

Matthew 15:29-39

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[0 : 0 0] Morning. Matthew's Gospel. Studying Matthew's Gospel over these months has made me realise how quickly I used to read it through and how many passages I paid little attention to.

! And now when we come to study it in some more detail, you can't really get Matthew's Gospel quickly. You have to take your time and take your time to study it in some more detail. And we are starting today, after a brief introduction, we're starting in Matthew 15 and verse 29.

And this comes at a time when, last time what we saw, or the last couple of times, what we saw was Jesus dealing with a Syrophenician woman.

And in dealing with her, also known as the Canaanite woman in Matthew's Gospel, and in dealing with her, revealing to them how awful their hearts were towards Gentiles.

And at a time when Jesus was saying little or nothing, they were saying, send her away, she keeps shouting at us, we don't want her around, that kind of attitude.

[1 : 1 9] And then Jesus steps in and heals her daughter, who wasn't even present. So he heals her, even though she's some distance away in a house. But what he shows is his compassion for the Gentiles.

And that's an important introduction to the passage that we're going to go on to study this morning. If you remember what we looked at in John 10, verse 16, that Jesus had already told the disciples, I have sheep of another flock and they will listen to me.

And what we're going to see this morning is just how avid some of the sheep from this other flock were to listen to him. They wanted nothing more than to hear him and to get close to him.

He'd also, we read, if you remember, in Luke 4, verses 23 to 27, that God showed that he had previously historically favoured Gentiles over Jews.

With the widow of Zarephath and with Naaman the Syrian, he said there were lots of lepers in Israel, but actually Naaman was the only one that I healed. And there were lots of widows, but he went to a Gentile widow and sorted her out in preference to sorting out Jewish widows.

[2 : 4 1] And it's not stated in the Old Testament, although what we read last time led us to understand that the widow of Zarephath had some understanding of God's word.

She was sort of expecting the prophet of God to turn up and hoping that he would turn up. And certainly with the Canaanite woman, she had knowledge of Jesus that the Jews didn't seem to have.

She addressed him as Lord, son of David, when actually the Jews, God's people, were trying to kill him, trying to get rid of him, didn't want his messiahship.

So what Jesus has shown up to this point is the Gentiles are more in tune with things than you are, people of God. Now, when you think that right the way back in the time of Abraham, in Genesis 12 and verse 1 and in Genesis 22 verse 18, you see this statement, in you all the nations of the earth will be blessed.

It was always God's plan that all the nations of the earth should be blessed by the people of God or the sons of God, that their job was to bless the rest of the world.

[3 : 5 7] Their job was to hold the oracles of God and take the oracles of God to the rest of the world. And they had made an appallingly poor job of that. And so the passage that we're about to read shows that Jesus is about to embark on a whole area of ministry that the Jews should have been involved in for generations and hadn't been.

Now, the scripture we're going to read doesn't specifically say that, but you can infer that from what you read, that there is this whole group of Gentile ministries that happens.

And actually, it's been the Jews' job for centuries to do that. And in the notes you'll see, when I remember to send them out, that you have a similar leading that God wants all the nations of the

world to be blessed.

Psalm 22 verse 27, Psalm 86 verse 9, Isaiah 42 verse 1, and Isaiah 49 verse 6 and 55 verse 5 and 60 verse 3 and Daniel 7 verse 14.

Many more scriptures say that all the nations of the earth will worship him and all the nations of the earth will serve him. And of course, we, as we sit here today, are a long way from that.

[5 : 24] The Jews are still astray and the Gentiles are just as far astray in the main. And even large sections of the church have gone astray.

So there is a remnant of people who have a heart to serve him. But nevertheless, prophetically, it will come to pass.

If you just briefly turn with me, keep your finger in Matthew because we're going there next. But Psalm 18, just a verse from Psalm 18 that shows that in the time of David, and we've already had a taste of this from the psalm that Joe had us read this morning, Psalm 96, where there is demonstrable foresight going on that goes far further than the lifetime of David.

So in Psalm 18, and particularly verse 49, we read, Therefore, I will give thanks to you among the nations, O Lord.

