

He Saw Everything Clearly; Mark 8 0464-0466

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In those days, when again a crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat, he called his disciples to him, and said to them, I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days, and have nothing to eat. And if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way.

And some of them have come from far away. And his disciples answered him, How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place? And he asked them, how many loaves do you have? They said seven. And he directed the crowd to sit down on the ground and he took the seven loaves and having given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people and they set them before the crowd.

And they had a few small fish and having blessed them, he said that these also should be set before them. And they ate and were satisfied and he took up the broken pieces left over seven baskets full and there were about 4,000 people. And he sent them away. And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.

The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and said, Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation. And he left them, got into the boat again, and went to the other side.

Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. And he cautioned them, saying, Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod. And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread?

Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up? They said to him, 12 and the seven for the 4,000.

How many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up? And they said to him, seven. And he said to them, do you not yet understand? And they came to Bethsaida and some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village. And when they had, when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, Do you see anything?

And he looked up and said, I see people, but they look like trees walking. Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again. And he opened his eyes. His sight was restored and he saw everything clearly. And he sent him home and he sent him home to his home saying, do not even enter the village. And Jesus went on with his disciples to the village of Caesarea Philippi and on the way he asked his disciples.

Who do people say that I am and they told him John the Baptist and others say Elijah and others one of the prophets and he asked Them but who do you say that I am? Peter answered him you are the Christ and he strictly charged them to tell no one about him and he began to teach them That the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed and after three days rise again.

And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, Get behind me, Satan. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man. And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, If anyone would come after me.

Let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul? For whoever is shame, ashamed of me and on my words in this adulterous and sinful generation of him, will the son of man also be ashamed?

When he comes in the glory of his father with the Holy Angels. So there we have our text for today. The text being the entire 8th chapter of Mark's Gospel. Now, if I may hasten to prevent you from having a heart attack, we won't be looking at all 38 verses very closely. Instead, what we'll be doing today is taking a 30,000 foot overpass over Chapter 8.

Because Chapter 8, is one of the most pivotal chapters in our New Testament. It is certainly the most pivotal chapter in Mark's Gospel. Mark's Gospel contains really four chapters that are of highest importance, four chapters that are pivotal for us. That would be the first chapter. The last chapter and the middle chapter, chapter 1, chapter 8, and chapter 16, along together with chapter 4, which contains the parable of the soils.

And if you remember when we talked about the parable of the soils, we emphasize and we stress the importance of that parable because Jesus Himself stresses the importance of that parable. He Himself says, if you don't understand this parable, then you can't understand anything that I teach. So we spent four Sundays looking at the parable of the soils, necessarily so, because we'll see that play.

We've seen that play into Jesus teachings and into Mark's writings again and again. We'll see that play into the story again today. But chapter 8 stands for us as one of the most pivotal chapters in all of Mark's gospel because it is the center chapter. We are familiar with the Jewish tendency to...

Summarize, or bring things to a climax, or bring to a resolution the story in the center of the story. That was a Jewish tradition, the way Jewish writers liked to do. Now Mark is writing to Roman Christians, but Mark is a Jew himself. And Peter... is the one who is the source of his memoirs here, and Peter, of course, is a Jew.

And so we see here the tendency to take the center chapter and place into the center chapter something of the apex, something of the resolution of the whole story. And we'll see that in Chapter 8, which is why we're taking a high altitude overpass, so that we may watch... Mark's development of the thought how he's going to take us through the chapter and how he's going to lead us in order to Show us what he wants us to see now when we say chapter 8 we remind

ourselves that of course this the whole chapter 8 is something that's foreign to the gospel writer now known as Mark knew nothing about our chapter 8, or chapter 7, or chapter 12.

Instead, what Mark knew was the center section here, which doesn't necessarily fit tidily into our chapter 8. So really, if we back up to about halfway through chapter 7, and continue that into the beginning parts of chapter 9, that's going to constitute what I'll call this center section into which Mark is packing so much pivotal teaching.

This center section contains for us a number of, should we say, odd or problematic sections. Sections that when we come to these sections we just have to scratch our head and say, boy, this is not exactly how I would have written this. In fact, the way that this is written seems to even present a problem for us to deal with.

So we've dealt with a number of those in Mark's gospel so far because Mark, quite frankly, has the most problematic sections in his gospel of any of the four Gospels. So we've dealt with problematic sections before, and just by the way, as we begin to talk about some of these problematic sections today, I'm always encouraged when I come across problematic passages in the Scripture.

Now, our tendency is when we come to, particularly in the Gospels, we come to these sections that want to read to us as though Well, I just don't think that's how I would have written it, or I wouldn't have expected it to happen like that. Those should serve for you as great encouragement, a great reminder that we are indeed reading the words of God and not the words of man, and here's why.

The early church wasn't stupid. The early church found the problematic passages, guess what, just as problematic as we find them. And so, if the early church had ever felt the liberty to remove anything from the passages, to modify, amend, or change anything, then they would have done so to the most problematic of passages.

They weren't stupid. They themselves could read this and just like us say, I wasn't expecting that. I wasn't expecting Jesus to treat the Syrophenician woman like that. But yet, they're there. And so, because they're there, that reminds us. We are not dealing with the words of man, we're dealing with the words of God.

The church has never felt the liberty to remove from God's Word passages that we found difficult or problematic. Please take that and understand that deeply into your souls. Forget all the hype, forget the popular opinion. The church has never... Felt the liberty to remove from scripture those passages that we have to wrestle with.

And so as such, we have our confidence in the scriptures bolstered when we come to difficult passages because we're reminded, you know what, if people had ever felt the liberty to smooth over some of these difficulties, they would've done it in the 2000 years that the church has existed. Yet they have not.

