

# *A Spiritual Spring for the Week*

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Sermon Text: Mark 8:13-21

Sermon Title: "God Will Provide Beyond Belief" (Traveling through Mark's Gospel)

Morrow Presbyterian Church, Morrow, GA

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It is hard for a pastor to admit that he is clueless about something. After reading the passage for today, I have to admit that I had a hard time understanding what Jesus was talking about.

He says to his disciples, "Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Are your hearts still hardened? Are your eyes still closed?" When I first read these verses for today, I felt like the disciples. I was worried that my eyes were closed, and my heart hardened against God, failing to get what he wanted me to get.

Let's back up a bit, to verse 13. Jesus tells his disciples to pack up, because they are heading to the other side of the Sea of Galilee via boat. Jesus just had another argument with the Pharisees, and now it is time to do ministry somewhere else. Along the way, the disciples notice that they have no food. In fact, they only have one measly loaf of bread for the thirteen of them, including Jesus. Apparently this becomes a problem, soon turning into a big problem.

Jesus is aggravated, not because the men forgot to

bring provisions for the trip but because they lost focus on what really matters. An ant hill becomes a mountain before too long.

How many times do we do this, turn simple hiccups into catastrophes? How many times do we enter a discussion with people, only to open our big mouths and turn the discussion into a fight? How many times does something go wrong, and we make a bigger issue of it than it is, and we put everyone else around us on edge? It is all unnecessary.

Sometimes losing my wallet or my keys in the house turns into a huge issue. I am ready to leave the house, I have my phone and wallet, but I cannot find my keys. Or I have my keys and phone, but cannot find my wallet. So what do I do? I get angry. I become so frustrated that I have lost these things for the millionth time, and that I never learn to put them back where they belong. The wallet belongs in the drawer, and the keys on the hook. Is that where I put them? No. I put the wallet on some table somewhere, and the keys might be in my pants pocket in the closet. So, I disrupt the harmony of the household, because I am storming in and out of rooms, trying to find one stupid thing, trying to get out of the house.

Now, to keep from getting so frustrated anymore, I

with their kind of living, because their infection may become a part of us in ways that we cannot separate them.

And, for the purpose of what the disciples were going through, be aware of these groups who put their trust in things, for when those things don't go as planned, these groups of people become worried and angry and lose faith. The disciples cannot get down on themselves, just because they forgot food. Food is a small detail that can be easily remedied. Jesus says, "Don't you remember the feeding of the 5000 plus and the 4000 plus people? Remember how little food we had to feed them all? How many baskets of food were left over after everybody ate his or her fill? 12 baskets of food were left over for the feeding of 5000 plus people, and 7 left over for the 4000 plus. Don't you get it?" Jesus asks.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus is saying to the men, "Do not put your trust, your hope, in things. Most of the time, they will not work out, and when they don't, do not make an issue of it." We are not to make an issue, because the added message from Jesus is, "God will provide." The proof was in the pudding, when Jesus asked the disciples to feed 5000 plus people on one occasion, and 4000 plus on another. Each time they had small amounts of

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Mark 8:19-21.

placed locators in my wallet and on my keys. All I have to do is push a button, and alarm goes off, and I can find my stuff quickly and without much pain.

We tend to make small issues into large ones. And this is what made Jesus aggravated. He begins by telling them to beware the leaven of the Pharisees, and even the leaven of Herod.<sup>1</sup> This is a great illustration, if you know anything about baking. If you place yeast in a bowl of flour and water (and a few other ingredients), the yeast comes alive. It grows and expands, and at some point you have a bubbling mound of flour and water. There is no way to contain the yeast. Once it is in there, it affects the whole batch. The same applies to my Starbucks Iced Coffees. The iced coffee is black, but I love to drop milk in that black liquid, and watch it fall to the bottom like many liquid tentacles moving around and between the ice cubes.

Jesus says that the disciples should be aware of the yeast, the leavening, of the Pharisees and of Herod. Be aware of the corruption of these people that moves through a person and corrupts every part of him or her. Be aware of these groups of people who use people to their own advantages. Do not be infected

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mark 8:15.

happen, we feel we are justified in panicking. We may justify our anger, and tell others to leave us alone, because they don't understand what we are going through.

Does panicking get us anywhere? Whether it is a small or large matter, does paralyzing ourselves with anger and worry move us to solutions? The disciples in Jesus' boat worried about not having enough food to eat on the journey. Simple matter that could be solved. However, back in Mark 6, the disciples freaked out when a huge storm overtook another boat they were in. They watched Jesus walk across the lake like a ghost under the night sky, and the disciples were in a bigger tizzy over that. Life was not good. They were still in a boat in a rage sea with hurricane-like winds blowing them left and right. Panic was not needed at that time, though. Jesus was needed. That instance was huge, and Jesus took care of it. "Be of good cheer," he said to them, "do not be afraid."<sup>3</sup> The torment in the men's hearts and in the night sky was calmed.

