

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
9-25-24

Mark 8

Jesus Gives The Disciples An Opportunity For Faith – Verses 1-4

¹ During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, ²“I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. ³If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance.” ⁴His disciples answered, “But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?”

8:1 This is a different miracle from the feeding of the 5,000 described in chapter 6. At that time, those fed were mostly Jews. This time Jesus was ministering to a non-Jewish crowd in the Gentile region of the Decapolis. Jesus' actions and message were beginning to have an impact on large numbers of Gentiles. That Jesus would compassionately minister to non-Jews was very reassuring to Mark's primarily Roman audience.

8:1-3 Do you ever feel that God is so busy with important concerns that he can't possibly be aware of your needs? Just as Jesus was concerned about these people's need for food, he is concerned about our daily needs. At another time Jesus said, “Your heavenly Father knows that you need [all these things]” (Matthew 6: 32). Do you have concerns that you think would not interest God? Nothing is too large for him to handle and no need too small to escape his interest.

8:4 How could the disciples experience so many of Jesus' miracles and yet be so slow to comprehend who he was? They had already seen Jesus feed over 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish (6: 35-44), yet here they doubted whether he could feed another large group. Sometimes we are also slow to catch on. Although Christ has brought us through trials and temptations in the past, we don't believe that he will do so in the future. Is your heart too closed to take in all that God can do for you? Don't be like the disciples. Remember what Christ has done, and have faith that he will do it again.

Jesus Feeds The Four Thousand – Verses 5-10

⁵“How many loaves do you have?” Jesus asked. “Seven,” they replied. ⁶He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people, and they did so. ⁷They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. ⁸The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ⁹About four thousand were present. After he had sent them away, ¹⁰he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha.

8:6 Jesus gave thanks for the food, and he serves as a model for us. Life is a gift, and the nourishment life requires, while it comes from the work of many hands, conveys God's material blessing. Mealtime provides an opportunity to thank God for daily needs met, for taste and beauty, and for human company and divine companionship. Giving thanks keeps us from regarding a plate of food as a trough, our stomachs as bottomless pits, and our gathering to eat as a bothersome interruption. Keep up the good tradition of praying and thanking God before your meals. Let your gratefulness to God be genuine.

The Pharisees Ask For A Sign From Heaven – Verses 11-12

¹¹ The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. ¹² He sighed deeply and said, “Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to it.”

8:11-12 The Pharisees had tried to explain away Jesus' previous miracles by claiming they were done by luck, coincidence, or evil power. Here they demanded a sign from heaven— something only God could do. Jesus refused their demand because he knew that even this kind of miracle would not convince them. They had already decided not to believe. Hearts can become so hard that even the most convincing facts and demonstrations will not change them.

The Yeast Of The Pharisees And Herod – Verses 13-15

¹³ Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side. ¹⁴ The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. ¹⁵ “Be careful,” Jesus warned them. “Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod.”

8:13-15 Mark mentions the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod, while Matthew talks about the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Mark's audience, mostly non-Jews, would have known about Herod but not necessarily about the Jewish religious sect of the Sadducees. Thus, Mark quoted the part of Jesus' statement that his readers would understand. This reference to Herod may mean the Herodians, a group of Jews who supported the king. Many Herodians were also Sadducees. Yeast in this passage symbolizes evil. Just as only a small amount of yeast is needed to make a batch of bread rise, so the hardheartedness of the religious and political leaders could permeate and contaminate the entire society and make it rise up against Jesus.

Jesus Questions The Twelve About Their Lack Of Understanding – Verses 16-21

¹⁶ They discussed this with one another and said, “It is because we have no bread.” 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? ¹⁸ Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember? ¹⁹ When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?” “Twelve,” they replied. ²⁰ “And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?” They answered, “Seven.” ²¹ He said to them, “Do you still not understand?”

8:17-18 Jesus rebuked the disciples for their hard hearts. Today the Hardhearts believe: (1) that poverty is always caused by laziness; helping the poor only enables them; (2) that worship is best conducted in one way— our way— which has worked very well for 40 years, thank you, and need not be changed; (3) that evangelism doesn't apply; people will never change anyway, so we don't need to do it. Joining the Hardhearts requires only one pledge: You must refuse to listen to Jesus' questions. Don't be a Hardheart. Be open to Christ's truth. Let him soften your heart.

Jesus Heals A Blind Man At Bethsaida – Verses 22-26

²² They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. ²³ He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, “Do you see anything?” ²⁴ He looked up and said, “I see people; they look like trees walking around.” ²⁵ Once more Jesus put his

hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. ²⁶ Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't even go into^[a] the village."

8:22-26 Why did Jesus touch the man a second time before he could see? This miracle was not too difficult for Jesus, but he chose to do it in stages, possibly to show the disciples that some healing would be gradual rather than instantaneous or to demonstrate that spiritual truth is not always perceived clearly at first. Before Jesus left, however, the man was healed completely.

