

Session 7

Crumbs for the Children

Mark 7:1-8:26 | A Ransom for Many: A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of Mark

Part 1: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim: Participants discover the section where the bread crosses the border: a fight over human traditions that void God's word, a Gentile mother who wins an argument with Jesus by asking for crumbs, a deaf man opened with a word the Church still uses at Baptism, a second feeding, this time for the nations, and a blind man healed in two stages, Mark's enacted parable for everything about to happen at Caesarea Philippi.

Catholic Touchstone: Tradition rightly understood. This is the session to distinguish, with full honesty, the "traditions of men" Jesus condemns from the apostolic Tradition St. Paul commands us to hold fast, the living transmission by which the Gospel, and the Bible itself, reached us (CCC 80-83).

What You Need to Know

The controversy of 7:1-13 must be read precisely, because it contains the single most common objection to Catholicism, and the answer, in the same breath. Pharisees ask why Jesus' disciples eat with unwashed hands, "the tradition of the elders," and Jesus answers with Isaiah 29:13 ("in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men") and an unsparing charge: "You leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men." His case study is Corban: a legal device by which a man could declare his assets "given to God" and thereby dodge the fourth commandment's duty to support his parents, "thus making void the word of God through your tradition." Read the target carefully: Jesus condemns human traditions that NULLIFY God's word. He does not condemn transmission as such; he himself worshiped in synagogues (a post-biblical institution) and was present in the Temple for the feast of the Dedication (John 10:22), and will command his apostles to teach everything he handed them. The steelman question is whether Catholic Tradition is the thing Jesus attacked, and the honest answer requires the distinction the New Testament itself makes.

Then 7:14-23, the interiority teaching: nothing outside a man defiles him; defilement flows from the heart, and the vice list of 7:21-22 is Jesus' anatomy of it. Mark adds his famous editorial aside: "Thus he declared all foods clean" (7:19). Two treasures here. First, the moral revolution: purity relocated from the kitchen to the heart, the whole Catholic moral tradition of interior conversion begins in this paragraph. Second, a delicious Petrine detail for a Gospel built on Peter's preaching: the narrator's aside about clean foods is the exact lesson Peter himself had to learn three times over on a rooftop in Joppa (Acts 10:9-16, "What God has cleansed, you must not call common"). Mark's parenthesis reads like Peter's own hard-won footnote.

The Syrophoenician woman (7:24-30) is the scene leaders fear and should not. A Gentile mother begs for her daughter, and Jesus answers with what sounds like an insult: "Let the children FIRST be fed, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." Handle it honestly, in steps. The word is *kynaria*, the little dogs of the household, under the table at the family meal, softer than the street-dog slur, but still a test with edges. The word "first" is the hidden door: it concedes a sequence, children first, then others, the order of salvation history (to the Jew first, Romans 1:16). And she is the only person in this entire Gospel who wins a verbal exchange with Jesus, because she takes his metaphor and turns it: "Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." She does not dispute Israel's priority; she finds the overflow inside it. Jesus grants everything: "For this saying you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter", the only exorcism in Mark performed at a distance, on the strength of a mother's wit and faith. And note what she asked for:

crumbs. Of BREAD. She has walked into the Bread thread from the Gentile side, and Mark is about to show what her crumbs become.

Ephphatha (7:31-37): back in the Decapolis (remember who has been evangelizing there since chapter 5), a deaf man with a speech impediment. Watch the method: fingers into ears, spittle, touch, a groan, an Aramaic word, *Ephphatha*, "Be opened." Christ heals through his body and through matter, the sacramental principle in miniature, and the Church has never forgotten it: the Rite of Baptism preserves an optional Ephphatha rite, the celebrant touching the ears and mouth of the newly baptized (CCC 1236); St. Ambrose was already explaining an Ephphatha opening rite to Milan's newly baptized in the fourth century, in his day touching ears and nostrils. The crowd's verdict carries two scriptural resonances at once: "He has done all things well" echoes Genesis 1:31 (God saw everything he had made, and behold, it was very good), creation happening again, and "he makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak" is Isaiah 35:5-6, the checklist of the messianic age. Let the group find Isaiah 35 themselves.

