

## The Gospel of Mark- Chapter 8 Part 2

If you would be turning with me over to the Gospel of Mark and chapter 8. We took a break from our study last week and looked at the Preeminence of Christ and that is exactly what we have been seeing unfold for us in the pages of the Mark. Jesus Christ Son of God.

I hope you are enjoying this study. In fact, I hope you are eating it up just as I am. I love talking about the ministry of Christ and learning more about him. Learning more of his words that are still just as real and important to us today as it was then.

Now let reorient you as to where we are in the Gospel before we get into today's reading. Jesus, as you might recall, left the area of the Sea of Galilee. Went pretty far into Gentile territory visiting cities like Tyre and Sidon.

He wasn't there to bring multitudes to him. He was there for the most part to draw himself and the apostles away from the large crowds that followed them. It was a time for him to begin teaching them more one on one. This is now the last year of the ministry of Christ and he has a lot to convey to them.

Jesus continuing on his circuitous journey went from the coastal cities of Tyre and Sidon to the side of the Sea of Galilee called the Decapolis. The side that was predominantly Gentile.

There we saw Jesus perform miracles like healing the deaf mute and the miracle of loaves and fish similar to what Jesus had done before.

Mark included these Gentile events to show that Jesus was sent to all mankind. Not just the Jews. That was important for them to understand as they were the primary recipients of this gospel.

Following that event though, Jesus left the Gentiles and went back to the Jewish side of the Sea of Galilee. It is here that Jesus has another encounter with the Pharisees that we will read about in just a second.

This time marks the final end to the public ministry of Christ in the region of Galilee. He will return one more time, but he will now move closer to the area of Jerusalem in the weeks to come and his ministry will be much more one on one.

Now with that in mind we are going to read verses 11-21 as we look at the subjects of signs and the leaven of the Pharisees.

*Mar 8:11 And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him.*

*Mar 8:12 And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.*

*Mar 8:13 And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.*

*Mar 8:14 Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf.*

*Mar 8:15 And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.*

*Mar 8:16 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread.*

*Mar 8:17 And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?*

*Mar 8:18 Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?*

*Mar 8:19 When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve.*

*Mar 8:20 And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven.*

*Mar 8:21 And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?*

Let's begin in verse 11,

*Mar 8:11 And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him.*

You know one thing that is apparent in the gospels, no matter which one you read, is that when someone came to Jesus desiring truth- that is what they got. When someone came to him desiring to be healed- that is what they got. We don't see anyone coming to Jesus earnestly seeking him from the heart that he refuses.

On the other hand, we see several instances of where people came to him not with good intentions, but ill intentions. They came to Jesus with the desire that they might find fault in his actions or words so that they might accuse him before others.

The thing they didn't realize because of the blindness of their hearts is that this man Jesus was God in the flesh and this man Jesus as God knew their hearts. Knew their motives. They weren't going to get a one up on him so to say. He knew their plans and he wasn't going to entertain their malcontent in these things.

That is the situation we have going on here. These Pharisees came forth and began to ask questions. Not because they wanted to know more, but were trying to find fault in his answers. Not finding what they hoped for evidently in his answers they then demanded that if he were the Christ that he would show them a sign.

Now this isn't the first time that the Pharisees have asked for a sign. We can see that over in the Gospel of Matthew and even though it isn't recorded for us in scripture, I have no doubt that this wasn't the last time either.

But I want you to think for a moment about the audacity of the demand on their part. Show us a sign.

For the last 2 ½ years Jesus has done nothing but show signs concerning who he is. When Jesus performed the first miracle in Capernaum casting the unclean spirit out of the man Pharisees were there.

When the masses flooded to Jesus in the city to be healed the Pharisees knew what was going on. They weren't blind to what was going on.

In fact, Nicodemus a Pharisee himself, and a ruler of the Jews came to Jesus by night early in the ministry of Christ and scripture records,

*Joh 3:2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.*

Had only the lame leapt and the deaf heard and the blind received their sight it should have been enough. Had only he the power to cleanse men from the demons that possessed men it should have been enough.

But the signs he did didn't stop with that. Undoubtedly, they had heard the tells of how he spoke the words of "peace be still" and calmed the stormy sea like no manner of man before him.

It wasn't that long ago that 1000's maybe 20,000 or more sat on the green grass to listen to what he had to say and then Jesus taking few loaves and fish fed the multitude and gathered up 12 baskets full. You think there were Pharisees in that crowd? Absolutely there were.

Now, just recently, Jesus has been on the other side of Galilee healing Gentiles of infirmities of the flesh and once again feeding a crowd of thousands upon thousands. You think they

would have heard about those things? I'm sure they would have. News travels fast.

So when these men come to Jesus and ask for a sign. I feel like it's one of those moments where Jeff Foxworthy would say, here's your sign. You have to be a bonified numbskull at this point to say I'm not really convinced you are who you say you are. Maybe you could show us a sign.