And his foresight is that he will be giving thanks to God, not just as a Jew and not just as the king of Israel, but among the nations, that the nations will be involved in giving thanks to the Lord.

[6 : 44] And I hasten that day, my heart says, hasten that day. So therefore, I will give thanks to you among the nations, O Lord, and I will sing praises to your name.

It's going to be an international thing, the praising of the name of God. So coming back to Matthew, we shouldn't therefore be surprised that this next passage drives home the point that he began to make in the previous passage that we studied last week, in that last week he showed his love for Gentiles, and revealed, I have to use the word hatred, in the heart of Jews for the Gentiles.

And so he brings out this contrast where his heart is towards this desperate Gentile woman, and where their hearts are, which is, never mind that she's desperate, get her out of our hair.

We don't want her around. She keeps making a racket, completely lacking in compassion.

Completely lacking in empathy. And certainly not running over to her and saying, how can we help? She's a Gentile, get rid of her. So, then we get to this next section, starting in verse 29 through to verse 39.

[8 : 06] Departing from there, Jesus went along by the Sea of Galilee, and having gone up on the mountain, he was sitting there, and large crowds came to him, bringing with them those who were lame, crippled, blind, mute, and many others.

And they laid them down at his feet, and he healed them. So the crowd marveled as they saw the mute speaking, the crippled restored, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing, and they glorified the God of Israel.

And Jesus called his disciples to him and said, I feel compassion for the people, because they have remained with me now three days, and have nothing to eat.

And I do not want to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way. The disciples said to him, where would we get so many loaves in this desolate place to satisfy such a large crowd?

Hmm, I wonder. And Jesus said to them, how many loaves do you have? And they said, seven, and a few small fish. And he directed the people to sit down on the ground, and he took the seven loaves and the fish, and giving thanks, he broke them, and started giving them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people.

[9 : 21] And they all ate, and were satisfied. And they picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, seven large baskets full. And those who ate were 4,000 men beside women and children.

And sending away the crowds, Jesus got into the boat and came to the region of Magadan. So how do I glean from that, that this is Gentile ministry?

In Mark's gospel, if you turn to Mark chapter 7, keep your finger in Matthew 15, because there is a parallel account of this event in Mark.

See, in Mark's account, it simply says he went to Galilee. So in Mark's account, verse 31, chapter 7, verse 31, again he went out from the region of Tyre and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee within the region of Decapolis.

So why the seeming disparity? Well, simply, the Jews used to refer to Galilee as Galilee of the Gentiles. So Matthew writing to a Jewish audience when he wrote that he returned to Galilee, they would immediately compute, that means Gentiles.

[10:39] Whereas Mark was writing to a Gentile audience, and therefore he would be specific that he not only went to Galilee, but he went to the region of the Decapolis.

And the Decapolis was named the Decapolis because Deca is 10 and Polis is cities. So it was a region of 10 cities, starting with Damascus at the top, and Canatha, and Hippos, and Dion. You can read them for yourself, you don't need to read them to you. But there are 10 cities in that region that were almost entirely Gentile. That's not to say no Jews lived there, but actually Jews didn't want to live there because they were full of Gentiles.

So Jews that were living there would encounter lots of abuse and prejudice against them. So they would tend not to live in those areas.

They would tend to live in Jerusalem and wider Israel, but they would avoid the cities of the Decapolis, which makes it even more interesting. Why did Jesus choose the Decapolis as a place of ministry when he would have got a much easier ride if he'd stayed in Israel?

[11:53] Well, we know from our previous studies, particularly in chapter 12 of Matthew, that when he ministered to them in Israel, they accused him of operating under the power of Satan.

And they sought ways to kill him. And he said to them at that point, you're done. You can't be forgiven for what you've done.

And therefore, I'm moving on. And part of that moving on is to establish the church, which hasn't been established yet, but is in the process. And in the future, from the day of Pentecost onwards, there will be a church.

But the disciples who are faithful are being led to the conclusion that the area of ministry that is paramount is among the Gentiles.

And the Jews are actually falling back because they've got a little way down the road yet. They've got AD 70 coming when the temple will be destroyed. And AD, I think it's 130 or 135, when they were scattered across the whole world.

