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INTERNATIONAL

*TEACHING THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD*

# Mark - Lesson 8B

## Chapter 8:11-21

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- At this point in the journey of our study through the Gospel of Mark, you should be sensing a building momentum.
  - Last week, we walked through the feeding of the 4,000 and Jesus' compassion upon the Gentile people in the region of the Decapolis.
    - We witnessed His compassion for the people, His provision for the people, and lastly, arguably the most important, the reality that they could find full satisfaction within the Person of Jesus Christ.
  - This all along has been Mark's point in his account – that Jesus is the Messiah in whom the people have been waiting for and desperately need.
    - The key for the disciples at this time is for they themselves to recognize this truth that has made itself visibly known.
    - However, as we have been witnessing, up to this point, the disciples have yet to recognize the identity of Christ and His mission.
  - It would be here in tonight's teaching that Jesus will make explicitly known, the reality of the disciples' misunderstanding of who He is and why He has come.
    - We will witness that the hardness of their hearts is a result of their lack of spiritual awareness causing them not to see.
  - **The disciples' eyes will either be opened to the truth of who God because He will make Himself known, or they will remain hardened.**
    - And it is only through and by the illumination of the Spirit in which moves men from spiritual blindness and unbelief to seeing truth clearly.
  - If I were to put a tag on tonight's text it would be: "Do you still not understand?"
    - With that being said, meet me in Mark 8:11-21, as we read the text together.

**Mark 8:11** The Pharisees came out and began to argue with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, to test Him.

**Mark 8:12** Sighing deeply in His spirit, He \*said, "Why does this generation seek for a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation."

**Mark 8:13** Leaving them, He again embarked and went away to the other side.

**Mark 8:14** And they had forgotten to take bread, and did not have more than one loaf in the boat with them.

**Mark 8:15** And He was giving orders to them, saying, "Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod."

**Mark 8:16** They began to discuss with one another the fact that they had no bread.

**Mark 8:17** And Jesus, aware of this, \*said to them, "Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart?"

**Mark 8:18** Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember,

**Mark 8:19** when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces you picked up?" They \*said to Him, "Twelve."

**Mark 8:20** "When I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many

**large baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?” And they \*said to Him, “Seven.”**

**Mark 8:21** And He was saying to them, “Do you not yet understand?”

- Let's Pray.
- There is an old Persian proverb that goes like this:

**He who knows not, and knows NOT that he knows not, is a fool; shun him.  
He who knows not, and KNOWS that he knows not, is a child; teach him.  
He who knows, and knows NOT that he knows, is asleep; wake him.  
And he who knows, and KNOWS that he knows, is wise; follow him.**

- It would seem that we find the disciples in a place of spiritual disorientation, if you will, and needing to be awakened to the spiritual reality before them.
  - That is, the One in whom they have been walking with is Messiah, Emmanuel, God in flesh, having come to provide salvation for those who believe in Him and in Him they have all they need.
    - As the Kingdom Program continues to unfold and the pressure continues to mount from the religious leaders from Jerusalem, the clock continues counting down.
    - The question becomes, **when** will the disciples realize that Christ is the One is whom they all have been waiting for?
    - Are they blinded to truth or simply not connecting the dots? Let's find out.

**Mark 8:11** The Pharisees came out and began to argue with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, to test Him.

**Mark 8:12** Sighing deeply in His spirit, He \*said, “Why does this generation seek for a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation.”

**Mark 8:13** Leaving them, He again embarked and went away to the other side.

- It's not too long after Christ's arrival, that He and His disciples are **greeted with a hostile welcome** by the Pharisees in the region of Dalmanutha.
  - The text tells us that the Pharisees begin to argue with Jesus – what a welcome that is!
    - The original language actually suggest that the religious leaders came debating with Jesus, “seeking a sign from Heaven”.
    - The word “seeking” in Greek is *zeteo* which means to inquire for something.
    - It is this sense of demanding someone to prove something to you as it pertains to matters of identification.
    - For example, whenever my wife and I go to check in on our kids at school, I can give them my child's name, but the front office is going to require my ID to verify who I am.
  - So in a way, the religious leaders are demanding that Jesus “prove” to them who

He is by “performing another sign”.