So we are, we are here reading before us. The very words that God has written for us, that God has intended for His church to have, and His church has preserved not just the easy passages, the uplifting passages, they've also preserved those passages with which we have to wrestle. Like, as we remember from a few weeks ago, the Syrophenician woman.

And Jesus encountering of her, and Jesus dealing with her in such a way that make us say, That just doesn't seem characteristic of the Jesus that we have come to know. So in our passage today, we, we are actually on the heels of a couple of other problematic passages. One is, of course, the Syrophenician woman that we've dealt with a few weeks ago.

Jesus is dealing with her, seems to say to us that he's not interested in helping her. This Jesus whom we know to be compassion, the embodiment of compassion, compassion in perfection, a heart that is drawn to those who are ostracized, those who are disadvantaged, particularly women, and here is a woman who is ostracized and disadvantaged, and she comes to Jesus in the picture perfect way of humbling herself before Jesus, professing faith, professing understanding of His teaching, and pleading with His help, and He seems to not be interested in helping her.

So we wrestled with that, and we saw within that that what Jesus is really doing, this interchange, is not for her benefit. He's not trying to draw faith out of her. What he's doing is for the benefit of the disciples because he is teaching them. He's removing from them the remnants of their old ways of thinking that certain people, meaning the Gentiles were defiled people.

He's removing that from them. And he asked them, I only came to the house of Israel. I only came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Is this woman an Israelite? This woman who bows at my feet, professes faith, professes understanding, humbles herself before me. Is she an Israelite or not? So that's the point of his teaching there.

That was a problematic passage that we wrestled with. Then came the healing of the deaf man. The healing of the deaf man in which Jesus does this healing in such a strange and such an odd way, thrusts his fingers in the man's ears, spits, touches the man's tongue, looks up to the heavens, and then says this word in Aramaic, Ephphatha.

And we talked about just why such an odd way of going about this. We wrestled with that and we saw that primarily what Jesus is doing is He's trying to put the deaf man something at ease. The man cannot hear. He is in a tremendously large crowd. He likely doesn't even know why he's been brought there.

Jesus can't talk to him. He can't read Jesus's lips. And so Jesus is trying to communicate to him, I'm going to touch you in your areas of need. I'm going to touch these ears. I'm going to touch this tongue. I'm going to open these. And God's going to do this as he looks up to heaven. So that was another difficult passage.

But here in our passage today, we are faced with I'm going to read you two or three, depending on how we want to divide this up, at least two or three more, should we say, odd or at least difficult passages to wrestle with. So as we begin, let's look at the first one. The first one is going to be what's known as the second feeding.

And the second feeding takes place in the first 10 verses here of chapter 8. And what's difficult about this is doesn't it read as though we've read this before? In fact, it reads almost exactly like we've read this before. The similarities between this miraculous feeding... And the first miraculous feeding are remarkable.

So Mark and Matthew both include for us two feedings. And Luke and John include one feeding. So all together that's six accounts of miraculous feedings that are taking place for us in the Gospels.

And the question that we would ask is, the most natural question is, why are there two feedings? And why are these two feedings so similar to each other?

So in your notes here, on the front page of your notes, I've made a nice little chart for you. I spend a lot of time doing that. Um, you can, you can, give me some gratuity later on that. But the, the chart there, you'll see I've broken apart all of the similarities, all the differences between them. So here's what we're going to do.

We're going to walk one by one through all the similarities and all the differences. We're going to look at the biblical background and we're going to ask ourselves, what's the spiritual importance of each one of these? All right? Just kidding. Now you can just look at that and you can kind of absorb it on your own.

We'll just. Note the fact that there are a lot of similarities and there's a lot of differences. And so commentators, when they approach this feeding, they have to wrestle with the question of why is this feeding even here? Remember, we've taught ourself to ask the question every time we come to a passage, particularly a miracle, we ask ourself why is this here?

Because Jesus performed thousands of healings, thousands of miracles. Why did Holy Spirit select the ones that He selected? So why is this one here? So those commentators who are, should we say, anti supernatural in their beliefs, they don't believe that Scripture is supernaturally inspired, they don't believe it's the writings of God, they would approach this in typically the same way.

You see them write about this to say, well, this is just really a great example, this is a great example of just what sloppy, uninformed, Amateur writers, the gospel writers were, especially Mark. Because here's what Mark has done. Obviously, Mark has taken two different legends, and he's included two different legends in this account that he's given to us.

And he probably even forgot that he just... And I'm going to talk to you a little bit about how Jesus gave the first one. So he's probably sitting here at his desk, writing down these things, and he's got all these papers on his desk. And among these papers, he's got these different accounts of legends or myths, or maybe they're actual things that Jesus did.

But he's got all these accounts on these pieces of paper, and he's piecing them together. And he forgot... That he's already given this one. So he gives it twice. But in his amateurishness, amateurishness, whatever that would be, in his sloppiness, he includes two accounts of the same event or the same legend that are mostly alike, but kind of not alike.

So there we go. You can't trust anything that these gospel writers say because they're not even, there's not even writing down the words of God. They're not even writing the words of men and then doing it well. They're doing it sloppily. So that's how most would approach this. That's how, if you read the commentators, you'll find that sort of explanation given over in different forms over and over and over.

So the first question we must ask ourself is, are we dealing with one instance, one miracle, or two? Now, I fully realize that probably everybody in the room will readily say, of course we're dealing with two feedings because we believe our scriptures. That's why we're here. We believe our scriptures. But nonetheless, it's important for us to just take a moment to just...

bolster our belief, to just reaffirm our belief that we have the trustworthy words of God. And there's no reason whatsoever for us to doubt that Mark is including the events of two different occasions, and neither of these occasions are legends or myths. Instead, they are accountings of the same type of miracle that occurs twice.

