

Mark 8:1-9:1
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EXHORDIUM

In the last chapter, we saw that Jesus is very interested in food and eating. He goes out of His way to teach about the true nature of food. It is not what goes into the man that defiles a man but what comes out of Him. Consequently, we are to learn that the food that Jesus gives us is the kind of food that does indeed cleanse a man's heart. The food of Jesus is the Word of God.

This helps us more clearly understand the contrast that Jesus makes in this chapter between the food that He supplies and the food that the Pharisees and Herod supply. Jesus's food is the good food that cleanses a man. The Pharisaic food has produced the fruit of unrighteousness.

The disciples have a difficult time understanding this. They cannot seem to clearly see what Jesus is teaching them. They constantly misunderstand His point. Their memories are really short. They cannot learn to put their complete trust in Jesus, even if He has repeatedly revealed Himself through miraculous signs.

This is astonishing, given what Jesus is revealing to them. He is the true manna from heaven. The food of the Pharisees is like the leaven of sin, it creeps down into the soul and corrupts the whole man. The Pharisees refuse to admit this and thus are rendered deaf, dumb and blind. But the disciples are not doing much better. They cling to Jesus because of the earthly benefits but His kingdom is not what they think it is. Jesus does not disguise this truth. He reveals it in very blunt speech. When He does so, He finds that even His disciples oppose Him. So, Jesus teaches them how to evaluate the kingdom of God.

EXEGESIS

¹In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples *unto him*, and saith unto them, ²I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat: ³And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far.

Jesus is intensely interested in feeding the multitudes. They are three days without food and in need of a resurrection.

Jesus has compassion. They are like sheep without a shepherd. Why did He wait three days? Was it to give time to the disciples to recognize the need and do something about it? They did not recognize the need so they did nothing about it.

Jesus does not want them to faint on the way.

⁴And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these *men* with bread here in the wilderness?

Wrong question. They should have been asking, Jesus are you going to do another miracle?

Jesus has already fed thousands with meager means. Why do the disciples not remember? Do they think it was a one time deal? Do they not understand that Jesus has come to feed multitudes?

⁵And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven. ⁶And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before *them*; and they did set *them* before the people. ⁷And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before *them*. ⁸So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken *meat* that was left seven baskets. ⁹And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away.

Last time, Jesus fed 5000 with five loaves and two fish and there were 12 baskets full. Now, He is feeding 4000 with 7 loaves. After they eat, He sends them away.

Jesus again asks what resources that disciples have. Whatever resources they have is enough to do the job. Everyone eats and is filled.

¹⁰And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha. ¹¹And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. ¹²And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.

The unbelief expressed here is simply astonishing. Not just the unbelief of the Pharisees but also the unbelief of the disciples. The Pharisees represent unbelieving Israel. The disciples are supposed to be believing

Israel. The Pharisees are consistent in their unbelief but the disciples constantly waver.

They ask for a sign when there were signs all around them. No wonder Jesus sighed. And He tells them that He will not give them a sign. But He has just given them multiple signs. What more could they possibly want Him to do? Rise from the dead?

Jesus is not saying that He will not give a sign. He is giving signs. He is saying that there is no sign that will be given that this generation of unbelief would believe. Unbelief never believes signs.

¹³And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side. ¹⁴Now *the disciples* had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf.

They forgot to take bread. Jesus could have upbraided them for this and made a parable of it. They would have misunderstood but He could have shown them that the true bread is the Word of God from Heaven.

One loaf was enough for at least 1000. When are they going to get it? Maybe after Jesus touches them again?

¹⁵And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod. ¹⁶And they reasoned among themselves, saying, *It is* because we have no bread.

¹⁷And when Jesus knew *it*, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened? ¹⁸Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember? ¹⁹When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve. ²⁰And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven. ²¹And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?

What is it that they are misunderstanding? Is it the fact that Jesus can feed a multitude with very little? Or, that the Pharisees and Herod represent unbelief and that they are to be different? Or, perhaps they should have been more astute with their numerology? They should have realized that Jesus healed a woman 12 years in her sickness. He raised a girl 12 years old. He fed the multitude and still had 12 baskets full to feed all of Israel. He is the provider of Israel. He is Israel's God.

Furthermore, He is Israel's God and Israel is not listening. They cannot hear him, nor speak His name in faith. That is because they are deaf and dumb. What is more than this, Israel is not only deaf and dumb, they are also blind. They ask for a sign that they can see with their eyes. He does the sign, many signs, and they ask for a sign. Can the disciples not understand that Israel is deaf, dumb and blind?

Now He feeds 4000 and picks up seven baskets full. This is the number of the days of the week. It is a special biblical number symbolizing fulfillment and perfection. Jesus is the Seventh day, the Sabbath.

²²And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him. ²³And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. ²⁴And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. ²⁵After that he put *his* hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. ²⁶And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell *it* to any in the town.

It is no accident that Jesus heals a blind man here. It is not only the Pharisees who are blind, the disciples are also blind. Jesus leads the blind man by the hand. He touches him. He leads him to the place of healing. He touches him and heals but not completely.

The Pharisees are the blind leading the blind. The disciples are the blind who are being made to see by degrees. But they still are not seeing things clearly. Jesus will touch them again so that they see things as they really are.

²⁷And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? ²⁸And they answered, John the Baptist: but some *say*, Elias; and others, One of the prophets. ²⁹And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. ³⁰And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.

Obviously, there was a great deal of speculation about Jesus. Some said He was John the Baptist. That is what Herod thought. Others thought He was Elijah but Jesus teaches His disciples that John the Baptist was the

fulfillment of Elijah coming again. Others, thought He was one of the prophets, perhaps Elisha or even Moses.

