

Gospel of Mark – Week 4

And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

More Miracle Stories

I. JESUS CONQUERS EVEN DEATH

After healing the Gerasene demoniac by performing an exorcism, Jesus returns by boat to the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, where he is met by a large crowd, and immediately performs two more miracles:

- the raising of a girl from the dead, and
- the cure of the hemorrhaging woman.

In this episode, one miracle story is interrupted by another. Doubtless this kind of event happened more than once in Jesus' busy ministry of healing.

For Mark, however, the unit is important as a lesson about faith in the power of Jesus.

Read: Mark 5:21-34

[21] And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him; and he was beside the sea.

[22] Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and seeing him, he fell at his feet,

[23] and besought him, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live."

[24] And he went with him. And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him.

[25] And there was a woman who had had a flow of blood for twelve years,

[26] and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse.

[27] She had heard the reports about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment.

[28] For she said, "If I touch even his garments, I shall be made well."

[29] And immediately the hemorrhage ceased; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.

[30] And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone forth from him, immediately turned about in the crowd, and said, "Who touched my garments?"

[31] And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, 'Who touched me?'"

[32] And he looked around to see who had done it.

[33] But the woman, knowing what had been done to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him, and told him the whole truth.

[34] And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

A. A Father's Plea

Jesus is surrounded by milling crowds. A synagogue official by the name of Jairus makes his way to the front of the crowd and falls at Jesus feet with a poignant appeal: **"My little daughter is at the point of death." Come and lay your hands on her.**"

B. Laying on of Hands

Jairus' request that Jesus "lay hands" on his dying daughter reflects the Jewish understanding of the importance of the human body to mediate God's grace and power.

- Healings in scripture often occur not by word only but by physical touch.

Jesus agrees to go with Jairus, and sets out for his house, followed by a large crowd. At this point the story is interrupted by another distressing predicament, this time of a woman afflicted with hemorrhages.

C. The Woman with the Hemorrhage

Suddenly Jesus is no longer following Jairus. Looking back, Jairus sees a disturbance around Jesus, who has stopped and turned around.

A woman who has been hemorrhaging for 12 years has touched Jesus garment and senses that she has been healed instantly.

- She had faith, but she also knew that in her state the law declared her unclean.
- As such she would ritually contaminate anyone she touched, or who touched her, including Jesus.
- She knew that this could be compromising for Jesus but why would he, or anyone, need to know, if she just touched his garments in the midst of a crowd?

D. Power Goes Forth from Jesus

But He does know! Immediately Jesus senses that power has gone out of him and knows that someone has been healed. But who? Impossible to tell in the large crowd!

Jesus does not allow the woman to escape anonymously in the crowd but cries out, ***“who touched my garments?”***

- He wants to meet her personally, and she needs to encounter Jesus, face to face.

The woman comes forward in guilt and shame and publicly confesses her action and her gratitude to Jesus.

Jesus then pronounces the word of healing, ***“Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”***

This account contains an important teaching.

- First, healing is a personal encounter with Jesus.

It is not a magical or mechanical event, though physical touch may be involved. The healed person must meet Jesus, even if the meeting takes place after the healing.

- Second, a public confession of Jesus is part of the healing process. Others may thus come to faith through this woman's witness.
- Finally, even though the physical events of her healing have taken place already, Jesus' *word* of healing completes the action.

He further personalizes it, and teaches that her touch would've been meaningless without faith: ***“Daughter, your faith has made you well.”***

E. Your Faith Has Saved You

The Greek verb *sōzō* used here in vs. 23, 28, and 34, means both “save” and “heal.” The woman's faith has opened her to receive not only physical healing but also the ultimate salvation of body and soul that it prefigures.

F. Reflection and Application

What is the greatest act of faith that has ever been asked of you?

How can this woman serve as an example for us? Am I in need of the courage to act on my faith?

The afflicted woman in this episode is a model for approaching Jesus.