These men though are spiritually blind. It wouldn't have mattered at this point if Jesus would have rained down fire from heaven they would have said, no I'm sorry it's probably coincidence or the Devil.

Ahh folks, signs just don't do a very good job of converting the soul do they? And the fact is, there's a lot of people out there today looking for a sign in order to believe aren't there?

We have people trying to make deals with God and say well Lord if you would just make the last song Amazing Grace, I would believe. Well Lord if you would just heal my baby, I would believe. Well Lord if you would just send me sign, I would believe.

Everybody thinks they are worthy of a sign from heaven. As if they have the right to ask God to speak to them directly from heaven and say I'm real and you need to believe in Jesus.

Listen, Jesus did signs that are unmistakable and it didn't convince men who were so religiously blind they couldn't see the truth 2 foot in front of their face. Jesus did signs that were unmistakable and didn't convince unbelievers in that day.

Signs did not convert men, though he performed them to validate who he was didn't he? When the disciples of John came asking if he was indeed the Messiah, he pointed them to scripture showing them the signs.

Even in the upper room the night Jesus was betrayed and his own apostles asked to see the Father, he pointed them first to the words that he spoke and then to the works that he did.

Certainly, the signs confirmed who he was, but how many signs does one need. How much is enough before you are left to believe the words?

In our Wednesday nights a couple of weeks ago we talked about all these so-called signs you see being promulgated in the name of Christianity since the early 1900's. Gifts of so-called faith healing, speaking in tongues, and prophecy. Emphasis put on the signs over the true word of God.

The reality is if we look at Christianity in the word of God those gifts that we saw the apostles perform after Christ faded away. Eventually people were to trust not in a sign, but people were to trust in the written word. Just like the Israelites were to trust in the written words of Moses and Joshua instead of looking for more signs.

Look here what Jesus goes on to tell these men, *Mar 8:12 And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.*

It grieved Jesus that men could be so close to the truth and not see it.

Now Mark ends the conversation with this thought. Matthew, however, mentions something else that Jesus says, and it is worth noting.

That's the great thing about the different perspectives of the Gospels. Sometimes one just tells us a little more about something that is good to know and that is the case with this situation.

Hold your place here with me for a moment and let's turn for the moment to Matthew 16.

*Mat 16:2 He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red.*

*Mat 16:3 And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?*

Here is essentially famous phrase we all know. Red sky at night sailors delight red sky morning sailor take warning. People have understood that for centuries upon centuries. Jesus is telling them you can look up in the sky and see the signs and know what they mean, but you can't discern the signs that taking place right in front of your face and you ask for more?

And then he says this,

*Mat 16:4 A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.*

Now this is actually the same thing he told them the last time in the Gospel of Matthew when they demanded a sign in chapter 12. There he went into a little more detail about the sign.

The sign was that as Jonah was in the whale's belly three days and three nights so would Christ Jesus be in the heart of the earth.

So, as we turn back to Mark, even though Mark didn't go into the detail we know that Jesus told them the only sign they would receive was seeing how Jesus would be in the earth for three days.

Now what was he speaking about? He was speaking about his death, burial, and resurrection. The greatest sign testifying of who Jesus was, was his resurrection. The empty tomb pointed to who he was.

Today when someone says of God, Lord if you would just give me a sign, I would know to believe. You know what God says? You have the testimony of an empty tomb. You have the testimony of the disciples and apostles who saw a crucified and risen Jesus and preached that message till they themselves were martyred for their faith.

You know men will endure a lot of suffering for the truth. They recant quick over a lie. These men died for the truth of an empty grave and gave their life as a testimony to that truth.

You want a sign? Your sign from God is not in closing with Amazing Grace. Your sign from God is not with something working out well for you. Your sign is an empty grave and you can read all about it in this book. You can read all about it right here in the Gospel of Mark chapter 16.

It is because of that sign that today I stand before you with the gift of eternal life. It is because of that gift that I proclaim him to you today. That you might trust in him as Lord and Savior. So that you might see him as the Son of God who is worthy of all matter of praise and glory.

You want a sign, right here is your sign. Stop looking for so called gifts. Stop look for the sky to open. Look to the miracle of the written word of God. Look for the words that give life eternal.

Now we have more territory to cover this afternoon so we need to press on.

Mark 8.

*Mar 8:13 And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.*

So following this conversation and confrontation with the Pharisees Jesus withdrew from the city now heading towards the city of Bethsaida close

to where the miracle of the feeding of the 5000 took place.

This event with the Pharisees now having happened Jesus is going to try to teach the disciples something, but first we read this.

*Mar 8:14 Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf.*

This verse sets the theme of the mindset of the disciples. They are on this boat and the place they are going to is a lot of wilderness and they didn't think to take food. One of them has a small loaf of bread. That is all they have to share between them all.

Now look here,

*Mar 8:15 And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.*

Now what do we use leaven for? We use it in baking bread right? When we want things to rise.

In the bible leaven is often used as a metaphor. Spiritually leaven represents sin. A little leaven leaven's the whole lump right? Leaven becomes the picture of sin in the word.

