

95-06-18Mark

After Jesus has left the earth, we saw Him teach the seed parables. We saw that the point in each of those parables was that the power belongs to God. The power is in the seed.

Jesus said that seed is the Word of God. There's a very simple conclusion we can draw from this. Do we want the power of God in our life? How much of the power of God would we like to see in our life? Do we want the power of God in our church? How much of the power of God do we want in our church? Jesus Christ has given us the key.

He has spent an entire chapter teaching us that the power is in the seed. The design is in the seed. The type of fruit that is going to be born is determined by the seed.

It's our job to be receptive soil. Do we want to be the kind of field that God can grow an eternal crop in? Do we want to be the kind of field that will produce eternal fruit? Not fruit that is temporary, not fruit that perishes, not fruit that is seen today and is gone tomorrow, but eternal fruit that will reflect the glory of God for all eternity. The key is to receive the seed, to nurture the seed, and to make it the object of our faith.

How much of the Old Testament do you think the Pharisees knew? A little bit or a lot? They knew a lot, didn't they? It was their specialty. It was their vocation in life to be students of the Word of God. They could quote chapter and verse.

They could justify all of the practices that they had based on the Word of God or their version of it. They could expand and enhance and take one notice in the Word and turn it into a practice and a tradition. You recall that God said in the Mosaic Law to take His Word with you wherever you go.

Bind it between your eyes. Keep it at your hand. And what was the point of that? It's obvious to the casual observer that God said, don't do anything, don't go anywhere without the Word of God as your guide, as your interpreter of reality, as the thing that gives you the basis for making your decisions.

That was the principle. But what happened in Israel? We're going to take the Word of God and write it on a tiny piece of leather or a tiny piece of papyrus. We're going to roll it up carefully.

We're going to tie it with a certain number of winds of a thread. We're going to put it in a nice little leather pouch. And we're going to strap it to our head.

And we're going to strap it to our hand. And we will be literally fulfilling the Word of God. We will have His Word between our eyes and on our hand everywhere we go.

And in doing so, what happened? They missed the point. What is the point? The Word of God doesn't have its power strapped to your body. It has its power active as the object of faith in our

soul.

That's the point. That's the point of Jesus' seed parables. That seed can't lay on the surface and produce a crop.

It can't even sink into shallow soil. It can't coexist with other kinds of seed, thorn seeds and weed seeds. It has to sink in deep.

And the point of that is the Word of God has to be the object of our faith. Not the Word of man. Not the experience of history.

Not a hollow tradition. Now, some of our traditions are valuable. Some of our traditions enhance and emphasize points in the Word of God.

But we've got to check our traditions against the Word of God. What does the Word of God say? That's the seed. That's the power.

That's the design. And that's what determines the fruit. If we want the power of God in our life, if we want the power of God in our church, it's going to come through the Word of God in the hands of the Holy Spirit and in no other way.

That's something to think about. Whatever else we talk about in the feeding of the 5,000 this morning, remember that point. If someone says, what did Old Sam talk about this morning? If you want the power of God in your life, if you want the power of God in your church, it's going to come through the Word of God and the Spirit of God and no other way.

Now, Jesus made that point, but He's going to try to get it to sink in. He wants this to become a part of the long-term memory of the disciples. Now, being a survivor of seminary and so forth, I've had courses that try to teach us how to be good teachers.

Many good books have been written. There's an outstanding book on the essence of good teaching written by this fellow, Stanford Erickson. Very well respected, often referred to, and yet concise book on what it takes to be a good teacher.

Now, we know in looking at science and looking at the knowledge that we gain in the human realm that when it is good and when it's accurate, it reflects something that God has done. We don't create good principles. We observe the good principles that God has designed.

And that's what has happened here. And so, Stanford Erickson, talking about the essence of good teaching, he has a chapter, and this chapter is called, Remembering Follows Understanding. If you've seen these commercials on TV for the Mega Memory Course, you may not stay up that late, but in the middle of the night when any good programming there may be on the TV scrolls off, you get these infomercials and advertisements for weight machines and exercise bikes and so forth.

And there's a fellow, in fact, a couple of fellows that get on there and they want to tell you how to improve your memory. They guarantee it. We can make your memory better.

Your short-term memory will be better. Your long-term memory will be better. Well, there are some principles that pertain to remembering things, learning something and being able to call it up later and put it into practice.