- While crowds of people were jostling him as he walked alone, she *touch*ed him.
- Her faith had brought her into living contact with Jesus, and as a result she experienced a dramatic healing.

The difference between the crowds and the woman prompts the question: "How often do we merely bump up against Jesus for instance, when we receive him in the Eucharist?"

Do we consciously jostle against him amid all the other preoccupations of the day, or do we come to him determined to *touch* him personally, with a lively awareness of the grace and the power that can flow forth from him into our lives?

II. TRIUMPH OVER DEATH

Read: Mark 5:35-43

[35] While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?"

[36] But ignoring what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe."

[37] And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James.

[38] When they came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, he saw a tumult, and people weeping and wailing

loudly.

[39] And when he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a tumult and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping."

[40] And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was.

[41] Taking her by the hand he said to her, "Tal'itha cu'mi"; which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise."

[42] And immediately the girl got up and walked (she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement.

[43] And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

A. Jairus' Faith

At this point the narrative swings back to Jairus. For Jairus, the interruption has been doubly critical.

- He has witnessed Jesus' power to heal, but the delay has cost the life of his daughter.

Those who bring news of the girl's death suggest that Jesus come no father. **"Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?"**

- But Jesus wants to be "troubled." And those who trouble him are the ones who will experience his healing power.

Thus, Jesus ignores their suggestions and continues with Jairus, promising nothing, but challenging him to believe: **"Do not fear, only believe."**

B. Jairus' Daughter

Twelve years of bleeding had stopped – but so had twelve years of life! Even now, in the face of death, could Jairus' continue to believe? Could he afford not to?

- After all, he had asked Jesus that his daughter **live!**
- Jesus is calling Jairus to a deeper faith than he had had before.
- Before his daughter was merely sick. But now he is asked to believe that Jesus can even conquer death!

To Jesus the girl is only asleep, while the evidence and witnesses say she is dead.

"Why do you make a tumult and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping."

[40] And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside.

“Sleep” here is intended by Mark, and perhaps by Jesus, as faith’s way of understanding death in the light of the promised resurrection.

C. Jesus Enters Jairus’ House

Jesus brings with him only the inner circle of the disciples, the three (Peter, James, and John) who will accompany him at other key events: at the Transfiguration (9:2); on the Mount of Olives (13:3), and at the agony in Gethsemane (14:33).

- Their presence there is a signal that what is about to happen is another key moment in Jesus’ mission giving a glimpse of a divine identity.

All the scoffers and mourners, and others, with the exception of the child’s parents, are put out from the house. Why?

- Because unbelief creates a climate that hinders Jesus’ mighty works (see Mark 6:5-6).

D. Jesus Restores Life to the Little Girl

Taking the child by the hand, as he had done for Peter's mother-in-law (1:31), Jesus speaks with authority:

Little girl I say to you arise! The verb for arise is the same word used for Jesus' resurrection and often appears in his healings as a sign that they foreshadow his ultimate victory over sickness, death, and the effects of sin.

The girl arose immediately. In reaction to this breathtaking demonstration of power, the greatest miracle that Jesus had performed so far, the witnesses are utterly astounded.

- They recognize that the overcoming of death itself is something only God can do, a sign of the new creation promised in scripture.

“Talitha cumi” is an Aramaic expression. Mark retains Jesus original saying.

The story ends with a rather touching action of Jesus, who tells them (probably the parents) to give the little girl something to eat.

Jesus Meets Rejection – Mark Chap 6

After the amazing double-miracle in the seashore town where Jesus confronts and overcomes the powers of death, Jesus travels to Nazareth, the village in which he grew up, and is rejected by those who refuse to believe – those who think they know him.

I. UNBELIEF AT NAZARETH

Read: Mark 6:1-6

[1] He went away from there and came to his own country; and his disciples followed him.

[2] And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue;

and many who heard him were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get all this? What is the wisdom given to him? What mighty works are wrought by his hands!