In remarkably similar format. So you can take a look at your notes there. You can kind of see some of the differences. There's a number of differences in detail. Which a lot of commentators, commentators who would subscribe to the inerrancy of God's Word, they would point to the differences. And a lot of commentators will do that.

They'll say, look, these two stories might look the same, but there's actually a lot of differences between the two. The most apparent difference would be the difference that the first feeding was a feeding of mostly Jews, the second feeding was a feeding of mostly Gentiles. That's a significant difference, but we're not going to dwell on that.

In fact, we're not going to dwell on any of the differences. Instead, what we're going to do is we're going to look at the similarities. Because, you know, a natural reading emphasizes what? Just a plain reading of the passage. What jumps out at you? The differences? Do you read that and you say, wait a minute?

In the first feeding, Jesus had them sit on the grass. In the second one, He said, He had them sit on the ground. Is that what jumps out at you? No, what jumps out at you are the similarities. What jumps out at you is just the feeling of Deja Vu that you have read this before. That's the natural, plain reading of the text, and that's the one that we should go with first.

So, Mark's intention is not for us to read this and go, Hmm, there's a lot of differences here. Mark's intention is for us to read this and say, Wow, this is almost exactly like the first feeding. So, just think about all the similarities. They're in a wilderness place. There is a tremendously large crowd.

The crowd has not planned for food. Jesus notices that everybody's hungry, and they're getting weak and faint. And so there's this interchange between Jesus and the disciples. How are we going to feed all these people? The disciples provide Jesus with a meager amount of food, bread and fish. Jesus takes the food, thanks God, or blesses it, breaks it in the breaking apart.

In the breaking of the bread, it's multiplied. Everybody eats, everybody's satisfied after being sat on the ground. Everybody's sat down, they eat, they eat their fill. After that, Jesus dismisses them. After dismissing them, then there's a boat journey. On the boat journey, the disciples express yet another misunderstanding.

And then after all that, there's another interchange with the Pharisees. So you see how remarkably similar the two are. And that's what's supposed to strike us. Why are these two accounts here and why are they so much like each other? So we'll put that in our mind and we'll begin thinking why two feedings and why are they so much alike?

Now, let me just take a moment here as sort of an aside and just help us as we all work on honing our biblical interpretation skills. In both of these stories, there are a fair number of numbers that takes place. In the first feeding, there were the five fish, there were the twelve baskets that were taken, I'm sorry, the two fish, there were the five loaves, there was the twelve baskets taken up.

In the second feeding, there was the, first of all there's the, seven loaves, and then there's the 4, 000 people. The first feeding was 5, 000 people, the second feeding 4, 000 people, and then they take up the seven baskets afterwards. So there's a lot of numbers there. And inevitably, whenever we come into a passage of scripture that has numbers involved in it, then a whole lot of people really go crazy over numbers and they start seeing significance in all the numbers.

And I just want to say this real quickly to say. Cool your jets when it comes to numbers in the Bible. There is not a single passage in all of your Bible in which the meaning of that passage is wrapped up in the symbolic interpretation of numbers. There's not a single passage in all of Scripture. In which you need to understand some sort of symbolic meaning behind a number in order to understand what God is saying to you.

Now, does that say that God never uses numbers symbolically? No. Sometimes God uses numbers in a symbolic sort of meaning to add to the passage, to help us. For example, well, a couple of weeks ago on an evening service that was not here at this church, an evening service, I was preaching David and Goliath.

And so Goliath is shouting these insults for 40 days. And so when we see a period of 40, 40 days or 40 years in the scriptures, then what that's saying to us is this is a time of testing, right? And so God uses things like that. But nowhere is the meaning of the passage wrapped up in numbers. So the numbers that we come across here, I read all sorts of crazy things.

People will assign all kinds of crazy meanings to the numbers. The first feeding in which there was five loaves, where those five loaves somehow symbolically become the five books of Moses. The twelve baskets, of course, that one's easy, that's the... Either the 12 tribes, or the 12 apostles, or maybe both.

The, the two fish, well those are the two witnesses. The, the second, the second feeding, the 4, 000, people seeing the 4, 000. Well this is a, this is a feeding of the Gentiles, so 4, 004, that must be the four directions on the compass. North, south, east, and west, yeah. Or the seven loaves, well those seven, yeah, those seven loaves, they're the seven Gentile deacons in Acts chapter 9.

And it just gets really crazier and crazier after that. So whenever, whenever we begin to vest numbers with more significance than God gives them, we're always on the wrong track. The meaning of the passage is not bound up in the numbers. When Jesus is asking them, now how many baskets did you collect up?

How many people did I feed? How much was left over? He's not saying, think about this, there's some significance in the numbers here. No, what he's saying is, do you remember, there was a bunch of people, very little food, everybody ate their fill, and we had plenty left over. Do you remember that? Do you remember that?

Our Bibles are not a book full of enigmas and puzzles that only the cleverest people can figure out. And unless you can figure out this secret code to the numbers, you can't understand your Bible. That's not how God wrote His Word to us. So the meaning of the miracle is not bound up in the number.

Instead, let's think about the similarity. So first of all, let's just reassure ourselves this is two, these are two different miracles. They're two different miracles. Well, we can see some differences, but

then let's, let's think just quickly about a couple of differences that are key. First, we want to think about the difference in the word used for fish.