Isn't that what we want to do as believers? If we're serious about the Word of God and we understand that it's the source of power in our life, we've got to be able to remember it. It's got to stick in there and come back up to the surface when we need to put it into practice. Well, Jesus Christ knew this.

Jesus Christ was the greatest teacher that has ever trod the soil of this planet. And He understood the principles that constitute good teaching. He knew how to help people remember.

And some of those principles are reflected in the observations made by this man. He says, here are some instructional guides to enhance long-term memory. Remember, this is addressed to teachers.

This is addressed to guys like me that hope the people to whom we communicate can retain what it is we communicate. He says, the instructional use of two principles will upgrade the quality and the amount of information retrieved from long-term memory, which is a fancy way of saying there are two things you can do so that people can remember what they hear. Active participation is the first, and over-learning is the second.

Active participation, in one way or another, nearly every book about schoolroom learning refers to the importance of active participation by the student. The most common objection to the lecture method, which is what is being inflicted on you right now, this is the lecture method. The most common objection to that is the passive posture taken by the students.

I am not requiring you all to get up and participate in a practical exercise. I am not having you fill out a quiz. All you can do is wait for whatever it is I'm going to say and hopefully concentrate.

He says, when attending to a good lecture, students are actively participating. Even though you're sitting still and not doing activities, you can actively participate when the lecture method is being used. How can you do that? By actively integrating, organizing, and elaborating the information being talked about, which is what we call concentration.

You think about it. A principle comes from the Word of God, and you say, you know, that makes sense, and I can see where that would make a difference in the way I live. I've got a situation just like that in my life.

I can recall a time when God worked that way in my life. Your paying attention and integrating

and organizing and playing with the information that comes across is your method of participation, and that's one of the things that helps you remember it. I cannot do the whole process when I speak.

I can't implant it in such a way that you'll remember it in the long term. It takes your participation, your interest and enthusiasm for what it is that's being talked about. That's one of the two principles that makes it stick.

There's another principle, overlearning. Overlearning means to continue studying beyond the least demanding criterion of success. In other words, if you're in a classroom and they say you need a 70 to pass the test, a 70 to pass the course, if you want this to stick in your long term memory, you don't just shoot for a 70.

You shoot for 100%. After you've learned it, you go back and review it. You look at it from a different angle.

You work with that information after you've gotten enough to just get the 70%. Having achieved one perfect repetition, for example, practice continues until no errors occur on 10 successive trials. If a fellow is trying to learn how to shoot a pistol, the first time he manages to crank off a round and hit the bullseye, he doesn't say, great, I've got that down.

I am now an expert pistol shot. He keeps practicing so that he can hit the bullseye 10 shots in a row. Repetition, overlearning, practicing even after you've managed to hit the bullseye one time.

Mechanical drilling and verbatim memorizing aim at the narrow encoding of this surface material, but a more efficient use of rehearsal, a more efficient way to repeat and to get close to that 100% is to extend the boundaries of what is being learned. That is the breadth of meanings can be increased by placing a specific item of information within a sequence of several different contexts or frames of references. That's real academic, but what does it mean? It means if I teach someone how to, of course, I can't help it.

All of my illustrations seem to come from military service for some reason. Let's talk about an M16. You know that guys have to know how to take those apart and clean them and put them back together.

Marines do this. Army soldiers do this. We show them how to do this in a classroom.

We show them where the pins and the bolts and the various interlocking mechanisms are to get this apart, take out the springs and the bolts and all the other little mechanisms and get it nice and clean and put it back together. Once we've showed them that in the classroom, then we hand them an M16. We say, okay, now you take it apart.

You put it back together. And we don't just do that once. We do it many times.

Then to make sure they remember it, we change the surroundings. Now we're going to have you do it outdoors and you try to keep those parts clean. Now we're going to have you do it in the dark.

Now we're going to have you do it by feel, blindfolded. Now we're going to have you take it apart, scramble the parts, and then move to the next guy's position and put his rifle back together. Now we're going to only give you some of the parts and you tell me which part is missing and so forth.

We keep changing the context. We change the environment and the surroundings of that one thing that we want them to learn so that blindfolded with one hand tied behind their back while bullets are whizzing around, they can feel strip and put back together that M16. So these two principles of learning, one is participation, repetition, making it meaningful in your own mind.