[13:04] And so you had the Jews no longer in Israel, scattered worldwide in what we know as the Diaspora. All of that is future for the Jews. But Jesus is schooling them, ready for the spreading of the gospel among the Gentiles.

So he has chosen this region. And I hope that helps clear up any, I don't know, doubts, misconceptions, misunderstandings.

And one thing that I will address briefly is there are quite a few teachers of the Bible and quite a few commentaries that suggest that the feeding of the 5,000 and the feeding of the 4,000 were actually the same event, and they just got the numbers muddled.

That's not what the word of God does. These were two very clear, separate events, as we will see, with separate purposes, and both designed to glorify and magnify the Lord.

And we'll explore more about how they were different in a moment. So what we see in this is all the signs and wonders that Jesus had previously performed for the Jews to show them he was their Messiah, he's now performing for the Gentiles to show them he is the Messiah.

[14:27] Not that they were looking for a Messiah, but the one thing you can be sure of in the Decapolis is that most of the worship that went up was to Roman gods, and Romans had loads of them.

You could pick from a big pick list and worship loads of gods who actually could do nothing. So you take your sick people to the Roman gods and you bring them away sick.

You certainly wouldn't spend three days in front of one of the Roman gods. Well, you might if you were desperate enough. But you'd come away empty-handed all the time. Most of their gods were in the form of statues.

They were inanimate objects that could do nothing, backed by satanic spirits who would do nothing because they hated the people that were worshipping the pagan gods. In fact, all pagan worship is rooted in hatred of humankind.

So they know that Jesus is around and they all turn up. And there are 4,000 men. And if you add women and children to that, like we did when we talked about the feeding of the 5,000, it was more like 15, maybe 20,000.

[15:40] This is more like 12, 13, 14, 15, 16,000 or something like that. Actual people who were sitting on the ground about to be fed. So what he's doing is he's making the same demonstration to the Gentiles as he made for the Jews.

And what we read in the previous section was, I've only come for the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But clearly that impetus has changed because he's now spending three whole days in front of more than 10,000 people demonstrating that he is divine, demonstrating that he is the long-awaited Jewish Messiah to people who are not Jews and demonstrating his superiority over all the other pagan gods they had worshipped.

So he's now taking control, in a sense, I need to say this carefully because you could misinterpret this, but in a sense he's taking control over their minds in that their minds have been schooled to expect something from pagan gods that can give them nothing.

And now he's saying, if you want a relationship with a god that will produce something, you need to worship Jesus. And he's not doing it through a book and he's not doing it through writing letters and he's not doing it through sending people.

He's turned up himself and said, bring me your sick and I will heal them. And sometimes the magnitude of this, and I'll use this just, I wasn't going to say this, but there are people in the church who claim to have healing ministries.

[17:20] Now it's not for me to say whether they have or haven't got healing ministries, but if they have, they should be going into hospitals and emptying them. Jesus banished sickness wherever he was.

He didn't heal a headache there and a bad back there, over which there might be questions because was the bad back just having a good day or did he wake up this morning and take an aspirin and the headache had gone anyway or any of those things.

There was no doubt about this. They brought cripples to him and they walked away not crippled. Undeniable medical miracles, which do still happen, but not in the tidal wave that a lot of the people who say, oh, come to us and get healed.

You don't see tidal waves of real healings anywhere at the moment. But I'm not denying that God does heal people on occasions. He certainly healed me when I first got saved.

That's another story for another day. But God does heal, but people use this to tell lies about our God. One way you can almost certainly see the healing of God is go into virgin territory and preach the gospel because he always confirms his word with signs following.

[18:41] If you go to someone where the word hasn't been and you preach the word of God, you can expect God to move in the miraculous. That's my rule of thumb, finger in the wind kind of approach to this.

If you want certainty about seeing God move in healing, go to somewhere where the gospel hasn't yet been spoken. There are still a few places and most of them are very inhospitable. So obvious differences between the events just before we move on.

You've got 5,000 in one and 4,000 in the other. There's a difference. In one, you've got five loaves and two fish. In the other, you've got seven loaves and a few fish. In one, you've got 12 basketfuls left over and these are small baskets.

