

MATTHEW

Chapter 15

Traditions and Commandments

Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, 2 “Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat.” 3 He answered them, “And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? 4 For God commanded, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ 5 But you say, ‘If anyone tells his father or his mother, “What you would have gained from me is given to God,” 6 he need not honor his father.’ So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God. 7 You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said:8 ““This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; 9 in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.””

15:1 *from Jerusalem* – Though Pharisees and scribes are mentioned together in 5:20 and 12:38, this sounds like an official inquiry from temple headquarters. (TLSB)

15:2 *the tradition of the elders* – After the Babylonian captivity, the Jewish rabbis began to make meticulous rules and regulations governing the daily life of the people. These were interpretations and applications of the law of Moses, handed down from generation to generation. In Jesus’ day this “tradition of the elders” was in oral form. It was not until c. A.D. 200 that it was put into writing in the Mishnah. (CSB)

Rules of conduct derived from an interpretation of OT Law. The Pharisees considered this tradition as having nearly equal authority to Scripture. In Jesus’ time, these traditions were being passed down orally. However, they were later written down in the Mishnah, where an entire chapter deals with hand washing. (TLSB)

OT dietary laws are not the principal issues at hand. Rather, it is whether Jesus’ disciples, in violating Jewish oral tradition, have caused themselves to be unclean in any important spiritual sense. First, there apparently was neither a universally accepted view of oral tradition in general nor of the Pharisaic tradition in particular. Different groups within Palestinian Judaism of the period would no doubt, have viewed one another’s particular expressions of piety with degrees of both agreement and disagreement. (CC)

One can imagine, Sadducees standing by and approving when Jesus rejects the very notion that the Pharisees’ oral tradition has any binding force. (CC)

Second and more importantly, the whole topic of actions and habits that supposedly would render a person either “clean” or “unclean” was a major issue for debate in the of Jesus’ ministry. (CC)

An entire division (out of six divisions) in the Mishnah, consisting of twelve tractates, is given over to the topic of “Cleannesses.” While these traditions do not all trace back to the time of Jesus, the proportionate amount of material helps to show how important the issue was. France, Gospel of Matthew, 576, comments: It is hard to exaggerate the significance of ritual purity for the Pharisaic ideology, which the majority of scribes supported, and which became the basis of later rabbinic orthodoxy. (CC)

What seems to have happened is that the Pharisees, in their desire to extend into all of life the holiness of the temple and the priesthood, have extrapolated the OT regulations about washings required for the priests and applied those regulations in some form to everyday life for all Jews. (CC)

There is, moreover, what seems to be a universal human tendency to say more than what God has actually said because we feel safer and more secure. (CC)

As an interesting example, compare Gen 2:17, where God prohibits eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge, with Gen 3:3, where Eve reports that prohibition but then adds to it that God supposedly also commanded them not even to touch the tree. (CC)

Practices readily become habits. Habits, in turn, develop into traditions. Traditions can all too easily become laws – laws that God never gave and that can threaten to encroach upon and undermine matters on which God has actually spoken. (CC)

wash – See Mk 7:1–4. (CSB)

Cf Ex 30:17–21; Lv 22:4–7 for laws intended for priests. (TLSB)

More of this had to do with the Temple workers that got added to all people.

15:3 *why do you break* – Jesus simply refuses to speak with His questioners about the issue they have raised. To debate the question with the Pharisees from Jerusalem would be to admit the validity of the terms on which they have raised the debate. Jesus is not willing even to do that much. (CC)

Jesus questioned how His critics dared subordinate God’s moral commandment to humanly instituted rules. (TLSB)

15:4 Jesus quoted the Fourth Commandment given at Mount Sinai and another law that mandated death for reviling a parent (Lv 20:9). On the basis of OT laws, Jesus taught that grown children had an obligation to provide for their aging parents. (TLSB)

15:5–6 Jesus faulted the Pharisees and scribes for teaching that one could avoid financial support of parents by vowing this money to God as a gift. Such a vow might not be fulfilled until much later (if at all), allowing continued use of the money. (TLSB)

15:6 *void the word of God* – Jesus accused His opponents of setting aside God’s revealed will for the sake of their human traditions. Hus: “They ... sit ill ... who teach good things and do them not. Worst are those who neither teach nor do. Worst are those who prevent the teaching of good things. And still worst of all are they who live ill, forbid the teaching of good things and teach their own things” (*The Church*, p 201). (TLSB)

