

Sermon for May 31, 2009

Boscobel & Mt. Zion UMCs

Text: Mark 8:11-21

Title: "Can't You See?"

As we continue our Worship Series, "Jesus and the Matrix" I invite you to take the insert out of your program. On one side you will see our Scripture for today and on the other you will find an outline with fill-in-the-blanks. I hope this opportunity to take some notes helps you in your faith journey and maybe this will help you assist someone else in their faith journey.

Well, as we continue to see how Jesus took the Kingdom of God into the heart of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century religious Matrix ... and as *WE* are challenged to be REAL FOLLOWERS of Jesus Christ in the midst of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century religious Matrix, now is probably a really good time to PRAY!

### **PRAY NOW!**

Now, as we are working our way through the life of Jesus according to Mark, we need to remember that Mark was not one of the original 12 Disciples, but was a close friend of Paul (also not one of the original 12 Disciples, but the most prolific author of our New Testament). Anyway, we are following Mark's stories of Jesus as Jesus had confrontations and interaction with the religious leaders of the day.

For the most part, Jesus went toe-to-toe with the Pharisees who were the largest group of religious leaders by number. Others running the religious Matrix were the Essenes and the Sadducees. Alright, let's get caught up from last week...

Introduction: The Feedings and Gentile Time

Last week you will remember that Jesus was in the area of Galilee and the Pharisees were concerned about the way Jesus' disciples were washing their hands. And remember that Jesus took time to explain to his disciples that it's not so much what is external (clothes and food we take in) that makes us sinful, but it's what is in our hearts that causes us to act and think in ways that makes God mad/disappointed.

And remember that Jesus, through this conversation was breaking down barriers between the Jews and the Gentiles. You don't have to wash your hands in case you touched a place where a Gentile touched. You don't have to eat kosher to be right with God, etc.

So, from there we find that Jesus got out of town ... he left the region of Galilee and went northwest to the coast (Tyre and Sidon). (MAP!?!?!?) This was a Gentile (non-Jewish) area. Jesus is taking time to *show* his disciples that they need to care for the Gentile population as well as their Jewish sisters and brothers.

After Jesus heals a number of people there, he makes his way back to the area of Galilee in a roundabout way ... through the (Grk) Decapolis or the "Ten Towns". In these towns Jesus continues to heal many people (Jews and Gentiles) and the crowds following Jesus grew.

As they followed Jesus, they became hungry. Jesus felt for the people because they had been with Jesus for three (3) days. The scripture says that in this case there were 4,000 people (not counting women and children).

Understand that this is different from the feeding of the 5,000 in chapter 6. For many people these feedings of the thousands just run together and we lose track of the significance of each. Here's the deal:

**Chapter 6** = Feeding of **5,000 Jews** at Bethsaida (NE shore of Sea of Galilee). Those people were only with Jesus for 1 day. Had 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. Twelve small lunch baskets of food left over.

**Chapter 8** = Feeding of **4,000 Gentiles** (practice what you preach!) near the Decapolis (SE of Sea of Galilee). They had been with Jesus for 3 days. Had 7 loaves and a few fish. Seven LARGE baskets (think hampers) of food left over.

Right after this event, Jesus and his disciples boated over to Dalmanutha on the western shore of the Sea near Tiberias. And this is where we pick up our Scripture for today ... it's on the screens ... on your insert and in your Bibles.

### READ MARK 8:11-21 NOW!

- I. Give Me a Sign! (vs.11-13)
  - A. So, as soon as Jesus arrives in Jewish territory again, the Pharisees find him and challenge him. "We want to see a miraculous sign from heaven or we won't believe in your Godly authority."
    1. In other words, what Jesus had done in front of them so far was not good enough.
    2. The healings were not good enough for them to believe that Jesus had Godly authority.
    3. The feedings of large crowds with almost no food to start with were not good enough for them to believe that Jesus had Godly authority.
    4. The teachings that Jesus had shared that put the Pharisees in their place were not good enough for them to believe that Jesus was of God.
    5. They demanded, not a miracle, but a SIGN from HEAVEN. They wanted fire to rain down or bread to fall from heaven like God did for Moses...
  - B. Here's the deal: It didn't matter what Jesus did, they were not going to change their ways and follow Jesus as the Son of God. They knew that and Jesus knew that!
    1. They were so set in their ways and their hearts were so critical and hard that it didn't matter what Jesus did or Who Jesus was...
    2. If they believed that Jesus was the Son of God and was standing right there with them, they were going to have to CHANGE!
    3. People have a hard time giving up what their parents and grandparents have taught them ... Seriously!!
  - C. For the Pharisees and leaders of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Matrix, it meant a couple of things...

