

A Big Misunderstanding

Mark 8: 10-21

Our text today immediately follows the miraculous feeding of the 4,000. Jesus departed from their midst to another region near the Sea of Galilee, and is quickly met with more opposition and doubt. I am well aware that our Lord came to earth, being fully God and fully man. While He possessed all the deity of God, He also possessed the attributes of man. I am convinced that He grew weary at times from the continual harassment of the Pharisees and the lack of faith within the disciples. No doubt this must have been discouraging at times. Through it all, Jesus never wavered; He continued to honor His Father and minister to mankind.

Our text opens with an encounter with the Pharisees and closes with an intimate moment of teaching the disciples. Jesus sought to instill truth in the disciples by revealing the genuine motives of the Pharisees, but they failed to comprehend the truth He conveyed. As we examine the [difficulties](#) within the text, I want to consider: [A Big Misunderstanding](#). Hopefully we will be able to receive the truth Jesus conveyed and be strengthened in the faith. Notice:

I. The Challenge of the Pharisees (10-13) – As was often the case, the Pharisees were never far from Jesus, and typically sought ways to criticize and deny the Lord. This encounter was no different. First, we discover:

A. The Location (10) – [And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha](#). While there is really no special significance to this place, other than the fact that Jesus determined to minister there, I did find it interesting. This is the only time this place is mentioned in the Bible. It was a village located on the west side of the Sea of Galilee, near the town of Magdala. It was situated just north of Tiberias and south of Capernaum. In the parallel passage, Matthew referred to Jesus coming to the coasts of Magdala. This is not a contradiction in Scripture; the two places were located near each other. It is interesting to note that Mary Magdalene was from the town of Magdala.

- Jesu spent much time in this region and was committed to reaching people wherever they were. He came to minister to them, and His ministry was not reserved for the larger, more sophisticated areas. It seems possible that Jesus may have dropped by to visit Mary Magdalene and others with her who believed. Whatever the case, Jesus purposed to go there. I am thankful He came to me when I couldn't get to Him!

B. The Temptation (11) – *And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him.* Like many previous occasions, the Pharisees came to question the Lord, seeking to discredit and tempt Him. This time they requested to see a sign from heaven. Quite literally they were demanding more proof that Jesus was in fact the Messiah. All of the previous encounters had failed to convince them of His deity. They refused what they had experienced in the past, and demanded more.

- Unfortunately many continue to possess the same attitude and doubt like the Pharisees. The Lord has proven without doubt His deity, being without question our Savior and Redeemer, and yet they fail to believe. They want to bargain with Him, demanding signs and miracles if they are to believe.

C. The Admonition (12-13) – *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.* ^[13] *And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.* Jesus being deeply troubled in His spirit, refused to grant their request. His refusal was not necessarily to keep them in unbelief, but He refused to perform for them as if He were nothing more than a freak in a circus show. Their continued denial of His deity and lack of faith deeply troubled the Lord. Jesus immediately left them and departed unto the other side.

- Jesus knew the unbelieving Pharisees would never be satisfied. If He agreed to their demands this time, they would continue to demand more signs in the future. Salvation is certainly a miracle of God's grace, but it is received by faith, not through the performance of miracles. If these yet lacked the faith to believe, another miracle would not convince them. We must respond to the Lord's offer of salvation by faith. While I rejoice that He is omnipotent, I had to receive salvation as an act of His grace by faith! His sacrifice on Calvary was enough and His Word is true!

II. The Confusion of the Disciples (14-16) – As Jesus traveled with the disciples, He sought to teach them spiritual truth. Unfortunately they were confused on this trip. Consider:

A. The Mistake (14) – *Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf.* In their haste to depart from Dalmanutha, the disciples failed to adequately prepare for the trip. Jesus had multiplied bread for the multitude, and yet the disciples failed to plan. All they had between them was one loaf of bread. While this mistake would not be detrimental, it did lead to a big misunderstanding regarding Jesus' teaching. We all make mistakes, and we need to learn from them.

