

Mark 8:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far.

Analysis

And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far. Jesus articulates the practical danger facing the crowd if dismissed without food. **If I send them away fasting** (ἐὰν ἀπολύσω αὐτοὺς νήστεις, ean apolusō autous nēsteis)—the conditional clause considers the consequence of dismissing them in their current state. Νήστεις (nēsteis) means fasting or without food, emphasizing their depleted physical condition after three days.

To their own houses (εἰς οἶκον αὐτῶν, eis oikon autōn) indicates these people had traveled from home to hear Jesus—they weren't local residents but had journeyed specifically to receive His teaching. **They will faint by the way** (ἐκλυθήσονται ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ, eklythēsontai en tē hodō)—the verb ἐκλύω (eklyō) means to become weary, exhausted, or to collapse. The future tense indicates Jesus' certain knowledge of what would happen. Without food to sustain them on the journey home, they would collapse from weakness.

For divers of them came from far (τινὲς γὰρ αὐτῶν ἀπὸ μακρόθεν ἦκασιν, tines gar autōn apo makrothen hēkasin)—the explanatory γάρ (gar, "for") provides the reason for Jesus' concern. Μακρόθεν (makrothen) means from a distance or afar. Some had traveled many miles to hear Jesus, making the return journey even more dangerous in their weakened state. The perfect tense ἦκασιν (hēkasin) emphasizes completed action with ongoing result—they had come and remained.

This verse reveals Jesus' practical wisdom and genuine care. He doesn't perform miracles for spectacle but to meet real needs. His concern for their physical well-being demonstrates the incarnate God's understanding of human embodiment and limitation. This challenges prosperity gospel distortions that use Jesus' provision as proof that faith always brings material abundance. Jesus provides what people need, not always what they want.

Historical Context

Ancient travel was arduous and dangerous, especially through wilderness areas. Roads were poor, bandits common, and travelers vulnerable to exhaustion, dehydration, and heat. A person traveling without food for days risked serious medical consequences—dehydration, hypoglycemia, collapse, even death. Jesus' concern wasn't hypothetical but reflected genuine danger. The Decapolis region was predominantly Gentile, and these travelers had likely come from various cities in the confederation to hear Jesus. Their willingness to travel long distances demonstrated the spreading fame of His teaching and miracles. This anticipates the Gentile mission—people from distant lands coming to Christ. The feeding miracle in Gentile territory parallels the earlier feeding of five thousand in Jewish territory (Mark 6), demonstrating that Jesus' compassion and provision extend to all peoples, not just Israel. This fulfilled Old Testament promises that Messiah would bring salvation to the ends of the earth (Isaiah 49:6).

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' practical concern for people's physical well-being challenge ministries that focus exclusively on "spiritual" matters while ignoring material needs?

2. What does the fact that people traveled from far distances to hear Jesus teach about the priority of receiving spiritual nourishment from Christ?
3. How should Jesus' example of meeting people's genuine needs (not just impressing them with miracles) shape Christian compassion and charity?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ἐὰν	ἀπολύσω	αὐτῶν	νήστεις	εἰς	οἶκον	αὐτῶν
And	if	I send	of them	fasting	to	houses	of them
G2532	G1437	G630	G846	G3523	G1519	G3624	G846
ἐκλυθήσονται	ἐν	τῇ	ὁδῷ·	τινες	γὰρ	αὐτῶν	μακρόθεν
they will faint	by	G3588	the way	divers	for	of them	from far
G1590	G1722		G3598	G5100	G1063	G846	G3113
ἦκασιν							
came							
G2240							

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 40:31 (Parallel theme): But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.