

" The Crowds!"  
(2012 Lenten Series #2)

1.03 /04/12 Mark 8:3-38 (page 53) RIGHT FROM THE VERY BEGINNING OF HIS PUBLIC  
MINISTRY, JESUS CREATED A SENSATION!

- a. ***The first chapter of Mark tells us, "that "The whole city" gathered at his front door! "***
    - i. *They began bringing to him all who were ill and those who were demon-possessed... And he healed many who were ill with various diseases and cast out many demons."*
    - ii. Once Jesus healed a leper inside the city limits who then went and spread the news all over so that Jesus could no longer publicly enter any city.
      - (1) Do you recall the passage where 4 friends brought a paralyzed man on a home-made stretcher to the house where Jesus was teaching, but it was so crowded they could not even get to the front door. So they became creative, they went up the outside steps to the roof, took up some of the loose-lying boards and they made a stretcher that could be let down with ropes right in front of Jesus (Mark 2.1+).
      - (2) Whenever he was at home, the news got out so that he could not eat a meal in private or rest. (+or Luke 5:19f)
    - iii. Jesus also loved to be where the people are when he is in the city phase of his ministry.
      - (1) We see him at weddings, funerals, dinner parties, Jewish festivals.
  
  - b. ***Jesus had to move out of the city, and he "stayed out in unpopulated areas."***
    - i. The unstable crowd of people were forced seek him out in the unpoliced landscapes, the untrodden, unsettled countryside or hostile wilderness.
      - a. They chased him around the lake to a hillside.
      - b. He could not escape in a boat; they were there on the other side along the shoreline to greet him.
      - c. His quiet time was so rare; he had to go out before dawn or in the middle of the night.
    - ii. Jim Warren on [≤www.BiblicalPeacemaking.com>](http://www.BiblicalPeacemaking.com) writes, the crowds of people *"had to leave their secure, safe familiar habitats and face uncertainty and an element of danger in order to encounter Jesus."*
    - iii. This represents a significant departure from the customary procedure of rabbis at the very beginning for Mark, and it was particularly true after Jesus was the guest preacher at his home synagogue one Sabbath and he angered the worshipers so much they ran him out of town.
    - iv. Only when he embarks on his last trip to Jerusalem does he go back into the cities. But that is at the very lowest point of his career when all the authorities, religious leaders and most of the crowd are against him.
      - (1) The disciples follow him to the big city, but they are confused and are not clear about the sacrifice he demands of them personally.
      - (2) So he finally dies all alone: the crowd, all the disciples, hanging back or fleeing to a safe distance.
2. JESUS' FEELINGS ABOUT ALL THOSE PEOPLE WHO FOLLOWED HIM WAS VERY INTENSE DURING HIS 3 YEARS CONSTANTLY IN THE PUBLIC EYE. HE COULD READ THEM AND SENSE WHAT THEY WERE THINKING.
- a. ***Issy, or "Miss Isleta," my very favorite half-breed Siamese cat was like that with me for 23 years.***

- i. She was born in the wild in my wood pile. When she was just weeks old, she got an eye infection, I had to remove her from the litter and take her to the vet. When she recovered, I took her out of the house and put her back with her family in the woodpile. But Peggy has always said more than once, that cat's one mission in life was to know what was going on inside me and to be by my side.
- b. ***We read that our Lord's immediate response was to have "...compassion on them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9.36).***
- i. And it was often a lonely place where they were.
  - ii. "Compassion" in the Greek Gospel, " is a very strong word," according to T.V. Philip, a lay church historian and former seminary professor of the Mar Thoma Church, in Bangalore, India. Dr. Philip notes that in the old Greek "*it means a movement of the heart from oneself to the other. Our heart takes upon itself the suffering of the other. It is our burden now more than the other person's. We stand in the place of the other.*"
    - (1) Dr. T.V. Philip quotes from a 4<sup>th</sup> century church father, Salvador of Marcilles, who said that "*when Jesus had compassion on the people, it means that all the individual suffering of many people is gathered in Christ and Christ bears all the suffering at the same time. The pressure of the people is Christ's passion. Christ is the sum total of all the poor in this world.*"
    - (2) Talk about being totally present to the other: Jesus was truly unique in being able to do this—for a whole large group of people as well!
- c. ***What amazes me about the mass of people all bunched up is that there is always one person who breaks through, who makes it to Jesus' side.***
- i. The woman with the bleeding sore who grabbed his garment, Bartamaeus who set up shop at the side of the Jericho highway, Zaccheus who climbed a tree to get a better view...
    - (1) Jesus senses their presence, he embraces their need, but they must make the first move,
    - (2) They each must risk separating from the crowd mentality, risk the crowd's judgment, including the wrath of the religious leaders.
    - (3) Jesus calls this, "faith."
  - ii. On his trip to Jerusalem, a limited few individuals come to his side.
    - (1) Except for the one I just mentioned, those few persons minister to Jesus' own need, become his heroes or saviors...
    - (2) such as Mary who anointed his head with oil,
    - (3) and Simon, who carried his cross.
- d. ***The closer Jesus got toward his last journey and last week, we see his attitude changing toward those who followed him everywhere.***
- i. The crowds can only be described as "an unstable mass," to borrow from a weather report, or from atomic theory.
    - (1) Isn't it reasonable to assume that so many people would finally get to him and agitate him, get on his nerves.
    - (2) They would mine, real quick!
    - (3) What can happen to an unstable mass?
      - (a) "During radioactive decay an unstable nucleus spontaneously decomposes to form a different nucleus,"
      - (b) When an unstable mass of warm air is forced to rise, its speed

