

# What was I not Getting??!!!



Did you ever come upon a scripture verse that, even though you may have read it many, many times in the past, it just grabbed your attention as you were now just reading it? This happened to me recently as I was doing my daily Bible reading. I was reading through the scriptures with no real purpose other than to simply read through the scriptures. I came upon the account in Mark 6:45-52 where we are told about the disciples being on the Sea of Galilee struggling against the wind. We read

that Jesus came to them walking on the water. They cried out to Him and He assured them that it was He. He went into the boat and at the same time the wind ceased. The disciples were amazed at this and there we have the gist of the account. For clarity, it is important to note that this is not the same as another event found in Matthew, Mark and Luke where Jesus was asleep in the rear of the ship and was awakened and calmed the storm. They are two very different events in the Gospels.

As I was saying, I have read the account found in Mark 6:45-52, as well as in Matthew and Luke many times. I have heard wonderful messages from pastors and leaders concerning this account of the disciples and Jesus. However, as I was reading, one passage of scripture stood out to me and I just could not get past it. It is found in Mark 6:52 and reads as such, *“For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.”* Wait a minute. This account that we just read in verses 45-52 was about Jesus walking on the water. What did this whole thing have to do with the feeding of the five thousand? The scripture is telling us that the disciples failed to “consider,” which means they failed to “understand the teaching and meaning” of the “miracle of the loaves.” This failure to understand the “teaching” of something that happened previously had affected their situation in the now.

So, as any good Bible student, I went back and read Mark 6:35-44 which tells of the account of we call the “feeding of the five thousand.” (I encourage the reader to do so.) As I read and pondered Mark 6:35-44, I came to the realization that I was right there with the disciples. I was failing to “consider” and “understand” the “teaching,” or lesson that Jesus was bringing to His disciples through the “miracle of the loaves” and how it affected them while on the sea. As you can imagine, as I said previously, this got my “brain a goin’ ...” It got my attention.

In beginning my journey in trying to settle this perplexity within me, I started out with the understanding that the Gospel of Mark was written by “John” Mark who we read of in the Book of Acts. I do not intend to go into his life story for that has no bearing on this discussion. John Mark was not one of Jesus’ disciples. Nor was he considered an Apostle. Therefore, he had very little firsthand knowledge of Jesus’ life and story. However, we do know that “John” Mark did receive most of His information for His Gospel from the Apostle Peter, whom he had traveled and worked with towards the end of Peter’s life. Having known this, I knew that it was really Peter that was relaying this account to us through the writing of Mark. It is of interest to note that Mark’s account of this situation on the Sea of Galilee does not include part of the account as seen in Matthew 14:22-33 which has the section concerning Peter’s brief stint of “walking on the water” before sinking and being rescued by Jesus. That piqued my interest as well. Why wouldn’t Peter include that in His retelling of the story? Instead, he chose to include the fact that, looking back on the whole account, the most important thing to him was that at that time they all failed *“... to consider not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.”* What Peter was telling us was that the disciples “didn’t get something.” But what didn’t they get?

As I continued looking into this, I decided to go back to Mark 6:7-13 and 30-31. In these verses we are taken to the time when Jesus sent the disciples out, two by two, and “...gave to them power over unclean spirits.” We see that He also gave them some “guidelines” to follow while on their journey (verses 8-11). Verses 14-29, takes us on a “side bar” to explain to us about the death of John the Baptist. We then jump to verse 30, where we read that the disciples returned all full of excitement and telling Jesus “*all they had done and what they had taught.*” Hmm... Let’s take a “selah” moment to pause and think on that for a moment... Can we begin to start seeing a possible problem brewing?

In verse 31 we see that Jesus decides to take the disciples to a place away from everything to rest and be refreshed. As we know this was Jesus’ routine after doing the works of the Kingdom. He would always go to a “desert place” or “solitary place” to spend time with the Father and be refreshed. He wanted to get them in the habit of doing the same for when they were going to be used, full time, in doing the works of the Kingdom when He was gone from them. They went into a boat to go to a “place.” However, the people saw them and went after them and met them when the boat came ashore. We see that Jesus was so moved with compassion that He began to teach and spend time with the people (verses 33, 34).

Next we get into the account of the feeding of the five thousand. We see that the day was drawing to a close. It must have been somewhere between 5:00-6:00pm for we are told that the “day was far spent.” The disciples, being “full of compassion” themselves (I say with a little sarcasm) tell Jesus to do the “sensible” thing and send the people away so that they can go and eat. However, Jesus makes the startling statement to them in verse 37, “(You) ...give them to eat.” The disciples protested. First they said they didn’t have enough money to buy food for the throng. Then Jesus had the audacity to ask for the five loaves of bread and two fish, which by the way would hardly be enough to feed the disciples themselves.