[3] Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.

[4] And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house."

[5] And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands upon a few sick people and healed them.

[6] And he marveled because of their unbelief.

And he went about among the villages teaching.

A. Is this not the Carpenter?

The people of Nazareth have heard reports of what Jesus has been doing (1:45); (3:8), and have probably witnessed it themselves. But what is the source of his power?"

These are legitimate questions but they are asked in the wrong spirit. The people of Nazareth cannot reconcile that the Jesus who is now with them - teaching with authority, healing, and casting out unclean spirits, is the same Jesus they have known since he was a child.

B. The Brothers and Sisters of Jesus

The "brothers and sisters" mentioned here can mean, as in many primitive cultures today, members of the extended family and are not necessarily siblings of the first degree (see Gen 24:48 and 29:12).

- According to the Catechism, these are Jesus' cousins or more distant relatives (CCC 500).

CCC 500: The Church has always understood these passages as not referring to other children of the Virgin Mary. In fact James and Joseph, "brothers of Jesus", are the sons of another Mary, a disciple of Christ, whom St. Matthew significantly calls "the other Mary". They are close relations of Jesus, according to an Old Testament expression.¹⁵⁹

“Brother” in Mark 6:17-18 means “stepbrother.”

- Hence this text offers no linguistic evidence **against** the faith of many Christians in the perpetual virginity of Mary.

C. Not without Honour

Jesus adapts a common proverb to explain his rejection: "**A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country . . .**" Like the Old Testament prophets before him, Jesus is persecuted and rejected for preaching the word of the Lord.

He is held without honor in circles of increasing intimacy: among his townspeople, his relatives, and even his household.

D. Reflection

Have I had to endure any misunderstanding or rejection because of my Christian beliefs among family and friends? Has my following Christ meant honor or dishonor for me?

E. A Lack of Faith

So acute is the unbelief of the people of Nazareth that Jesus is unable to perform any mighty deeds there, apart from curing a few sick people. This was not the response he was expecting from the people of Nazareth.

And he marveled because of their unbelief.

Jesus "***marveled.***" This single word, the only place Mark uses it of him, tells us much about Jesus humanness. He can be surprised! Though He was Son and God, his reaction was as human as ours when confronted by the unexpected.

Faith involves our relationship with God, the way we speak to him and listen to him.

When he heard the promises of God, Abraham “believed the Lord and he (God) reckoned it to him as righteousness” (Gen 15:6).

- Because Abraham put his faith in the word of God, he experienced God’s work.

In the same way, when Jesus speaks to us in scripture or in our prayer and we believe him, we too will know his presence and work in our lives.

II. THE MISSION OF THE TWELVE

Jesus continues to carry out his mission and begins to involve the disciples in it. The initial phase of the training of the twelve is now complete, and they are ready to participate actively in the mission of Jesus, to become fishers of men (1:17)

Read: Mark 6:7-13

[7] And he called to him the twelve, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits.

[8] He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts;

[9] but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics.

[10] And he said to them, "Where you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place.

[11] And if any place will not receive you and they refuse to hear you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet for a testimony against them."

[12] So they went out and preached that men should repent.

[13] And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them.

A. Sent Out in Pairs

The disciples were not to go alone but two by two, as little units of Christian community, since their mission was to gather God's people into a new community centered on Jesus.

The twelve apostles are to carry on the mission of Jesus, performing works similar to those in Jesus own ministry: preaching, teaching repentance, expelling demons, and the anointing and healing of the sick, all in Jesus' name and by his authority.

III. THE DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Read: Mark 6:14-29

[14] King Herod heard of it; for Jesus' name had become known. Some said, "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; that is why these powers are at work in him."

[15] But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old."

[16] But when Herod heard of it he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised."

[17] For Herod had sent and seized John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; because he had married her.

[18] For John said to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."

