

Step off the Dock

Mark 8:13-29

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All right you boat people, what's the difference (connection) between building a boat to be on and being in love with the ocean?

There are a lot of reasons to build and have a boat but if your not in love with the ocean – It seems to me that at some point the reason of having a boat just comes to an end of the dock in a “what is this all for” sort of situation.

Which reminds me - Three old men were at the doctor for a memory test. The doctor said to the first old man, "What is one plus one?" "Two hundred seventy-four," he replied. The doctor said to the second man, "It's your turn. What is one plus one?" "Tuesday," replied the second man. The doctor said to the third man, "Okay, your turn. What's one plus one?" "Two," said the third man. "That's great!" said the doctor. "How did you get that?" "Simple," said the third man. "I subtracted 274 from Tuesday."

I realize I am speaking in metaphors. So let me be clear - Today I really want to share about the Kingdom of God and what the church really is...honestly, we could spend weeks exploring the two so for today we will use broad strokes, add some detail and trust the Holy Spirit to fill in its fullness. There is a connection so bear with me...

Let's start with a couple broad strokes. The Kingdom of God as it is spoken of in the Bible means God's rule in the hearts and lives of those who believe in and follow Jesus. The Church is the body made up of the people who have given their hearts and lives to God's Kingdom...God's rule (Ephesians 2:11-22).

As I understand it, Jesus taught more about The Kingdom of God, God's rule in people's hearts and lives, than anything else. From the very beginning of his ministry in Mark 1:14-15 we read, “After John was arrested, Jesus went to Galilee preaching the Message of God: "Time's up! God's kingdom is here. Change your life and believe the Message!”

Now returning to the metaphor I will substitute in the church and Jesus: There are a lot of reasons to be part of the church and build it up ...but if it is not first - because we love Jesus, there will be a time when we will say...“I don't understand, what is this all for”? Where is this going?

If I may...as a boat is made to move on the water not stay tied to the dock, the Church is made for mission, to move out, not to exist inside, for itself. The church moves into its mission first and only because its members have fallen in love with Jesus and have fallen in love with his mission...they see themselves as under God's rule and are part of God's

rule in the world. The passion of the church is loving Jesus. His mission emerges out of loving him and living for him.

Being a Christian, a follower of Jesus does not automatically mean we understand the big picture of the Church. We can read the first half of the Gospel of Mark to discover just how much the disciples struggled to understand who Jesus really was and what his ministry was about. We read about how they failed to understand Jesus work in the feedings of the 5000 and the 4000, they were terrified when Jesus calmed the storm saying “who is this that even the wind and waves obey him” (4:41). They cried out terrified when he walked on water thinking he was a ghost (6:45-52). They were full of wonder when he healed, astounded when he showed total control over demons, and confused when he spoke in parables (4:1-13). These were the 12 Jesus chose to be his constant companions, who lived in a special relationship with Jesus, were instructed by him, and were given authority to heal, cast out demons as they shared in his ministry (6:6-12). These were the insiders of all the insiders. They loved and followed Jesus with complete devotion, yet they didn’t understand who Jesus really was and what his ministry was all about. As a result, Jesus accused them of being dull (7:18), of not having faith (4:40), of not being able to see or hear, and having hardened hearts (8:17-19).

We first love Jesus with all our heart, mind strength and soul – then his mission to love our neighbor.

**Let’s pick up a story in Mark verse 13 of chapter 8 – Jesus had just fed the 4000 and, “He then left them [the 4000], got back in the boat, and headed for the other side. But the disciples forgot to pack a lunch. Except for a single loaf of bread, there wasn't a crumb in the boat. Jesus warned, "Be very careful. Keep a sharp eye out for the contaminating yeast of Pharisees and the followers of Herod." [The yeast was unbelief]. Meanwhile, the disciples were finding fault with each other because they had forgotten to bring bread. Jesus overheard and said, "Why are you fussing because you forgot bread? Don't you see the point of all this? Don't you get it at all? Remember the five loaves I broke for the five thousand? How many baskets of leftovers did you pick up?"**

**They said, "Twelve." "And the seven loaves for the four thousand—how many bags full of leftovers did you get?" "Seven." He said, "Do you still not get it?"**

Jesus wanted them to understand that he was the one through whom God was at work for them and in them, the one whom they could place their total trust...the one whom they could love with all their hearts, souls, minds, and all their strength...He was Emanuel, God

with them. They, not unlike us, were caught up with who brought the bread...building boats and not trusting in Jesus

...so the Son of God arranged an example to teach them further...