And the other is having that same principle set against different backgrounds. Have you ever been trying to pick the color of paint that you were going to use in a room or the type of fabric you were going to use in some article of clothing? You don't just look at it in one light, do you? You say, well, there's fluorescent lights in here. Let me see what it looks like in the sunlight.

Let me see what it looks like under incandescent light. Let me see what this fabric looks like against this carpet or this curtain material and so forth. You look at it in all different contexts to get a genuine appreciation for what that is.

Now, Jesus Christ was the greatest teacher that we have ever been privileged to be ministered to by. And He knew these principles. And this is what He's doing with the disciples.

That body of teaching that we saw in the seed parables is now going to be reinforced. He's trying to get the disciples to participate in that truth. He's trying to get them to put it into practice.

He's trying to get them to practice it not only in one context, but in many contexts. And we're going to see Jesus Christ change the situation, change the background, change the circumstance, and always bring them back to that fundamental set of principles that He taught in those seed parables. What is the point? It's God's power.

It's God's plan. It's God's design. You don't do the work.

When you go, what does Jesus do right after He teaches these parables? He sends the disciples out two by two and He says, I want you to go preach this message and don't take anything with you. Why is it they don't take anything? It's partly symbolic. We saw the value of that, that the people to whom they go see these two men and they say, this is a witness.

This establishes the truth in Israel. In the mouths of two or more witnesses, a thing is established. They're coming out and saying, we need to change our mind.

That's a witness. If they go to a town and they're rejected and they shake the dust off their feet,

that's a witness. That's a testimony.

It faces the people with an issue. That was part of the reason Jesus sent them with no extra baggage. What's another reason? A common reason that we hear when we study this passage.

You've got to depend on God. Don't take your resources. Don't take your provision.

Don't be like David and when you go to Nob, pick up the sword of Goliath and get as much bread as you can carry. You go out with nothing and you depend on God to provide for you. God will put the people in place to take you in.

God will provide the food. God will provide the opportunities. God will protect you and defend you.

You don't need an extra staff. You don't need an extra rod. God will protect you if the weather gets bad.

You don't need an extra cloak. Trust in God. It's God's plan.

It's God's power. It's God's design. It goes right back to what He's teaching in the seed parables.

We see them coming across the sea and hitting the storm. New context. New background.

New situation. Same principle. What are you going to trust? Are you going to trust in your ability to bail? Are you going to trust in your seamanship and your long experience as fishermen on the Sea of Galilee? Or are you going to look to God and say, it's God's plan.

It's God's power. It's God's design. I serve Him.

I'm in His hands. And He has said in Jesus Christ, we're going to the other side. I'm going to trust that.

Same principle. Completely different context. They get to the other side and here's the man possessed by demons.

The most concentrated form of evil that they have come up against to date. A legion of demons. An unclean man living in the tomb, surrounded by death, disorganization, uncontrollable, dangerous.

Fearful. Same principle. God's power.

God's design. God's plan. There is no force on this earth that is outside God's control.

There is nothing that faces a believer that's not in God's design and a part of His purpose. The disciples have a chance to go back and say, you know, if I trust the Word of God, if I trust in who Jesus Christ is, if I trust in who I am and His plan and operate on that basis, God will grow the crop. God will bear the fruit and God will get the glory because it's all His work.

It's all His design. Now we've come here to this case where the disciples have returned. You remember we had an inserted history there of Herod and the dealings with John the Baptist, the death of John the Baptist and it foreshadows the rejection of the message.

Now here's going to be a challenge for the disciples. John the Baptist preached a baptism of repentance. He preached the One coming after Him who was greater than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose, he says.

And what happened to Him? He's in prison. He's beheaded. His message is rejected.

And what happens? Jesus says, Stand by. You are My witnesses. You will be My spokesmen.

You are going to stand before kings. You are going to be rejected. Here's a preview of coming attractions.

Are you going to decide that based on the outcome of what you do, you're in the wrong? That you didn't do it right? You should have done it a different way? You should have packaged the Gospel in a different coating? Put a little sugar on it? A little honey to help it go down? Are you going to blame yourself when the message is rejected? Or are you going to trust God? What God says. God's plan. God's purpose and God's design.