- Well the problem here is Jesus has, in essence, provided His identification on multiple occasions both in front of these men and away from them.
- Jesus has performed countless miracles and, up to this point, two Messianic Miracles, specifically:
  - 1. The Healing of the Jewish Leper
  - 2. The Casting out of the Dumb demon
- We must also keep in mind that Jesus has been the subject of 2 Sanhedrin Investigations.
  - And the fact that 2 investigations have occurred speaks to the fact that there were many worthy claims speaking to His identity as Messiah.
- One could only imagine the annoyance and frustration that Jesus had towards these men.
  - He has provided them with sign after sign, miracle after miracle, and yet they demanded more.
  - However, the reality was that more proof of who Jesus was would only reveal the further blindness and unbelief of their hearts.
- **Truth made evidently known, consistently, yet failed to be acknowledged and responded to appropriately, is a rejection of the truth altogether.**
  - The reality was, even if Jesus had entertained their request for another sign, the Pharisees and Sadducees would have still ascribed that Power to Beelzebub (Satan) and not God Himself.
- You may recall this moment when Jesus healed the blind and deaf man (The Dumb Demon) in Matthew 12:22-24.
  - Even with the evidence provided and the proof made known about who Jesus was, their rejection of His work and the means by which that work was accomplished not only caused the offer of the Kingdom to be rescinded for that time, but that generation would not be forgiven.
  - Check out Matthew 12:22-24 quickly:

**Matthew 12:22** Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw.

**Matthew 12:23** And all the people were amazed, and said, “Can this be the Son of David?”

**Matthew 12:24** But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons.”

- We will come back to this phrase, “this generation” soon.
  - So, in an effort not to entertain or engage in the Pharisees’ empty debate, Jesus poses a rhetorical question in **verse 12** after “sighing deeply”.
    - Now this word “sighing deeply” in Greek is a groan of intense and deep displeasure.
    - And this groan of deep displeasure is followed with the rhetorical question:

“Why does “this generation” seek for a sign?”

- In other words, Jesus could have performed more signs till He was blue in the face and yet those signs wouldn’t be good enough for them.
- What was the cause of the religious leaders missing these signs and Christ’s identity?
- Friends, this was the result of hardened hearts which resulted in Spiritual blindness and unbelief – a complete rejection and denial of truth.
  - These men were set in their ways, set in their type of teaching, while all at the same time, shepherding the children of Israel into that same darkness.
  - **In other words, there was no changing their minds through means of signs.**
- They were seeking a sign that confirmed their own Pharisaical positions and teachings.
  - They wanted truth interpreted in their own light and not the “Light of Truth”
- And it would be because of this reality that Jesus hits the Pharisees and Sadducees with this “mic drop” statement.
  - **“Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation.”**
  - Understand that this term “this generation” is speaking to a specific generation during a specific time.
  - **It is those who physically saw Jesus and witnessed His miracles and signs in that day – that is the generation spoken of here in context.**
- Now Jesus’ statement here is quite telling, from the vantage point of Mark’s Gospel.
  - Because it is in Matthew’s gospel that we see an exception to **a sign** which is not provided in Mark’s record.
  - Check out Matthew 16:1-4:

**Matthew 16:1** The Pharisees and Sadducees came up, and testing Jesus, they asked Him to show them a sign from heaven.

**Matthew 16:2** But He replied to them, “When it is evening, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’

**Matthew 16:3** And in the morning, ‘There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times?

**Matthew 16:4** An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah.” And He left them and went away.

- So, where Mark mentions no sign will be given, Matthew’s account says the only sign that will be given is **“the sign of Jonah”**.
  - Matthew and Luke’s gospel provides detail as to the significance of **this sign** in which “this generation” should look for.
  - Check out Matthew 12:39-40:

**Matthew 12:39** but he answered and said to them, "an evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet;

**Matthew 12:40** for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

- Now what is quite comical is **how** Jesus, in Matthew 16, leads up to the explanation of “the sign of all signs”, if you will.
  - He tells the Pharisees and Sadducees in few short words, “You have the ability to read and assess the weather based upon the patterns they see in the sky, but yet you can’t discern “the sign of the times”.”
    - **Now, the sign of the times simply pointed to the first coming of the Messiah.**
    - So, in other words, you are smart enough to predict the weather, yet unable to put one and two together to see that the very Messiah you have read about in the scriptures is standing right before you.
    - What becomes quite intriguing in this present reality, contextually, is that when Jesus did rise from the dead, those same religious leaders still refused to believe.
  - It was at this point that Jesus leaves them with that nugget to chew on and departs with His disciples to the other side – heading towards Bethsaida (Mark 8:22).
    - Before we depart from this point, there is a critical question to be asked here and that is:
      - **In instances where people do not respond to Truth (Gospel), what is the proper perspective for the believer to have?**
      - If people reject the gospel that you share with them day in and day out, don’t wear your feelings on your shoulder – **you aren’t responsible for that person’s response to the Gospel.**
    - **God is solely responsible for those in whom will respond to His truth and those who will not.**
      - There is no need to engage in endless debates when the reality is some will take time, according to God’s timetable to respond while some will never accept the truth of the Gospel.
      - For many this is a hard pill to swallow, but the reality is it is biblical.
      - Let’s keep moving. Check out verses 14-16.