When you look at the Greek, it's a word for a basket that you carry in your hand and maybe with your little packed lunch in it suitable for one person. It's a small basket. Whereas the seven basketfuls were a different kind of basket and they were the sort of basket that in Acts 9, you may recall that there's this account of Paul being lowered out of the city when he was escaping in a basket.

That's the kind of basket. It's big enough to contain a man if need be. So very, very different details. And that was when he was, sorry, it was in 2 Corinthians 11, verse 33, where you get this account of him escaping from Damascus.

[20:12] So why is the difference important? Well, I will just spend a few moments talking about the numbers. Now, I'm always very suspicious when speakers start bandying about Bible numbers because you can go on a real deceptive ride of stupidity where they grasp meanings out of nowhere and apply meanings that you can't really apply.

But there are some here that are worth noting. The 5,000 is a situation where there's huge lack of food and an opportunity to extend grace.

And the number five is the number of grace. And so it's normally used in situations where there is some lack or some sickness or some deprivation.

And so the number five is used as part of the expression of God's grace to put that right. It's not because the people deserve it, but God is gracious and merciful and puts it right.

And so with the 5,000, they'd been there all day and they were all hungry. And it was out of God's grace and mercy that he then fed them all. And so the five is used to express God's grace.

[21 : 32] And then there were 12 baskets full left over. And people who write on these matters say that 12 is the number of governmental perfection.

And it's also the number that's attributed to Israel. So he's feeding people who are hungry from Israel, which is supposed to be the people who hold the oracles of God and therefore is supposed to have a perfect governmental oversight of the world and of God's word going out to the people. There are lots of places where you can find this sort of principle, the number being attached to governmental stuff. So you had the 12 tribes, for example. You also had 24 courses of priests, so two times 12 courses of priests, the governmental part of the setup back then.

So because of his grace, he fed 5,000 men with 12 basketfuls left over for the disciples. And these disciples were destined to be the governmental authority that established the church in the future. Jude talks about the faith given to us by the apostles, doesn't he? It was the faith that was handed down by the apostles. When you come to the number four, the four is significant of completion where creation is concerned.

[22 : 59] And so the feeding of the 4,000 men of the Gentiles signifies the completion of drawing both Jews and Gentiles together eventually, as we read in the New Testament, into one new man.

There's a completion taking place. And on this occasion, the feeding was from seven loaves and seven is the number of divine completion.

And there were seven baskets full of food left over. So you've got God's people living off the bread of life and ruling in grace represents governmental perfection.

And then you've got the whole world, Gentiles and Jews, living off the bread of life and dwelling in God's grace. This represents divine completion. And at the back of all this, why does it all happen? It happens because in both cases, Jesus is said to have felt compassion for the people. I hope I'm alone in thinking that every now and again, I come across people in churches that challenge my compassion.

[24 : 01] I'm sure you don't ever suffer from that. But it's easy to be compassionate to nice people like you. But when the dirty, smelly, disreputable, ex-prisoner, you name it, when they turn up at church, suddenly I feel very middle class and I feel, and I have to make a determined effort to be compassionate and to treat that person as my equal.

That's because somewhere in here, I'm a snob. And it, and I kind of have to go, no, I'm not going to be a snob.

It's an act of will. No, because I was brought up to be a snob. But, but Jesus, how did you know? Jesus goes looking for these people.

And this is the important thing about this passage of scripture. Jesus went looking for Gentiles, looking for Canaanites, looking for people who had nothing to do with him, hadn't even given him any time, looking for people who were actually worshipping useless pagan gods.

One of the worst sins anyone can commit is to worship pagan gods. And he went looking for them. Now, what we see in verse, if we go back to Matthew 15, verse 33, the disciple said to him, where would we get so many loaves in this desolate place to satisfy such a large crowd?

[25 : 42] These are the guys who were with him when he fed the 5,000. So you have to, now, I scratch my head and think, duh! But, I'd be the same.

The fact that I've had a miracle yesterday doesn't mean I expect one tomorrow. Because it doesn't sometimes dawn on me that the same God that gave me the miracle yesterday can give me an equally baffling miracle tomorrow.