Now we have in chapter 6 after this episode where we see the fate of John the Baptist and so forth, now we come back to the disciples. God sent them out in pairs. They cast out demons.

They healed the sick. What does that tell us? The power of God was operating in and through the disciples, wasn't it? You remember when Jesus commissioned the disciples and selected them by name back in chapter 3, verse 14? Then He appointed twelve that they might be with Him and He might send them out to preach and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons. That's why God selected these men.

He didn't select everyone in Israel. He didn't select Mary Magdalene. He didn't select Lazarus.

He didn't select Nicodemus. He didn't select a lot of other people that believed in Him. He selected these twelve and ultimately eleven of these twelve are going to go on to be apostles and continue this ministry after Jesus leaves the earth.

Who picked them? Jesus Christ. Who determined their purpose? Jesus Christ. Who empowered them? Jesus Christ.

Where do we see the disciples doing anything in their own strength related to this ministry? They don't make their own provision. They don't do their own healing. They don't open up a counseling clinic and begin to counsel.

They don't open up a food pantry and feed the poor because that is something they can do in their own strength. They operate with the supernatural power of God and they are an example for us. It doesn't mean that we shouldn't do those things, by the way, but the principle is in the example.

The example is what we look at to get the principle. Thomas Aquinas said, Knowledge of things is not produced in us through knowledge of signs. Think about that.

Thomas Aquinas, way back. Knowledge of things is not produced in us through knowledge of signs, but through knowledge of things more certain, namely, principles. It's not the sign that we see that teaches us and gives us the knowledge we need.

It's the principle behind that sign. We have to be careful when we study the Word of God to look beyond the sign and get the principle that God is giving us. Now, one of the most common misapprehensions about the passage we're looking at this morning, the feeding of the 5,000, is to look at this in a superficial way and say, we should open up a food pantry.

We should try to feed the 5,000. Stop and think about this. Jesus' healing ministry, Jesus' miracle ministry, those were signs.

We've seen this in all of the 14 miracles that we've covered to this point. Every single miracle that we have seen, we've seen a principle behind it. God doesn't ask us to go out and reproduce that miracle, does He? We don't have to turn water to wine.

We don't have to heal the lepers and raise the dead. But we observe the principle behind that miracle. It's not the sign that teaches us.

It's the principle that that sign conveys. Thomas Aquinas understood this about 1,800 years ago. Not produced in us through knowledge of signs, but through knowledge of things more certain than signs, namely principles.

Knowledge of principles produces in us knowledge of conclusions. Knowledge of signs does not. If we can understand the principle behind what Jesus is doing, we can use that principle and draw conclusions for ourselves.

We can't do that just knowing the sign and knowing the story. We'll go out and try to reproduce the story instead of applying the principle and drawing new conclusions in new situations, new backgrounds, new sets of circumstances. That's what Jesus is doing with the disciples.

He says, don't just look at the fact that I have this supernatural power. Don't just look at the fact that when I sent you out and gave you the power to heal and the power to cast out demons, that that's the point. That is a sign of something.

It's a sign that it's God's power. It's God's purpose. It's God's design.

It's God's Word as the object of your faith that empowers you and accomplishes God's purpose. How many different ways is Jesus showing us this truth? How many different ways is He impressing it on the disciples? So keep that in mind now as we go into the feeding of the 5,000. Look here in verse 30 of chapter 6. After the episode with Herod and John the Baptist, the disciples, the apostles, gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught.

Now this picks up where we left off back in verse 13 where the disciples went out, they cast out many demons, they anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them. Now they're back. The six disciple teams are back and they're reporting to Jesus Christ.

G. Campbell Morgan made a rather astute comment about this verse in his commentary, which by the way, we have over here in our church library. He said, Notice that the apostles report to Jesus, not to each other. And he says, My deliberate conclusion is that the report is hardly worth printing.

We don't have the substance of what they did and what they accomplished in this journey, do we? There's no record that John did this and Peter did that and Andrew cast out this demon and so forth. G. Campbell Morgan says, My conclusion is that the report is hardly worth printing and it never is. It would be well for us if we told the Lord more often what we do and teach and told each other less often.

I think he makes an excellent point there. So the disciples come back and tell the Lord what it is that they have done, what it is that they have taught. And he said to them, Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while, for there were many coming and going and they did not even have time to eat.