7:11 *Corban*. The transliteration of a Hebrew word meaning “offering.” By using this word in a religious vow an irresponsible Jewish son could formally dedicate to God (i.e., to the temple) his earnings that otherwise would have gone for the support of his parents. The money, however, did not necessarily have to go for religious purposes. The Corban formula was simply a means of circumventing the clear responsibility of children toward their parents as prescribed in the law. The teachers of the law held that the Corban oath was binding, even when uttered rashly. The practice was one of many traditions that adhered to the letter of the law while ignoring its spirit. (*that is, a gift devoted to God*). By explaining this Hebrew word, Mark reveals that he is addressing Gentile readers, probably Romans primarily.

7:13 *Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition.* The teachers of the law appealed to Nu 30:1–2 in support of the Corban vow, but Jesus categorically rejects the practice of using one Biblical teaching to nullify another. The scribal interpretation of Nu 30:1–2 satisfied the letter of the passage but missed the meaning of the law as a whole. God never intended obedience to one command to nullify another. (CSB)

Here Jesus shows His distain for a custom that was apparently intended to help fund the temple treasury, even if this funding came at the expense of the donor’s parents. (CC)

Pope and indulgences.

Jews became ceremonially defiled during the normal circumstances of daily life, and were cleansed by pouring water over the hands. For a lengthy feast with many guests a large amount of water was required for this purpose.

Ceremonial washing was a part of everyday Jewish life. Stone jars could be cleaned if defiled, whereas clay jars were to be broken. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

15:7 hypocrites – Though Jesus harshly criticized hypocrites in the Sermon on the Mount (6:2, 5, 16; 7:5), this is the first time in Mt that He applied this term to the Pharisees and scribes. Their hypocrisy included self-deception, assuming that they were serving God by their conduct and rules when in fact they were not. (TLSB)

15:8–9 LXX translation of Is 29:13. People in Isaiah’s day imagined that they were worshiping God, even though they were, in fact, teaching human commandments. The Pharisees and scribes made the same mistake. “We unanimously believe, teach, and confess that some ceremonies or Church practices are neither commanded nor forbidden in God’s Word, but have been introduced only for the sake of fitting and good order. Such rites are not in and of themselves divine worship. They are not even a part of it” (FC Ep X 3). (TLSB)

15:9 commandments of men – That tradition has led them to the point of transgressing God’s commandments. (CC)

15:1–9 Jesus is dealing with questions of Law when He criticizes placing man-made traditions above God’s Commandments. God’s Law and Gospel dare never be subordinated to human teachings and rules. Jesus came to fulfill every aspect of the Law, that He might be our perfect Savior. • Lord Jesus Christ, keep me faithful to Your Word, which is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path (Ps 119:105). Amen. (TLSB)

What defiles a Person

10 And he called the people to him and said to them, “Hear and understand: 11 it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person.” 12 Then the disciples came and said to him, “Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?” 13 He answered, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. 14 Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.” 15 But Peter said to him, “Explain the parable to us.” 16 And he said, “Are you also still without understanding? 17 Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? 18 But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. 19 For out of the heart come evil

thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. 20 These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone.”

5:10-11 Turning from the blindness and error of the Pharisees from Jerusalem, Jesus teaches the crowds. Indirectly, in a way that Peter labels “a parable” (15:15), Jesus contrasts the Pharisees’ teaching on purity with His own. The religious leaders came to Him, likely assuming that they were clean. Jesus’ teaching reveals that what has come out their mouths is much more important than how (or what) food has gone into their mouths. (CC)

It is important to recall again that the issue raised is not God’s declaration in the OT that some foods were clean and some were unclean. The issue is the Pharisaic tradition about eating (presumably clean) foods with unwashed hands.