So in the first feeding, Jesus uses the standard word for fish. There's these two fish and the standard word for fish just means a normal, ordinary fish. That feeding takes place on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. We know that the Sea of Galilee, we've talked about the productivity, the fruitfulness of the Sea of Galilee in terms of producing fish.

Well, the type of fish that the Sea of Galilee produces are typically. This is the normal, average sized fish. You may have heard that most people believe that tilapia originated from the Sea of Galilee. This is the normal, average sized kind of fish. In the second feeding, the diminutive, we have heard that word many times before, recently in Mark's Gospel.

The diminutive is used, which is translated rightly. Little fish are small fish. This feeding takes place, not on the shore of sea, of the sea of Galilee, but this feeding takes place in an area that was known and still is known today for its production of, you guessed it. Sardines. Sardines. And so what the, what the second feeding involves is a few sardines, which is why they're not numbered.

Who counts sardines? Who even wants to eat them, by the way? But who counts sardines. So that we're just told it's just a few small fish. All right, so that's the first difference. The second difference that we see that helps us to know we're not talking about the same miracle twice. The second difference is in the word basket.

The first miracle Mark uses the word that means a very small basket. it would hold about a liter, somewhere around a gallon. If you remember when we talked about that one, I compared it to an ancient fanny pack. It would oftentimes have a strap you could put around your waist, you'd take it to market.

It was just a small basket. It would hold about a liter of material. That's the word that was used. Twelve of those was taken up. In the second miracle, a completely and entirely different word is used for basket that means In fact, it's the same word that shows up in Acts chapter 9 to describe the way that Paul escaped Damascus.

You remember? How he was lowered down over the wall in a basket. So that basket is big enough for a man to fit in. So now we're talking about quite a large basket. Seven of the large baskets are taken up after the second feeding, which means that the second feeding, even though there was fewer baskets, it was more left over.

Now, you might say, well, that just sounds like, well, just a stylistic difference. Maybe Mark is reading from one account and they preferred one word, and then this other account prefers the other word. So it's just a stylistic difference. No, no, no. Look with me. The difference in the words, Jesus maintains the difference in the words as He questions the disciples about the miracle.

Look at verse 19. When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many small baskets? We're left over using the word there for small basket and then verse 20 and the seven for the four thousand How many different word large baskets were taken up? So Jesus maintains the distinction in words and when Jesus maintains the distinction in words It tells us this is not just two accounts in which people two different people preferred different words this is a different

word describing a different type of basket a small basket present at the first feeding and A large basket present at the second feeding.

Finally, and we'll put this issue to rest and move on. Finally, Jesus questions the disciples to say, Do you remember I fed them twice? Do you remember the first time? The people and the leftover? And do you remember the second time? Now, if this was really just one miracle conglomerated into, or one miracle split apart into two different tellings, then it makes no sense why Jesus asked them, Do you remember the first one?

Do you remember the second one? Okay, so clearly, we'll put that to rest now, clearly, this is not just a copying and pasting. This is not just one event or one legend that's told twice. This is two feedings that are remarkably like one another. So, beginning there, we read here about the first feeding, and now we come to the second episode of chapter 8, which is the Pharisees, at the conclusion of this, again, both feedings.

At the conclusion, the Pharisees show up. And they are not happy. And so here, beginning from verse 11, the Pharisees came and they began to argue with him. Some translations say they began to question him or discuss with him. Those words are far too weak. In fact, argue is not strong enough. The word that Mark uses here literally means harass or heckle.

So these Pharisees come and they are literally So I know we have this mental picture in our minds of what all these scenes look like as they play it out. And one of the pictures that we have is this picture of Jesus and maybe His disciples are behind Him. And there's these Pharisees, and they're sort of having this face to face.

That's not what's happening here. In this occasion, Jesus is being heckled. Like King David, as they were ousting Him from Jerusalem. And, what was the guy's name? Abiathar? Not Abiathar. Who was the guy's name that was heckling David? Where's all your mighty strength now, David? Where's all your mighty people that follow you now, David?

Where are you now, David? This is what this is like. Show us a sign, Jesus. Show us one of your signs. Come on. Do something spectacular for us, Jesus. They are heckling him. And as they were heckling him, they're heckling him over this seeking a sign from heaven to test him. Come on, Jesus, show us a sign, you big powerful miracle worker, you.

heal this person, cast this demon out, show us this sign. Which makes us want to say, how many signs do you need to see? How many signs are you going to need to see? Jesus has shown sign after sign after sign from chapter one. Show us a sign from heaven to test, and they're trying to test him. That word there is also translated tempt.

Chapter one, Jesus went into the wilderness to be tempted. So they're tempting Jesus, verse 12, and he sighed deeply in his spirit. Mark is never embarrassed to show us Jesus's emotional reactions. He's never embarrassed by that. He's never shy about showing us the full humanity of Jesus as Jesus sighs deeply in his spirit.

Come on, you big old mighty Jesus. You're the old Messiah. Show us something. These people again, these people again. So he sighed deeply in his spirit and he said, why does this generation seek a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation. So show us a sign, Jesus. No sign. I'm not doing any tricks for you.

So they ask for a sign. Jesus denies them this sign. So let's just remind ourselves that asking for a sign, seeking a sign, it's not portrayed in scripture as something that's necessarily sinful. We see many times that there are signs asked for, signs are given. In your notes there, there's an example in Isaiah where God Himself says, Ask of me a sign, and God says that a number of times.

Ask of me a sign and I'll show you a sign. And there's a number of asking of signs in the Old Testament. Not all of those are sinful. Some of those are quite questionable. Some of those are sinful, like Gideon with the fleece and everything. But many of them are not. And in fact, Jesus Himself would show signs.