Jesus then told the people to sit down. He gathered the disciples together with Him and blessed the loaves and the fish. Could you imagine if you were one of the disciples? Just think - there you are, in front of over five thousand hungry, weary people - with five loaves and two fish and now Jesus is asking you to pray over the meal with Him. I think as Jesus was praying there may have been a few of the disciples looking over their shoulder saying to themselves, “Oh boy. What did we get ourselves into this time? We should have stayed on the road where we were happy to just preach, heal a few sick folk and cast out a few demons. That’s what we do. Not this stuff.” Then Jesus breaks the loaves and fish and gives it to the disciples to give to the people. What!!! You want us to go out among these hungry people with some pieces of bread and fish. None of us has even a whole loaf or a whole fish - just pieces. This is crazy!!!

As we know the Lord multiplied the loaves and the fish, by the hand of the disciples, and all the people were filled and there were 12 baskets full of “leftovers.” The important thing to remember as we go forward is that Jesus allowed the multiplication of the loaves and fish to be done **through the hands of the disciples**. It is not necessarily written in the text, but at this point the disciples must have been feeling pretty good about themselves. The day before they all just returned from a great time of preaching, casting out demons and healing the sick. Today they just fed over five thousand people. Wouldn’t you be thinking that, “Hey, this isn’t so bad. I am being used by Jesus mightily. I must be pretty good.”

Going back to our story, we see that it was late by the time all this had occurred. It must have been dark and well into the night by the time the last basket was filled and when the disciples finally ate. Jesus does something interesting at this point. He tells the disciples to go into a boat and that He will meet them at Bethsaida. Now from where they were to get to Bethsaida they would need to only go a short distance to the east of where they got into the boat. Jesus stays back and gets the people that were left on their way. He then goes up to be with the Father and prays.

As we continue reading we know that a “wind that was contrary” to where they were going was blowing strong. In other words they were rowing against the wind and it wasn’t working. They were rowing and rowing and rowing up until the “fourth watch” which was between 3:00- 6:00am. Jesus sees them and goes out on the water. This is where it gets a little humorous and almost comical. The text tells us that Jesus was walking and acting as if He would pass them by. Could you imagine that? Jesus was acting as if He was going to neglect them and pass right by them. The disciples begin to cry out for fear of possibly seeing a “spirit.” These “great mighty men of God” that preached, cast out demons, healed the sick and had bread and fish literally multiply in their hands, were now reduced to ones “crying out in fear.” Jesus stops and calls out to them and tells them, “*Be of good cheer: it is I (I AM); be not afraid.*” In the account in Matthew this is where Peter gets up the courage to ask Jesus that if it is truly Him, call Peter to come out and walk on the water. Jesus does just that. Jesus, I think, called Peter’s bluff. Peter now had to go or he would “lose face” with the other disciples, even though they were not doing so well at the time, either. Peter takes a step out of the boat, sees the waves and the wind and begins to sink. Jesus grabs him and they both get into the boat. Immediately, the wind ceases.

The disciples are in awe and we then read in Mark 6:52 (expressed by Peter to Mark) that the reason why they were in this “dilemma” was because they failed to “consider” and understand the teaching of the “miracle of the loaves.” A key, I believe to understanding this perplexing scripture is the fact that Peter refers to the account of the loaves and fishes, not as the “feeding of the five thousand” as we tend to refer to it as but rather he refers to it as the “*miracle of the loaves.*” The point that Jesus wanted to bring forth was not necessarily the importance of feeding the people, although that was a factor. The point was that it was a miracle that was done at and by the hands of the disciples. What happened with the loaves and fish defied the “laws of nature” (which is what a miracle truly is). The bread and the fish never ran out but continued to multiply and replenish itself right within their own hands through the power that Jesus had given them back in Mark 6:13.

The problem with the disciples was that they had limited understanding of what Jesus had given them. Yes, they went forth and preached the Gospel, cast out demons and healed the sick. That was wonderful and they felt pretty good about themselves. If you remember they came back and told Jesus about all the wonderful things “*they had done.*” They began to get a little “heady” about themselves. Then here comes another opportunity to go and bring forth the Kingdom. The disciples balk at that opportunity and tell Jesus to send the people away. What they failed to understand was that they were limiting what God wanted to do through them. He wanted them to defy the “laws of nature.” He wanted to teach them to not be satisfied with the “casting out of demons, preaching and healing the sick” but that there is much more. However, with that “more” also comes the responsibility of knowing **where** and from **Who** that “more” really comes from. They were getting prideful about what the Lord allowed them to be used in.

