see who Jesus is

They want us to be clear about his identity –

The God of compassion and power

The God who has come for the world – for Jews and Gentiles.

I love the thought that this crowd of 4,000 **may** have come to listen to Jesus because of the testimony of 'Legion', the man Jesus healed by driving out the demons into 2,000 pigs.

Jesus told that man, 'Go back to your home, and tell them about me'.

That's what he did, and 'all the people in the region (Decapolis, the same place as the feeding of the 4,000) were amazed.' (Mark 5:20)

So Jesus feeds the 4,000, and see what then happens -

There's a conversation between the Pharisees and Jesus.

And the question for all of us today, is this:

Who stands at the centre of your universe?

Is it Jesus, or is it you?

For the Pharisees, no way was Jesus at the centre of their lives and universe.

They were seeking to test him/ to trap him –

'Give us a sign Jesus as to who you are', as if feeding the crowd with just a few loaves and fish, is not enough.

The focus of the Pharisees was on themselves, not on Jesus.

When you have needs – like paying a bill and you're short of money – the bill tends to dominate.

When you're sick, your sickness dominates.

When you have a problem, an anxiety, a difficulty, a relationship that's gone wrong, it tends to dominate.

And Jesus is pushed out. And we **become** the centre of our own universe.

And as soon as **you** become the centre of your own universe, then you start to function as if you're the ruler of the universe. And start to demand that the universe serves you.

You're the ruler, why shouldn't it?

If you're in charge of your life, you're the ruler, **then** other people should serve you, things need to work out for you, and particularly in relation to the problem you've got.

The Pharisees were at the centre of their own universe – they're not looking to Jesus.

It was all about their agenda, their needs, their views.

And everyone around, needed to serve them, accept them, and do it their way.

They were the rulers of their universe.

And Jesus can do nothing for people like this.

**Meanwhile**, the people there with Jesus, looked to Jesus as the centre of their universe

They had walked for days, carrying children and supplies.

They had now been out for three days with Jesus, listening to his every word, and they're hungry.

No Yorkshire pudding and gravy, no food. Nothing.

And Jesus looks at them, and has a deep sense of compassion for them, as he does for everyone.

The Pharisees were there to harangue Jesus, their hearts were closed.

The crowd was there to listen to Jesus, their hearts were open.

The crowd wasn't asking for bread, but they got bread.

Matthew tells us they were bringing the lame and the blind, and the crippled and the mute, and he healed them. And the people praised God – Jesus was at the centre.

They weren't asking for food. But Jesus **knew** they needed it.

The disciples panic. They do it every time.

Jesus simply asks them a question – so what do you fellows think we should do?

Feed the people. But how? And Jesus does a miracle. He feeds the people.

And Jesus wants to feed us, to fill us up, so we can feed others -

So we can make disciples

That's our task, let's not be distracted -

As St Paul says – 'Forgetting what is behind, and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus' (Phil 3:13-14)

The people here are very hungry. They're going to collapse on their way home.

And Jesus says, 'let's feed them'. 'But how?' – say the disciples.

They seem to have forgotten that Jesus has done this before.

How many loaves do you have?, asks Jesus. Just seven, they say.

I will use the little you have and multiply it. And that's what Jesus does.

I don't think we should say that we don't have much money as a church – God will take what we have and multiply it.

Or we don't have many people – God will take what we have and use us.

God's into multiplication, he's into growth.

And he calls us to go and feed people. To get alongside people.

To share the compassion of Jesus with others. To meet people's needs.

To bring share Jesus, the bread of life, with them.

What Jesus is saying is this - can't you trust me? Aren't my miracles enough for you to trust me? I fed the 5,000 before, so you can trust me to provide again – for you and for others.

And on the back of this miracle – one of the most amazing miracles of all time, the Pharisees are still asking for a sign that Jesus is, who he says he is. Their unbelief is incredible.

But we do this every day of our lives. How many miracles have you witnessed? How many prayers have you seen answered? How many testimonies have you heard recently of what God is doing in other people's lives?

God is in control, and he really can deal with **all** the issues facing you right now.

Jesus looks at the Pharisees, and gives a great sigh, and says, I don't have any sign for you

I have no miracle for you. I don't know how to provide for you. Not with your anger, your attitude, your cynicism, your unbelief, always expecting something just for you.

And here's the worst part of the story.....

He got in the boat and **left them**, and went to the other side. Do you see the weight of that?

Jesus got into the boat and left them. If feeding the 5,000 and now 4,000 is not enough for you, I don't know what is.

So let's keep God at the centre of our lives, and not ourselves

God is sending us out to make disciples

On Mondays, as we litter pick and carry out our questionnaire, we are beginning to see some exciting things happening

We're able to show something of the compassion of our God, that we see in this passage

Able to point people to Jesus.

We've just seen that Jesus fed people, and they ate and were satisfied

That is what we are called to do – to be sent out, taking Jesus, the bread of life, with us.

Preparing food for a family?

Would you join us on Mondays?

Jesus will take the little we have, and multiply it

AMEN