The feeding of the four thousand (8:1-10) is not a rerun; it is the payoff of the woman's crumbs. Location: the itinerary of 7:31 has carried us through the Decapolis, so the scene reads most naturally as Gentile country. This crowd has been with Jesus THREE DAYS (a number worth letting resonate quietly), and he will not send them away hungry. Seven loaves, seven baskets of fragments, and Mark even changes basket-words: the twelve baskets of chapter 6 were *kophinoi*, the wicker baskets Jews carried; the seven here are *sphyrides*, the big hampers of the Gentile world. Twelve for the tribes of Israel; seven, many hear the seven nations of Canaan (Deuteronomy 7:1) or simply the number of fullness, for the nations. The children have been fed; now the little dogs get, not crumbs, but a banquet with hampers left over. Then the Pharisees demand a sign (having just missed two), Jesus warns against "the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod," and the disciples, in a boat with the Bread of both feedings sitting beside them, worry that they forgot bread, "they had only one loaf with them in the boat" (8:14). Mark's irony is surgical. Jesus' exasperated quiz (8:17-21), how many baskets? twelve; how many? seven, ends on the question the whole section exists to ask: "Do you not yet understand?"

And then the hinge: the blind man of Bethsaida (8:22-26), found only in Mark. Jesus heals him in TWO STAGES, first touch: "I see men, but they look like trees, walking"; second touch: sight restored. This is not a power struggling; nothing in Mark suggests strain. It is an enacted parable, positioned with a craftsman's care immediately before Caesarea Philippi: a man who goes from blindness to blurry half-sight to clarity, right before Peter goes from blindness to the right title with the wrong meaning, and will need a second touch of his own. Do NOT explain this to the group; ask the placement question and let them wonder. Next session pays it off.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

- **Isaiah 29:13 (as Mark 7:6-7 quotes its Greek form).** "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men." Jesus' chosen text against the Corban maneuver: worship gutted by man-made workarounds.
- **Exodus 20:12 with Deuteronomy 5:16.** "Honor your father and your mother", the commandment Corban was engineered to evade. Note that Jesus treats the commandment as "the word of God" with binding force his opponents' legal tradition cannot override.
- **Isaiah 35:5-6.** "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped... and the tongue of the dumb sing." The prophets' checklist for the age of God's coming, being ticked off item by item in the Decapolis, and note who Isaiah says is coming when these signs occur: "Behold, your God... He will come and save you" (35:4).
- **Genesis 1:31.** "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good." The crowd's "He has done all things well" is creation's verdict spoken over the Redeemer: the One repairing hearing and speech is the One who made them.

- **Deuteronomy 7:1 (leader background).** The seven nations of Canaan, one traditional key to the seven loaves and seven hampers of the Gentile feeding; others hear simply the number of completeness. Hold the symbolism lightly and let the geography (Decapolis) carry the main weight: this feeding is for the nations.

Voices of the Church

Voices of the Church: St. Irenaeus of Lyons (Against Heresies, Book 3)

St. Irenaeus, our second-century witness, asks what the Church would have done had the apostles left no writings at all, and answers: we would follow the order of the Tradition they handed down to those to whom they committed the churches, as in fact the barbarian nations without paper and ink did, believing through the Spirit what was preached. For Irenaeus, Scripture and apostolic Tradition are never rivals; what the Church would later call one sacred deposit is here in embryo: a public teaching, guarded openly in the churches the apostles founded, where the succession of teachers is open for all to examine.