You see the teaching of the “miracle of the loaves” was to show the disciples that they should not be so egotistical about what they had done previously. They felt good about themselves and a little “pride” began to sink in. Their “pride” would actually become a hindrance for them in the future if not dealt with and exposed within themselves. Jesus allowed them to be a part of the “miracle of the loaves.” However, now they were feeling even better about themselves and their pride was starting to creep into their thoughts. They were missing what Jesus was trying to teach them.

Remember, Jesus told them to get into the boat and head towards Bethsaida which was east of where they were. The wind was contrary to where they were going. In their pride and arrogance they were going to get there no matter what. Today, we would even say that they had great faith and were determined to get to where Jesus told them to go. However, if we read the text we see that when Jesus finally came into the boat, they immediately were on the shore of a totally different place/ region called "Gennesaret" which is due west of where they started - in the opposite direction to where Jesus originally told them to go. Was Jesus wrong and schizophrenic in telling the disciples to go to the wrong city? No. You see from the text we can see that Jesus was using this entire scenario as a "tool" in teaching His disciples about principles of the Kingdom and also about themselves and their own heart. You see a good teacher will give an exam to their student not so much to see what the student knows, but a good teacher will give an exam to let the student see where their own progress is and where they need to "sure up" areas of lack within themselves concerning that subject. Jesus was doing that with the disciples.

Jesus, I believe sent them in the "wrong direction" contrary to the where the wind was blowing for a purpose. In themselves and in their own "greatness" they were getting nowhere. Peter was so brazen to "dare" Jesus to call him to get out of the boat and walk on water. Was this great faith or a bit of arrogance mixed in with faith? In other words they were all about to be "cut down to size." Jesus came and "acted" as if He was going to pass them by. Of course, He wasn't going to leave them out there. He went out there to teach them about;

- #1) The power that they were given to cast out demons, heal the sick, preach the Good News and perform miracles was within them to use themselves at this time to cause the wind to cease but their arrogance limited their thinking and they failed to have the correct attitude of heart;
- #2) They were being taught a lesson that their own arrogance and pride is no match for the winds that would one day "blow" against them as Christ's Apostles.
- #3) Jesus wanted to show them their own heart. They had to learn what the correct attitude of heart should be for a true disciple of Jesus in bringing forth the Kingdom of God.

After the wonderful things that they were allowed to be a part of and experience, they began to have the wrong attitude of heart. It became all about them. They began thinking that "they were all that." They got a little "heady" which, if not dealt with would have affected them in their future ministry. Peter, looking back on this account many years later in relating it to Mark and for us, today, realized that very fact - they failed to consider and understand what Jesus was trying to teach them "*for their heart was hardened.*" They were not to live off of past "great" experiences or what we would call "great moves of God" but rather they were to live everyday as a new day to experience and have an opportunity to do something new unto Him and give God glory. Anything that they were privileged to be a part of was not because they were anything "special" but rather it was only accomplished through and in the Name of Jesus. They were beginning to lose perspective of things and Jesus wanted to get them back on track.

Luke 10:19, 20 - "*Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.*"

We have all heard great messages and sermons on each of these separate accounts we have discussed in this article. The "sending out of the twelve" (Mark 6:7-13 and 30-31); the "feeding of the five thousand," although we now know the correct title of that passage of scripture should be referred to as the "miracle of the loaves" (Mark 6:35-44); and the account of Jesus "walking on the water" (Mark 6:45-52) - in and of themselves are wonderful and are full of the principles of faith and of the Kingdom. They are full of encouragement to go forth and preach, heal and set the captives free. They are full of principles of taking care of the needy, etc. However, taken in its full context within the entirety of the scriptures themselves,

Jesus is trying to teach us all what should be the correct “attitude of heart” for any disciple, even for us today, as we have the great privilege of being allowed to experience and participate in bringing forth the Kingdom of God. Jesus was teaching His disciples that there will always be new opportunities in bringing forth the Kingdom of God. The important thing is to not allow our hearts to “be hardened.” We must always be open to consider and understand what we may have missed, or be lacking in and that Jesus is trying to teach us with and in every situation.

As I started out reading Mark 6, I never thought that I would find myself in the same mindset as the disciples were in Mark 6:52. In reading that verse, it made me begin to ponder my own understanding of the scriptures. It made me go back and review the scriptures in the context in which they were written. The Lord has me in a place that when I read the scriptures I am no longer taking each account and making them a “stand alone” topic, account or event. The scriptures are divinely inspired. They were written with very distinct purposes and order. We must read them and study them in the same way. If not, we may find ourselves in the same place that the disciples were, *“For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.”*