It would be over-reading Jesus’ words here to think that He is, at this moment, abrogating or nullifying the OT Law about clean and unclean foods (e.g., Leviticus 11). To be sure, in the post-Easter period, God would reveal to the apostles the implications of Christ’s fulfillment of the Law of Moses. The OT laws regarding food regulations, Sabbath observance, and circumcision would become, after the resurrection, matters that are strictly adiaphora. However, we have no real evidence that Jesus, during His earthly ministry, wanted His disciples to regard those parts of the Law of Moses as no longer applicable. (CC)

Jesus wanted all people, not just His opponents, to hear and understand what He said about defilement. (TLSB)

15:11 “Neither sin nor righteousness should be placed in meat, drink, clothing, and like things. Christ wished the use of such things to be left free” (Ap XXVIII 7). (TLSB)

15:12 *Pharisees were offended* – These are, after all, representatives of what is perhaps the most widely admired group of pious leaders in the land. (CC)

15:13 The Father planted Israel (Is 5:1–7). But Jesus implied that because He had not planted the Pharisees, they would be uprooted. (TLSB)

15:14 The Pharisees considered themselves spiritual guides for the common Jew. But since the guides were themselves blind to Jesus’ teachings, both they and their followers were doomed. Hus: “A subject, in obeying his prelate [leader] in that which is evil, is not excused from sin ... they both fall into the pit of error” (*The Church*, p 224). (TLSB)

15:15 Peter referred to Jesus’ statement in v 11, which is a kind of riddle. (TLSB)

15:16 *are you still without understanding* – Jesus’ reaction, addressed to all the disciples who are present, shows us that Peter and the other apostles are continuing to come up short of where their Lord expects them to be in their understanding. (CC)

The Pharisees are guilty of majoring in minors and elevating their own human tradition above the commands of God Himself. (CC)

Jesus was concerned that even His disciples did not understand the argument He was making (v 10; 13:51). (TLSB)

15:17–18 Jesus elaborated His statement in v 11, adding this important point: “What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart.” (TLSB)

15:19 *heart* – Spiritual inner being of a person (6:21). The mouth speaks what is in the heart (12:34). The heart is the moving force that leads a person to commit the other sins that Jesus mentioned. “Original sin is born in us because of the sinful seed and is a source of all other actual sins, such as wicked thoughts, words, and works” (FC Ep I 21). (TLSB)

15:20 Sins of the heart are what defile a person, not eating with ritually unclean hands (vv 2–3). (TLSB)

15:10–20 People are unholy because of sin, not from some external defilement. Sin originates in the heart. Jesus mentioned a few of these sins, and one could easily add many more. At our birth, we were already sinful. But through Holy Baptism and the Word, the Spirit has renewed our hearts and washed away all our sins (Ti 3:4–7). Although our hearts will never be completely free from sinful desire in this life, God’s Spirit continues to lead us on the path of holiness. • Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Amen. (TLSB)

The Faith of the Canaanite Woman

21 And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. **22** And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.” **23** But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, “Send her away, for she is crying out after us.” **24** He answered, “**I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**” **25** But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” **26** And he answered, “**It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.**” **27** She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.” **28** Then Jesus answered her, “**O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.**” And her daughter was healed instantly.

15:21-28 Matthew paints a stark contrast between the religious leaders and the Canaanite woman. At the beginning of ch 15, the Pharisees and Sadducees reject Jesus, and he condemns their hypocrisy of using tradition to overturn God’s Word. At the beginning of ch 16, the leaders again react negatively to Jesus’ teaching, and he condemns the leaven of their heresy. Sandwiched between these two hostile exchanges with leaders of Israel are times of mercy and miracles for those in great need. Jesus restores the demon-possessed daughter to her mother, heals many who are brought to him as he teaches, and feeds the four thousand. Faith (of a Gentile! woman!) and praise from those healed stand out all the more because they are found within the context of rejection and denigration. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 3)

Tyre, Sidon, and a Canaanite woman all signal that Jesus is in pagan lands, and these places have the connotation of everything dangerous to those of Israel. Jesus is definitely in foreign territory. In v 22, the woman’s call to Jesus as Lord and from the royal line of David borders on worship. When she names the enemy as demonic possession, she pits Jesus against Satan in a preview of the cross and resurrection. The dogs (*kunaria*, literally “little dogs,” a diminutive of *kuōn*) appear to be house dogs, not the strays that roamed the streets, especially since they are near enough to the table to feed on any leftover scraps. Still, dogs were considered lowly and even contemptible, and thus the boundary between Jew and Gentile is maintained. On the other hand, that Jesus names her as a dog is progress as the woman now sees herself in the house with Jesus! (See Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew, A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28*, revised and expanded edition [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990, 2004], 97–103.) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 3)