Voices of the Church: St. John Chrysostom (Homilies on Matthew, on the Canaanite woman)

St. John Chrysostom cannot praise her enough: rebuffed by silence, discouraged by the disciples, and answered with a hard word, she neither despaired nor demanded, but pressed in with humility and wit, accepting the name given her and finding mercy inside it. The delay, Chrysostom insists, was never refusal: Christ withheld the answer so that her faith, hidden like treasure, might be displayed and crowned before all, a lesson for everyone whose prayers meet with silence.

Voices of the Church: St. Ambrose of Milan (On the Mysteries, on the Ephphatha)

Explaining the rites of Baptism to the newly initiated of Milan, St. Ambrose points them straight back to this scene: the opening rite of the liturgy, he says, is the mystery Christ celebrated in the Gospel when he cured the deaf and dumb man with the word Ephphatha, "Be opened": in Ambrose's rite the celebrant touched ears and nostrils, that the candidate might be opened to receive the word of God and breathe the fragrance of holiness. The Church's present rite touches ears and mouth (CCC 1236), the same mystery in a later key: what the Lord did with fingers and spittle in the Decapolis, his Church does sacramentally to this day.

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 80-83:** Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture flow from the same divine wellspring and form one sacred deposit of the Word of God; Tradition here means the apostolic transmission, to be distinguished from the various theological, disciplinary, or devotional traditions that can be retained, modified, or abandoned.
- **CCC 1852-1853:** The vice list of Mark 7:21-22 as Scripture's anatomy of sin proceeding from the heart.
- **CCC 2447 (with 2196):** The works of mercy and the honor due to parents that Corban-style piety attempted to evade: religion that dodges justice toward family is condemned by the Lord himself.

- **CCC 1151-1152:** Christ makes use of signs from creation, spittle, touch, imposition of hands, to signify and effect healing and grace; the sacraments continue this "sacramental economy."
- **CCC 1335:** The multiplications of the loaves prefigure the superabundance of the Eucharist. The Catechism speaks there of Eucharistic prefiguration, not of the nations; the Gentile setting of the second feeding is Mark's own contribution, and the two together are why this session reads the four thousand as the nations brought to the table.

Thread Watch

Thread Watch (leader only)

The Bread: DEVELOPING at full speed and crossing the border: her crumbs (7:28), the Gentile banquet with seven hampers (8:1-10), the ONE LOAF in the boat (8:14, do not explain it; if a participant gasps at "one loaf," let them say it), and the quiz ending "Do you not yet understand?" (8:21). That question is addressed to your group as much as to the Twelve. Resolution still two moves away; keep it taut.

The Messianic Secret: Note 7:36: commanded silence, zealous proclamation anyway, in the Decapolis, where chapter 5's herald was licensed. The border between silence-zone and proclamation-zone is blurring as the Gentile mission opens.

The Way / Torn: Dormant, but the two-stage healing quietly stages next session's theme: partial sight on the way to full sight. Say nothing.

Sealed-guess watch: Still no human confession of the title. One session remains before the guesses become very interesting. Do not smile too visibly.

Session Goals

1. Participants can state the Corban maneuver and Jesus' actual target: traditions that nullify the word of God.
2. Participants can make the Catholic distinction between apostolic Tradition and "traditions of men," with 2 Thessalonians 2:15 and Irenaeus in hand, after stating the Protestant objection at full strength.
3. Participants can walk the Syrophoenician exchange honestly, its edge, its hidden door ("first"), and her victory, and locate it in the Bread arc.
4. Participants discover Isaiah 35 and Genesis 1:31 behind the Ephphatha and connect the scene to the baptismal rite.
5. Participants can explain the two feedings as Israel-then-the-nations and sit with "Do you not yet understand?" without premature resolution.

Time Note (90 Minutes)

Win 15 min | Build 55 min | Send 15 min | Closing prayer 5 min. **Pre-chosen cuts if running long:** fold the sign-demand (8:11-13) into the leaven question with one leader sentence, and compress the Ephphatha discussion to the Isaiah 35 discovery plus the baptismal note. Do not cut the Tradition steelman, the Syrophoenician exchange, or the boat quiz.