And most often, I probably don't even stop to ask. Because it's just, oh, that's not possible. Where are we going to get any bread? We're in the middle of nowhere.

This is even more desolate, this place, than the previous place. At least the previous place was, had a few villages locally. This is in the middle of nowhere. There's a lot of empty space in the Decapolis.

And he's on a mountain somewhere. And it's described in both Gospels as a desolate place. Oh, where are we going to get bread? Duh! Same place we got it last time.

[26 : 49] But there wasn't, and with me there often isn't, that, God will sort this kind of mentality. And when he does, despite the fact that I forgot to ask him, I kind of, my breath is taken, and things change, and I, that is astonishing.

And a day or two, or a week later, I'm in a similar situation, and I have no expectation that God will do the same thing again. as if the love of God is diminished because he's dealing with a different crowd or different people or a different situation.

And we need to get our heads around the idea that the love of God is never diminished. There is no one on this planet that he doesn't love enough to die for. which is a, is a, a moving and challenging thing to get my head around that when I deal with people on the streets who I do not necessarily immediately fall in love with, he's already in love with them.

And I think it's, yeah, they were a bit dense, and I too would be a bit dense in the same situation if I'm honest with myself. Note that this group hadn't just been with him a day.

The 5,000 had been there a day and he fed them. This group have hung around for three days. He said, I've got sheep in another flock and they're going to listen to me.

[28 : 22] And about 12 or 14,000 of them turn up on this day and don't just listen, but they listen nonstop for three days and go without food in order to hear him. They are streets ahead of the Jews when it comes to seeking God.

But the Jews are supposed to be the people who lead them to that. As we read on, where were we? Verse 33, weren't we? So he says, how many loaves do you have?

And they said seven and a few small fish. And he directed the people to sit down on the ground and he took the seven loaves and the fish and giving thanks, he broke them and started giving them to the disciples and the disciples gave them to the people.

It often drops out of my memory and understanding that when God's giving out bread, and remember bread is always a symbol for the word of God.

He is the living bread that came down from heaven. And he says of his word, if you eat that bread, you'll still die. But if you eat this bread, you'll never die. So his bread is the source of eternal life.

[29 : 31] And he gave it to the disciples to give to them. And this, I think, gives us a sort of, I don't know what you call it, a mandate, an instruction, an expectation, that whatever God has given to us in terms of his word, in terms of food for people, we should go and give it to them.

This is not one of those legalistic beatings that says, you know, why aren't you sharing the gospel with everybody you see and all the rest of it and get out on the street and preach and all that.

Preaching on the streets might be your ministry, it might not. And if it's not your ministry, it'll be fruitless when you do it anyway. But what it is, it's an invitation from the Lord to say, I've given you the bread of life.

You are saved, eternally saved because of what I've given you. Go and share it. And in fact, you've got so much of it, you may not realise it, but you've got so much of it that when you finish sharing it, you'll still have seven baskets full left over.

There isn't, what they had not twigged when it came to feeding this 4,000 after being present at the feeding of the 5,000 is that God's resource, Jesus' resource is not limited.

[30 : 57] And he could have produced the food and caused it to appear in the hands of the crowd. But for some reason, he got the disciples to distribute it. And I suspect in fact, I'm convinced that that was because it was supposed to give us a lesson that it's our job to share this stuff, that we get life to give away.

And when we go and give it away, that produces fruit. And there'll be so much abundance that God will pour into us so that we can give that we will always have leftovers.

In terms of getting fed, this group was probably a lot more needy than the first group because they've been without food for three days, not just one. But I think there's a reflection there for us to consider as well.

And that is that once people get hungry for Jesus, they will be like a dog with a bone. They'll stay there and stay there and stay there and stay there until something happens for them, until they get satisfied.

Now, there are hundreds of others who just go, not interested. But the one that is interested needs feeding and needs feeding probably for some considerable time.

[32 : 13] The amount of opposition they will encounter when they're away from your feeding trough will try to drag them away from their faith. So, when we get someone who's in our lives, who is on the hook, who is beginning to feed, we kind of want to, it's a bit like when we train the little puppy over there.