**Mark 8:14** And they had forgotten to take bread, and did not have more than one loaf in the boat with them.

**Mark 8:15** And He was giving orders to them, saying, “Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.”

**Mark 8:16** They began to discuss with one another the fact that they had no bread.

- It's after Jesus and the disciples depart from Dalmanutha that Mark leads into **verse 14** in a peculiar way.
  - It seems as if Mark wants the reader to notice that with the disciples leaving in haste, that they weren't fully equipped for their travel.
    - And in this case, their food supply was limited.
    - Notice how limited they were – the text tells us they had “no more than one loaf”
  - The last time that bread was brought into discussion was the feeding of the 4,000 and now we see the discussion of bread back in the details.
    - We can surmise that with Mark's detail of bread here, off the cusp of the feeding of the 4,000, that there is a lesson of some sort on the horizon.
    - The question becomes: “What is this lesson in which Jesus is going to teach the disciples and how will it further impact the unfolding of the Kingdom Program and the sense of the disciples' development.
    - We will see this further unfold in verses 15-21.
  - After Mark's detail of the disciples' lack of planning, Jesus gives the disciples a heeded warning.
    - In verse 15 Jesus gives the disciples orders.
    - Understand that these instructions in which Jesus gave were beyond simply suggestions – these were orders.
  - The word for “giving orders” in Greek is *diastello* which means “to order precisely and clearly – leaving nothing to implication”.
    - In other words, Jesus wanted to be as succinct as possible in His cautioning the disciples of what seems to be a reoccurring theme with them.
  - He tells them to “**Be Aware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod**”.
    - May I suggest that perhaps the use of the term **leaven** and Mark's mention of the disciples “**forgetting to bring bread**” are intricately interconnected?
  - Jesus' warning to them was, in a sense, a red flag for the disciples that they too were “missing the obvious signs” just like the Pharisees.
    - The only difference between the disciples and the religious leaders is that Jesus has handpicked these men to journey, personally, with Him as Apostles.
    - **This detail simply confirms for the reader that the disciples have not been understanding who Jesus was.**
  - But we also see another element at play and that is the mentioning of the leaven of Herod.
    - For us to understand what Jesus is saying to the disciples at this time, we need to first understand the term “leaven”.
  - Leaven, in scripture is a picture of sin and “a corrupting influence.”
    - Within the Mosaic Law, leaven is often connected to the gradual increase of sin and its corrupting hold upon the hearts of men.
    - Matthew 16:12 and Luke 12:1 provides us with context as to a definitive

understanding of what the leaven of the Pharisees is referring to in context.

**Matthew 16:12** Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

- Here is what Luke 12:1 tells us:

**Luke 12:1** Under these circumstances, after so many thousands of people had gathered together that they were stepping on one another, He began saying to His disciples first of all, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

- So, where Matthew’s gospel tells us that the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees is their teaching, Luke’s gospel tells us that the leaven is their hypocrisy.
  - **1.** We witnessed in **Mark 7** that the sin of the Pharisees was seeking the Kingdom by means of self-righteousness and legalism, all wrapped up in the name of Pharisaic Judaism (man-made religion)
    - These men flaunted the importance of exterior righteousness yet were inwardly corroding and dead inside because they did not obey God.
    - And it was their leadership and teachings that were taught as “Law” to the children of Israel.
    - It is no wonder that Israel struggled with understanding who their Messiah truly was, because the Pharisees had their own Messiah in mind and Jesus didn’t fit that mold.
  - We even witnessed some of this Messianic confusion from a few places in the Gospels such as:
    - Nathaniel in (John 1:46) stating “Can anything good come from Nazareth?”
    - The crowd’s discount of Jesus as Messiah referring to Him as “Joseph’s son or the carpenter’s son” in (Luke 4:22)
    - Or even John the Baptist’s confusion regarding what Messiah’s first coming would truly look like when he asked if he needed to look for another: (Luke 7:20)
  - **2.** The sin of the Sadducees was seeking the Kingdom of worldliness by wealth, status, and Power.
    - This sin of dependency upon the need for social status and power were **never** the means of one entering into the Kingdom.
    - Deliverance is not going to be found in your 401K investments and retirement plans, or even who you vote for.
  - **But rather recognizing that your only true source of security and hope is found in Christ alone.**
    - We now find ourselves at the last-mentioned leaven category, and that is the “leaven of Herod”.
    - Interestingly enough, Mark’s Gospel is the only one that mentions the “leaven

of Herod”.