Here's something to keep your eye on when we go through this passage. You may recall back a few chapters earlier when Jesus and the disciples came together in chapter 3, verse 20. The multitude came together again so that they could not so much as eat bread.

Doesn't this strike you as kind of a strange way of saying that it was really crowded and really busy and lots of distractions? You could say that they couldn't even get in and out the door or they couldn't get a word in edgeways or they couldn't organize themselves. They couldn't accomplish what they wanted to accomplish. They couldn't get to all the sick because of the press of the crowd.

But the figure that is used here to tell us how crowded it was is that they could not so much as eat bread. And this idea of eating and bread is a thread that runs through this and gives us a sign. It gives us a detail that has some significance and symbolic value for us.

Once again, here they are. They've gathered together and they cannot so much as eat. The disciples can't get their own nourishment, much less minister to others.

It's too crowded. It's too busy. They've just returned from this trip.

And Jesus says, let's leave the crowd. How many times have we seen Jesus do this now? Here's a huge crowd. What an opportunity.

We've attracted all this attention. We went out and did what you said, Lord. We preached.

We anointed people with oil and healed them. We cast out demons. There's a great amount of attention now in Israel.

What an opportunity. Now we can really set the hook. Now we can really bring them in and latch onto them here.

Here they are. They're all here. We're ready to go.

And Jesus says, let's bug out. Let's leave. Let's go away by ourselves.

We can't even eat here. What's the point? We are not ready to minister to others if we ourselves are not nourished, if we ourselves are not built up and prepared. You can't go out and make an impact on others if God is unable to make an impact on you.

I can't have an impact on others if God can't have an impact on me. What's the pattern in the Word of God? We've seen it over and over. Every chapter of Colossians.

God's Word rehabilitates our soul. God's Word cleanses us from sin. God's Word gives us the ability to identify and confess our sin.

God's Word is the washing of water that renews our minds, that gives the ministry of the Holy Spirit full reign. What is the sword of the Spirit? It's the Word of God. That has to take place first.

There's nothing wrong with ministry and there's nothing wrong with having an impact on the lives of others. Quite the contrary. But we've got to know how it works.

That's what Jesus is teaching His disciples. That's why He taught the seed parables. That's why He's taking advantage of each of these new circumstances and saying, disciples, stop and think.

You're in the middle of a storm. What are you going to do? Are you going to bail or are you going to trust? Are you going to work or are you going to think? And they are not ready to go minister to others until they have got this lesson down in their own souls. And so Jesus is demonstrating that time and time again.

Here He is now. We've got this huge crowd. It looks like a great opportunity, but we're not ready.

We can't even eat here. Let's go away and rest up, get ourselves refreshed, restored, get our focus renewed, and we'll be ready. And so Jesus says, notice all of the words for isolation here.

Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place. That is a three-fold emphasis on getting away. All of us need that refreshment from time to time.

All of us need that restoration. There is a time to get into the thick of it and mix it up with the crowds and engage in ministry, and there is a time for rest and refreshment. And if we ever reach the point where we ourselves cannot take in nourishment, we're doing too much.

We've taken on too much. We have gotten too focused on the outward and not enough on what has to take place first, which is God's impact on us. They did not even have time to eat, so they departed.

And once again, we're going to get this emphasis. They departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves. Another three-fold emphasis on separation, removal, a time of refreshment.

But the multitude saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them. And that's where the sentence should end.

If you've got a new King James like I do, the rest of that is not harmful, but it's superfluous. They arrived before them. There are two interesting things in verse 33.

First of all, it says, the multitude saw them departing, and many knew Him. That word knew, for those of you that keep track of the Greek, is from *epigenosko*, where we get the noun *epinosus*. This doesn't just mean that they knew about Him or knew of Him.

It means that they had experience with Him. *Epinosus*, which is the word often used in the New Testament for our thorough understanding and experience in the Word of God, is used here. They had experience with Jesus Christ.

Many of these people had followed Him before. They knew His habit of getting in the boat and going to a new town. They anticipated where He would go, and they went there.

But notice what the last half of the verse says. They arrived before them. In Greek, this says they outwent them.

Some scholars have had trouble with this. Well, how could they possibly be traipsing around over the land? They have to cross the Jordan. They've got to get over to this far off place, and here's Jesus and the disciples in a boat.

