

Sermon #1,155: St. Mark 8:1-9 (*Historic Gospel*)

7-19-15 (Trinity 7), Bethany-Princeton MN

Hymns: 436, 16:1, CW 374, 435:2.5; communion 322, 370, 434, 325

JESUS CARES FOR YOUR BODY AND SOUL

The Text, St. Mark 8:1-9 (v. 2-4). “I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And if I send them away hungry to their own houses, they will faint on the way; for some of them have come from afar.” Then His disciples answered Him, “How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?” Lord, this is Your Word and these are Your words. Sanctify us by the truth. Your Word is truth. Almighty God, our heavenly Father, though we have in no way deserved Your goodness, You abundantly provide for all our wants of body and soul: We pray You, give us Your Holy Spirit, that we may heartily acknowledge Your merciful goodness toward us, give thanks for all Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (*The Lutheran Liturgy, Collect on the Trinity 7 Gospel*) Amen.

Fellow redeemed in Christ, who has compassion for you: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

This miracle is the second one in which Jesus feeds a multitude of thousands. This time it is the feeding of the 4,000; before it was 5,000. This time it is seven loaves, not five loaves; and seven baskets of leftovers, not 12 baskets. This time Jesus was teaching for three days before the miracle, before it was all in one day.

But what is the same is something wonderful: Jesus and His compassion.

In the original language of this New Testament verse, this is one word, a beautiful word. It comes up in the previous feeding of the 5,000; in St. Mark’s version it says Jesus “**was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd.**” This word “having compassion” literally says Jesus “felt it in His insides,” in His viscera, His intestines. Did you know Jesus had intestines? Well, if He had a human body He must have, we think, but we don’t really want to dwell on this. It’s kind of an eww. But inspiring the words this way, God the Holy Spirit is saying: Dwell on it! And deal with it! Because you need to.

You are tempted to think that God cares about your soul, but not so much your physical needs. Or you pray for material things and not much else.

But God created your soul and body at the same time. They share in the same life. When something difficult happens to your body or the material part of your life, if you get sick or fail a test or your child gets hurt or there's a problem in your job, it affects your soul: you worry or fret, you feel insecure, you lack confidence and certainty. Likewise, if something isn't right with your soul – you doubt God, you are uncertain of forgiveness, you are despairing – it affects your body too, it's difficult to think straight or function well in your job.

The Bible clearly teaches that your soul was created by God at the same time He created your body. Genesis 2 says that when God created Adam, He breathed His Breath – the word actually is the Spirit – into Adam's nostrils, and it says Adam became ***“a living soul.”*** So it isn't just that you have a soul. You are a soul. Your soul is your true self. Jesus Himself used the word *soul* when He said He came to give His life as a ransom: ***“the Son of Man came to give His soul as a ransom for many” (Mt 20:28)***. On the cross when His body was breathing its last, He said, ***“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.”***

So God created you to be a soul. But He did not create you to be a disembodied spirit; that's what angels are. They don't have bodies. You do. In Psalm 139, David by inspiration describes how God made his body, and includes his soul as well: ***“For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret ... Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.”***

This should give us a strong impression of the care that God takes in giving you body and soul. We see this come out at the time of death, with our questions of: What happens at death? The simple definition of death is: the separation of soul from body. The Bible says: ***“The dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it” (Ec 12:7)***. From this we know a Christian's soul goes to God and the body to the dust. Then it really isn't right to look at the body and say, “That's not really (*name*).” Yes, it is that person! God made that body. God will raise that body. It belongs to Him, in His care. People who care for their dying loved one, and commit to a Christian burial of the body, are lovingly treating the person, performing the last act of love in this life. God does the rest. He will keep the body safely in the grave, and raise it at the last day. Then the soul and the body – which will then be a glorified body, but really will be the way God created the person to be – will be reunited. Our life in heaven at the time of death, as souls that go to be with God, is incomplete until the Last Day. We are created for body and soul to be together, not separated. It is why the Last Day is so joyful!

The picture of what God does with us as body and soul is so careful! But the picture we have of what we do with our body and soul is so sloppy.

Of course we are careless about taking care of the needs of our soul: coming to church, reading the Bible, praying. We let our material needs dominate our thinking and concern. But our solution is usually the wrong one. We want to be the ones to solve this by doing better, by works of the Law. In actuality most of the problem comes from the devil tempting you to do as you please with your own body. But doesn't your body belong to God? Satan's such a liar. He stirs up the Old Adam by the idol of personal freedom and choice.