15:21-22 Tyre was a Gentile city in Phoenicia (modern-day Lebanon), 30 miles northwest of Capernaum. A Canaanite woman approaches Jesus with a desperate need. The Canaanites were ancient, pre-Israel inhabitants of Palestine. In the parallel passage (Mk 7:24–30) Mark tells us she was a Greek (Gentile),

born in Syrian Phoenicia. She addresses Jesus as “Lord, Son of David,” which implies she is a “God-fearer” who recognizes Jesus as the promised Messiah. She is “crying out” to Jesus (*ekrazen* is imperfect, indicating she kept on crying out), begging him to have mercy on her. Her urgent plea is for Jesus to help her daughter, who is “suffering terribly from demon-possession.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 3)

15:21 *withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon* – One of the few times that Jesus ventured beyond the borders of Galilee. (TLSB)

This Gentile territory, a coastal region northwest of Galilee that had never been part of Israel and had been dominated by Phoenicians in OT times. (CC)

15:22 ESV has “and behold.” At the start.” With “llo” Matthew draws attention to the approach and the words of the Canaanite woman. (CC)

a Canaanite woman – Descendant of the OT race that Israel was ordered to exterminate because of their idol worship (Dt 20:17). (TLSB)

kai idou denotes something noteworthy, in this case that a Gentile woman would approach Jesus with such confidence. By language this woman was Greek, by birth a Canaanite, a heathen, by allegiance a Roman subject, a Syrophenician, of Syria, as distinguished from a Phoenician of Carthage; and by faith of that harvest which was to spring up in Phoenicia, in Greece, in Carthage, and in Rome. It was through the reports that she heard of the great deeds of Christ, which had been broadcast across the borders of Israel into the surrounding lands of the heathen, that she had come to faith.

Have mercy – Typical cry for help in a desperate situation (17:15; 20:30). (TLSB)

Son of David – This Gentile woman addressed Jesus in the same way as did two Jewish blind men (9:27). In contrast to the Pharisees who were spiritually blind, she was not (v 14). (TLSB)

oppressed by a demon – Cf 4:24; 12:22. The daughter’s ailment is not further specified. (TLSB)

15:23 *he did not answer her* – 15:23-24 Jesus is silent at first in response to the woman’s cries. He is not only testing her faith, but also testing the disciples’ understanding of his universal mission. The woman annoys the disciples by following them and disturbing the peace. They ask Jesus to “dismiss her,” *apoluson autēn*, which may imply, “Do what she asks, so she will go away.” Jesus’ reply to the disciples, which seems on the surface to be rather cold and unfeeling, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel,” is likely meant for the woman to overhear and further test her faith. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 3)

send her away – When Jesus remained silent, making no response to the woman’s cry for mercy, the disciples begged Him to help her and so get rid of her. (TLSB)

15:24 *sent only to the lost sheep of Israel* – Jesus’ sending to Israel did not exclude that he showed grace to the heathen and received those who came to him in faith. As soon as the divine plan had been worked out, it would be carried to all the world. The rule is laid down in Romans 2:9, 10. The Samaritan woman (John 4:7ff), the centurion of Capernaum (Matthew 8:1-13) and the Syrophenician woman are the exception, not the rule.

Jesus reminded His disciples that His mission was limited to the people of Israel. (TLSB)

15:25 *knelt* – Same Gk word translated “worship” in 14:33. (TLSB)

Lord help me – This woman would simply not be turned away. (TLSB)

Apparently overhearing Jesus’ words, the woman is moved to action. She humbles herself completely, worshipfully kneeling before Jesus and pleading, “Lord, help me.” This is more than a frantic request from a desperate mother. It is a prayer of faith. Following her example we should come to Jesus with our requests as beggars before the Master with a humble, worshipful, and trusting heart. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 3)

15:26-27 Jesus answers her plea with what again seems like a cold, uncaring response. He says it is not right to take the food meant for the children and throw it to their “dogs,” *kunariois*. *kunarion* literally means “little dog” and probably refers to a pet dog in the home. The testing of this woman’s faith reaches a level where someone of lesser faith might have given up in disgust. However, it is likely that Jesus speaks these words not with a cold, unkind tone of voice, but in a warm, caring manner. The woman seems to understand Jesus’ point that the promised blessings of God’s kingdom must first be shared with the Jews. But she is more than willing to settle for a few crumbs from the master’s table. She believes it would take just a few crumbs of his power and kindness to make her daughter whole again. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 3)