How could these people have outfooted them? In the first place, the reason Jesus and the disciples are in the boat is to get away from the crowd, and I doubt that they were in a great hurry to arrive at their destination. And you can tack, and you can zig and zag, and you can take your time in a boat. That's what we do for recreation.

We say, I'm going to get away from it all. I'm going to go in the boat, get out on the water, and

relax. So they're in no hurry.

Secondly, what this actually means is not that they outdistanced them and got there first. It's actually worse. They went beyond where Jesus was going.

They said, He's in the boat. He's heading to the northeast. Let's go to the next big town to the northeast, because obviously that's where He's going.

They thought they knew where Jesus was going from past experience. They anticipated it. They assumed His destination, and they went there, and they overshot it, because Jesus and the disciples turned straight north and disembarked in a desert place.

Nobody thought Jesus would go to a desert place. They all thought He was going to the next big town. And so they overran them, is what the Greek says.

They outwent them, literally. So they overshot it. They're too far.

And Jesus accomplishes His objective here, because now He and the disciples get out of the boat. They go up in the mountain. If you read John 6, I think it is, you find out this detail, that Jesus and the disciples get up there to the mountain, and Jesus does some teaching.

And then Jesus emerges. And here in verse 34, it says, And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude. If you have an NIV Bible, it says, When Jesus disembarked, it doesn't say disembarked.

And Jesus didn't see the crowd when He disembarked. The crowd overshot them. It's a bad translation.

The word means He came out. He came forth. And He came forth from the mountain retreat, not from the boat.

Read John. This, by the way, is the only episode, the only miracle of Jesus Christ that is recorded in all four Gospels. Pretty important piece of information.

Of all 35 miracles that we're studying on Wednesday nights, this is the only one that is in all four Gospels. So we gain a little bit by seeing what John and some of the others have to say about this. Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude.

He was moved with compassion for them because they were like sheep, like sheep not having a shepherd. We got a chance to see some sheep this morning. We got a chance to read about some sheep last week in our Scripture reading.

Do you remember that from Ezekiel 34? Let's review that real quickly because this is what is in Jesus' mind when He looks out at this crowd. They've run to and they have run fro. They're scattered.

They're looking for Jesus. He looks down from the mountainside and He sees here's this straggling, scattered group of people hunting around. Where did the Lord go? We thought, sure, He was going to this city and He wasn't there.

And somebody said they saw the boat turn in and so they're scattered over the hillside. And Jesus looks out at this and it moves Him with compassion. Look in Ezekiel 34.

Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to them, Thus says the Lord God to the shepherds, Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool. You slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock.

The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost. But with force and cruelty you have ruled them. What a contrast.

Think about what Jesus says about His own ministry. The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. I am the Good Shepherd.

The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep, Jesus says. What a contrast to the shepherds of Israel that existed even in Jesus' day. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered.

My sheep wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill. Yes, my flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them. Let me ask you, is this talking about the physical scattering of Israel? Is this what God has in mind here in the mouth of Ezekiel the prophet? Isn't He talking about their spiritual life, their being ministered to by a faithful communicator, faithful prophets, faithful priests, faithful shepherds in Israel who feed the flock of God? Isn't that what's in view here? Because they are still at this time in Ezekiel's ministry, they are still in the area of Israel.

It isn't their physical scattering that He's talking about, it's their spiritual scattering. Why are they food for the wild beasts? Because every pagan religion in the surrounding cultures is infiltrating and taking over these people who don't have a clear ringing voice preaching the Word of Truth. Therefore, in verse 7, you shepherds, hear the Word of the Lord.

As I live, says the Lord God, surely because my flock became a prey and my flock became food for every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, nor did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed my flock. Therefore, O shepherds, hear the Word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God, behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my flock at their hand.

I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the shepherds shall feed themselves no more. I will deliver my flock from their mouths that they may no longer be food for them. For thus says the Lord God, indeed, I myself will search for my sheep and seek them out.

As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among the scattered sheep, so will I seek out my sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day. I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries. I will bring them to their own land.

I will feed them on the mountains of Israel. How significant. Jesus walks out on the side of the mountain and He sees the people scattered like sheep without a shepherd.

And what is He going to do? He is going to feed them. What is the significance of this feeding? If we start falling back into the literal, we have to ask ourselves the question, why in a three and a half year ministry did Jesus feed the crowd only twice? Because its significance goes beyond the literal. Not that we shouldn't feed the hungry.