Jesus Himself would show signs even when He wasn't asked. You remember the paralytic? As the paralytic was lowered down, and Jesus says, Your sins are forgiven. And then knowing what everybody's thinking, Who are you to forgive sins? Jesus says, you want a sign? I'll show you a sign. What if I were to tell him to get up and walk?

Would that be a good sign? So he turns to the man, stand up and walk. See? So Jesus himself will often offer a sign. So the asking of a sign is not necessarily sinful. But any good teacher knows, any parent knows, don't you? You know the difference between a genuine question and a challenge, don't you? You know the difference between having your authority challenged?

And being asked a genuine question. You know the difference? between someone who is trying to assert that they're really the smart one, and they're going to show you the smart one through their snobby questions, and someone who's coming with a genuine question. So certainly the master, whom John's Gospel tells us, he knew the hearts of men.

Nobody needed to tell him the hearts of men. He knows the hearts of men. He knows that the heart of this question is not coming from a desire to know and have a question answered. This question is really a challenge. This question is really a smack against His authority, against His own teaching, against His position.

And so, to this, Jesus says, no sign is going to be given. I am not here to scoffers, which, by the way, we should take notice here. of how Jesus treats scoffers. The next verse is, He left them. And the word Mark uses there could also be translated, He abandoned them. He turned His heel and left. Turning His back to them, He said, I'm done with you.

This is the equivalent of what Jesus Himself told His disciples to do. When they reject your message, knock out the dust of your sandals against them. As a demonstration to show them you are outside the parameters of the people of God. Jesus Himself does the same thing. He just leaves them. This is how Jesus treats scoffers.

There is not one instance in all of Scripture in which Jesus tries to reason with a scoffer. Jesus spends great amount of time talking with all kinds of people answering questions, but when they come to Jesus with a scoffer type attitude, Jesus's response is, I'm done. I'm not showing you anything. I'm leaving.

So they're asking for the sign. No sign's going to be given. They come to Jesus with this hard heart, with this Remember how the Pharisees, remember how we've said how they are the picture of the

sin in chapter three that we called enlightened blasphemy. Remember that? Enlightened blasphemy means we, it's sometimes called the unpardonable sin in that passage.

But what that means is in the face of illumination from God, your hard heart says. I won't yield in the face of God's enlightening work to somehow through the work of his spirit somehow show This man really is God the scriptures really are true in the face of that the hard heart that says I still will not Yield to that that's the sin of enlightened blasphemy That's the sin of having been shown something of the truth and yet not yielding to it And so they come to Jesus They've seen sign after sign after sign after sign and yet they come to Jesus show us a sign He's not going to show us because they come to him from a heart That's not ready to stop asking questions and believe they come to him from a heart that's seeking how to embarrass him Seeking how to put him in his place seeking how to show all the other people watching and listening This man really can't be listened to You know, it's been said, I didn't coin this phrase, I wish I did, but it's too clever for me.

It's been said that if you come to the scriptures with a big brain, you will find the scriptures completely sufficient for you. But if you come to the scriptures with a big head, you will find the scriptures completely insufficient. You get that? If you come to the scriptures with a big brain. And ask the scriptures to answer all your intellectual questions and to satisfy your curiosity.

They won't answer every question you have because the scriptures are about an infinite God. We will never have all of our questions answered. But if we come to the scriptures with a big brain, we will find them sufficient for everything we ask. But if we come to the scriptures with a big head, We will find them wholly and entirely insufficient, incapable, unable to sustain any sort of belief because we came to them with a big head.

There's a lot to be said there. These Pharisees are coming to Jesus. Not with questions that they sincerely want answered. They're coming to Jesus with a big head. They're coming to Jesus with a great big opinion of themselves. They're coming to Jesus with a closed heart. Even though they've been shown something of the truth, they're unwilling to believe and unwilling to submit to any of it.

And Jesus says to them, I'm leaving. I'm done. So he left them, got into the boat, and went off to the other side. Now the next episode... This is the episode of the teaching that takes place in the boat. So now once again they find themselves in the boat and then following the first feeding, there's the episode in the boat in which there's this misunderstanding that's brought to light.

Same thing here for this boat journey. In fact, there's been three boat journeys in Mark in which the lack of understanding of the disciples is brought to the front. Three boat journeys. The first was the storm, the second was the second storm, and now this is the third one in which the boat journey is the occasion for bringing to light their lack of understanding.

So they're having this conversation about, with each other, they're saying, You know, we forgot bread, which tells us probably some time has passed. There were seven large baskets of bread just previously. We don't know what happened to that. Maybe they gave a bunch of it away. But whatever the case is, there's now no bread, which reminds us Mark is almost certainly not arranging these stories chronologically.

He's almost certainly arranging these. Thematically, to teach us a theme, a point. So in this occasion, they have no bread, they're talking to each other, you can just kind of hear them, you see them sort of whispering to each other, you know, Jesus may be in the back of the boat, and he's watching the disciples up there in the front of the boat, and they're whispering to each other, you know, I thought you were bringing bread, you were supposed to bring it this time, we don't have any bread, and we're starting out over the water, we don't have, we don't have any bread.

And so then Jesus interrupts their little conversation, which, by the way, don't you hate when people have a whispering conversation in front of you? So Jesus interrupts their little whispering conversation to say, Beware the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod. which is like this out of the blue, beware the leaven of the Pharisees and the Herod.

And so he interrupts their conversation with this teaching about beware of the leaven. Now, before we continue, let's just make sure we understand Jesus's analogy of leaven. Some of you might have a translation that says yeast. You might have a translation that says yeast. I think N I V. All right, so if your translation says yeast, it's wrong because the word does not mean yeast.

