

What Think You of Christ?

Preached by: Matthew S. Black

Text: Mark 8:1-33¹

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Series: Mark (Introducing Jesus)

Introduction: Open your Bible to **Mark 8:1-33**. There's no mistaking it. Jesus Christ claimed to be God of very God—absolute deity. Jesus is either everything or He is nothing. He is either the Lord of the universe, or He is the greatest liar in the history of the world. Which is it? If He is God, then it ought to be our choice today, not only to say that He is our Savior, but to live under His guidance. Our mind, our heart—all that we are should be given to Him. At times we live as if Jesus Christ was nobody—just another person. The title of this morning's message is "What Think You of Christ?".

No more middle of the road living. No half-hearted living anymore. We can't have anymore of that in our lives. If Jesus is God, then let's live for Him and serve Him with every ounce of energy, with every syllable that comes out of our mouth.

When it comes to Jesus, there is no middle ground. I think you'll see this clearly in Mark 8 as Jesus had four specific interactions with people, and He brings four rebukes to people who would reduce His message or defame Him personally. The message this morning is "What do you think of Christ". It matters. It's not so important what you say, but what does your life say?

We are a people with so much light. Have we responded to the light? Is Christ our treasure? What do we really think of Him?

I. **First we see Christ's Demonstration of Power and Compassion.** We get a bit of it in the first few verses of Mark 8. Now Jesus has just healed an enormous crowd of people in Gentile territory on the Gentile side of the Sea of Galilee. As we come to the first ten verses of Mark 8, we are now at the very end of Jesus' ministry in the Gentile territory before He begins to make His journey to the Cross.

I believe Jesus is getting his disciples ready for evangelism. He's going to tell them in a matter of months, after His resurrection, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

A. Look at Jesus' great **compassion**.

Mark 8:1-3, "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."

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is from the *English Standard Version* of the Bible.

1. “Again”. This is the second feeding of a multitude. This passage, according to **verse 9**, which we’ll see in a moment is where Jesus feeds “four thousand” people. Now if you’ve been with us in the Gospel of Mark, you’ll remember that in **Mark 6:30-44**, Jesus fed five thousand men plus women and children. Very likely there was 20,000 people there. The disciples minds must have remembered this incident just a few months before. The only difference now is that the feeding of the 4000 is in Gentile territory. The feeding of the 5000 was in Israel.
2. “three days” So here the crowd has been getting healed by Jesus for three days, but none is eating. Now we have a problem listening to the preaching past 12pm on Sunday. These people had stayed with Jesus for three days! There was all kinds of healing going on. The parallel passage is in **Matthew 15:29-31**, “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.” So here are all these illnesses and injuries and blindness and deafness. And Jesus heals absolutely everybody. He is showing His compassion to the Gentiles.
3. Look at the compassion Jesus has. **Verses 2-3**, “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.” Jesus wanted to feed these people. He had “compassion” on them. Christ cares for your needs. He cares when your car breaks down. He cares when your teeth need work. He is the most compassion person in the universe. What do you think of Him?

Explanation: Five times in the Gospels it is recorded that Jesus was “moved with compassion”. This is the first time Jesus uses the first person. He says in verse 2, ““I have **compassion** on the crowd”. Think of the compassion Jesus has for you. “If anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 **John 2:1**). Jesus cares for you. He says in **Isaiah 49:15-16**, “Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. 16 Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands”. He has an interest in you. There is no one who cares for you like Jesus. He gave His life for you! Go to Him! Abide in Him.

Application: What do we turn to when we need help and compassion? Often we turn to things that will give us no lasting satisfaction. Even as believers, we have the temptation to get temporary fixes from friends or family or the TV or watching a movie. None of these things will give us lasting satisfaction. Let me show you how Christ has the great power to meet your every need. He is the Bread of Life. Whoever partakes of Him will never hunger or thirst!!

B. Now let's see Christ's great **power**. **Mark 8:4-9**, "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."

So this is the second miracle of feeding a gigantic crowd. This is far from the shores of Capernaum on the other side, in Decapolis. We see that the people are well fed by the Lord. He has deep compassion not only for Jewish people, but for Gentiles.

