

- (c). What details in Mark's account stress the adequacy of Jesus' ability to meet the people's need?

NB It is noticeable that in both stories, Jesus not only feeds the crowds; he involves his disciples in the feeding. The closer we are to Jesus, the more likely we are to share in his work of compassion, healing and feeding, bringing his kingdom-work to an ever wider circle. The Christian life, as a disciplined rhythm of following Jesus, involves not only being fed, but becoming in turn, one through whom Jesus' love can be extended to the world. N T WRIGHT

- (d). After this act of compassion, things get hotter. Right on cue, the Pharisees appear (v.11)

What is ironic about them asking for a sign just at this point in the story?

- (e). Why do you think Jesus "sighs deeply" (v.12)?

What would make Jesus groan today? What is it about us that would make him say, like a frustrated teacher, "You still don't get it"?

- (d). In v.12, Jesus says that he will give no sign to this generation. What do you think he means in the light of the many miracles and healings he has already performed, not to mention his coming death and resurrection?

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

SESSION 9: CHAPTER 7:1 – 8:13 "VIOLATING TRADITION"



Read Mark 7: 1- 13

- 1.(a). At the end of Chapter 6, we see that as Jesus moves through the marketplace he goes about healing the sick.

What by contrast happens to the Pharisees as they travel through the marketplace?

- (b). What specific questions do the Pharisees raise with Jesus? Why this approach?

What specific complaints does Jesus raise against their approach to tradition?

- (c). What sorts of traditions do we observe today that might get in the way of honouring God?

Read Mark 7: 14-23

2. (a). What do you think Jesus means by "clean"?

How does his view of becoming "unclean" differ from that of the Pharisees?

- (b). In what ways can we emphasise appearance over internal reality?

- (c). What do you make of the list of those evils that "defile a man"? How do they relate to Phil. 4:8?

- (d). Many of the traditions of the elders were embellishments of the OT ceremonial law. Thus the observance of the law and the traditions served to distinguish Jews from Gentiles.

How does Jesus' standard of uncleanness cut across the Jew-Gentile distinction?



Read Mark 7: 24-30

Jesus travelled about 50 miles to Tyre and then went on to Sidon. These were both port cities on the Mediterranean, north of Israel. Both cities were flourishing trade centres and were very wealthy.

In David's day, Tyre was on friendly terms with Israel, but soon afterward the city became known for its wickedness, its king, Ethbaal, even claimed to be God. Tyre rejoiced when Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 BC, because without Israel's competition, Tyre's trade and profits would increase.

It was into this evil and materialistic culture that Jesus brought his message. It is worth noting that he stressed the importance of inner purity just before visiting Tyre.

3. (a). What do you make of v.24?
- (b). What does this woman want?
- (c). Jesus responds to the Syrophenician woman's request with a mini-parable about children, bread, and dogs. What is he actually saying? What evidence is there that the woman has understood his point?
- (d). Does the mention of the bread suggest a common theme in chapters 6-8?



NB Kenneth Bailey in *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes* suggests that Jesus takes the narrow-minded attitudes of his disciples and presses them to their logical extreme. As he says: 'The verbalisation is authentic to the disciples' attitudes and feelings, but shocking when put into words and thrown into the face of a desperate kneeling woman pleading for the sanity of her daughter. It is acutely embarrassing to see one's deepest prejudices verbalised and demonstrated.' Jesus ultimately not only honours the woman as one of the few who "bests" him in an argument, but also teaches a lesson regarding their mistaken ideas about the kingdom. N T WRIGHT

- (e) Does that interpretation help us to understand why Jesus is seemingly 'bested' by a woman?

Read Mark 7: 31-37

4. (a). The healing of the deaf man takes place in the Decapolis.

What other miracle had taken place in that area?

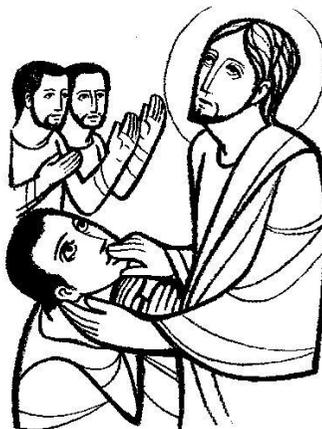
(b). How do the events here demonstrate that man's success in telling about what Jesus had done for him?

(c). What practical purposes do you think were served by

Jesus putting his fingers into the deaf man's ears and touching his tongue?

Throughout Mark's Gospel physical ailments are seen to have spiritual counterparts. The deaf man in this account is obviously someone who quite literally is unable to hear or speak properly

(d). In this chapter and the previous one, what different people exhibit symptoms of *spiritual* deafness?



Read Mark 8: 1 - 13.

QUESTIONS:



5.(a). What differences can you detect between this miraculous feeding and the earlier one mentioned in Chapter 6?

In what ways might the numbers have a symbolic role?

(b). Why do you suppose that the disciples had such a hard time accepting that Jesus could supply the needs of the 4,000 here, having witnessed the feeding of a larger number?