Oh, well done, another little nibble. Well done, bit more food, bit more food, bit more food. We keep them fed so that they don't want to look elsewhere for food.

And we keep returning them to the provision of the Lord. I think we have a fine example of that in the family at the moment where there's been a years-long feeding thing going on which is just recently born fruit.

So I think we've got two lessons from this. And I mean us, not just the people who we're feeding, but we need to get our heads around the fact that Jesus' resources are not finite.

The fact that you led someone to Christ yesterday doesn't mean you can't lead someone to Christ today. There is always more to come. 5,000, 4,000, five loaves, seven loaves, two fish, a few fish, doesn't matter to him.

[33 : 40] If there was none of that he could still produce the food. And the second, which is one that we sometimes, we kind of know it here in the head, we don't always know it in the heart, is, we read it from Hebrews, he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.

And when we're diligently seeking him, not just for ourselves, but more importantly for others, see, Jesus came for the benefit of others. so when we're seeking God for others, he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.

So we need to keep on and we need to keep on keeping on because he will reward those who diligently seek him. There's an awful lot of seeking of the Lord for selfish benefit that goes on in the church, the broad church.

But actually where God really moves is when we diligently seek him for specific things for others to bring life to others. When we lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters, that's what unlocks the action and favour of God.

Just turn with me to Psalm 91 a moment. And I think as I was reading all this and studying all this, I found this crowd had gone to a desolate spot with no distractions apart from their hunger and had sought the wisdom and knowledge of Jesus for three days.

[35 : 11] And he was the rewarder of those who diligently sought him. He fed them. And Psalm 91 says this, He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say to the Lord, my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust. For it is he who delivers you from the snare of the trapper and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his pinions, wings, and under his wings you may seek refuge.

His faithfulness is a shield and a bulwark. You will not be afraid of the terror by night or of the arrow that flies by day or of the pestilence that stalks in darkness or the destruction that lays waste at noon.

A thousand may fall at your side and ten thousand at your right hand but it shall not approach you. You will only look on with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked for you have made the Lord my refuge even the most high your dwelling place.

No evil will be for you nor will any plague come near your tent for he will give his angels charge concerning you to guard you in all your ways. They will bear you up in their hands that you do not strike your foot against a stone.

[36 : 23] You will tread upon the lion and the cobra the young lion and the serpent you will trample down because he has loved me therefore I will deliver him. I will set him securely on high because he has known my name.

He will call upon me and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble. I will rescue him and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him and let him see my salvation.

That whole psalm is a testament to what happens when you make the Lord your refuge. And it puts you in that strong place where actually what happens to you what happens to me doesn't matter.

The Lord is my refuge and my strength. You'll know from the prayer chain that I've got a bit of a medical challenge going on at the moment. I can tell you this the outcome doesn't matter.

Obviously I've got things going on in my head that suggest well this is the one I'd prefer. But it doesn't matter. because I am eternally secure in him.

[37 : 32] And because I'm eternally secure in him I can talk to people who don't know him and say you need to be secure in him like I am. The Jews have missed this vast opportunity over centuries to be the source of the living God to the peoples.

people. Let's not miss it. One of the when Jesus said he is the bread of life and then he said you need to eat my flesh and drink my blood and so on.

And of course the Roman Catholic Church has taken that and turned it into cannibalism which it was never intended to be. It was a very powerful metaphor for getting Jesus inside you. Getting Jesus. The way I would choose to put it for the purpose of this morning is taking him off this printed page and getting him in your heart. And out of the heart will then flow your mouth will speak out of that which fills your heart.

And if we're not feeding off the bread of life spiritually we will starve. We'll be uninformed. Not ready for what the world throws at us. just turn quickly to Ephesians 6.

[38 : 49] And Ephesians chapter 6 verse 10 and following is speaking to a people who are going to be persecuted and are going to be disparaged and cast out of synagogues and all sorts of things.

And he says finally be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the full armour of God that you'll be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

Putting on the armour of God I don't know if you've been to churches where they have these prayer sessions where they imagine I'm now putting on the helmet of salvation and I'm now putting on the breastplate of righteousness. It misunderstands the scripture to do that.