"They ate and were satisfied" (verse 8). Then it says in **verse 9**: "he sent them away".

Application: Jesus will never send you away hungry. If you know Christ, then you know He is more important to you as Job said, "than your necessary food". You need Him. You treasure Him above your house, your car, your lands, your family, your children, your employment. All these things could be lost and your soul would still have its ultimate treasure and satisfaction in Christ. What do you think of Christ? Is He your meat and your drink? Is He your treasure, your "Pearl of Great Price"? Can you say right now, "Take the world but give me Jesus"? Praise Him—you came to Him for forgiveness of sin, and He also gave you all your heart desired. We are like Solomon who asked for wisdom and got riches and power with it.

Transition: **What do you think of Christ?** Is He your everything? Do you see His power and compassion and ability to satisfy you to the uttermost?

II. **Secondly, we see the Distain of Christ for those who would Play with Him.**

There are those who are very much involved with the things of Christ, but they do not live for Him. What can Christ do for us? He can make us see Him for who He is. He is the Author of our faith. He sends His spirit to convict. That conviction is all intended that we would see. Now we have the spiritually blind compared with the physically blind. Now Jesus is going from Gentile territory back to Jewish territory.

Mark 8:10-11, "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."

So the Lord goes back to Galilee again, near Capernaum for His final ministry there before going to the Cross in Jerusalem. After feeding 4000, Christ gets in a boat and travels across the Sea of Galilee to this district, probably near Capernaum, called "Dalmanutha". There He meets the Pharisees. He hasn't seen them in probably six months because He's been all over Decapolis in Gentile territory.

A. First we see the **spiritually** blind. The Pharisees want to see “a sign from heaven to test Him” (verse 11). They’ve seen lots of signs on earth – the blind can see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, and the dead are raised. Now they want Him to do a heavenly sign. Make the sun stand still. Make an asteroid to hit the earth. The Pharisees began to “argue with Him” (verse 11). The Pharisees hadn’t seen enough. They want to see another miracle. They wanted more, and then perhaps they would believe. They wanted to test Him a little more. Their hearts were hardened.

After all that they had seen, they did not believe. They wanted to “test him”.

1. All **unbelievers** have stubborn hearts. Verse 12-13, “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.” We find out later that he goes north on the Sea of Galilee and He and His disciples make their way again toward Gentile country to the towns and villages of Caesarea Philippi.

But these were the leaders over the towns of Galilee, over Dalmanutha and Chorazin and Capernaum. They had seen Jesus perform miracles for over two years.

Jesus says in verses 12-13, “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...” What a sad statement. He LEFT them. We read that he goes to Bethsaida on the other side of the Sea of Galilee and again to Gentile territory.

Application: Here’s a very sober truth that summarizes what is going on here:

Those who choose to remain asleep in the strong light of Christ’s love and light and teaching, will remain asleep. He leaves those who would play with Him and not take Him seriously. *He leaves and goes to the Gentiles* towns and villages around Caesarea Philippi.

Jesus has very harsh words in Matthew 11 for those from Capernaum and Chorazin and this area that Jesus is in talking with the Pharisees in Dalmanutha.

Matthew 11:20-24, “Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. 21 “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. 23 And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. 24 But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.””

Application: **You have more light than anyone in the history of the world.** What do you think of Christ? Do you think He can be played with? So many are so well fed and so well dead! What do you think of Christ? Do you need just a little more light before you give Him everything. You already have more light than most of the known world. You have more light than all the generations that have preceded us. You don't need more light. You need to surrender all to Christ before He leaves you alone. Don't play with Him. He has given you so much light. Respond to it!

2. **Believers** also struggle with hardness of heart. Look at **verse 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?'"

Can you believe they are still talking this way after seeing the feeding of the 5000 and then the feeding of the 4000? One is among the Jews, the other among the Gentiles.