1. #1 = They had to admit they were wrong. They had to admit that what they had been doing for the past few hundred years was a mistake ... PRIDE! It's very hard to say, "I/We screwed up."
  2. #2 = They would have to bow down to Jesus as King and then TRUST Jesus. By the way, trusting Jesus goes beyond COMMON SENSE. Some of us think that when God moves it should be totally understandable to us... This is called the "Christian FAITH", not the "Christian Intellect"!
  3. The Pharisees would actually have to have FAITH in the God they spent their lives serving... Totally new territory.
- D. Did you catch Jesus Response? "I tell you the truth; I will not give this generation any such sign."
1. "This generation" was the nation of Israel as led by those religious leaders.
  2. In other words, Jesus says, "As long as this religious Matrix is in place and you are not being who my Father wants you to be, stop asking!"
  3. See, Jesus knew that those Pharisees had forgotten why they were a 'Chosen People'. Why were they called God's Chosen People?
    - a. God's intention in using the Hebrew/Jewish people was that they be different than the rest of the corrupt world.
    - b. They were supposed to be a light in the darkness of the rest of the world.
    - c. They were supposed to be different in a magnetic way ... so that other races and countries would want to be like the Hebrew people and meet their God.
    - d. That was gone in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. All the Jewish people were doing was treading water ... under the control of the Roman Empire and following ancient rules because they didn't know what else to do!!
- E. We do the same thing. We forget why we are here. We forget that we are supposed to be the light of the world as followers of Jesus Christ because we get so caught up in our day-to-day stuff and our culture that we forget that we are supposed to be DIFFERENT!
- F. So, Jesus says ... that's it. These Pharisees' hearts are so hard and they are not going to listen to me. I'm not wasting any more time here. Let's go across the Sea again.
- G. And they left so fast, that the disciples did not remember to grab some food for the trip!

## II. Who Forgot the Bread? (vs. 14)

- A. I love this. You can hear them on the boat ... "Does anyone have anything to eat? Does anyone have any bread?" "I'm hungry."

- B. Jesus, not paying any attention to what they are talking about, tries to bring in a teachable moment. His mind is still on what just happened on the west side of the Sea: “Watch Out! Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod.”
1. It’s a warning from the Teacher to his students to not be like the Pharisees ... People who say one thing, but do another (Playacting).
  2. It’s a warning from the Teacher to his students to not be like Herod or his followers ... Life is all about power and political gain. The Herodians thought that maybe Herod would bring the kingdom that Scripture promised the Jewish people.

### III. Beware of the Yeast (vs. 15-16)

- A. So, what is this “Yeast” and why is Jesus warning His disciples about it?
1. Yeast is that thing that you add to dough to make it rise before you bake it.
  2. In our Scriptures it is used often to describe something negative or ungodly or evil that starts small and invisible but slowly grows into something that affects everyone.
  3. Jesus could see how his disciples could get caught up into thinking like the Pharisees ... hardened, critical hearts (wait until we finish this section of Scripture!) and starting to act differently than they really were (playacting).
  4. Jesus could also see how his disciples could get caught up into thinking like the Herodians ... thinking about political position as the most important thing.
- B. Do you remember us talking about the ideas of Jesus’ followers as they headed toward Jerusalem later in Jesus’ life?
1. The disciples were trying to decide which one of the disciples was going to sit at Jesus right and left hand when Jesus took over as king!
  2. The disciples were thinking about political power like the followers of Herod!
- C. And listen to how they respond to Jesus warning... the disciples hear Jesus say something about the “yeast” and all they can think about is that they are hungry.
- D. Has anyone else here tried to talk to their kids about something important, but you can’t really get their attention because they are already stuck on something else? That’s what happens here with the disciples. Jesus is attempting to tell them something very important and all they can think about is...
1. Who forgot the bread?
  2. I think it was Matthew’s turn to bring the bread!
  3. We only have one loaf of bread? That’s not going to last us!

4. Yeah, we're all hungry ... one loaf of bread is not going to be enough! We might starve out here.
- E. Then, Jesus figures out that his buddies are not listening to him! As Jesus is talking about that yeast ... those things we get stuck on that distract us from Jesus ... it grows and grows and before you know it, you have forgotten to be light in the world... it's happening! It's happening as Jesus speaks!!
1. "Seriously? You are arguing about having no bread?"
  2. "Don't you understand that when I said 'YEAST' I was not talking about physical bread?"
  3. "Are your hearts that hard?" (Talk about the "Yeast of the Pharisees"!)
  4. "Have you not seen what I have done over these past few months? Have you not heard what I have taught you?"
  5. "Don't you remember anything at all?"
- IV. Real Faith Today (vs. 17-21)
- A. I wonder how often we are like the disciples.
  - B. I don't know about you, but I have a tendency to forget God's blessings. It's funny how I see God take care of my needs, but as soon as that next problem comes up, I start complaining or getting scared about how this situation is going to turn out...
  - C. What is it going to take ... how many times does God have to come through for us ... to realize that if we put God first and are obedient to God's teachings, God will take care of us?!?
  - D. Listen to the reminders that Jesus gave His disciples...
    1. "Don't you remember anything?" Were you not there when I fed those 5,000 Jewish people with 5 loaves of bread and a couple of fish?
    2. How many baskets of food did you pick up after everyone had eaten all they wanted ("anyone want seconds? Don't go hungry here!")? Disciples answer: 12.
    3. Jesus continues ... And how many large baskets of leftovers did you pick up after I fed the 4,000 Gentiles with just 7 loaves of bread? Disciples answer: 7.
    4. "What is it going to take for you men to actually BELIEVE in me?!? Do you want some sort of sign from heaven like the Pharisees!?"
    5. "Will you never believe?"
  - E. The same holds true for us today, doesn't it?
    1. God is going to ask us to do things that we cannot figure out with our common sense and we're going to FORGET what God has already done for us in the past.
    2. We get so focused on "WHO FORGOT THE BREAD" that we forget that JESUS IS IN THE BOAT WITH US!

3. If we are going to break the Religious MATRIX of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, we cannot allow the “YEAST of the Pharisees” ... those little things that distract us from Jesus ... make us forget that Jesus is in the Boat!

Next Week: We find out that well more than 50% of our society is caught in a Matrix that was not designed by God!

Let's Pray!