Jesus tells them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. Well the Pharisees were the teachers in the synagogues. They were the ones leading the people for the most part. Jesus says you need to be aware of them. What they are peddling is not truth, its sin. Its sin because it puts the emphasis on works rather than grace. Its sin because it puts the emphasis on self-righteousness over confession of sin.

These men had been asking for signs when signs were all around them. Jesus says don't be like them. Don't let their ways become your ways. Don't be spiritually blind to a truth of what you are seeing in me.

He also warned them of the other end of the religious spectrum- the Herodians. As much as the Pharisees struggled to keep a rigid moral life according to the law the Herodians were a group that cared very little for keeping oneself chaste in this world. Herod was known for great sins of excess and his followers went along hook line and sinker.

Two groups one hopelessly religious and another running from it altogether. Both were spiritually in the same shape- lost. Jesus says don't fall for the Pharisees. Don't follow either one of them. Both are like leaven. Both are sin that further entices men to sin by taking men away from the truth.

So, Jesus is trying to teach them a spiritual lesson and you know what they are thinking? Hmm. Leaven is associated with bread. He must know we forgot to take bread. They are thinking with their bellies.

*Mar 8:16 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread.*

*Mar 8:17 And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?*

Just as the Pharisees were blind to the truth sitting in front of them, so too the disciples themselves had days they just didn't get it either. Jesus was trying to teach them a spiritual truth and all they could think about was a physical reality.

You know these men had been on the road a lot with Jesus. They had never starved to death. There were times when they grew weary, but they never suffered long.

Jesus is trying to teach them spiritually and all they can think about is lunch.

I find myself even now speaking now somewhat awkwardly to many of you who might just be thinking of lunch or the big Sunday tradition of dinner.

You are thinking when will he shut up so we can go eat? Wondering if the roast is going to get to dry if he keeps on. I know what you think because I've been down there in those pews when the smells from the kitchen next door waft through the doors.

It's hard to think of the spiritual when you are thinking about the physical. These men were thinking about how little they had with just a loaf between them all.

Now at this point you ought to be thinking and I hope you are- aren't they with Jesus? Is there ever too little with Jesus? They just had seven big baskets of leftovers on the other side of the lake. Wasn't that long ago they had 12.

Jesus fed 1000's upon 1000's with so little, so why are they worried? Don't they think Jesus can feed them too?

You see at this moment they are just a spiritually blind as the Pharisees were. The Pharisees saw the signs and asked for more. The disciples saw and participated in the signs and yet didn't have faith that Christ could do the same for them if needed.

Again let's read,  
*Mar 8:18 Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?*

Jesus here begins questioning his disciples with five questions. These are questions of rebuke. Jesus is speaking to them on two different levels here. Physically and spiritually. The physical things that they have seen and heard that they should well remember points to the spiritual reality that Jesus can provide.

Jesus brings back their thoughts,

*Mar 8:19 When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve.*

*Mar 8:20 And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven.*

There was enough when there was so many and there will be enough now. That is the reality that he is trying to share with them.

Now one last verse here,  
*Mar 8:21 And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?*

I think there is every indication here that Jesus provided for all of them with the loaf or by some other means when they got to shore. They weren't going to go hungry.

So, as we come to the end of our reading today we have looked at different types of people. We looked at those who wanted a sign in order to believe.

Again, so many today are looking for the same thing. They think they need a sign to take the next step of faith. Is it really faith though if God has to give you a direct sign? The answer is no, that would be walking by sight.

Furthermore, over time I'm convinced that many people who are looking for signs from God to make one decision or another often tend to misinterpret how God works. Saved people are just as guilty.

I heard a preacher once spend half his sermon describing the events of a heart felt hunting trip with his grandfather because he saw a rabbit in the yard that morning and felt it was a sign we needed to hear it.

Folks I wake up to deer, squirrel, rabbits, and occasionally ducks in my yard and I don't think they were signs I need to tell you a story about

them. I'm to preach the word not stories about Grandpa.

Grandpa never saved a soul. Just as signs don't save the soul. But this word does. Stop looking for signs and start looking to the word.

Secondly, we are presented with a believer who is so busy thinking of the immediate reality that they have lost sight of what God has done for them already.

You know God has provided for me over and over. I don't deserve it, but he has. Yet you know I'm like everyone else when I see the next big thing in front of me and I'm thinking oh my how am I going to make it through that.

Truth is I haven't made it this far on my own and I won't make it through the next big thing on my own. Instead of looking at the mountain

we need to look to the one who can move mountains. He's done it before in our lives and he will do it again.

I don't know what is going on in your life today. But if you are listening and your looking for a sign to confirm something in your life. God is saying look to my word.

If you are here and your worried about what is ahead. God says look to my word. See what mighty things I have done. Look to your life and see what I have done.

Don't walk by sight. Walk by faith.

Now we are going to end there this afternoon, but let me tell you we got some big things coming up in this chapter that you will not want to miss.