Application: Christ says to you today, "**And do you not remember?**" (verse 18). Remember when you were first saved? We have come to Christ and come so far, but we also struggle to remember all that the Lord has done. We have to remember our first love. We have to remember what we once were and what God has done for us! It's easy for us to get stubborn of heart again.

Remember your first love and joy you had when you first knew Christ. Don't lose it. It's so important to remember what the Lord has done for you in your life. Don't forget. Keep a journal. Rehearse your victories in your prayer closet.

- B. Now we come to the **physically** blind. **Verses 22-26**, "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 men, 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'.

This account is beautiful because of the disciples. He told the Pharisees He would show them no further signs. But remember these disciples were struggling but sincere. He takes the disciples far from Capernaum and shows them another sign.

And notice the mercy of Jesus even to some in very hardened places. Remember Bethsaida was a town that had rejected Jesus, and yet Jesus was still working in the life of at least one there!

(Matthew 11:20-24, “Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. 21 “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.)

Explanation: I think we see a stark contrast between the blind Pharisees and the blind man. We have people sincerely “begging” Christ for help. And Christ always listens to that. He always answers. But the Pharisees do not believe. They do not need help. They are “testing” Christ. Christ “resists the proud but gives grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5).

Application: What do you think of Christ? Will you play with Him or will you plead with Him? Will you come with a hungry heart or a stubborn heart?

III. **Finally, we see the Declaration of Peter, and it ought to be the declaration of us all.** We come to the central point of the Gospel of Mark. After this point, Jesus heads down toward Jerusalem to be crucified. This is perhaps a month or so from His death.

Jesus is aware of popular opinion. How far off is popular opinion. Be very wary of popular opinion. If something is popularly right, then it’s probably wrong. Jesus is not defined by popular opinion, but by the Word of God.

A. First we see Peter’s declaration. **Mark 8:27-30**, “And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” 28 And they told him, “John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.” 29 And he asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Christ.” 30 And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.”

Of course, Peter did not come to the knowledge on his own. **Matthew 16:17** says, “And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.”. The Lord’s identity was revealed to Peter by God Himself. This is true in every genuine conversion, **John 6:44**, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him”. No one is saved by the persuasive opinions of men. People are saved when their spiritual eyes are opened by the Lord through the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. He gives them the faith to believe unto salvation

B. Then we see Peter's **difficulty**. **Mark 31-33**, "And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man"".

Peter later comes to glory in the Cross. He says in **1 Peter 1:18-21**, "knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. 20 He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for your sake, 21 who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God."

Application: If you have true faith in Christ, that does not mean you will understand everything. There are many things we struggle with. We will fall and fail as Peter did. He got it wrong – he didn't understand how Christ had to suffer. He went on to deny Christ three times.

Yet Christ had mercy on Peter, and made Peter probably the chief of the Apostles, first to the Jews and then later on to the Gentiles after Paul was beheaded in Rome.

The Lord was patient with Peter, and He will be patient with you, if you sincerely have Jesus Christ as the center of your life.

Conclusion: Let me close with a hymn by John Newton. The title of it is "What do you think of Christ?"

What think you of Christ? Is the test
To try both your state and your scheme;
You cannot be right in the rest,
Unless you think rightly of Him.
As Jesus appears in your view,
As He is beloved or not;
So God is disposed to you,
And mercy or wrath are your lot.

Some take Him a creature to be,
A man or an angel at most:
Sure these have not feelings like me,
Nor know themselves wretched and lost.
So guilty, so helpless am I,
I dare not confide in his blood,
Nor on his protection rely,
Unless I were sure He is God.

Some style Him the pearl of great price,
And say He's the fountain of joys;
Yet feed upon folly and vice,
And cleave to the world and its toys;
Like Judas, the Saviour they kiss,
And while they salute Him, betray;
Ah! what will profession like this
Avail in this terrible day?

If ask'd what of Jesus I think?
Though still my best thoughts are but poor,
I say, He's my meat and my drink,
My life, and my strength, and my store;
My Shepherd, my Husband, my Friend,
My Saviour from sin and from thrall;
My hope from beginning to end,
My portion, my Lord, and my All.

John Newton 1725-1807