

Week of May 12, 2019 — Mark 8:1-21

Introduction / Ice-Breaker

What was something you've done that required a *lot* of faith? How did you build up enough faith to go through with it?

Scripture Discussion

Re-read the passage together to refresh your memory: Mark 8:1-21.

Feeding of the 4,000

The disciples have seen Jesus do many miracles up to this point, including the feeding of 5,000 people in Mark 6:30-44. A similar scenario is presenting itself in this passage:

- “In those days...” (v. 1) likely refers to the time spent in the Decapolis (7:31), which is Gentile territory.
 - Why is this significant? (Hint: Think in terms of Jesus' encounter with the Gentile woman in 7:26-28. What were the “dogs” eating?)
- Notice Jesus' attitude towards the crowd in v. 2. (No question here, simply an opportunity to be encouraged!)
- Does Jesus ask the disciples to *do anything* in v. 2-3? Or does he just state the facts?
 - Why do you suppose he would “state the problem” and not do anything about it even though he could?
 - What opportunity is he giving the disciples? What does he want them to do?
- How did the disciples respond to Jesus' statements? (v. 4)
 - What does this show about their understanding of Jesus?
 - How is this *possible* considering the miracles Jesus had already shown?
- Was Jesus provision enough? (v. 8)

Demanding a Sign

- What was the attitude of the Pharisees in their interaction with Jesus? Why were they demanding a sign? (v. 11)
 - What does this show about *their* understanding of Jesus? How is this similar to the disciples?
- Read v. 10 and v. 13. What happens in both verses? Does it seem strange that Jesus would make such a short trip?
 - What might be the reason for Jesus' "quick exit"? (Hint: If you read through the rest of Mark, the Pharisees aren't mentioned much any more!)
- Jesus refused to cater to the demands of a sign. In the parallel account in Matthew 16, Jesus says no sign will be given, "except the sign of Jonah" (Matt 16:4)
 - What does this mean? What happened to Jonah that will also happen to Jesus? (See also Matt 12:39-40)

Leaven of the Pharisees

- The disciples were still dull people and didn't understand Jesus' warning in v. 15. How did Jesus respond to them in v. 17-21?
 - Why was he so harsh?
 - What was he hoping for? (Note all the verbs used: *perceive, understand, hardened, see, hear, remember*)
- In your own words, what is the "leaven of the Pharisees?"

Application Questions

The disciples seemed to have forgotten Jesus' power to provide in v. 4. Have you ever seen God come through for you in the midst of trouble, then subsequently forgotten his goodness and power the next time?

- Why does this happen? How can we help ensure it doesn't happen again?

Have you ever demanded something of God like the Pharisees did in v. 11? What was it and why?

- What does *demanding* show about the dynamics/roles in a relationship?

Why is the sign of the empty tomb—the symbol of Jesus’ resurrection and ascension—not enough for us?

- What causes us to doubt and want extra assurance?

The Pharisees showed persistent unbelief and opposition to Jesus’ mission. They saw Jesus as a threat to their authority and influence. They were full of pride and selfish ambition!

- Where in your life to *you* exhibit pride and selfish ambition?
- Is there an area of your life where Jesus is a threat to your authority and influence? Have you surrendered that to him or are you holding out and resisting?
- On the other hand (instead of resisting), how are *you* participating in and furthering Jesus’ mission?

The Pharisees (devoted as they were) *and* the disciples missed who Jesus was even though he was right in front them! Jesus wants us to see him for who he is and believe.

- How do you see him? What in your life gives evidence to that?

Pastor Jonathan mentioned that faith is grown through *learning*, through *repentance* of our cynicism, through paying *attention*, and through *remembering* God together.

- We all can grow in our faith! Which of those areas do *you* need to focus on? How could you practically do it?
- Suggestion: Share some of your favourite verses, or passages you’ve been reading recently in order to remember together right now

Prayer

- Pray for eyes of faith to see Jesus clearly and for our faith to grow!
- Pray for humility and submission to Jesus as Lord of all
- Pray for unity in our church under the Lordship of Christ