In fact, there is a crucial difference between yeast and leaven that if you understand the difference destroys the analogy. Yeast and leaven are not the same thing. So yeast is what's used today as a bread rising agent, as a dough rising agent, and it works completely differently from Yeast is something that you put in your bread and then, you know, it makes it rise and everything and if you mess it up What's the worst thing that happens if you mess up your leaf your your yeast?

Somebody tell me it might not rise or it might be like the I love Lucy thing where the you know The bread is pushing the door the oven door open and coming out into the kitchen. Is that live love? I love Lucy So it might be that you got this overabundance of rising or it might not rise at all That's the worst thing that can happen with yeast Leaven is not like yeast.

Leaven is simply cutting off a small portion of the dough batch that has already risen, cutting off a small portion, setting it aside in supposedly a cool place. Which in the ancient world was pretty hard. But setting it aside in a cool place. And when you're ready for the next batch, that small amount of old dough is then given some juices, usually fruit juices with sugar in it, to then reignite the fermentation process.

And then that small amount of old dough is put into the new dough to make the new dough rise. Anybody see a problem with that? The possibility for rancid leaven was extremely high. And that was the whole problem with leaven. Was that often times it would be sour. It would spoil. Yeast doesn't do that. So often times it would spoil, meaning that the whole new dough was now rancid.

You see how that doesn't work with yeast? The, the analogy breaks apart when you make it yeast. Leaven is the only thing that works once you understand why leaven was dangerous. Why leaven in the ancient world often times ruined the whole batch of dough. Because it could have gone sour or rancid. Maybe you didn't realize it, and now the whole batch of dough, which was just fine before, is now spoiled.

That's the whole point. So whenever we come across leaven in the scriptures, almost always, it's used as an analogy of a corrupting influence, a wicked influence, a sinful influence, that has the ability, when mixed together with something good, of ruining the whole thing. It's kind of like the one bad apple sort of thing, only it's a much more powerful analogy.

So that's the key to leaven, that's the understanding of leaven, is that a small amount of it, you might not ever know, but a small amount of it could be rancid, it could be sour, and ruin the whole new batch, and you don't know until everybody gets sick. And so Jesus says, beware, be warned. You know, we have lots of warnings in our world, don't we?

I think about, you know, you ever seen the Prop 65 warning? It's not the most ridiculous thing in the world. The Prop 65 warning that's basically on every single thing that you ever buy. Which is the state of California has determined that this contains something that might cause cancer. If you take it and eat it in your food every day for the next 20 years it might cause...

What a ridiculous warning. So we, we hear all these warnings in our world today and sometimes, sometimes we just grow sort of numb to them. We just grow sort of dull to them because we hear so many warnings. But listen, when the Son of God gives us a warning, that's when we stop in our tracks and we say, what is your warning, Master?

We're here to listen. His warning is, beware the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod. Now what does that mean? Well in Mark's, I'm sorry, in Matthew's gospel and Luke's gospel, the leaven of the Pharisees is associated with their teaching. So maybe there's something to it there, maybe there's a continuity here.

But really, when we think about the Pharisees and Herod, the commonality It really is the same thing that we mentioned earlier, enlightened blasphemy. They both have been shown something of the truth. The Pharisees have seen sign after sign after sign. Herod, what about Herod? Remember he's the one, he said John, baptizer.

Come back to life. So he was there. John the baptizer was in prison. He preached to Herod over and over. He saw the signs. He's heard of Jesus's, all of Jesus's signs. And in light of all that, he says, Maybe this is John, come back to life. So both of them have been shown something of the truth and yet in their hardness of heart and in their desire to unbelieve, they resist the truth.

That's what Jesus is getting at. So Jesus says to them, beware, beware of the unbelief that's That springs from a heart that even though you've been shown the truth, nevertheless wants to cling to your unbelief. Beware of that. And Jesus says that comes in the context of what? Worrying about earthly needs.

That's what he says. Worrying about earthly needs. They're worrying about bread. We forgot the bread, guys. And in the context of worrying over earthly needs, Jesus says, this is an open door. An open door for unbelief. The unbelief of a little bit of sour leaven, a little bit of rancid leaven to creep into your soul and cause you to stop believing the truth that you have been shown and that you should believe.

So Jesus says, beware of that. And so we should take that warning to heart today. Beware. Jesus says it to us in the same way, beware the leaven of unbelief. That will creep into your soul and cause you to just disbelieve just a little bit. Disbelieve just a little bit. You know, the enemy does not need you to disbelieve all of the scripture.

Just a little bit. Just a little bit is okay. Just a little bit of that leaven. Because as Paul says to the Galatians, a little leaven leavens what? The whole lump. So that's the warning. Beware of this. And

so then they respond by saying, what? He must know. How did he know? He knows we don't have bread. He's going to be mad.

And then Jesus goes into the same teaching once again. We've heard this before. If you, do you have eyes? You guys have eyes. Why don't you see? You have ears. Why don't you hear? He who has ears, he can hear. He who has eyes can see. What about the first feeding guys? What about the second feeding? Do you remember all those things that we took up?

Do you remember all of that? So then he goes back through that with them. about the teaching of the leaven. Now, the next story he goes into is another story that is a bit problematic for us. It's the healing of the blind man, the man at Bethsaida, the blind man that's healed at Bethsaida. So then after all that, he says, they go to Bethsaida and then they bring him this blind man and they beg him to touch the blind man.

So then Jesus then takes the blind man, touches him, and then takes him aside just like the deaf man. And then he heals the blind man and in the healing of the blind man comes one of the most problematic passages in Mark's gospel. Because what have we said over and over and over and over with every healing that Jesus performs?