- starts increasing, the air becomes saturated. It can turn into a rain storm. A stable mass of air forms a cloud that does nothing.
- ii. Both Jesus and crowd change, probably in reaction to each other. It is dynamic.
  - iii. Though he spoke with great authority and power, the main thing the people wanted to see were the miracles.
    - (1) Jesus knew the miracles, however, "gave no impulse to faith."
    - (2) At one point he scolded the crowd for demanding signs from him, and he said no signs would be given them except the sign of Jonah.
      - (a) Do you know what the sign of Jonah is? Faith, which comes from repentance.
      - (b) and that which would only come after the Resurrection.
  - iv. And Jesus also could do no mighty work anywhere near his home because of the lack of faith.
  - v. In the crowd, the Pharisees and other religious leaders were his main antagonists, all the way to the Temple in Holy Week.
    - (1) The religious authorities rejected Jesus for three reasons: they had their own separate criteria for what a prophet was; and they had their own idea about God's Law, or the Law of Moses, different from Jesus.
    - (2) But also, third, their whole religious system was corrupt.
  - vi. So was the political system represented by the Roman occupation: not just corrupt but a system of repression, domination, and entitlement.
    - (1) In the main, the masses of people who attended to Jesus were
      - (a) the disenfranchised
      - (b) those who could not pay their taxes,
      - (c) those who property had been stolen,
      - (d) the poor and homeless,
      - (e) the diseased.
    - (2) These are the ones for whom Jesus had great compassion.
    - (3) Jesus went to the cross preaching peace and justice, but it fell on deaf ears in the crowd, just as Archbishop Oscar Romero was gunned down by the police celebrating mass in the church in El Salvador in Lent, March 24, 1980.
    - (4) Romero in his book, "The Violence of Love," once said, "*I don't want to be an anti, against anybody. I simply want to be the builder of a great affirmation: the affirmation of God, who loves us and who wants to save us.*"
  - vii. But the crowds, the unstable masses, cannot think for itself. It vacillates back and forth. It is made up of people which has been marginalized and ignored. It can turn violent or angry.
    - (1) They do not want to repent, to obey, or to think deeply.
  - viii. This is particularly true when he does not give them miracles, or fails to feed them, or when they get an idea he does not want to be a political Messiah.
    - (1) The crowd has a way of swallowing you up if you are not careful.
    - (2) Peter and the disciples got swallowed up.
    - (3) The disciples started playing to the crowd.
  - ix. Jesus compared all these people to the parable of the farmer or sower in Matthew 13:1-9.
    - (1) They had roots, but their roots were not deep enough.
    - (2) When the sun came out, they wilted and fell away.

- (3) Whenever there was trouble, they did not trust him but got angry.
- (4) *Jesus told them finally, "How long am I to be with you? or how long must I suffer this generation?"*

- x. When Jesus entered Jerusalem sitting on a donkey, they gave him a great parade. By nightfall many were dancing in someone else's parade or party!
  - (1) particularly any who had witnessed his actions in the temple.
- xi. Jesus is finally totally disowned by the people. At his trial they shout for his crucifixion. It comes at his weakest, lowest moments in his ministry.
- xii. Paradoxically, they do not realize what they have witnessed, a view of God's own truth and love. They no more realize who they have been dealing with than does the woman at the well when she accepts Jesus as her Savior and Lord.
  - (1) So ironic!

3. WHAT DOES JESUS WANT FROM THE CROWD? WHY DOES HE WASTE HIS TIME WITH THEM?

- a. ***He wants people to come out of the crowd, to separate themselves as individual believers,***
  - i. "but not in such a way as to denounce and vilify the crowd," says Jim Warren.
    - (1) *"to come before God as transparent individuals, naked in our needs, responsible in our actions and choices, and passionate in our desire for freedom from the principalities and powers that rule and motivate the human..."*
  - ii. You and I *"are encourage to stand forth from the crowd ourselves and join the community of the kingdom, the family of Jesus."*
    - (1) as individuals but also as members of a loving family, knit together in Christ Jesus.
  - iii. Modern-day Hollywood has a way you can become a part of the unidentified, unnamed mass of humanity. Hollywood calls it being an "extra."
    - (1) My nephew Tim is a regular extra on TNT's show, "Leverage." He is so good at it, I cannot ever recognize him.
    - (2) This past Sunday on CBS "Sunday Morning," host Charles Osgood told us in order to be an "extra," "you have to be able to embrace humility. Be sure you are not noticed. We are not aware of just how much talent it takes just to be a body," says Osgood.
    - (3) I had never heard of the most "famous" extra. It is Jesse Hyman. He has appeared two million times as an extra on TV or in film. Some famous actors started out as extras: John Wayne, Ronald Regan, Brad Pitt, Eva Longoria.
  - iv. You may identify many layers in a crowd, suggests Warren. It is difficult to identify and separate ourselves out of those layers of the crowd that want to swallow us too.
    - (1) In fact, Jesus tells us, do not display your righteousness in public.
    - (2) And when you pray, do it in secret in the most private room of your house where no one can break in and see you, or invade your privacy.
    - (3) *"And your Father who sees you in secret will reward you in secret."*
  - v. There are no extras in God's Kingdom, no extras in the church, no unstable mass or crowd.

**And now may God's children respond by saying...**

**"Amen!"**

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