Jesus will judge those who, when I was naked, you did not clothe me. When I was sick and in prison, you did not visit me. When I was hungry, you did not feed me.

When I was thirsty, you did not give me to drink. That's not the point. We're not throwing out the baby with the bath water.

What we are trying to do is see the emphasis that God puts on this. What is the significance? What is the principle behind the sign? That principle that will sit in our soul and enable us to draw conclusions about our own life. It goes beyond the surface.

It goes beyond the immediate. This is a spiritual problem in Israel. This is lack of spiritual leadership.

These shepherds have fed themselves in the physical sense rather than feeding the flock of God in a spiritual sense. And God says, I am against those shepherds. We've seen examples of this in our own modern day culture, our modern day Christianity.

People who set themselves up as quote unquote shepherds and feed themselves at the expense of the flock. They don't feed the flock the word of truth. They instead feed themselves on the gifts that they gain through their ministries.

God says in verse 14, I will feed them in good pasture and their folds shall be on the high mountains of Israel. Isn't it interesting that three of the four Gospels that record this feeding of the 5,000 mention the grass, the green grass that these people are going to sit down on. And it harks back to this passage.

It harks back to the 23rd Psalm. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie

down in green pastures.

Mark says Jesus had them sit down, had them recline on the green grass. It's such a clear connection to the spiritual need in Israel. It reflects it.

It signifies it. It is a sign of it. And God wants us to look at that sign and get the principle.

God will provide. It's God's flock. It's God's love.

It's God's glory that's on the line. God will provide. I will feed them in good pasture and their folds shall be on the high mountains of Israel.

There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick. But I will destroy the fat and the strong and feed them in judgment.

And as for you, O my flock, thus says the Lord God, behold, I shall judge between sheep and sheep. Now this is extremely important for our story. I will judge between sheep and sheep.

I'm going to gather you, my sheep. I'm going to bring you on the side of the pasture. I'm going to set you down in the green grass and I'm going to feed you.

And I'm going to judge you. Is it too little to you to have eaten up the good pasture that you must tread down with your feet the residue of your pasture and to have drunk of the clear waters that you must foul the residue with your feet? Are we so interested in our pursuits, our goals, that we muddy the water for other sheep? That we confuse the issue? That we make it difficult for them to take advantage of the nourishment that God is giving to us? Do we muddy the water for the sheep? Do we dirty the food that God is trying to provide for them? As for my flock, they eat what you have trampled with your feet and they drink what you have fouled with your feet. Therefore, thus says the Lord God to them, behold, I myself will judge between the fat and the lean sheep.

Because you have pushed with side and shoulder, butted all the weak ones with your horns and scattered them abroad, therefore, I will save my flock and they shall no longer be a prey. I will judge between sheep and sheep. I will establish one shepherd over them and he shall feed them, my servant David.

He shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God and my servant David, a prince among them. I, the Lord, have spoken.

I will make a covenant of peace with them and cause wild beasts to cease from the land and they will dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. I will make them and the places all around my hill a blessing. What is this hill? That's the hill where the sheep are being fed.

That's where the green pasture is. That's where the sheep have been led and where they lie

down and where they are nourished. I will cause them to dwell safely there.

All around my hill will be a place of blessing. I will cause showers to come down in their season. There shall be showers of blessing.

Sources are hymned by the same name. Then the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And the earth shall yield her increase.

They shall be safe in the land and they shall know that I am the Lord when I have broken the bands of their yoke and delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them. Reminds us of the demon-possessed man. His bonds were broken and he was delivered from those who were oppressing and enslaving him.

They shall no longer be a prey for the nations nor shall beasts of the land devour them. What do you notice here in chapter 34? Who is doing the work? God Himself. Who leads the sheep? Who feeds the sheep? Who selects the pasture? Who gets rid of the dangers that surround them? Who gets rid of the wild beasts? It's all God's work.

It's God's plan. It's God's purpose. God nourishes them up on His Word.

And it's His Word that gets them in this situation. This is where the trees blossom and bloom and produce fruit. The earth yields its increase as a result of God's work.