Peter Declares That Jesus Is the Messiah – Verses 27-30

²⁷ Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?" ²⁸ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." ²⁹ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah." ³⁰ Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him."

8:27 Caesarea Philippi was an especially pagan city known for its worship of Greek gods and its temples devoted to the ancient god Pan. The ruler Philip, referred to in 6:17, changed the city's name from Caesarea to Caesarea Philippi so that it would not be confused with the coastal city of Caesarea (Acts 8:40), the capital of the territory ruled by his brother Herod Antipas. This pagan city where many gods were recognized was a fitting place for Jesus to ask the disciples to recognize him as the Son of God.

8:29 Jesus asked the disciples who other people thought he was; then he asked them the same question. It is not enough to know what others say about Jesus: You must know, understand, and accept for yourself that he is the Messiah. You must move from curiosity to commitment, from admiration to adoration.

8:30 Why did Jesus warn his own disciples not to tell anyone the truth about him? Jesus knew they needed more instruction about the work he would accomplish through his death and resurrection. Without more teaching, the disciples would have only half the picture. When they confessed Jesus as the Christ, they still didn't know all that it meant.

Jesus Predicts His Death And Rebukes Peter – Verses 31-33

³¹ He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. ³² He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

8:31 The name for Jesus, "Son of Man," is Jesus' most common title for himself. It comes from Daniel 7:13, where the Son of Man is a heavenly figure who, in the end times, has authority and power. The name refers to Jesus as the Messiah, the representative man, the human agent of God who is vindicated by God. In this passage, "Son of Man" is linked closely with Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ and confirms its messianic significance. From this point on, Jesus spoke plainly and directly to his disciples about his death and resurrection. He began to prepare them for what was going to happen to him by telling them three times that he would soon die (8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34).

8:32-33 In this moment, Peter was not considering God's purposes, but only his own natural human desires and feelings. Peter wanted Christ to be king, but not the suffering servant prophesied in Isaiah 53. He was ready to receive the glory of following the Messiah, but not the persecution. The Christian life is not a paved road to wealth and ease. It often involves hard work, persecution, deprivation, and deep suffering. Peter saw only part of the picture. Don't repeat his mistake. Instead, focus on the good that God can bring out of apparent evil, and the Resurrection that follows the Crucifixion.

8:33 Peter was often the spokesman for all the disciples. In singling him out, Jesus may have been addressing all of them indirectly. Unknowingly, the disciples were trying to prevent Jesus from going to the cross and thus fulfilling his mission on earth. Satan also tempted Jesus to avoid the way of the cross (Matthew 4). Whereas Satan's motives were evil, the disciples were motivated by love and admiration for Jesus. Nevertheless, the disciples' job was not to guide and protect Jesus but to follow him. Only after Jesus' death and resurrection would they fully understand why he had to die.

The Way Of The Cross – Verses 34-38

³⁴ Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? ³⁷ Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ³⁸ If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

8:34 The Romans, Mark's original audience, knew what taking up the cross meant. Death on a cross was a form of execution used by Rome for dangerous criminals. A prisoner carried his own cross to the place of execution, signifying submission to Rome's power. Jesus used the image of carrying a cross to illustrate the ultimate submission required of his followers. He is not against pleasure, nor was he saying that we should seek pain needlessly. Jesus was talking about the heroic effort needed to follow him moment by moment, to do his will even when the work is difficult and the future looks bleak.

8:35 We should be willing to lose our lives for the sake of the gospel, not because our lives are useless but because nothing— not even life itself— can compare to what we gain with Christ. Jesus wants us to choose to follow him rather than to lead a life of sin and self-satisfaction. He wants us to stop trying to control our own destiny and to let him direct us. This makes good sense because, as the Creator, Christ knows better than we do what real life is about. He asks for submission, not self-hatred; he asks us only to lose our self-centered determination to be in charge.

8:36-37 Many people spend all their energy seeking pleasure. Jesus said, however, that worldliness which is centered on possessions, position, or power— is ultimately worthless. Whatever you have on earth is only temporary; it cannot be exchanged for your soul. If you work hard at getting what you want, you might eventually have a "pleasurable" life, but in the end you will find it hollow and empty. Are you willing to make the pursuit of God more important than the selfish pursuit of pleasure? Follow Jesus, and you will know what it means to live abundantly now and to have eternal life as well.

8:38 Jesus constantly turns the world's perspective upside down with talk of first and last, saving and losing. Here he gives us a choice. We can reject Jesus now and be rejected by him at his second coming, or we can accept him now and be accepted by him then. Rejecting Christ may help us escape shame for the time being, but it will guarantee an eternity of shame later.