We have said they're instantaneous, they're complete, they don't come in stages, they don't come in steps. Jesus heals and the person is 100 percent healed right away. There's no therapy, there's no recovery period. Peter's mother in law gets up and starts serving them. The leper is completely cleansed. All the fingers and ears and toes are regrown.

The, withered hand is completely restored. The demon is cast out, and the man formerly known as Legion is sitting in his right mind. Over and over and over again, the sea is told to be quiet, and it's a great calm. Every miracle that Jesus performs is instantaneous and complete, except this one. This one miracle.

This one healing Jesus performs apparently in stages or in steps because he spits he touches the man's eyes And he says now can you see and the man says I can see but just barely the people look like trees walking around And then Jesus touches his eyes again. Now. Can you see? Oh, yeah now now I can see okay go home So there's one miracle of all of them.

So here here's how many commentators treat that they say boy This was a tough one This, for some reason, this was a really hard one. Jesus, Jesus had a hard time pulling off this healing. For whatever reason, this was, this was a difficult one for Him. Jesus had to sort of back up and come at it again. Kind of like, well, in the last month or two months, I think, I've had three surgeries on this eye.

First one didn't work. Second one didn't work. We're hoping the third one works. You know, first one, okay, let's back up, come at it again. Second one, okay, let's back up one more time, let's try this again. So is that what's happening here with Jesus? He didn't quite get it the first time. I mean, He did restore some sight.

The man can now see something, but Jesus wasn't quite satisfied. And He says, well, let me give this a second try. Does that in any way concur with your understanding of the Son of God? Is it even remotely possible? That the one who created those eyes had trouble restoring them. That

the one who created those very eyes in the womb of his mother, who created her in the womb of her mother, who created her in the womb of her mother, all the way back to the side of Adam.

Which, by the way, the word rib is not in there, so I don't know where we got rib, but from the side of Adam, the one who has created every mother all the way from Eve, does it make any sense that he had to give it two good tries? That does not in any way concur with our understanding of the Son of God. So clearly and plainly, Jesus is doing something else here.

Plainly, Jesus wants to show something or demonstrate something in the two steps of the healing. Now, the last time that Jesus wanted to demonstrate something, who was it for? It was for the disciples, wasn't it? He wanted to demonstrate something for the disciples, the Syrophenician woman, and he wanted to demonstrate to them.

The principle of cleanness and uncleanness. Alright, so here's the same sort of thing. Jesus wants to demonstrate something for the disciples. So what is it? What could a two-stage healing, what could a two step healing be intended to demonstrate for the disciples? A two-step healing. Well, recently, there's a man who couldn't hear.

Jesus put his fingers in his ears. Then he could hear. Here's a man who can't see. Jesus touches his eyes. Now he can see. So there's a hearing. There's a seeing. Jesus keeps asking. If you have ears to hear, you can hear. If you have eyes to see, you can see. Why don't you see? Why don't you hear? Why don't you understand?

So there's that. Two stage healing. First, he sees a little bit. Then he sees plainly. What could Jesus be doing? Wait a minute, wait a minute. Weren't there two feedings?

Weren't there two feedings? That the writer seems to intentionally want us to see as two parallel things that have so much in common that it's impossible to ignore them. And in both of those feedings, weren't both of those feedings a demonstration of Jesus showing himself? Showing himself to be the provider, to be the shepherd, showing himself to be the Son of God.

And weren't both of those feedings followed by the disciples seeing a little, but not clearly? Are we starting to see a pattern? Could it be that Jesus is demonstrating for the disciples? What the feedings are doing. Jesus shows himself. After the first feeding, did the disciples get it? Kinda. I mean, they certainly got something about Jesus.

Remember, these disciples, at Jesus word, they've left everything and they followed Him. So they get something. They're not completely ignorant and completely unbelieving. They get something, and that's the picture of the disciples consistently through Mark's Gospel. They kinda get it, but then, not. So, the first feeding, Jesus shows himself to them.

After that feeding, they've got this deep misperception that although they understand some things, although they see people but they look like trees walking, nevertheless Jesus comes to them on the water. I am, I am, intending to pass them by. Remember all that? And he reveals himself to them. Now after that revealing of himself, do the disciples understand?

Understand? Meh, kinda... They're closer. They seem to be getting more of it but still they see people but they look like trees moving. Now the second feeding and the second feeding occurs and

each time it's like okay now we're Are we learning more? Are we seeing more? Remember, this is before the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, before the giving of the Holy Spirit.

The disciples appear to be slowly, step by step, stage by stage, they appear to be getting it. And if that's what Mark is showing us, what would we expect would come next? If Mark is showing us by one feeding, now I'm starting to understand about this man, Jesus. But then another feeding. Okay, now I'm getting more of this.

If that's what Mark was showing us, what would you expect comes next?

Who do men say I am?

Who do you say I am? You are the Christ. Would that be what you would expect? You are the Christ. We see now what we didn't see before.

You see, the first half of Mark's gospel, he is preoccupied entirely with answering the disciples question on the water. Who is this man? Who is this man that speaks to wind? And so Mark is, has taken up almost entirely that question. Who is this man? And remember how Jews like to climax in the middle. And so in the very center of the gospel, in chapter 8, you are the Christ.

We saw, we saw something from the beginning. You told us to follow you, and we, we saw something. But it was like, the people looked like trees walking. And then you showed us this. And then he showed us that, and then he showed us that, and now it's like, we see, you are the Christ.