- And this ultimately begs the question: “What is the leaven of Herod?”
- Since we know that the leaven is not connected to any “physical bread” regarding these groups, but rather their “spiritual condition”, we must examine our immediate context regarding Herod.
  - Well this brings us back to none other than Herod Antipas and his dealings with John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ.
- We are aware at this point that John the Baptist was beheaded by Herod Antipas because of Herod’s failure to respond to truth.
  - You may recall, I mentioned the phrase “flirting with the truth” some time ago.
  - And what we found interesting about Herod Antipas is he had a love/hate relationship with truth.
- Herod Antipas’ primary reason for protecting John the Baptist from being killed was based on two things:
  - 1. His fear of the people and a potential civil unrest.
  - 2. His fear of John as a man of God.
- However, Herod’s means to show face before the commanders of his region and wanting to uphold a publicly made, faulty oath, resulted in the death of John the Baptist.
  - 3. So what we see from the “leaven of Herod” is this danger of choosing comfort of societal order and pleasing man’s bottom line versus truly responding to truth.
- Friends, here is the reality: We see this type of leaven especially found in many churches and in believers today.
  - For the sake of more butts in chairs in the church and more money in the offering plate, the message of the Gospel becomes compromised to be more palatable for the world to receive.
  - More comfort and less conviction is becoming the way of many churches with Pastors who began in sound orthodoxy but over time compromised for whatever reason.
  - And I believe there is a key observation that should be recognized here and that is that the human heart, apart from being regenerated, will always seek its own desires.
    - In other words, the only way in which spiritual blindness can be resolved is if the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of that blind heart to hear and receive what is being shown.
    - And for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, to guard your hearts against the mentioned leavens.
- And what a timely word from the Lord regarding believers guarding themselves and being mindful of these things.
  - Because the slightest bit of leaven can leaven the whole lump.
  - Check out what Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 5:5-7:

**1 Corinthians 5:5** I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

**1 Corinthians 5:6** Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?

**1 Corinthians 5:7** Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.

- The scene that Mark is beginning to paint for the reader becomes this juxtaposition between being Spiritually Blind versus Spiritually Aware.
  - And it seems as if the disciples are struggling with becoming more spiritually aware even with being in close proximity to Christ.
  - It seems that the clarity of what Jesus is trying to show the disciples is still out of sight and out of mind because in **verse 16** the disciples began discussing the fact that they had no bread.
    - At this point, I can imagine Jesus sitting on the boat looking at these men saying “And this is what I’m working with?!”
  - Where the disciples are concerned about their physical lack and need, Jesus is trying to lead them to become more spiritually aware and embrace the truth they are seeing.
    - The success of these men in the Kingdom Program is not going to be based upon their abilities, plans, and personal efforts.
    - Rather, their work and mission for Christ regarding the Kingdom Program requires that they operate with Spiritual eyes to see the Spiritual things.
    - But most importantly through total dependence upon Christ and His ability!
    - What did Matthew say in Matthew 6:33:

**Matthew 6:33** But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

- After hearing their concerns on the physical lack, Jesus retaliates with a firm rebuke to their missing the point, yet again.
  - Check out verses 17-21 again:

**Mark 8:17** And Jesus, aware of this, \*said to them, “Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart?”

**Mark 8:18** Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember,

**Mark 8:19** when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces you picked up?” They \*said to Him, “Twelve.”

**Mark 8:20** “When I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?” And they \*said to Him, “Seven.”

### Mark 8:21 **And He was saying to them, “Do you not yet understand?”**

- Can you imagine Jesus at this point: His hands raised, head tilted, intently looking at each disciple as if to say, “Really, dude?!”
  - What I don’t want us to miss here is the fact that Jesus is aware of the disciples’ lack of understanding.
    - I find that to be quite comforting because the reality is, Jesus knows exactly where I am in my walk with Him and at the same time, in Him, is everything I need.
    - The question becomes: **“Am I humble enough or aware enough in my walk with Him, to call upon Him knowing that He alone provides my needs?”**
    - And it must also go without saying that the only way in which one comes to **this** realization is if God has made His provisions and truth known.
  - It is this point in which Jesus makes known to the disciples that they are missing the point here.
    - This lesson had nothing to do with the bread supply that they had or the lack thereof.
    - **They could not yet see or understand that there were spiritual implications at play.**
  - As Dr. Edwards in his commentary on Mark states: **“Where the disciples are anxious about lack of bread, Jesus is anxious “concerned” about their lack of faith.”**
    - Where the disciples have been privileged as “insiders” to hear the parables explained...
    - Where they have been sent out by Jesus, two by two, with power in His name to share the news of the Kingdom...
    - Where they have seen Jesus heal the sick, and the lame, restore sight to the blind and the like...
    - Where the closer inner circle witnessed a child being raised from the dead...
    - Where they witnessed two separate feedings of over thousands of people eat off the little that was available...
    - **In all of that, they somehow still struggled to see, hear, understand, and remember that all these signs were accomplished by the One promised of Old.**
  - These miracles that were meant to serve as a message for the disciples, pointing them to the fact that Jesus was the Promised Messiah, turned to be missed messages because of their hardened hearts.
    - It’s like your professor saying you have a 30-question quiz and it’s open book, open notes, and phone a friend – Are you going to use the resources you’ve got or not?
    - And here they are in the boat once again trying to figure out who missed the memo for more bread for the boat.
  - The reality was, the disciples were suffering from the same issue the Pharisees

were, just in a different way.

- The Pharisees couldn't see or understand the signs of Christ because they were made spiritually blind and lacked divine illumination to understand.
- So, in their lack of illumination they responded in their ignorance and human ability.
- 1 Corinthians 2:14 Paul states the following:

**1 Corinthians 2:14 But a natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.**

- Friends this is in fact why the Pharisees were seeking to trap Jesus in meaningless debate.
  - **The reality is, a person who has not been turned on by God to the truth of God will not respond to the word of God.**
  - **And therefore truth becomes jarred and fashioned in their own way.**
  - Now the disciples on the other hand were not able to understand Jesus' teaching and lessons because they weren't using what was made available to them.
    - In other words, they had spiritual eyes to see and ears to hear yet their thinking was still tied to worldly means and not heavenly means.
  - **What we see is that Jesus' warning to the disciples to avoid the "leaven of the Pharisees and Herod" is the trap of worldly reason and rationale which is sin, and realize the heavenly manna that is found in the Person of Christ.**
    - To have a true picture of Messiah requires one to abandon what they knew and were previously taught and embrace Messiah who is before them.
    - All of this is accomplished first by the Spirit making known the Son by opening your eyes so that you may see and understand.
    - Apart from the Spirit, it is impossible.
    - I want to show us a graphic of how the Spirit is at work and brings illumination to the hearts of men, as best I can.

Heart Condition:	Spiritual Blindness (Closed Heart)	Spiritual Awareness (Open Heart)
Response to Truth	Irresponsive	Receptive
Approach to Seeking Truth	Human Intellectualism and worldly arrogance	Humility and desperation
Conclusion about Truth	Rejects it	Responds to it

- Isn't it interesting how Jesus speaks about the Pharisees' ability to measure the weather, yet their lack of knowing the signs of the times?
  - In other words, one's intellect and skills, no matter how "spiritual" they think they are, are incapable of knowing the things of God unless God Himself makes it known to them.
  - As we approach **verse 21**, we arrive to a cliff-hanging moment.
    - Jesus ends this section of the text by asking a question: "Do you not yet understand?"
    - This section ends with a gripping question yet a sobering reality.
  - **That one can be so familiar with Christ yet not experience the fullness of Christ.**
    - The disciples have been walking with Him for some time and yet the very men, with the exception of Judas, who will be essential in the establishing of the Church still are a bit fuzzy on the main detail:
    - "Who is this man that even the wind and the seas obey Him?"
    - However, as they continue following Christ, their understanding of His coming, His mission, their mission and His purpose will become more defined and understood.
  - And as we will find out soon enough, what seems like a delay in the disciples' understanding of Christ and the Kingdom Program, will soon become clear.
    - My prayer for each of us tonight is that we caution ourselves in the same way Jesus cautioned His disciples:
    - Be not succumb to the trivial things of this world and what this life may bring, but rest upon the truth in which the Spirit has revealed in thee.
  - I want to end with the classic Hymn, "I know not why God's wondrous grace" written by Daniel Webster Whittle:

**I know not how this saving faith  
To me He did impart**

**Nor how believing in His word  
Wrought peace within my heart  
I know not how the Spirit moves  
Convincing me of sin  
Revealing Jesus through the Word  
Creating faith in Him.**

- ◦ All that we need for life and godliness is found in Christ alone and His Word alone reveals the greatest gift known to man.
  - Let's Pray.