Part 2: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: Lord Jesus, you opened deaf ears with a word and fed the nations from seven loaves. Ephphatha, be opened, speak that word over us tonight: open our ears to your word, our eyes to your bread, and our hearts to everyone you intend to feed. Amen.

Win (15 minutes)

1. What is a tradition in your family that you love, and one you quietly wonder about? What makes the difference between them?
2. Tell us about a time persistence paid off when the first answer was no, or silence.

Leader bridge: Tonight the bread from last week starts traveling, across a border, under a table, into seven hamper, and Jesus has an argument about tradition that Protestants have been quoting at Catholics for five hundred years. We are going to read it more carefully than the pamphlets do.

Build (55 minutes)

Read Mark 7:1-23 aloud.

1. **The Corban case (7:9-13). Reconstruct the maneuver: what did declaring assets "Corban" allow a man to do, and what commandment did it checkmate? DISCOVERY: someone read Isaiah 29:13 (noting that Mark 7:6-7 quotes its Greek form), Jesus' chosen weapon. What exactly is Jesus' target: tradition as such, or something more specific?**

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

The maneuver: declare your assets a gift vowed to God, "Corban", and they become unavailable for the support of your aging parents, and the commandment stands checkmated by the vow. A pious technicality engineered to defeat "Honor your father and your mother." Jesus' verdict: "You leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men... making void the word of God through your tradition." Isaiah 29:13 names the disease: lips near, hearts far, worship-as-performance built on man-made precepts. Now the precision the pamphlets skip: the target is human traditions that NULLIFY God's word. Jesus is not against transmission or received practice as such, he worshiped in synagogues (an institution nowhere commanded in the Torah), was in the Temple at the festival of the Dedication, itself a post-Mosaic feast (John 10:22), and told the crowds to observe what the scribes taught from Moses' seat (Matthew 23:2-3). The test he applies is functional: does the tradition serve the word of God or void it? Hold that test; the steelman is coming.

2. **The interiority teaching (7:14-23): "there is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him," and then the vice list of 7:21-22, what comes OUT. What revolution is happening here, and what does Mark's aside, "Thus he declared all foods clean" (7:19), have to do with the man whose preaching stands behind this Gospel?**

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

The revolution: purity relocated from the kitchen to the heart. Defilement is not an intake problem but an output problem; the contaminant is not on your hands but in your desires, and the vice list is Jesus' unsentimental anatomy of the human heart (CCC 1853 cites it). This is the foundation of the

whole Catholic moral tradition of interior conversion: examine the heart, not just the record. And the aside is one of the New Testament's best inside jokes: "thus he declared all foods clean" is precisely the lesson PETER had to be taught three times on a rooftop in Joppa before he could enter a Gentile's house, "What God has cleansed, you must not call common" (Acts 10:15). In a Gospel built on Peter's preaching, that parenthesis reads like Peter's own rueful footnote: I was there when he said it, and I still needed a vision to believe it. Which is oddly comforting: even the first pope was a slow student, and the Lord kept teaching him.

3. **STEELMAN, build it strong before you answer it. Your Protestant friend has this passage loaded: "Jesus condemned the traditions of men that void God's word, and that is exactly what Catholic Tradition is: purgatory, Marian dogmas, indulgences, none of it in the Bible, all of it elevated over Scripture. And the strongest version presses further: even granting the apostles taught orally, you cannot show that stream survived intact or identify it infallibly; Scripture alone is the identifiable, sufficient rule. Sola Scriptura is just taking Jesus' side in Mark 7." Build it at full strength; it quotes Jesus accurately and its instinct, guarding God's word from human overlay, is holy. Then answer with the distinction the New Testament itself makes. DISCOVERY: someone look up 2 Thessalonians 2:15, someone 1 Corinthians 11:2, someone 2 Timothy 2:2.**