B. The Mandate (15) – *And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.* As they journeyed back across the Sea of Galilee, Jesus warned the disciples of the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod. He used the illustration of leaven, or yeast in bread, to convey a greater spiritual truth. Like yeast, once introduced into the dough, it would permeate the entire loaf, affecting all the bread. They could not safely dabble with the doctrine and influences of the Pharisees without being affected. Once introduced, sin permeates the heart and has a devastating effect. They had to guard against hypocrisy and unbelief. He didn't want the attitude of the Pharisees to cause doubt and unbelief in the disciples.

- We too must guard against ungodly influences in our day that negatively affect our spiritual condition. We cannot dabble in sin or the desires of the flesh without consequence. We must guard against doubt, fear, complacency, and compromise. One of Satan's biggest lies declares that a little bit never hurt anyone. Jesus declared that a very small amount can have a devastating effect. We must guard our hearts and lives against the evil influences of our day.

C. The Misunderstanding (16) – *And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread.* While Jesus intended to convey spiritual truth to guide His disciples, they made a wrong assumption and entirely missed the point Jesus made. They thought He was warning against leaven simply because they forgot to bring bread for the trip. Rather than receiving the needed instruction, the disciples misunderstood Jesus and missed the point.

- This reveals why context and allowing Scripture to speak for itself is so important as we study. We should never approach any passage with preconceived notions or assumptions. Much too often we apply our own interpretation or application. We tend to assume that the passage speaks to the needs of others, and fail to see our own need. When we expect to hear from the Lord, we must do so with an open and attentive heart, allowing Him to speak freely.

III. The Chastening of Jesus (17-21) – In our closing verses we discover the chastisement of Jesus directed toward the disciples. Notice:

A. The Rebuke (17-18) – *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? ^[18] Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?* Jesus immediately discerned their thoughts and rebuked them. "Do you not understand the words I speak? Are your hearts still hardened? You have eyes and yet you fail to see; you have ears and yet you do not hear. Do you not remember the miracles I performed in multiplying bread?" Jesus wanted them to understand this wasn't about bread; He had shared spiritual truth! (How often do we fail to understand His

truth? How often do we look and yet fail to see Him? How often do we hear and never take the time to actually listen? We too have a short memory at times when it comes to the truths of God.)

B. The Reminder (19-20) – When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve. ^[20] And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven. Jesus was not angry with them, but He did challenge their short memories. He asked about the miracle of the 5,000 and how many baskets were taken up. He then asked about feeding the 4,000 and what was left after everyone had eaten. They surely hadn't forgotten, but they had lost focus. Jesus was not concerned that they failed to bring enough bread on the trip; He was concerned with their spiritual growth and well-being. This was not about physical needs, but spiritual truth.

- We also tend to lose focus and need reminding from time to time. I often worry about issues that will have no eternal significance. I worry about the little things in life and yet fail to see the great need to serve my Lord faithfully. We worry much more about the temporal things in life than we do the eternal, spiritual matters.

C. The Reality (21) – And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand? Our text closes with a statement that reveals the disappointment of Jesus at that moment. At this point in their training, the disciples should have been more spiritually mature. Jesus was amazed at their lack of understanding, totally missing the point He intended to make. Again, His comments were never about physical bread, but spiritual truth. He had the power to produce bread for them, and He wanted them to grow in their faith.

- This loving rebuke convicted me. How often has Jesus considered my life and questioned how I possibly could not understand. He has conveyed the same truth time and again, proving Himself faithful and mighty in my life, and yet I completely miss the lesson He desires to teach. Often I am too focused on my agenda and desires to receive the truth He wants to convey. I pray we all will learn to obediently spend time with the Lord, with eyes wide open, ears ready to listen, and a heart ready to receive the truth He desires to share!

Conclusion: This has been a simple passage to consider, but it has revealed great truth. I fear we are more like the disciples than we care to admit. Has Jesus been trying to teach you something and yet you are too preoccupied to comprehend? Come before Him with unhindered attention and receive the truth He wants to share. Confess your lack of focus and faith. Trust Him to meet whatever need you have, especially the spiritual needs!