[19] And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not,

[20] for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and kept him safe. When he heard him, he was much perplexed; and yet he heard him gladly.

[21] But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and the leading men of Galilee.

[22] For when Hero'di-as' daughter came in and danced, she

pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will grant it."

[23] And he vowed to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom."

[24] And she went out, and said to her mother, "What shall I ask?" And she said, "The head of John the baptizer."

[25] And she came in immediately with haste to the king, and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter."

[26] And the king was exceedingly sorry; but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word to her.

[27] And immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard and gave orders to bring his head. He went and beheaded him in the prison,

[28] and brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother.

[29] When his disciples heard of it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.

A. Overview

This section is a “flashback” on past events. Mark recounts this episode to dispel rumors that John the Baptist and Jesus are the same person. John’s execution foreshadows the death of Jesus and the martyrdom of all the believers in the early church (CCC 253).

B. King Herod

This King Herod is Herod Antipas – a son of Herod the Great. After the death of Herod the Great around 4 BC, the Roman Emperor Augustus divided the kingdom in Palestine among three of Herod’s sons. Herod Antipas was the son who received the title “tetrarch” and governed the region of Galilee and Perea until AD 39.

C. Confusion about Jesus

Herod heard about the apostles' mission because Jesus' name had become widespread. But many rumors were circulating about Jesus resulting in widespread confusion.

Herod thinks that Jesus is John the Baptist, whom he beheaded, has now been raised from the dead; others that he is Elijah, or one of the prophets.

Mark then gives us a flashback of how John met his death.

D. Your Brother's Wife

King Herod had divorced his first wife to marry his brother's wife **Herodias**, and John publicly denounced them for this unlawful union. The Law of Moses prohibited a man from marrying his (living) brother's wife (see Lev18:16), calling it incest (Lev 20:21), or adultery.

Herodias wanted to kill John but Herod imprisoned him, partly to keep him safe from Herodias and partly because he thought John was a truly holy man and he liked to listen to him.

Finally Herodias gets the opportunity to kill John.

Herodias' daughter, Salome, performed a dance - probably a seductive display that would have been highly unusual for a royal princess. Hugely delighted by the dance, Herod makes a grandiose promise to Salome: "**Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will grant it.**"

Salome consults her evil mother, Herodias, who asks for the head of John the Baptist. Herod, not wishing to break his word to Salome, and to lose face in the presence of his VIP guests, has John beheaded and gives Herodias his head on a platter.

IV. FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND

Read: Mark 6:30-32

[30] The apostles returned to Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught.

[31] And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.

[32] And they went away in the boat to a lonely place by themselves.

A. Rest and Refreshment

The apostles' return to Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught.

Jesus recognizes that after their period of intense apostolic laborers, the Twelve need to be refreshed once again in his presence and in their fellowship with one another.

A. Reflection and application

This brief passage illustrates the rhythm of Christian ministry, which ought to alternate between periods of intense labor and periods of rest - simply being with Jesus.

- Christian ministry is rooted in prayer, since apart from him we can do nothing (John 15:1-8).

B. The compassion of Jesus

Read: Mark 6:33-34

[32] And they went away in the boat to a lonely place by themselves.

[33] Now many saw them going, and knew them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns, and got there ahead of them.

[34] As he went ashore he saw a great throng, and he had

compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

A vast crowd gathers unexpectedly in the wilderness to be with Jesus and the disciples, depriving them of their long sought after peace and quiet.

One can only sympathize with the disciples, as well as be impressed by Jesus' willingness to give up his rest and peace for the sake of the people.

- Jesus had compassion on them **because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.**

Mark tells us that it was Jesus' teaching that attracted the crowd, his descriptions of the kingdom of God that filled their hearts with hope and expectation.

- He teaches them first and will later feed them!

C. Sheep without a Shepherd

Jesus recognizes that the people are **like sheep without a shepherd**, a phrase often used in the OT to describe the condition of God's people in the absence of sound leadership.