15:26 *children’s* – “The lost sheep of Israel” (v. 24). (CSB)

Jesus answered the mother with a pithy statement expressing a general truth or rule of conduct. Because of the proverbial nature of His statement, He may not be calling her a dog. (TLSB)

Now Jesus wants to know this: does the Canaanite woman really know who He is, or are the things that have come out of her mouth been just words and no more? (CC)

to *the dogs* – The Greek says “little dogs,” meaning a pet dog in the home, and Jesus’ point was that the gospel was to be given first to Jews. The woman understood Jesus’ implication and was willing to settle for “crumbs.” Jesus rewarded her faith (v. 28). (CSB)

15:27 *yes Lord* – For the third time she addresses him as Lord. *Nai* denotes complete assent.

Even the dogs – Luther states: “She catches the Lord with his own words. Yes, still more, with the rights of a dog she gains the rights of a child. Now where will he go? He has caught himself and must help her. But know this well, he loves to be caught in this way. If we only had the skill of this woman to catch God in his own judgment and say, ‘Yes, Lord, it is true, I am a sinner and not worthy of thy grace, but you have promised forgiveness and didst not come to call the righteous, but like Paul says in 1 Timothy 1:15, to save sinners.’ Behold, the Lord must then through his own judgment, have mercy on us.”

How did she know? Who had taught this Canaanite woman about Israel’s Messiah? We simply do not know. Matthew’s hearers/readers do know, however the ultimate answer to the question of how this woman came to know and believe. The Father revealed it to her. She is, like the Magi and the centurion before her, an unlikely candidate for such faith. (CC)

This astute woman matched Jesus’ maxim with one of her own: Pets get the scraps that fall from the table. (TLSB)

15:28 *great is your faith* – Second time Jesus commended the faith of a Gentile (cf 8:10). In contrast, Jesus repeatedly chided His disciples for their lack of faith (8:26; 14:31; 17:20). (TLSB)

Jesus commends the woman's "great faith." We are reminded of the faith of another Gentile, the centurion from Capernaum who asked Jesus to heal his servant. Jesus said of him, "I have not found such great faith even in Israel" (Lk 7:9). Then Jesus tells the woman that her prayer of faith has been answered, and we learn that "her daughter was healed from that very hour." This is not only a great miracle, but also a great message for the 12 disciples and for Jesus' disciples in every age. God's salvation is for all people. Just as the Gospel spread in the first century from Jerusalem and Judea to "Samaria and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8), so in our day the Gospel is moving out from Europe and North America, where many are ignoring or rejecting it, and spreading rapidly through Africa and Asia and to the ends of the earth. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 3)

In what does greatness of faith consist? Two things. She knew Jesus is "Lord" and "Son of David." And she knew that Israel's Messiah had come to give such an abundance that there would be something left over even for her. (CC)

15:21–28 This persistent Canaanite woman gains Jesus' praise for believing that He will help her sick daughter. In time of need, we often either fail to pray with such determination or only ask hesitantly. Instead, we ought to "pray without ceasing" (1Th 5:17). Jesus hears all prayers offered in His name, and He will answer in His own time and way as is best for us. Therefore, we can pray with confidence. • Lord, sometimes I have not because I ask not. Move me to pray with confidence. Amen. (TLSB)

Jesus heals many

29 Jesus went on from there and walked beside the Sea of Galilee. And he went up on the mountain and sat down there. 30 And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and he healed them, 31 so that the crowd wondered, when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled healthy, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they glorified the God of Israel.