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

First, honor everything right in it: there ARE corrupt human traditions; churches, including Catholics in practice, can bury God's word under accretion; and the instinct to test everything against the word of God is not Protestant property, it is Jesus' own test in this chapter. Now the distinction Scripture forces. The same Paul who condemns "human tradition" (Colossians 2:8) COMMANDS tradition: "stand firm and hold to the traditions (*paradosis*) which you were taught by us, either BY WORD OF MOUTH or by letter" (2 Thessalonians 2:15); he praises the Corinthians for maintaining "the traditions even as I have delivered them to you" (1 Corinthians 11:2); and he builds a transmission chain: "what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2). So the New Testament knows two different things called tradition: the precepts of men, condemned when they void God's word, and the apostolic *paradosis*, the handing-on of the Gospel itself, commanded and Spirit-guarded. Catholic Tradition claims to be the second, not the first, and the Church applies Jesus' own test: authentic Tradition transmits and unfolds the word of God and can never contradict it; Scripture and Tradition flow "from the same divine wellspring" as one deposit (CCC 80-82). Two supporting observations. St. Irenaeus, within a century of the apostles, describes exactly this: churches founded by apostles, guarding a public teaching succession, such that even nations without writing held the true faith by Tradition. And one question every sola Scriptura Christian must eventually face: the Bible's table of contents is not in the Bible. The canon, which books belong, reached us by the discernment of the apostolic Church handing on what she received: Scripture itself is Tradition's most precious cargo, and the same public test that identified the canon, the open succession of teaching in the churches the apostles founded, guarded by the Spirit Christ promised (John 16:13), is how the Church identifies Tradition still. And keep categories clean: celibacy is a discipline the Church can change, not a dogma; the deposit is doctrine, not customs. The real dividing line, then, is not "Bible versus tradition"; both sides have both. It is: WHICH tradition, and on whose authority, a far more honest conversation, and Mark 7 gives both sides the test to conduct it: does it serve the word of God, or void it?

Read Mark 7:24-37 aloud.

4. **The Syrophoenician woman (7:24-30). Do not sand off the edge: a desperate Gentile mother begs, and Jesus answers, "Let the children first be fed, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." Sit in the discomfort a moment, then work it: what is the force of "first"? What does she do with his metaphor? And what does she win, and how?**

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Acknowledge the edge honestly; the group will trust you more for it. "Dogs" is *kynaria*, the household's little dogs under the table at the family meal, gentler than the street-slur, but it is still a test with teeth: he states Israel's covenant priority in its bluntest form and waits to see what she does with it. The hidden door is "FIRST": children first concedes that others come second, not never, salvation's actual sequence ("to the Jew first and also to the Greek," Romans 1:16). And she walks through the door he left open, taking his own metaphor and turning it with humility and wit: "Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." She disputes nothing, demands nothing, and finds the overflow inside the order: a household's dogs eat DURING the meal, from its abundance. She is the only person in this entire Gospel who turns an exchange with Jesus, and he crowns her retort: "For this saying you may go your way", the only distance-exorcism in Mark, granted to a Gentile mother's faith. St. John Chrysostom's reading of the silence and delay is pastoral gold for anyone in the room whose prayers have met silence: the withholding was never refusal; it was the setting in which a hidden faith could be displayed and crowned. Last thing, and say it slowly: what did she ask for? Crumbs. Of bread. Remember what happened to bread last week, and keep watching it.

5. **Ephphatha (7:31-37). Inventory the method: fingers, spittle, touch, a sigh, an Aramaic word. Why so physical, when a thought would do? DISCOVERY: someone read Isaiah 35:4-6 aloud, and someone else Genesis 1:31. What two verdicts is the crowd unknowingly echoing, and where does the Church still use this scene, word for word?**

