

Monday Evening Bible Reading Group: December 16th: Mark 8:1-26: Some Notes

Another crowd feeding; more boat trips; the Pharisees studiously avoid the real point; the disciples don't get the point; a two stage healing. This section is a good example of what you can miss by Bible reading without Bible study: 1) the word translated "basket" in this crowd feeding story is not the same as the word used in the earlier crowd feeding story. In the earlier story the word refers to the fairly small Jewish personal lunch box. Here the word refers to the bigger (Gentile) hamper. 2) This crowd feeding miracle takes place in Gentile territory,,, though we don't know that everybody in the crowd is a Gentile. 3) Jesus links Herod people and Pharisee people – two groups that in most circumstances wouldn't be seen dead together. What they had in common was a misunderstanding of the Jesus Messiah: Herod feared a political rival; the Pharisees wanted an orthodox Jewish nationalist leader who would ensure that all the RULES were kept. 4) A lot of folk were looking for God in the thunderbolts launched from the mountain tops. Jesus was showing them the Sign of a God who cared that ordinary folk were going to have to walk home after a three day convention without enough food to get them safely home. (No nearby villages here.) 5) Did the missionary work of the man whose multiple demons had been removed have anything to do with this (maybe mainly Gentile) crowd turning up?

Some other points to reflect on: We look at our watches if the 10 a.m. service is still going strong at 11 30 a.m. This crowd had been hanging on to Jesus' every word for three days. (Wondering about sleeping arrangements and comfort breaks?) Jesus presides at the Eucharist. The disciples act as deacons... and were the women who followed Jesus not also involved as deacons? (Radio 4 today giving a voice to Roman Catholic women saying that their Church hierarchy knows perfectly well that women are filling "priestly" roles, but won't admit it. Some bits of the C of E are in much the same state of denial!) the disciples are irritatingly human in falling into, "But I thought you said you were getting the rolls! How are we going to survive on one bread roll?"

The two stage healing: Yes, maybe there is a message here about discipleship being a process rather than an immediate change; but think also: blind from birth, physical eyes may be working, but brain takes time to tune in.

Personal footnote: Can anyone explain to me why the formerly blind man thought of people as trees? Was he more familiar with trees than with people, because people got out of his way and trees didn't?