As shepherdless sheep they are likely to scatter, get lost, and quickly become vulnerable to predatory beasts.

- When religious leadership fails, God's people are likely to stray away from fidelity to him and become prey to their enemies.
- That is why St. Paul says that we must pray always for our religious and civil leaders!

V. BREAD IN THE WILDERNESS

The feeding of the five thousand (about twenty thousand if women and children are included) is one of the most memorable events in Jesus' public ministry. It is the only miracle described in all four Gospels (Mt 14:14-21; Luke 9:11-17; John 6:5-13).

The miracle of the loaves and fish looks both to the past and to the future. First, it recalls miraculous feedings from the Old Testament, like the heavenly manna God provided for Israel in the wilderness (Ex 16).

It also anticipates the later institution of the Eucharist where the same string of verbs (**taking . . . blessed . . . broke . . . gave**) is found together, something that occurs only here and at the Last Supper (14:22; CCC 1335).

Read: Mark 6:35-44

[35] And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a lonely place, and the hour is now late;

[36] send them away, to go into the country and villages round about and buy themselves something to eat."

[37] But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." And they said to him, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?"

[38] And he said to them, "How many loaves have you? Go and see." And when they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish."

[39] Then he commanded them all to sit down by companies upon the green grass.

[40] So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties.

[41] And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all.

[42] And they all ate and were satisfied.

[43] And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish.

[44] And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men.

D. The Miracle of the Loaves

As the evening came, the disciples asked Jesus to send the people away for food. It was probably near sunset – the time for the evening meal.

It's a reasonable request, but it's interesting that the people themselves did not make the request; they seemed content just to listen to Jesus.

But Jesus is not willing to send away those who come to him with spiritual and physical needs. **He says to them in reply, "Give them some food yourselves."**

- Jesus wants his disciples to take an active part in his ministry.

The disciples are shocked! Where are they going to get food to feed so many people? Jesus' demand seems impossible.

They would have to buy two hundred denarii worth of bread! A single "denarius" is equivalent to a laborer's daily wage. Over half a year's wages would be required to purchase food for the multitude.

- Jesus is challenging their faith by calling on them to handle a situation clearly beyond their own resources!

Jesus does not answer directly, but instructs them to bring to him the little they have, which turns out to be five loaves and two fish.

It is significant that he insists on beginning with what they have to offer. Jesus does not want to create bread out of the stones or out of thin air but to take and miraculously and multiply what his

disciples are able to give out of what they have - a principle that will bear on all their future apostolic labor.

- Start with the little you have and God will multiply it!

E. And they all Ate and were Satisfied

The miracle itself happens in a quiet, unobtrusive way, as if the extraordinary increase of the loaves and fish escapes the notice of some of the people. Unlike most of Jesus miracles, this one is not followed by a exclamation of amazement and wonder.

What is most important is that ***all ate and were satisfied***. Just as in the miracle of the manna in the desert, there's more than enough to satisfy the hunger of all.

F. Priests of the New Covenant

Note that Jesus does not give the multiplied bread directly to the crowd but distributes it to them by the hands of his apostles.

This foreshadows their role as New Covenant priests, when they give to God's people the heavenly bread which Jesus provides in the Eucharist (CCC 1564).

G. Reflection and Application

The early Church recognized in the miracle of the loaves a symbolic anticipation of the Eucharist, when Jesus would share both word and food with his people.

In fact, the structure of the Eucharistic liturgy follows the same pattern seen in this miracle.

- First, in the Liturgy of the Word, Jesus nourishes us with his teaching through Scripture readings and the homily that breaks open their meaning "***and he began to teach them many things***" (Mark 6:34).

- Then in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, he nourishes us with the Bread of Life, his own body and blood given for us (*The Gospel of Mark* – Mary Healy; p. 129).

As Vatican Council II teaches (*Dei Verbum* 21):

21. The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord, since, especially in the sacred liturgy, she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful the bread of life from the table both of God's word and of Christ's body.

