

The Gospel According to Mark - Cautions and Questions

Cautions and Questions

Mark 8:14-21

"I cast my mind to Calvary where Jesus bled and died for me!" How often do you cast your mind back to Calvary? How often do you remember His sacrifice made for you and on your behalf? What motivates your life, your words, your attitudes, your actions, your thoughts, your goals, your dreams? I believe we should be motivated by the supreme example of Jesus in His life and the extreme sacrifice of Jesus in His death! In our text today Jesus gives us some important cautions and ask some powerful questions! Let's pray and ask Him to teach us and inspire us to heed His cautions and to find the right answers to His questions. Pray!

Our text today follows the second feeding miracle Jesus performed. Let's begin in Mark 8:9 and then proceed to our text for today which begins with verse 14...

Mark 8:9 About four thousand men were present. And having sent them away,

Mark 8:10 he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha.

Mark 8:11 The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven.

Mark 8:12 He sighed deeply and said, "Why does this generation ask for a miraculous sign? I tell you the truth, no sign will be given to it."

Mark 8:13 Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side.

Mark 8:14 The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat.

Mark 8:15 "Be careful," Jesus warned them. "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod."

Mark 8:16 They discussed this with one another and said, "It is because we have no bread."

Mark 8:17 Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened?"

Mark 8:18 Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember?

Mark 8:19 When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" "Twelve," they replied.

Mark 8:20 "And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" They answered, "Seven."

Mark 8:21 He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"

The Cautions

Mark 8:15 "Be careful," Jesus warned them. "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod."

YEAST - a microscopic fungus used as a fermenting agent to raise bread dough

LEAVEN (Leeaw' vehn) A small portion of fermented dough used to ferment other dough and often symbolizing a corruptive influence.

It only takes a little yeast or leaven to raise a whole batch of dough. Jesus used this as an illustration because just a little bit of evil also goes a long way in corrupting individuals, families, and organizations.

Corruption is found in religion and in the world! The Pharisees were an example of corruption in religion as they were hopelessly addicted to legalism and their quest for power and control! Herod was an example of corruption in the world and was hopelessly addicted to the pleasures of the world as well as power and control! History shows that corruption in religion leads to horrendous evil (cults, abuse, religious wars) History shows that corruption in the world leads to horrendous evil (communism, dictatorships, genocide, human rights abuses, war)

Caution #1

Concerning Pharisees (Religion)

Mark's Gospel

Mark 8:15 "Be careful," Jesus warned them. "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees..."

Luke's Gospel

Luke 12:1 . . . Jesus began to speak first to his disciples, saying: "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

Matthew's Gospel

Mat 16:11 How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

Mat 16:12 Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

And what was so wrong about the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees? We mentioned one thing briefly last week...

Hypocrisy

The Pharisees said one thing but did something completely different, so their teaching was flawed. Of course when they taught Moses' law, Jesus said follow the teaching, but to not do as the teachers did because they didn't practice what they preached. Pretending to be what one really is not, especially the pretense of being a better person than one really is, that's hypocrisy. The word is based on the Greek hypokrisis, originally meaning to give an answer. A hypocrite in classical Greek could be an interpreter of dreams, an orator, a reciter of poetry, or an actor. Jesus was saying the religious leaders of His day were only acting the part, but it was not real, they were only actors, hypocrites! It only takes a little hypocrisy to destroy your...

Honesty/Trustworthiness/Integrity/Honor/Witness/Leadership

Now let me share something with you. I've had people tell me they didn't think they should come to church because they were struggling with sin in their life and they didn't want to be a hypocrite! While I appreciate their sentiment, I must say this: People who are struggling with sin need to be in church! Satan wants you to think because you are struggling with sin that you are a hypocrite and don't need to be in church. Satan is a liar! Here's the truth:

Rom 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

So we are all sinners. Here's the difference between a sinner and a hypocrite: A sinner knows he or she has done wrong and are truly sorry and want to do better. They know they can't do better on their own, but need God's help and the help of brothers and sisters in Christ who have been down those roads and are willing to help! A hypocrite, on the other hand, knows they are a sinner, but they are not sorry and don't care to do any better. They act as if they haven't done wrong, don't have any reason to be sorry, and want others to think things are just perfect in their life! In other words, they put on airs and are living a lie! God wants honesty! He would rather us admit we are sinners than live like we're saints when our hearts are far from Him! So this first caution from Jesus is a rather important one! But the caution contains more than just a word about hypocrisy! There was also the matter of...