We cannot allow panic to paralyze us. We cannot let the weight of any situation bear down on us, that we cannot look up to God and find his help. In our stress and strain, God will provide. God will more

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<sup>3</sup> Mark 6:50.

bread and fish to feed them all. Yet, they had to put their trust in Jesus. He would provide. He had more than enough for everybody, and all were satisfied. Jesus provided. Our heavenly Father provides.

We can get ourselves in a tizzy. We may get ourselves in a tizzy over little things, like the lack of a loaf of bread in the pantry or not being able to find car keys that should be hanging on a hook. We may get ourselves in a tizzy over larger things. When the pantry and refrigerator have little food in it, and we don't know where the next meal will come from. When somebody is doing something to cause pain and anxiety, and we wish they would just quit it. When we keep looking for a job, and every employer turns us down. When we get the news that we have cancer or some life-threatening illness to face, and we simply don't want to face it. When a relationship breaks apart, and we thought it would last forever. These are the big things that might happen to us, and we panic. We get upset and even become angry. That's understandable, but it cannot last.

We might laugh at people who get in a tizzy about the little things. We might laugh at ourselves for being so preoccupied with small details that don't shake the foundations of the world. But when the big things

the margins. The quote underneath says, “A Bible falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn’t.”<sup>4</sup> The Bible is falling apart, because it is the resource that the desperate person goes to in order to understand that God will provide. For all the junk we endure every day, every week, maybe every minute, we may go to the Bible and read the stories of others who felt their worlds were falling apart, too. Whether the issues were big or small, God was present. God saw those people through. God provided.

“How is it you do not understand?” Jesus asked his disciples, who were fretting in that boat over missing loaves of bread. How many baskets of bread were left over the first time around? Twelve, enough to feed this entire congregation and even the people who visit our Food Pantry. How about the second time around? Seven baskets of food left over. The leftover baskets were ridiculously large, and so is God’s provisions. They are ridiculously large, because God’s love for us is so large. It is quite possible that Jesus allowed for some much food to be left over, because he wanted to show how much he loves his people.

People in the Bible committed themselves to God and the life-statement that he would provide. Even

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<sup>4</sup> The quote is attributed to Charles Spurgeon.

than willing to provide, and he has the ability to provide. In the big things and the little things, Jesus says in so many words, “Peace, do not panic. I and my Father and the Holy Spirit will provide. Trust that we will provide.”

Easier said than done, right? “God will provide.” This three-word sentence sounds way too simple, right? It isn’t as though we can say the words, “God will provide,” and then all our troubles will magically disappear. All our strife will be at an end. In fact, even as we say those words, troubles might still follow us. They don’t go away rapidly.

Jesus was not being glib, when he said to his disciples not to worry, do not allow the yeast of the Pharisees or of Herod to infect you. Jesus was not being sarcastic, when he told the men about the feeding of the 5000 plus and 4000 plus. “God will provide” is not a pithy statement; it is a life commitment. It is the statement by which we live, especially when all seems to be going to heck in a hand basket.

On Facebook, I saw a wonderful posting of a Bible that had all sorts of highlighted marks in it in all sorts of colors. The Bible was well-worn, almost worn out, with pages crumpled and covered with comments in



King David, who didn't always have a pleasant time being king. For all the conspiracies and plots registered against him, he was able to say to God in Psalm 4 that God delivered him from distress in the past, and that God could and would do it again.<sup>5</sup> He saw how people could turn his glory into shame, and seek all sorts of falsehood against him, and yet he knew that the Lord set the godly and him apart for great things. "Be angry," David said, "but do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed and be still. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord."<sup>6</sup> These were not pithy words. These were not sarcastic words just to get him through a little rough patch in life. David believed these words every day, and he believed God. He believed God was mighty to save. God is also mighty to save us.

Instead of panicking, pray. Instead of freezing, get up and go after the Lord. Instead of letting anger take over, ask for the Holy Spirit to take over. Instead of thinking that all is lost, know that we are lost and God has found us. He will find us again and again and again. God will provide, even a ridiculous amount of blessings, just to prove that he loves us.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Psalm 4:1.

<sup>6</sup> Psalm 4:4-5.

## Assurance of Pardon

Hear this good news from Psalm 16, “The Lord is our refuge, and so we have no good apart from him. The Lord is our chosen portion and our cup; he holds our lot in life. The Lord gives us counsel, instructing our hearts even in the night. The Lord will not give us up to the Grave, but will always show us the path of life. In his presence there is fullness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures forevermore.” Rejoice and believe the good news. You and I are forgiven through Christ our Savior, amen.