So now back in Mark chapter 6, when we see Jesus looking and He says, in His heart, He looks out and He sees them and He says they are like sheep not having a shepherd and He's moved with compassion. And what does He do? He does exactly what God says in Ezekiel chapter 34. He doesn't say, come here, let's get organized.

Let me set up a little system of elders here. Let me get a system for communication so I can guide you and help you make decisions. Let's have a little court here so I can help you decide and work through the problems that you're facing.

He began to teach them many things. He began to do what the good shepherd does. The good shepherd feeds the flock.

What does Jesus say to Peter after his resurrection and shortly before he leaves? That three-fold rejection and denial of the Lord hanging heavy in Peter's heart. What is the answer to that? Does Jesus give him psychological counseling? Does Jesus go into some long conversation? What is the answer for Peter? Feed my sheep. Feed my lambs.

Feed my sheep. It's the Word of God that has the power. It's the Word of God that determines the fruit.

It's the Word of God that is that supernatural seed that bears fruit in our soil. That's what Jesus

does here. He began to teach them many things.

And when the day was far spent, His disciples came to Him and said, this is a deserted place and already the hour is late. Let's send them away that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy themselves bread for they have nothing to eat. By the way, there is nothing wrong with this suggestion.

This is probably a situation that faced Jesus and the disciples and the crowd many times. This is midway in Jesus' ministry. This is not early on.

They have preached to dozens, perhaps hundreds of crowds by this time. And it's not an uncommon thing to reach the end of the day and say it's time for us to knock off so these people can go get some food. And that's what they generally did.

So what Jesus is about to say here is not an admonition. This is a challenge. This is not a rebuke.

This is an opportunity that Jesus brings. In verse 37, He answered and said to them, you give them something to eat. You meet this need.

And they said to Him, shall we go and buy 200 denarii worth of bread to give them something to eat? We know that from other parables that the Lord taught that a denarius was a day's wage. Remember the servants that are hired in the morning and they say we'll work all day for a denarius? So 200 denarius, that's roughly eight months' wages. If you have an NIV, I think they translate it this way.

Shall we go spend eight months' wages to buy food? This is exactly the attitude that Jesus wants to challenge. This is the attitude that Jesus wants to change. Don't look to your own resources.

Don't get Judas up here and start looking in the money box to see if we have enough money to buy food. Don't think in terms of human solutions. Think in terms of God's power.

It's God's Word. It's God's plan. It's God's design.

Jesus is putting that same truth in yet another context. Can you trust Him in the boat? Can you trust Him in the presence of demons? Can you trust Him in the presence of need? The need for food. The obvious need of this flock of scattered sheep.

You give them something to eat. He said to them when they say, what are we supposed to do? They're not thinking in these terms. They don't think, well now let's see.

We've been out casting out demons. We've been out implementing the power of God to heal. We've been out implementing the power of God to do these supernatural things.

Here's an occasion where God could do a supernatural thing. Maybe instead of just remedial work, fixing broken bodies, casting out unclean spirits, Maybe God can use that same power in

the area of provision, in feeding this flock. That's the kind of thinking Jesus is trying to encourage in the disciples.

Let's use the same power of God that we've used in one context, one area of life, in another. If it worked over here, why won't it work over here? It's the same God with the same power. And if they thought back to their Old Testament Scriptures and cycled that through their soul, what would they remember? Go back and look in 2 Kings and Elisha, and a time when there wasn't enough food for the sons of the prophets.

And there are barley loaves of bread that are multiplied. And it feeds a larger crowd than what they thought it would feed. It's the first case of the multiplication of the bread.

We're going to continue our study of this. We're only halfway through. There's a great deal of truth.

It's an important passage. All four Gospels record it in much the same fashion. They stress the same things.

They emphasize the same points. And we'll pick up here next week and see what it is that the disciples are going to learn from this sign. What principle is it that Jesus Christ is getting across so that they can draw conclusions and bear fruit in their lives even after He leaves.

But let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, we thank You for the truth of Your Word. We thank You that You have made provision for us.

And even though we are fallen and we are weak and frail, and our instinct and our tendency is to turn to human solutions, You have given us another choice. You have made available to us Your supernatural power through Your Word and through Your Spirit. Father, open our eyes and help us to see our lives, to see our situations and our decisions from Your perspective, and to see that there is more going on than what's on the surface.

We have the opportunity as believers to implement and have You work in our lives and make an impact on us so that we can in turn...