What this is saying is get stuck into the word and get the word on the inside of you so that you always are wearing God's armour. God's armour isn't a literal thing made of chain mail and metal. It's the heart being fortified by the word of God so you become impenetrable to the schemes of the devil. Reading on verse 12 for our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers against the powers against the world forces of this darkness against the spiritual forces of the wickedness in heavenly places therefore take up the full armour of God that should be able to resist in the evil day having done everything to stand firm stand firm therefore having girded your loins with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace in addition to all taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit which is the word of God the last few years we have been through the biggest spiritual attack you could imagine any of that but what

[40 : 57] I do know is that was not a flesh and blood battle despite the fact that they wanted to stick needles in your arm and they wanted you to do this and that and the other thing to protect the flesh again I'm not discussing the why's and wherefores of all that what I am saying especially now when we look back and we know how much of it was lies it was a spiritual thing that was sent there to notice one of the first things that was hit was churches were told you can't meet in worship forsake not the fellowship being together of the brethren the Bible says oh yeah but there's covid covid apparently is bigger than god no it's not and I think we've got some lessons to learn and I'm not trying to in any way put down people for how they handled their pathway through that whole thing because we all did the best we could but the one thing I can say with reasonable certainty you may or may not agree is that we were all caught none of us knew quite what to do because we weren't clothed in armour and and it led to so much uncertainty and some of the strongest preachers and teachers were completely baffled as to what they should do and how they should respond and some still are to this day so it's important especially in our time when we are definitely looking at the end we're looking the end in the face that when it all kicks off we need to be strong and we need to have strong convictions not based on bullish behaviour or bravado or any of those things but based on the love of

God we need to minister to one another and to others with God's love but we need to know where we stand and it only comes through as we've just read putting on the armour of God so this time there were even more leftovers dealing with the Jews they had leftovers for the disciples dealing with the Gentiles they had masses of leftovers the basket concern would stand about that high seven of them full of bits and pieces you could have fed quite a few other people with that so we must understand that God's provision is always plentiful you remember the feeding of the 5000 they were saying well even if we got 200 denarii worth of food everybody would only get a little nibble and they went away satisfied they went away the word means gorged same in this case they were fully satisfied same word used he chose to provide too much and I'm just going to finish with this and that is

Mark says or rather Matthew says he then got in a boat and went to the region of Magadan and Mark says he went to Dalmanutha sorry Dalmanutha because there aren't THs in Hebrew I've just been told I was hoping to find something really gutsy about these two words all I found was nobody knows where it was where it is one thing we can infer from it is that Dalmanutha and Magadan are

either the same place different names for the same place or one is the name of a town and the other is the name of the region most people comment and say it was about there I think the other map might be slightly clearer or simpler less crowded so down the west side or northwest side of the Sea of Galilee somewhere lots of people say

Magadan was probably Magdala but they don't provide any evidence as to why they would say that so I would take that with a pinch of salt but the point is not what the name of the place was or if there was a point it's now lost in history because there's no way to work out what the names mean or whether we're even looking at the right place the important thing is this go right to the end of the chapter Matthew 15 verse 39 he got into a boat and came to the region of Magadan and then if you go to Mark chapter 7 what you find chapter 8 verse 10 sorry yes he entered the boat with his disciples and came to the district of Dalmanuta and verse 11 the Pharisees came out and began to examine him so he'd gone from Gentile territory back to Jewish territory is the one thing we can be sure of and as soon as he set foot back in Jewish territory they pounced on him notice the Pharisees didn't follow him into

Gentile territory they waited for him to return and then pounced on him because he's with the Gentiles so we don't have to worry about him we're not interested in Gentiles so we'll find out what he did in Jewish territory next week father I thank you that once again your word always gives us somewhere to go always gives us a pathway of improvement always gives us instruction about our ministry and our hearts and I I pray Lord that you will work on our hearts that our hearts will become more and more sacrificial and more and more loving of those who don't love you father the people that love you are a delight to love but Lord teach us to love the ones who are not easy to love and to pour out the love that you would pour out on them in Jesus name amen