But

people are still like trees walking, aren't they? Because what happens now? And he began to teach them how it is that the Son of Man must be arrested, and convicted, and tried, and beaten, and mocked, and crucified.

And Peter took him aside and rebuked him. And said to him, Jesus, this is a good opportunity for me to teach you a little bit about the Old Testament. Because that's not what happens to the Christ, Jesus. That's not what happens to the anointed one. To which Jesus will say, can you see Peter? Well, yeah, but I mean, people are still like trees walking.

Now let me show you more. And he began to teach them how the son of man must suffer. Because Peter has seen enough and the disciples have seen enough to see you are the Christ. But they have yet to see that the Christ can only be recognized in his first coming as the bloody, suffering, dying Christ.

That's the only way he can be recognized in his first coming. Later, the chief priest... We'll have Jesus standing before him. And even there in those early morning hours before the Roman whips, even then he's already suffered abuse. So as Jesus stands before the high priest, and his eyes are already beginning to swell and grow black, and blood is already trickling from his nose and from one ear, and scratches are all over his face, he says mockingly to Jesus, mockingly, in the most demeaning manner he possibly can, so you are the Christ?

You, you are the Christ. I am.

I am.

If this is what Mark is doing, one feeding shows a little, I'm beginning to see. Another feeding shows some more, I'm beginning to see. Opening the ears, I'm beginning to hear. Open the eyes, I'm beginning to see. You're the Christ. Okay, now, let me show you some more. If that's Mark's progression, what would you expect comes next?

Look at your Bibles.

The transfiguration. The most glorious revealing of the Christ in all of the Gospels. Do you see what Mark is doing? In Matthew's parallel account, after Peter makes the confession, You are the Christ, what does Jesus say? Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, Peter, but my Father in heaven has revealed this to you.

What Matthew states in a statement, Mark is showing us in illustrations. You see? Matthew says, you could only, Jesus says at the words of Matthew, you could only know this because God has revealed this to you. Mark is showing us the same thing. He's just showing us by story after story after story. Because Peter now sees something, he understands something, but he has so much yet to see.

He has so much clarity yet to be brought to him. And yet, this is what Jesus is doing, and this is how Mark is leading us through. And this is why it's helpful to just take this step back and see, Oh, this is what Mark is doing, beginning from the first feeding at the end of chapter six, all the way through chapter seven, the Syrophenician woman, the deaf man, the second feeding, now the blind man at Bethsaida, all the interchanges with the Pharisees, and now you are the Christ.

Well, wait. Okay. We got that much, Peter. But, now let me tell you something else. Let me tell you about this Christ that I am. Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. You're getting fuzzy again. You're getting blurry again, Jesus. You're, you're, you're sort of getting blurred. You're starting to look like a tree walking again.

All right, let me take you up the mountain and let me show you myself.

Now here's the point. Here's the point to take home with you today. How did all of this come? How did the deaf man here? How did the blind man see? How did the hungry people eat? How did How did Peter, James, and John see Jesus on the mountain? All of it came the same way, through divine action. Through divine intervention.

That's the only way any of them perceived any of this. The Pharisees come to Jesus having seen the same things that the disciples have seen. And they taunt Jesus. Meanwhile, the disciples have seen the same things the Pharisees have seen. And they say, you are the Christ. What's the difference? The divine action of God.

The divine intervention. The thrusting of the fingers in the ears. The touching of the eyes. The touch from God. Which brings illumination. Which opens the eyes. And brings seeing. And brings hearing. And brings understanding. This is why Jesus will say again and again, Don't you have eyes? Don't you have ears?

Now the disciples, they don't understand this. They don't understand this any more than the man that Jesus was touching his eyes or the man Jesus was touching his ears. They don't understand what's happening, but here's what they do understand. You're the Christ. We see that now. We understand. We don't know how we came to this.

We don't know how you did this work in us, but we now understand that we see you. It's like John 3. As Jesus is talking to Nicodemus. And Jesus is having that interchange. You must be born again, Nicodemus. How in the world can anybody enter their mother's womb a second time and be born? Well, Nicodemus, it's like the wind.

You see what the wind does. You see the leaves flutter. You see the branches sway. You see the dust get kicked up. But you don't see the wind. In the same way, you see what the Spirit does. But you don't see the Spirit. You don't see His work. You see Jesus because the Spirit has blown upon you, but you don't see the Spirit working.

Or it's like Paul says to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 2, that this gospel that we preach is foolishness. Foolishness to those who are being lost, but to us who are being saved, it's the power of God unto salvation. So how can one message be foolishness to some people and the message that's powerful unto salvation to others?

How can it be? Divine touch. Divine interaction. That's the only explanation for it. That's how some can hear the same message, the same sermon, and think, when is this guy ever going to be done? Why can't he just wrap it up in 45 minutes? And others will hear the same thing and say, I wished he would keep talking.

You see? Same message. Divine touch. And we know not how it's happening. We know not how the spirit works. This is why we sung the song earlier. Remember the words to that song earlier? It's an old one. We all probably know it. 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 God did that, but here's what I do know. I know him in whom I have believed, and He is able to guard what He has entrusted to me against that day. That's what I know. I know Him. I don't know how He did this, but I know Him. I know not how the Spirit moves, convincing men of sin, revealing Jesus through the Word, creating faith in Him.

I know not how that works. But here's what I do know. I know Him. I know Him because He showed me Him.

So here's the takeaway from the overview of chapter 8. Two takeaways. The necessity of divine intervention, the necessity of the touch of God, and the deep need that what He does show you, you yield to it. You see how all that works together in chapter 8. You know nothing that the Spirit doesn't show you, yet what He does show you, the extreme critical need for obedience to what He has shown you.