VI. JESUS WALKS ON THE SEA

Mark's Gospel continues to present to us evidence that shows who Jesus really is. We saw Jesus' power in multiplying the loaves and fish. Even so, his disciples "did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened" (Mark 6:52). Now we witness Jesus command over the powers of nature as he walks on water and stills the raging wind.

Read: Mark 6:45-52

[45] Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd.

[46] And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray.

[47] And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land.

[48] And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them,

[49] but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out;

[50] for they all saw him, and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; have no fear."

**[51] And he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded,
[52] for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.**

A. Jesus Dismisses the Crowd

After the miracle, Jesus has the disciples precede him towards Bethsaida, a fishing village at the north end of the lake. Now that the crowd has been nourished in spirit and body, Jesus can dismiss them. But Jesus remains behind to pray.

B. Walking on Water

In Jesus' absence, the disciples are once again in distress in the boat. They are laboring against the heavy wind and have made little headway.

Jesus looks out across the lake, sees the boat being tossed about and battling a headwind. It is the fourth watch of the night, i.e., between 3:00 AM and 6:00 AM.

(The evening hours between 6:00 PM and 6:00 AM were divided into four "watches").

Jesus comes toward them **walking on the sea**. This action can be fully understood only in the light of the Old Testament, where God's power to tread the waves is a sign of his sovereignty over all creation.

C. "It is I: Have no Fear"

On seeing the figure of Jesus coming towards them on the water in the dead of night, they are terrified. They think he is a ghost, and cry out in panic.

Jesus immediately calms their fears with a threefold reassurance: **Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid.**

The key to this statement is the phrase **“it is I,”** which can also be translated **“I AM,”** the divine name revealed to Moses at the burning bush (Ex 3:14), and is a veiled reference to the divinity of Jesus.

D. They did not Understand

For they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

For Mark, then, this event is a manifestation of Jesus character as Son of God. Not so for the disciples, who are still resisting the revelation of Jesus' identity – they refuse to accept what God is doing through Jesus.

How can we understand the curious connection Mark makes with the loaves?

If they had understood the miracle of the loaves, they would have had no trouble understanding this one, for the two are of one piece: he who feeds the people in the wilderness is the same Lord who walks on the waves of the sea and says, **“it is I.”**

VII. TOUCHING THE TASSEL OF HIS CLOAK

[53] And when they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennes'aret, and moored to the shore.

[54] And when they got out of the boat, immediately the people recognized him,

[55] and ran about the whole neighborhood and began to bring sick people on their pallets to any place where they heard he was.

[56] And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or country, they laid the sick in the market places, and besought him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment; and as many as touched it were made well.

E. Preparation for the Sacraments

If on landing at Gennesaret, Jesus is again besieged by the crowds. He brings God's healing, and people seek to touch even ***the fringe of his garment (tassels on his cloak)***.

Moses instructed the Israelites to wear tassels on their clothing as visible reminders to keep God's commandments. Jesus often used tangible things such as spittle, clay, clothing, and water as channels of his healing power.

He thus prepares the way for the seven sacraments of the New Covenant, which heal the body and soul as visible instruments of grace (CCC 1504).

F. Reflection and Application

Because Jesus is alive and risen from the dead, the mighty works he did on earth are accessible even now to those who draw near to him in faith.

And so in the sacraments Christ continues to touch us in order to heal us. Jesus is still the great Physician of our souls and bodies. In the power of the Holy Spirit he continues his work of healing and salvation through the Church, especially in the two sacraments of healing: Penance and the Anointing of the Sick (CCC 1421).

Preparation for Week 5

- Read Chapter 7 of the ICSB: *The Gospel of Mark*.
- Review Study Questions for Chapter 7 in the ICSB, p 54.
- Read pages 134-148 of *The Gospel of Mark* by Mary Healy.