False Teaching

The religious leaders of Jesus' day weren't always teaching the truth of God's Word, but a twisted and distorted teaching designed to make God's Word say what they wanted it to say! We talked about his a few weeks ago, but let me just remind you of what Jesus said in Mark 7:9...

Mark 7:9 And he said to them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!

Unfortunately this same issue became a problem in the New Testament Church! Paul spoke these words to Timothy...

Tim 6:3 If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching,

1 Tim 6:4 he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions

1 Tim 6:5 and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

It only takes a little false teaching to undermine...

The Understanding of Truth/The Principles Which Guide Your Life/Your Personal Walk With Christ

False teaching can cause a person to question God's reality, God's love, and God's presence in their life.

Paul cautioned Timothy again in his second letter to him...

2 Tim 4:3 For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.
2 Tim 4:4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

It is my prayer as I prepare these messages and as I teach them that I will be as true as I possibly can to the original intent of Scripture. I try to live by the advice we also find in Paul's second letter to Timothy...

2 Tim 2:14b...Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen.

2 Tim 2:15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

2 Tim 2:16 Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly.

Here's a good way to heed Jesus' first caution. It's found in Paul's letter to the Church at Corinth...

1 Cor 5:6 Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?

1 Cor 5:7 Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast--as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

1 Cor 5:8 Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.

Caution #2 Concerning Herod (The World)

Mark 8:15 "Be careful," Jesus warned them. "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod."

This was Herod Antipas was the son of Herod the Great. While tame in comparison to his father, he allowed corruption to enter his life through worldliness. Here's a list of things that showcased Herod Antipas' ungodly, worldly lifestyle...

Unfaithfulness in marriage/Love for alcohol /Willingness to imprison and eventually murder to please others and retain his position of authority

Herod Antipas had opportunities to change but rejected Christ for the world! You might remember these words from a few sermons back...

Mark 6:18 For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."

Mark 6:19 So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to,

Mark 6:20 because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him.

God was reaching out to Herod through John the Baptist, and Herod was drawn to the truth he was hearing, but he was holding on to the things of the world. Those things were like a yeast that effected his whole life. He just couldn't let go of the pleasures of this world so he turned down and walked away from the very truth that could have saved his life in this world and his soul for an eternity! As corrupt as Herod was he at least listened and was interested to what John had to say. There are people so corrupted by the world they have no desire to even listen. In fact they despise anyone who claims the name of Christ and refuse to even consider God's truth. Peter stated this in his second letter...

2 Pet 2:10 This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority. Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings;

2 Pet 2:11 yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous

accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord.

And then down in verse 18 we read...

2 Pet 2:18 For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error.

2 Pet 2:19 They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity--for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.

We are seeing examples in our society where there is no remorse or conviction concerning wrongdoing whatsoever and people who want to justify the most ungodly behaviors. What happened in New York State with the radical abortion laws that allow a baby to be aborted right up to the very end of a pregnancy and then they lit up buildings in pink and celebrated in the streets? They now call it reproductive rights, so it's really not about the life or the health of the mother anymore. Mess with a Sea Turtle's Nest of eggs on the beach and you could go to Federal Prison, and I love sea turtles, but somethings very wrong. Let me say this: God is a gracious and forgiving God, and if abortion has been a part of your life and you've asked God to forgive you, He has. Praise God! But I also know you know the pain of that choice and would want to encourage anyone in this room who might ever consider having an abortion, to know there are other options! There are Godly people in this church and at the Crisis Pregnancy Center who will be there for you and help you choose life!

Now that we understand the gravity of the cautions we can better understand the seriousness of the questions Jesus was about to ask his disciples

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Question #1

Mark 8:17 Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: "Why are you talking about having no bread?"

Why Indeed? Had the disciple not just witnessed the second miraculous feeding of thousands with just a few loaves of bread and a few fish. And now they had a full loaf of bread in the boat with Jesus and the disciples and they think there's a problem of provision. You've got to be kidding right? Well before we point fingers, how many times has God provided for us in the past and when we face a new challenge, how quickly do we fret and worry? I have a good friend who is in a well known Christian Band who called me Thursday night after our leadership team meeting. I hadn't heard from him in a long time, so I was worried at first, but then he told me he had someone on a three way call who wanted to say hello. It was one of my favorite singers on the planet who I had the privilege of being the opening artist for years ago when his band was on their Columbia Records, Riders in the Sky, tour. His name is David Huff, who was the lead singer for the band David and the Giants! I listen to his music a lot when I'm preparing my messages because his songs are inspired and anointed. I asked him how he handles the cost of doing concerts and he quoted me this passage...