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Why physical? Because the patient is deaf: he cannot hear reassurance, so Jesus speaks in touch, a private sign language of fingers to ears and tongue, taking him aside, sighing where he can be seen. And because this is how the incarnate God characteristically works: through his body, through matter, the sacramental principle in one scene (CCC 1151). Isaiah 35 is the prophets' checklist for the day of God's arrival, "Behold, your God... will come and save you. Then... the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped... and the tongue of the dumb sing", being ticked off in Gentile territory. And "He has done all things well" echoes Genesis 1:31, creation's own verdict now spoken over the Redeemer: "God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good." Creation's verdict, repeated where creation is being repaired: the One fixing ears made ears. The Church never let this scene go: the Rite of Baptism includes the Ephphatha, the priest touching ears and mouth, "may the Lord soon touch your ears to receive his word, and your mouth to proclaim his faith", and St. Ambrose was explaining that rite to the newly baptized by the fourth century. When a baby is baptized in your parish, the Decapolis happens again.

Read Mark 8:1-26 aloud.

6. **The feeding of the four thousand (8:1-10). Lawyer questions: where are we, how long has this crowd been with Jesus, how many loaves, how many baskets left over? Now put it beside chapter 6: twelve baskets there, seven here, and Mark even uses different Greek words for the baskets. What is the second feeding FOR, and whose crumbs became this banquet?**

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Location: Mark does not restate it in chapter 8, but the itinerary of 7:31 has left us in the Decapolis, so the scene reads most naturally as Gentile country, quite possibly a crowd first stirred by one man sent home in chapter 5 to tell what the Lord had done. Mark never labels the crowd outright; the setting, the basket-words, and the placement after the Syrophoenician woman are what carry the reading. Duration: three days with him, hold that number gently; Mark's readers knew what the third day brings. The math: seven loaves, seven hampers of fragments, and the vocabulary shift is real: chapter 6's baskets are *kophinai*, the small wicker baskets associated with Jewish travelers; chapter 8's are *sphyrides*, the big hampers of the wider world (the kind Paul escaped Damascus in, Acts 9:25). Twelve baskets for the twelve tribes; seven, whether one hears the seven nations of Canaan or simply fullness, for the nations. The children have been fed (chapter 6); now the little dogs are not under the table catching crumbs, they are AT the table with hampers to spare. The Syrophoenician woman's one-liner has become a banquet: she asked for crumbs, and her people received a feeding of their own. That is how this Lord answers humble faith: exceeding, never merely granting.

7. **The boat quiz (8:14-21).** Savor Mark's irony: fresh from two miraculous feedings, the disciples are anxious because "they had only one loaf with them in the boat." Jesus warns about leaven; they conclude he is annoyed about the bread supply; and he explodes into questions, ending with "Do you not yet understand?" What are they not understanding, and, carefully now, what might Mark mean by telling us there was ONE LOAF in the boat?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Run the quiz as Jesus does, out loud: how many baskets after the five thousand? Twelve. After the four thousand? Seven. They remember every number and comprehend none of them. What they are missing is not arithmetic but identity: the feedings were not catering, they were revelation, Israel's Shepherd hosting Israel, then hosting the nations, doing what only the LORD does. "Leaven" is the spreading agent of the Pharisees' sign-demanding unbelief and Herod's worldly cynicism, and it is already at work in the boat: men with the Bread-multiplier beside them, fretting about supply. Now the one loaf: Mark, the most economical of evangelists, did not need to tell us the inventory. Let the group say it if they see it, and if someone ventures "the one loaf... is him," do not confirm or deny; say "keep reading; this Gospel finishes its bread thought in an upper room." The question "Do you not yet understand?" is left hanging on purpose, over the Twelve, and over us. It is the question your group's sealed guesses have been living inside since week one.