15:29 *mountain* – Jesus taught on the mountain (5:1), prayed on the mountain (14:23), and here healed on an unnamed mountain in the Decapolis (Mk 7:31). Since many Gentiles lived in this area, some may have been among the great crowds. (TLSB)

15:30 Jesus fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy of what to expect in the days of the Messiah (Is 35:5–6). Summarizes the events of Mt 4:23–25; 8:16–17; 9:35–36; 14:13–14, 34–36. The number of miracles drops off after 16:21. (TLSB)

15:31 *they glorified the God of Israel* – This expression of praise is another hint that Gentiles were among those healed. (TLSB)

There is every reason to conclude that this account of Jesus' wondrous healing of many sick and infirm people, followed by a second amazing feeding miracle, is meant to communicate essentially the same theology of comfort and future hope as the parallel account in chapter 14. (CC)

15:29–31 Jesus shows that He is the promised Messiah by the healings He performs. Far too often we take our physical health for granted and fail to glorify God when we recover from illness or injury. Jesus brings eternal salvation, but He also helps and heals us when we are physically afflicted. • O Great Physician of body and soul, accept my humble thanks and praise for all the blessings I receive from Your bountiful hand. Amen. (TLSB)

Jesus Feeds the Four Thousand

32 Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion on the crowd because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.” 33 And the disciples said to him, “Where are we to get enough bread in such a desolate place to feed so great a crowd?” 34 And Jesus said to them, “How many loaves do you have?” They said, “Seven, and a few small fish.” 35 And directing the crowd to sit down on the ground, 36 he took the seven loaves and the fish, and having given thanks he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. 37 And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up seven baskets full of the broken pieces left over. 38 Those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. 39 And after sending away the crowds, he got into the boat and went to the region of Magadan.

15:32 *compassion* – Here in this account, Jesus is the one who brings up the situation. He begins by declaring that He has compassion on the crowds, and He lets the disciples know in advance that He doesn’t want to send them away. It’s out in the open; the Master cares, and He doesn’t want the people to be sent away. (CC)

lest they faint – Unlike the situation in 14:15, here it is Jesus who speaks to this His disciples about the people’s need for food. (TLSB)

15:33 *desolate* – The region of the Decapolis, southeast of the Sea of Galilee, was a high plateau with few towns. (TLSB)

The most important difference between this miracle and the feeding of 5000 men is the way that the second miracle highlights the incomprehension of the disciples. It is not only that one might expect the disciples to have more confidence in Jesus’ ability and willingness to provide in a situation such as the one that presents itself in the desert place in chapter 15. After all, He has already dealt with a similar situation before their eyes (14:15-21). He tries to lead them, but they are unable to follow. (CC)

One would think that once the Lord has taken off the table the possibility of dismissing the crowds and has highlighted His own compassion, the disciples would recall the earlier miracle and would at least suspect what Jesus is about to do. They do not, however, suspect any such thing. (CC)

We must never lose sight of a human being’s vast capacity for unbelief. One might also observe that the disciples’ obtuseness both here and 16:5-12 helps to highlight the fact that when Peter does confess Jesus rightly at Caesarea Philippi, he does so only because the Father has revealed such things to him (16:16-17)! (CC)

15:36 *given thanks* – This the Greek verb eucharisteo (English “eucharist), also used to describe what Jesus did before giving the cup at the Last Supper. (TLSB)

15:37 The feeding of the 5,000 is recorded in all four Gospels, but the feeding of the 4,000 is only in Matthew and Mark. The 12 baskets mentioned in the accounts of the feeding of the 5,000 were possibly the lunch baskets of the 12 apostles. The seven baskets mentioned here were possibly larger. (CSB)

satisfied – Jesus never skimmed in supplying people’s needs but gave in abundance. (TLSB)

baskets – Gk word differs from the one used in 14:20, where the disciples gathered the leftovers in the kind of baskets Jews commonly used to carry kosher food. Jesus also makes this distinction in 16:9–10. (TLSB)

15:38 *four thousand* – Though Mt nowhere states that those fed on this mountain included many Gentiles, there are hints in the text that this was the case. Cf vv 33, 37. (TLSB)

15:39 *Magadan* – Iso called Magdala, the home of Mary Magdalene. Mark (8:10) has “Dalmanutha.” (CSB)

Location unknown; probably on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. (TLSB)

15:32–39 The two great feeding miracles of Jesus remind us of how God miraculously fed His people Israel with manna and quail in the wilderness (Ex 16; Nu 11). God works through His creation to provide our daily bread. We dare not take this blessing for granted. Luther urges us in his explanation of the Fourth Petition “to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving,” for our Lord constantly cares for us. • Thank You, heavenly Father, for daily food and drink. Lead me to share my abundance with those in need. Amen. (TLSB)