Phil 4:19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

Phil 4:20 To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

How awesome is that? What a testimony that someone of his caliber just wants to get the Gospel to our world and let's God take care of the rest! I'm pretty sure David knows and has experienced the following verses as well...

2 Cor 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

2 Cor 9:9 As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; His righteousness endures forever."

2 Cor 9:10 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.

Question's # 2&3

Mark 8:17b ...Do you still not see or understand?

These two questions go together. Seeing helps us to understand and understanding helps us to see! The disciples needed to be confronted with these two questions. Sometimes we need to be confronted with these questions. Why? The questions may serve as a wakeup call. They jolt us and shake us to think. And if the answer is "no I still don't see and I still don't understand," we need to ask ourselves this question: Do I really want to see and understand? If the answer is yes, then we could simply pray a prayer the the Psalmist prayed in Psalm 119:34-37...

Psa 119:34 Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart.

Psa 119:35 Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight.

Psa 119:36 Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain.

Psa 119:37 Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word.

And let me share this truth with you. If you desire to see and understand God will show you, He promised!

Luke 11:9 "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

Luke 11:10 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

Luke 11:11 "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead?

Luke 11:12 Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?

Luke 11:13 If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

And you know what The Holy Spirit does, right? Listen...

John 14:26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

Question #4

Mark 8:17c ...Are your hearts hardened?

Once again Jesus has to remind the disciples that it was not only the Pharisees and folks like Herod who can suffer from a heart of unbelief

Heb 3:12 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

Heb 3:13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

This goes to the heart of something I've been teaching in various sermons over the last year. Letting Jesus be your Savior is a one and done, but letting Jesus be your Lord is a daily decision! While I don't believe a person who has been truly saved can lose their soul salvation, because Jesus keeps His promises, they can turn away from the Lordship of Christ and do much damage to their personal lives and to their testimony.

Don't let your heart become hardened to the Lordship of Christ! Letting Jesus be the Lord of your daily decisions is the most important and best decision you can make each day. Listen to how Paul describes the power that comes to us when we allow Jesus to be the Lord of our heart on a daily basis...

Eph 1:17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

Eph 1:18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,

Eph 1:19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength,

Eph 1:20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,

Eph 1:21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

Questions 5&6

Mark 8:18 Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear?

The disciples had only seen with their physical eyes, and heard with their physical ears, but not with spiritual eyes and ears. God wants us to understand spiritual truth. He's not trying to hide it from us. As I said earlier, once we become a part of the Kingdom of God by inviting Jesus into our lives, He gives us His Holy Spirit to guide us and to teach us. The disciples had Jesus in person to teach them. However, like us, they sometimes seemed ignorant to the truth or they were just distracted! Now I know none of us have a problem with distraction, right? Maybe our eyes fail to see because we're not looking at the right things or maybe our ears fail to hear because we're not listening to the right things. Jesus was trying to get the disciples to pay attention!

Jesus often went from parable to tangible, by explaining the parable and even showing them examples and this leads us to the...

Last Questions

Mark 8:18b And don't you remember?

Mark 8:19 When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" "Twelve," they replied.

Mark 8:20 "And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" They answered, "Seven."

Mark 8:21 He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"

Jesus had to be saddened by the disciples slow learning. I know He is saddened by my slowness to see, hear, understand, and remember. I think about the many times I've ignored His cautions about religious pride and worldly pursuits. I think about the many times I worry and fret about how we will find the resources we need to continue to minister to the people of Slidell and surrounding areas. I think about how I forget to remember all the ways He has provided for us as a church and how He has provided for my family in the past and the ways He's protected me from the enemy and how He has empowered me to overcome difficulties, struggles, temptations and discouragements!

Okay, cautions and questions! So what's the best way for us to heed the cautions and find acceptable answers to the questions?

Find time to get into the Word!

Pray and ask God to help you understand the Word!

Submit to God's leadership as His Spirit reveals the truths of God's Word and how to apply them to your everyday life!

After all, James reminds us of this promise...

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.