8. **The blind man of Bethsaida (8:22-26), found only in Mark.** Jesus heals him in TWO STAGES: after the first touch, "I see men, but they look like trees, walking"; after the second, everything clear. Nothing else in the Gospels looks like this. Is Jesus' power sputtering? And, the real question, why might Mark have placed this two-stage healing HERE, immediately before the scene we read next week?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Not a sputter: the same chapter has him feeding four thousand from seven loaves; Mark shows no strain, and Jesus initiates the second touch himself, unbidden. The healing is deliberate in two movements, which makes it an enacted parable, and its PLACEMENT is the sermon. For seven sessions we have watched everyone see Jesus blurrily: crowds see a wonder-worker, Pharisees see a threat, the Twelve see... men like trees, walking, real sight, badly focused. Do not resolve it further;

assign the cliffhanger: next week Jesus stops on the road and asks the Twelve the question the whole Gospel has been building, and one of them gives an answer that is exactly right and badly out of focus, and will need a second touch. Tell the group to come back having read Mark 8:27-9:1, and to bring their memories of tonight's blurry trees with them.

Dig Deeper

A note on the sign-demand (8:11-13): the Pharisees ask for "a sign from heaven" one paragraph after four thousand people were fed from seven loaves. Jesus "sighed deeply in his spirit" and refuses: "no sign shall be given to this generation." Signs are invitations, not compulsions (CCC 548): to the open, a feeding is a window into God; to the closed, no demonstration would ever be enough, because the demand for one more proof is how a heart avoids the proof it already has. The refusal is itself a mercy: Jesus declines to feed an appetite that grows by eating.

Send (15 minutes)

1. Run Jesus' Mark 7 test on your own practice of the faith: is there a devotion, habit, or family religious custom in your life that has drifted from serving God's word, and one that clearly carries it? What would reordering look like?
2. The Syrophenician woman met silence and a hard word, and pressed in with humility instead of walking away. Where in your life are you currently getting silence from God, and what would her kind of persistence, humble, witty, undeterred, look like there this week?

Live It This Week

- Pray the vice list examen once this week: read Mark 7:21-22 slowly and let the Holy Spirit put his finger on the one item that is currently yours. Take it to Confession if it belongs there.
- Persist through one silence: pick the prayer you have quietly given up on and pray it daily this week with the woman's own words as your close: "Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."
- If you can attend a Baptism, or watch for the next one at your parish, listen for the Ephphatha and pray it over yourself: Lord, open my ears to your word and my mouth to profess it.

Closing Prayer

Leader: Lord Jesus, you fed the children and did not forget the ones under the table. Ephphatha, open our ears, that your word may get past our traditions to our hearts; open our eyes, that we may see you clearly and not as trees walking; and keep us hungry for the one Loaf in the boat. Through Christ our Lord. Amen. (Together: one Our Father.)

Scripture Memory Verse

"He has done all things well; he even makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak." (Mark 7:37, RSV2CE)

Part 3: Leader Reference Card

Primary text: Mark 7:1-8:26

Every passage used this session, in order:

- Mark 7:1-13 (tradition of the elders; Corban)
- Isaiah 29:13 (lips near, hearts far)
- Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16 (honor father and mother)
- Mark 7:14-23 (interiority; the vice list; all foods clean)
- Acts 10:9-16 (Peter's rooftop lesson, leader background)
- 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 1 Corinthians 11:2; 2 Timothy 2:2 (apostolic Tradition, steelman chain)
- Colossians 2:8; Matthew 23:2-3; John 10:22 (steelman support, leader background)
- Mark 7:24-30 (the Syrophoenician woman)
- Romans 1:16 (to the Jew first, leader background)
- Mark 7:31-37 (Ephphatha)
- Isaiah 35:4-6 (the messianic checklist)
- Genesis 1:31 (he has done all things well)
- Mark 8:1-10 (feeding of the four thousand)
- Deuteronomy 7:1 (seven nations, leader background)
- Acts 9:25 (sphyris, leader background)
- Mark 8:11-13 (the sign demanded)
- Mark 8:14-21 (leaven; the one loaf; the quiz)
- Mark 8:22-26 (the blind man of Bethsaida, two stages)
- CCC 80-83, 548, 1151-1152, 1335, 1852-1853, 2196, 2447
- Memory verse: Mark 7:37