We think first of the "big" sins that have to do with the body: abusing alcohol or illegal drugs; or the sins that defile the marriage bed. Perhaps that is especially on our minds with the looseness in our country where homosexual behavior is on almost every TV show and disapproval of it is silenced. But our own carelessness in these areas contributes. We have too lackadaisical of an attitude toward what young people do prior to marriage.

We don't realize it perhaps, but one root of sexual sin may be how we go along with our culture in glorifying the body in a superficial way – emphasizing "looks" in our children, being cool and keeping up with others – so people have higher or lower self images based on appearance and superficial things.

At a more basic level our carelessness with bodily and material things begins with the things you let your eyes see and let your ears hear; the obsession with money; turning away from others to serve your own needs; the undue importance you place on temporal things, on the praise of others, on getting people's attention and being popular; having no standards for how you use entertainment and your leisure time; and so on.

You're letting your old Adam ask: *"Do I want this? Shouldn't I have this?"* When you should be asking: *"Has God given me my body? How does He want me to use my eyes, ears and all my members, my reason and all my senses? Am I being a good steward of all He has given me in my body and life?"*

What hurts your body also hurts your soul. All these sins you commit with your eyes and your hands, your words, your thoughts and desires, sink deep into your soul. They aren't merely something you do. The devil plays these things on a continuous loop in your mind, to damage your soul endlessly. They bruise your conscience. They torment your soul. You can wash your face and hands, but having a clean conscience is beyond your powers. You look fine on the outside but are tattered and in shreds on the inside.

If so, today's gospel lesson is for you. Specifically Jesus and His compassion. In the earlier feeding miracle it was said about Jesus: He had compassion. Here He Himself says it. **"I have compassion."** First words out of His mouth.

Jesus and His compassion are a sign that He cares for your body and soul. Jesus feeling it in His guts, His intestines, that He did not remain above this or apart from this but was willing to come down and ache in His insides for all the suffering that we humans endure, the fact that we do not have a God who says "you humans!" but became one Himself, became one with us, this says to you that He cares for your body and soul.

Not only does He care as in, "I care!" But He cares for your body and soul, as in: He gives care to your body and your soul. The compassion He feels does not just stay on His inside. It comes out from Him. He provides care. There is a wholeness to Jesus' care for you. That is what this miracle shows. He provides what your body needs. He provides what your soul needs.

You might read this Bible story, someone might have observed this, and say as a result: "Cool. He fed them. Now they aren't hungry anymore," and only be thinking of physical needs. But this feeding included both body and soul.

When Mark writes, **"They ate and were filled,"** it isn't just about the stomach. It also means *satisfied, satiated*, which takes us to Jeremiah's words in the Old Testament today. The Lord says, in regard to giving the Israelites back their home, which we might say comes under material needs: ***"I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul."***

See how that works? In taking care of the body He is at the same time satisfying, replenishing, the soul that bodily or material cares and sadness have caused to be wearied and burdened, mentally or emotionally exhausted. When Jesus sees your body's needs He also sees the needs of your soul, spiritual needs. He cares for your body and soul as one.

This is why you come to church. This is why you need to receive pastoral care. Even pastors need pastoral care. Because of the harm to our bodies and souls. Here, in the means of grace, Jesus is present, and for what purpose? To heal the damaged soul. Here nothing else happens than Jesus giving out His compassion, providing care for body and soul.

So where you are careless, He is careful. He is very careful with you. You are precious to Him. What happens to your body, including where you were taking Satan's bait, saying, "I need this, I need that," gorging yourself on mate-

rial and carnal desires, or filled with the worries of this world, that is what Jesus cares about. He sees how it affects your soul. He has no frowny face or “see-I-warned-you” to give you. He has only compassion to give you.

Jesus places Himself in this wilderness of yours, to give this compassion to you. This compassion has another name: grace. His forgiveness. He still comes to you as true Man, feeling compassion on His inside but giving it to you through His Word and Sacraments, joining Himself to you. This is the care that He gives you: to cleanse you constantly, body and soul, by forgiving your sins. This is what the church is. Christ giving out His compassion to sinners.

His body given for you, His soul committed to the Father in death, is now what He gives to you to make you holy and clean. He joins this body to you when you eat His body in the Lord’s Supper. He has redeemed your body together with your soul. You are holy inside and out because of Him.

When the moment of your death comes and the soul is separated from the body, your soul will go to God because He has cleansed you from all sin. When He raises your body at the last day it will be a holy body because of the care that He gives you now in the Gospel. He has compassion. For you. Amen!