

Mark 8:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat:

Analysis

I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat: Jesus articulates the motivation for the coming miracle—divine compassion. **I have compassion** (σπλαγχνίζομαι, *splanchnizomai*) is a strong Greek verb indicating deep, visceral emotion—literally referring to the bowels or inner organs, considered the seat of emotions in ancient thought. This term appears frequently in the Gospels describing Jesus' response to human suffering (Mark 1:41, 6:34, Matthew 9:36, Luke 7:13). It's never used of humans feeling compassion in the Gospels, but exclusively of Jesus and God the Father (in parables), emphasizing divine compassion's unique quality.

Because they have now been with me three days (ὅτι ἤδη ἡμέραι τρεῖς προσμένουσίν μοι, *hoti ēdē hēmerai treis prosmenousin moi*)—the crowd's three-day presence demonstrates extraordinary commitment. The verb *προσμένω* (*prosmenō*) means to remain, continue with, or stay near. They weren't casual listeners but devoted followers willing to endure hardship to receive Jesus' teaching. **And have nothing to eat** (καὶ οὐκ ἔχουσιν τί φάγωσιν, *kai ouk echousin ti phagōsin*) emphasizes their exhausted provisions.

Jesus' compassion addresses both spiritual and physical needs. He doesn't say, "They've received spiritual food, that's sufficient"—He recognizes embodied humans need physical sustenance. This challenges false dichotomies that separate spiritual from physical, suggesting God only cares about souls. Biblical Christianity affirms God's concern for whole persons. Yet Jesus also prioritizes spiritual over

physical—He first taught for three days, then addressed hunger. Man doesn't live by bread alone but by every word from God's mouth (Deuteronomy 8:3, Matthew 4:4).

Historical Context

The three-day duration is theologically significant throughout Scripture. Jonah was three days in the fish's belly (Jonah 1:17), foreshadowing Christ's three days in the tomb (Matthew 12:40). Jesus rose on the third day (1 Corinthians 15:4). Here, the crowd's three-day commitment demonstrates perseverance in seeking Christ. In the ancient world without modern food preservation or distribution, three days without eating in wilderness was genuinely life-threatening, especially for those who traveled from distant areas (v. 3). Jesus' compassion moved Him to act not merely to impress or prove His power but to meet genuine human need. This distinguishes Him from miracle-workers in Greco-Roman mythology who performed signs for self-glorification. Christ's miracles authenticated His teaching and revealed God's character—compassionate, merciful, attentive to suffering.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' deep compassion (*splanchnizomai*) for physical hunger challenge Christian ministry that focuses exclusively on spiritual needs while ignoring poverty, hunger, and suffering?
2. What does the crowd's three-day commitment teach about prioritizing spiritual nourishment from Christ's teaching even when it costs comfort and convenience?
3. How should understanding that Jesus cares about both our spiritual and physical needs shape our prayers and expectations of God's provision?

Interlinear Text

Σπλαγχνίζομαι	ἐπὶ	τὸν	ὄχλον	ὅτι	ἤδη	ἡμέρας
I have compassion	on	the multitude	because	now	days	
G4697	G1909	G3588	G3793	G3754	G2235	G2250
τρεῖς	προσμένουσίν	μοι	καὶ	οὐκ	ἔχουσιν	τί
three	been	with me	and	nothing	have	
G5140	G4357	G3427	G2532	G3756	G2192	G5101
φάγωσιν·						
to eat						
G5315						

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 9:36 (Parallel theme): But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

Micah 7:19 (Parallel theme): He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

Psalms 103:13 (Parallel theme): Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

Psalms 145:15 (Parallel theme): The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season.

Hebrews 4:15 (Parallel theme): For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Hebrews 5:2 (Parallel theme): Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.

Psalms 145:8 (Parallel theme): The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.

Mark 9:22 (Parallel theme): And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.

Mark 1:41 (Parallel theme): And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.

Mark 5:19 (Parallel theme): Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

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