

March 31st, 2019
Beware of the Leaven of the Pharisees
Mark 8:1-26

BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

Mar 24 Judges 16-18	Mar 28 1 Samuel 4-8
Mar 25 Judges 19-21	Mar 29 1 Samuel 9-12
Mar 26 Ruth 1-4	Mar 30 1 Samuel 13-14
Mar 27 1 Samuel 1-3	Mar 31 1 Samuel 15-17

Lesson Introduction: *Our lesson this week will center on Jesus' call to faith in Him. Throughout Mark, we have seen Jesus, time and time again, doing incredible miracles, and this passage is no exception. The passage is bookended by Jesus feeding a group of 4000 and then giving sight to a blind man. In between, what we see is the spiritual blindness and stubbornness of both the Pharisees and the disciples. Ultimately, what we will learn from this passage is that to be Christ's disciple, we must come to Him by faith alone. We can see all the incredible signs of God again and again but until our eyes are open to see Christ for who He truly is, we will only be left wanting another sign.*

FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS OF THE PASSAGE:

- **We come to Christ by faith alone (V. 11-21)**
- **Man is naturally hard hearted (V. 11-21)**
- **God's power and grace grant us eyes to see (V. 22-26)**

Mark 8:1-26 English Standard Version

1 In those days, when again a great crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat, he called his disciples to him and said to them, 2 "I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. 3 And if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way. And some of them have come from far away." 4 And his disciples answered him, "How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?" 5 And he asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" They said, "Seven." 6 And he directed the crowd to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves, and having given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and they set them before the crowd. 7 And they had a few small fish. And having blessed them,

he said that these also should be set before them. 8 And they ate and were satisfied. And they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. 9 And there were about four thousand people. And he sent them away. 10 And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.

11 The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. 12 And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation." 13 And he left them, got into the boat again, and went to the other side.

14 Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. 15 And he cautioned them, saying, "Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." 16 And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. 17 And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? 18 Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? 19 When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" They said to him, "Twelve." 20 "And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" And they said to him, "Seven." 21 And he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

22 And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him. 23 And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, "Do you see anything?" 24 And he looked up and said, "I see people, but they look like trees, walking." 25 Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. 26 And he sent him to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village."

Discussion Section 1: Demanding a Sign (V. 1-13)

- What does V. 4 tell us about the faith of the disciples?
- Why did the Pharisees ask for a sign?
- Why did Jesus refuse to give them a sign?

Note: This section begins with yet another outrageous miracle performed by Jesus. After feeding one large crowd earlier in the book of Mark (6:30-44), Jesus finds Himself again with a large group, and just like before, He has compassion on the crowd and decides to feed them. Amazingly, Jesus' disciples doubted that this crowd could be fed! Although They had seen Jesus raise the dead, make the sick well, and actually feed a crowd much larger than the one in this passage with less food, yet when it came down to it again, they did not believe. They marveled when they saw these marvelous acts performed, but they did not yet have faith in Christ.

Similarly, the Pharisees, although they had witnessed the Lord do all sorts of miracles, asked for a "sign from heaven" that would affirm that Jesus was who He proclaimed to be, namely, the Son of God. It was not enough for them that they had witnessed the authoritative teaching of Jesus, along with seeing Him display His power time and time again. It was not enough that the Father opened the heavens and spoke concerning Jesus and the Spirit of God had descended on Him like a dove at His baptism (1:10-11). They needed more. And the truth is, they would always need more. There was no sign that God could provide from heaven that would convince them. What we learn from this section then is that coming to Christ by faith is the only way we can truly receive Him. We will make every excuse in the book as to why we can't trust Him, even if we had seen the things the Pharisees saw in person. Signs and wonders will not ultimately save us, only faith and who Christ is brings salvation. Jesus refused to give a sign to the Pharisees because He knew that even if He did, they would not believe. Too often, we operate in the same way toward God. We give the Lord conditions for our discipleship. If He will heal me or fix my marriage or give me great wealth, then I will follow Him. Yet true discipleship means coming to Christ in faith and trusting that He will do all that He has said He will do.

Discussion Section 2: Having Eyes Do You Not See? (14-21)

-What is the leaven of the Pharisees and the Herodians?

-Why were the disciples so confused?

Note: In referring to leaven, Jesus is speaking of yeast. Yeast causes dough to rise, and here Jesus is saying that the leaven of the Pharisees and the Herodians is in danger of spreading into the group of disciples, causing

disbelief to rise up in them, just as it has in the Pharisees and Herodians. Jesus is warning His disciples against hard-heartedness. Yet what we see is that they are already there in a sense.

The disciples do not understand and turn the conversation to actual bread. Jesus points out that, although they have been with Him, seen Him at work, and heard His teaching, they are still blind and deaf. Ultimately, their hearts are hard. Although they have eyes, they do not yet have eyes to see, and although they have ears, they cannot yet hear. Although they have heard and seen all the things you might imagine would bring someone to faith, they had yet to understand and believe. To get to a place of genuine faith would require more than their natural understanding, and Jesus was about to give them a glimpse into how genuine faith is produced.

Discussion Section 3: The Sight Producing Touch of Christ (22-26)

-Why is this miracle progressive, when Jesus often instantly healed people with a word or a touch?

-What do we learn about spiritual sight from this passage?

Note from The Gospel According to Mark (Pillar New Testament Commentary), By James R. Edwards:

Like the blind man, the disciples who "have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear" (8: 18), can also be made to see and hear. But it will not happen on their own. The ability to see, both physically and spiritually, is a gift of God, not of human ability... His healing from failed sight to partial sight to complete sight comes solely from the repeated touch of Jesus. His healing exemplifies the situation of the disciples, who move through the same three stages in Mark, from non-understanding (8: 17-21) to misunderstanding (8: 29-33) to complete understanding (15: 39). The first "healing touch" for them will come on the road to Caesarea Philippi (8: 27) when Peter declares that Jesus is Messiah. The disciples will be no longer blind, but their vision will remain imperfect and blurred, for they do not understand the meaning of Messiahship. Only at the cross and resurrection will they, like the man at Bethsaida, see "everything clearly" (V. 25).