



Heartbeats along the way: The Hardened Heart

Mark 8:17-18. And becoming aware of it, Jesus said to them, "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes, and fail to see? Do you have ears, and fail to hear? And do you not remember?"

Out of His great compassion for the crowd that had gathered and listened to him for three days, Jesus had just performed the miracle of the feeding of the four thousand, multiplying seven small loaves of bread and a few fish. As the crowd dispersed to their homes, the clean-up crew gathered seven baskets of leftover bread - one basket for each piece of bread over which Jesus gave thanks.

A day or so later, as the Disciples were getting back into a boat to return to the west shore of Galilee, they began to fret that they had only one loaf of bread. Jesus asks them why, after two significant miracles involving large crowds and a total of seventeen leftover baskets of bread, they don't get it. "Are your hearts hardened? Don't you see, or hear, or remember?"

I believe some hearts, like those of the Pharisees, were severely hardened by tradition and a narrow understanding of their faith. I believe the Disciples' hearts weren't completely 'softened,' but were in the process of being remolded by the Master. I believe Jesus is using this as a teaching moment about completely trusting God.

Sometimes we see the need but miss the opportunity standing behind it. May we never be that way as we continue to walk with Jesus toward our Spring Garden Campus! Let's take time to see beyond the needs and challenges to the great soul-nourishing opportunities God presents to us as we near the next stage of our Spring Garden Adventure.

Let's use this teaching moment to open our hearts, our eyes and ears to remember to fully trust the God we confess, and the Son He sent to save us. Miracles are all around us. We just need to receive them - be they bread, or fish, or teaching moments.

"Dear Christ, prepare our hearts that we may become more aware each day of the miraculous deeds you do for us, our church family, and strangers alike. In Your holy name, Amen."

~ cl reynolds

The Feeding of the Four Thousand and What Followed

In those days when there was again a great crowd without anything to eat, he called his disciples and said to them, "I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way—and some of them have come from a great distance." His disciples replied, "How can one feed these people with bread here in the desert?" He asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" They said, "Seven." Then he ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground; and he took the seven loaves, and after giving thanks he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute; and they distributed them to the crowd. 7 They had also a few small fish; and after blessing them, he ordered that these too should be distributed. They ate and were filled; and they took up the broken pieces left over; seven baskets full. Now there were about four thousand people. And he sent them away. And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.

Now the disciples had forgotten to bring any bread; and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. And he cautioned them, saying, "Watch out—beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod." They said to one another, "It is because we have no bread." And becoming aware of it, Jesus said to them, "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes, and fail to see? Do you have ears, and fail to hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?" They said to him, "Twelve." "And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?" And they said to him, "Seven." Then he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?"