**They arrived at Bethsaida. Some people brought a sightless man and begged Jesus to give him a healing touch. Taking him by the hand, he led him out of the village. He put spit in the man's eyes, laid hands on him, and asked, "Do you see anything?"**

**He looked up. "I see men. They look like walking trees." So Jesus laid hands on his eyes again. The man looked hard and realized that he had recovered perfect sight, saw everything in bright, twenty-twenty focus. Jesus sent him straight home, telling him, "Don't enter the village."**

**Jesus and his disciples headed out for the villages around Caesarea Philippi. As they walked, he asked, "Who do the people say I am?" "Some say 'John the Baptizer,'" they said. "Others say 'Elijah.' Still others say 'one of the prophets.'" He then asked, "And you—what are you saying about me? Who am I?" Peter gave the answer: "You are the Christ, the Messiah."**

The story about healing a blind man Jesus shows that even though they have been touched once with the faith to believe and the sight it brings they were still near sighted and in danger of unbelief. As Jesus touched the blind man a second time he showed the disciples that they needed another touch so they would see clearly who Jesus is and what his ministry is all about. Even upon confessing Christ as the Messiah, they required more sight. They would receive that opening of their eyes but not until after the resurrection at Pentecost when Jesus gave them the Holy Spirit who would lead them into all truth.

In the same way, Jesus holds out hope for us today...as we so often fail to understand what Jesus is doing in and around us even though we understand and confess he is our savior. Jesus reminds us there is hope of understanding, hope of knowing how unsearchable his love really is, hope of merging into God's rule, God's kingdom, as we live each day.

Today, the church today is described as a consumer church. Our American and Canadian cultures have indoctrinated us to a world view as consumers. It is a powerful and pervasive message. It teaches us through constant commercials and consumerism to trust in goods to bring contentment and security...so we add something new to the boat. As result we arrive at church and live our faith journeys with the same attitude – constantly on the look for what am I going to get out of this. How can I use this to calm the storms in my life, provide safety and security, keep the demons at bay, sooth my guilt, bind my wounds, quiet my fears. We quietly set aside loving Jesus with all our heart, mind, soul

and strength...and the demand of being a disciple – picking up our cross and following him every...we save our love for Jesus for Sunday mornings...we exchange the ocean for the dock.

**Jesus calls us to step off the dock and completely into love for and trust in him as the one through whom God is at work in, around and through us...the one who brings the whole world together.** We are invited to consider our own faith Journeys in Jesus' haunting questions **"Why are you fussing because you forgot bread? Don't you see the point of all this? Don't you get it at all?"**

Let me bring us back to where we started,  
The difference between loving the sea and building a boat describes the difference between 10% and the other 90% of churches today. About 90% of churches see their mission as one of building a boat. They get people together, make a plan, gather resources, give or receive orders...and build a boat...understanding that to have programs and activities all based in Jesus makes them a church that should have life and grow.

It is only about 10% of the churches understand their task as one of instilling a love for the sea within people. In other words, one out of ten churches understand that their first and most important task is to teach people to love Jesus...to make disciples, followers of Jesus. Out of that love for Jesus we come to love his mission.

As we look at CrossRoads and I invite you to consider your own faith Journey and Jesus' haunting questions **"Why are you fussing because you forgot bread? Don't you see the point of all this? Don't you get it at all?"**

If I can be so bold – when we come to this place...many things in life will fall into place...especially difficult things. A heart whose Lord is Jesus, and in one whose life is in line with his rule and kingdom will be able to accept difficulty...weather it be physical, a struggling relationship, the loss of a job, a house, a hope...our natural reaction is to turn to our own wisdom and strength...make sure we have the bread, the stuff to build the boat...and Jesus would remind us...don't you get it yet?

Our most important task is to fall in love with Jesus. Then to love others and live Jesus' mission because we love him. He is the one through whom God is at work for his rule, his kingdom (not ours) in and through us. He is the one whom we can place total trust...the one whom we can love with all our hearts, souls, minds, and all our strength...He was and is Emanuel, God with us.

'Our Father in heaven, may your name always be kept holy.

May your kingdom come and what you want be done, here on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us the food we need for each day.

Forgive us for our sins, just as we have forgiven those who sinned against us.

And do not cause us to be tempted, but save us from the Evil One.'

[The kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours forever. Amen.]<sup>[a]</sup>