



Mark 8

An OCF Bible Study

Mark 8

Have the disciples seen anything like this feeding of the masses previously (v. 1-10)? Yes (Mark 6:30).

Did the disciples clearly remember the earlier lessons they had learned? They had arranged the 5,000 people in groups, distributed the food, cleaned up twelve basketfuls, and they didn't remember a thing. We can imagine Jesus hoping one of the disciples might say, "Jesus, this rings a bell; didn't we do something like this before."

Did Jesus rebuke the disciples at this time? No What does that say about Jesus? He is gracious and merciful.

Application: Have you ever experienced God's patience? Has He ever had to teach you the same lesson more than once? It's easy to criticize the disciples for their response. But when we truly acknowledge how patient Jesus is when we lack faith or are slow to understand, then we can sympathize identify with these disciples' struggles.

Why did the Pharisees ask Jesus to show them a miracle, a sign from heaven (v. 11)? To test Him. To see if He really was who He claimed to be. This demand for a "special" sign was an extreme example of the arrogance and pride of the Pharisees towards Jesus. Haven't they seen enough signs already? **How did Jesus respond ? (v. 12)?** You're not getting a sign. This is not a sideshow at the carnival!

What did Jesus mean when he said, "Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod"? Yeast was a common metaphor for what (v. 15)? Corruption or evil or sin that spreads like yeast as it permeates the whole loaf of bread. The yeast in this case was the pervasively corrupt teaching of the Pharisees (distortion of Scripture, rules, legalism) that spreads slowly and quietly and affects everything it touches, i.e. the hearts and minds of the people. The leaven of Herod would include skepticism, immorality and worldliness.

How did the disciples react when Jesus spoke of the two leavenings (v. 16)? They were clueless. The disciples didn't relate it to a spiritual idea at all. All they could think of was the bread that goes into the stomach.

This time Jesus strongly confronted His disciples over their lack of understanding. In view of the two miraculous feedings they had witnessed, they should have understood who He was. Why didn't they understand (v. 17-21)? Their hearts were hard: *And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened (Mark 6:51-52).*

Why are their hearts hard? Because of humanity's Fall in the Garden of Eden. We are born with hard hearts: *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9).* **When will their hearts be softened so they will be able to understand?** At Pentecost (Acts 2). Their hearts will be filled with the Holy Spirit: *And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26).* **When is our Pentecost?**

Jesus opened the eyes of the blind on four different occasions. This was the most prevalent type of miracle He did. What strikes you as unique about this miracle (v. 27-29)? This is the only "gradual" or "progressive" healing described in the ministry of Jesus. It took place in stages.

But who do people say I am? Jesus asked this question as an introduction/lead-in to a more important follow-up question, which was what? "But who do *you* say that I am?" It was fine for the disciples to know what others thought about Jesus; but Jesus had to ask them, as individuals, what they believed about Jesus. He personalized the question. Peter got it right, but he still didn't understand everything. His understanding was incomplete. He knew who Jesus was, but he knew nothing of the Cross or what the future would hold for Jesus.

Application: **Who do you say He is?** He's the one who died in my place. He's the one who shed his blood to cover my sins. He's the one who opened the gates of heaven for me. He is my Lord and Savior. This is the most important question each one of us will ever answer.

What was Jesus mission that He revealed so plainly (v. 31-32)? To come and suffer, be rejected and die—and and then rise again. He’s talked about it before, but now He’s teaching them by speaking plainly and directly —no parables, no vagueness.

This was an unbelievable shock to everyone. Why? They were expecting or hoping that Jesus was the national and political messiah who would come and throw off the Roman oppression and set up His earthly kingdom. The disciples were unprepared for this clear revelation that Messiah would suffer, die and rise again.

After Jesus declared his mission to die and then rise again, Peter took him aside and rebuked Jesus. What does that say about Peter (v. 32)? Peter loved Jesus and was devoted to Jesus, but he was far too confident in his own understanding. He thought he had this “Messiah thing” figured out. He was bold, unafraid, and sincere—and wrong.

Charles H. Spurgeon: Peter was openhearted, bold, enthusiastic. To my mind, there is something very lovable about Peter; and, in my opinion, we need more Peters in the church today. Though they are rash and impulsive, yet there is fire in them, and there is steam in them, so that they keep us going.

Jesus rebuked Peter in public. Why did Jesus refer to Peter as Satan? What’s He saying/His message (v. 33)? “Don’t get in my way Peter. I’m on a mission from the Father. You’re doing the same thing as Satan—getting in my way.” Peter is trying to abort Christ’s mission—stop Him from going to the cross. Peter is still focused on the wrong concept of a political Messiah. Peter is standing in opposition to God's will in favor of the popular messianic idea.

Then he called the crowd to Himself along with his disciples (v. 8:34-38). He said, *If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.* Jesus warns those who want to follow Him. It was bad enough for the disciples to hear that Jesus would suffer, be rejected and die on a cross. Now Jesus tells them that they must walk that very same road that He would walk.

In our day and age, what does it mean for us to deny ourselves and take up our cross? Denying self means to live as an others-centered person—an unselfish life, giving our lives to Jesus completely. Willingness to suffer and die for the Lord’s sake. Becoming a servant. *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me (Galatians 2:20).* Mother Theresa is perhaps a good example.

Application: One question we are all faced with—are we willing to take up our cross and follow Jesus? No matter the cost? No matter what He asks you to do? In reality most of us want the best of both worlds. Yes, I want to follow Jesus, but can I bring my shiny stuff + my comforts + my pleasures along?

Jim Elliott: *He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.*

What does it mean to save your life (v. 35)? Jesus meant that if a person wants to retain control of his or her life now, he or she will suffer the loss of something more valuable in the future. Conversely, if a person will relinquish control of his or her life to follow God's will faithfully, he or she will gain something of greater ultimate worth (eternal life).¹

If someone is ashamed of Christ what might that look like (v. 38)? Being unwilling to speak up, a chameleon—someone who blends in with their surroundings, etc.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®) copyright ©2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

This is copyrighted material provided by Officers’ Christian Fellowship (OCF). Permission is granted for use in local groups. For more information about OCF: www.ocfusa.org.

¹ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Mark, 2014 Edition* (published by Sonic Light, www.soniclight.com), pp. 119