But Peter understood that He is Christ, the Messiah, the One who has come to redeem Israel, set the captives free, restore the Kingdom and defeat all the enemies of Yahweh.

This was, in fact, true but Jesus was not willing that this truth be widely spread just yet. Perhaps part of the reason is that His very own disciples were not completely sure about this. Peter makes the good confession but immediately after this good confession he is ready to disobey the Christ.

³¹And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³²And he spake that saying openly.

Peter says, thou art the Christ. Jesus then begins to teach them about the Son of man, equating the Son of man, Himself, with the Christ. He now shows them that their view of the Messiah needed to be altered. He tells them things that they never would have suspected about the Messiah. He is to suffer, be rejected by the elders and chief priests, and scribes and then be killed. After three days, He would rise again.

These things were far from the disciples' minds. They see that Jesus is the Messiah but they only see it like a man partially healed.

And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. ³³But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

This is marvelous. It is so Peter but is not also, so you? And so, me? The disciples are having a hard time seeing. They see a little bit but as soon as they look away from Jesus, even for a second, they stop seeing. The best they can do is to see men walking around like trees.

Peter has just made the good confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of God." Immediately after saying this, Peter takes the side of the devil against Jesus. How can this be? It is not a matter of excusing Peter by saying that Peter just did not understand. Jesus has already upbraided the apostles, saying, "Do you not yet understand?" He is saying, you should understand.

But now Peter is telling Jesus what to do. He is not submitting to Jesus. He is arguing with Him. This is not a matter of understanding. If a child

does not understand his mother, he cannot use that as excuse for disobedience. So, what if you do not understand me, boy, do it anyway!

Jesus accuses Peter of not savoring the things of God. He is not appreciating, not honoring, not holding in high esteem. He is being earthly minded, not heavenly minded.

Peter may have countered, “No, I am not being earthly minded. Jesus is going to set up the heavenly kingdom. Now, He is talking about dying. It is not ME who has the problem. Jesus has a problem.”

But remember that this sort of wrangling with the Lord is manifestly not permitted. The Lord has patience with us when we do not understand. He does not have patience when we refuse to obey.

How do you think Peter liked being called Satan by Jesus? That had to be really stinging. Jesus was not a meek and mild-mannered man. What He says to Peter is a biting criticism of His most loyal follower and friend. But Peter deserved it.

Jesus Explains Himself

³⁴And when he had called the people *unto him* with his disciples also, he said *unto them*, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. ³⁵For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it.

Jesus calls the people as well as the apostles. He wants everybody to hear this. The Christian way is death. He was not soft selling an easy gospel. The gospel that Jesus preached had hard edged consequences. You had to choose. One foot in the world did not work for Jesus. You had to die to that life and live to life with Jesus.

This is not coming to Jesus for felt needs. The commitment level is much deeper than that. This is, “We come to Jesus and we must do whatever He requires of us.” Jesus wants them to know that the Pharisees and Herod will stay blind, deaf and dumb. They are NOT going to submit to the Lord Jesus. Because those are the men in power, you are going to be treated just like me. I am going to die and so are you. Still want in?

³⁶For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? ³⁷Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? ³⁸Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man

be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

Of things that matter, it will profit a man nothing at all to gain the world and forfeit his soul. Of course, in this life, there is much profit; wealth, fame, power, pleasure, leisure. There are many benefits to seeking the world's way. But Jesus says that if you take all of these and compare them to a life separated from Christ, then they are as nothing. Such a man will eventually find himself without any of that and without his soul as well. In the end, he will have nothing at all.

Tiger Woods. He has it all. Probably the happiest man on the Earth, right? His mother and father, wife and children, proud of their son, husband and father, right?

Jesus coming in glory. My commentaries suggest this is either Pentecost or the visitation of the Lord on Jerusalem in 70AD. I think it is more likely the Ascension, when Jesus officially began to rule.

Mark 9

¹And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

The kingdom of God did come with power at Pentecost.

EXHORTATION

It is easy for us to pick on the Pharisees. They were the enemies of Jesus and deserver their bad name. But we must look at the response of the disciples in order to understand ourselves better. We are more like them.

We have been called by the Lord. We have trusted that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Savior of the World and the Savior of ourselves. This is glorious and we have learned that the Lord is gracious, compassionate, long-suffering.

But we must also honestly evaluate our behavior before the Lord. He has performed many miracles in our lives. For many of you, the fact you are a Christian is miraculous. You did not grow up in a Christian home, or a nominally Christian home, at best. The Lord brought you to Himself in a supernatural way. For others, the fact that you are here in this church, committed to Christ, His Church, your family, the historic reformed faith, is another miracle. Your background should have never brought you here but somehow the Lord did it.

Many of you have seen the Lord do marvelous things in your own life, in your marriage, your children (even having them!), your work, provision for your family. There is much to be thankful for.

And yet, even with all of that proof that Jesus is the Lord and Lord of our lives, you may choose to not trust Him. You have said He is Lord and then you have said with Peter, “No, Lord!” Those are two words that ought not go together. You should not say, “No, Lord!” If you are a Christian you must say “Yes, Lord.” Now I am not sure what you may be fighting the Lord about. You should not be fighting Him about anything. But if you are, you must give in. If you do not give in, He may be forced to exert His strength to subdue you. Better to be lightly wounded, like Jacob, than have the Lord destroy you for your rebellion.

Peter repents. The disciples repent and the Lord restores them. Is there some area in your life where you are saying, “No, Lord!” If so, confess it to Jesus, repent and be restored. Let us pray.