

I CHOOSE FAITH

9.2.18

Mark Series

Message 34

Mark 8:11–21 (NIV)

¹¹ The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. ¹² He sighed deeply and said, “Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to it.” ¹³ Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side.

¹⁴ The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. ¹⁵ “Be careful,” Jesus warned them. “Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod.”

¹⁶ They discussed this with one another and said, “It is because we have no bread.”

¹⁷ Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: “Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? ¹⁸ Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don’t you remember? ¹⁹ When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?”

“Twelve,” they replied.

²⁰ “And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?”

They answered, “Seven.”

²¹ He said to them, “Do you still not understand?”

1. Today’s passage finds the Pharisees refusing to believe Jesus.

A. This unbelief exasperates Jesus.

1. Jesus had already done many miracles up until this point.
2. There was plenty of evidence for the Pharisees to see that Jesus was the Messiah and Savior they had been looking for.

3. Yet, they still wouldn't believe.

4. **No one can make you believe because believing is a choice.**

B. The Pharisees demanded Jesus to do perform another sign to prove himself.

1. But this was not an occasion of good people needing a little more help deciding.

2. They had already decided that Jesus could not be the Messiah.

3. In the eyes of the Pharisees, Jesus was more of a trick and pony show than the Savior of the world.

C. Jesus refused to give them the sign they were seeking.

1. That's because **"Miracles happen where there is faith."**

2. There was no faith in the Pharisees.

a. They didn't want to believe in Jesus.

b. They came to Jesus out of condemnation instead of expectation.

D. If we are honest with ourselves, we often come to God in the same way.

1. "God, if you don't do this then I won't believe."

2. "God, if you won't help me then I won't follow you anymore."

3. **There are times when we try to hold God hostage with our prayers and demands, yet God doesn't respond to threats.**

E. **Is there ever an appropriate time to ask for a sign from God?**

1. Growing up, I heard often the story of Gideon and his fleece to God.

a. In the book of Judges, Gideon wasn't sure that God would do what He said He would through him.

b. So twice, he set a woolen fleece outside demanding that one time the fleece be wet when the ground around it

would be dry and the other that the fleece would be dry and the ground around it wet.

c. Through this sign, God confirmed his word to Gideon.

d. In the Christian culture, when we ask God to give us a sign of His will, we call it "putting out a fleece".

e. "How many of us have ever put out a "fleece"?"

2. Is it wrong to put out a fleece?

a. No, it isn't wrong.

b. Many times God does answer a fleece but it's not because that is the preferred way but because God shows compassion towards us.

c. But if your main way to hear from God is to always put out a fleece, you are missing out on how God intends to speak to you.

3. You have two things that those before us didn't have:

a. You have God's Word in easily accessible form.

b. You have the Holy Spirit living in you.

c. The Word of God and the Spirit of God are the primary ways God wants to speak to you and confirm His will to you.

4. Before you put out a fleece before God, you better make sure you have prayed, worshipped, and studied God's Word for you.

a. Illustration: In every classroom in America, a funny ritual happens every day.

1. A student will bring their worksheet or assignment to the teacher and say, "I don't know how to do this."

2. And every teacher in America asks, "Did you read the instructions?"

b. A similar ritual happens every Christmas in households in America.

1. A husband is trying to put together either some kid's toy or new appliance and gets frustrated because it isn't working out.

2. And every wife in America says, "Did you read the instructions?"

c. Before you call customer service, it is always a good idea to READ THE INSTRUCTIONS.

1. Before you put a fleece before God, READ the Scripture and spend time in prayer.

2. A fleece without previous prayer is to ask for something without a relationship.

3. The Pharisees wanted signs from Jesus but didn't want to believe in Jesus.

4. And Jesus said, no.

2. The Disciples also had trouble believing in Jesus.

A. As Mark 8 continues, the disciples are in a boat with Jesus.

1. This is sometime after the feeding of the four-thousand and all the food that was left over is long gone.

2. At some point in time, they realize they are hungry.

3. They look around and someone forgot to bring the groceries.

4. Maybe they are arguing back and forth or casting blame.

5. But they are trying to keep this fact away from Jesus.

B. Jesus responds, "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and Herod."

1. Immediately the disciples are feeling guilt.

- a. They forgot the bread, and now Jesus is going to be hungry and they don't have anything to give him.
- b. Their consciences were guilty but for the wrong reason.

2. It amazes me that when we feel guilt or insecurity about something, we suspect EVERYONE knows our secret?

- a. Even random, perfectly innocent, encounters leads our guilty consciences to read in-between the lines to places that no one knows about.
- b. The disciples thought Jesus was reprimanding them for forgetting to bring bread.
- c. Jesus' words were directed for something more.

C. The "yeast of the Pharisees" had nothing to do with real bread.

1. Yeast, in Scripture, usually has a negative connotation.
 - a. Usually, yeast is used to describe the ability of a little sin to corrupt a whole life, just like a little yeast will cause a whole loaf of bread to rise in the oven.
 - b. The yeast of the Pharisees didn't refer to bread but to unbelief.
2. Previously, we saw the Pharisees interacting with Jesus in pure unbelief.
 - a. Unbelief is contagious.
 - b. And a little bit of unbelief goes a long way.
3. **Jesus' disciples were in danger of viewing Jesus with eyes of unbelief instead of faith.**

D. That the disciples were acting in unbelief is evident in Jesus' response.

1. Jesus asked, what happened when He fed the five thousand and the four-thousand.

- a. The answer is there was bread leftover.
- b. Jesus miraculously fed all of these people.
- c. Yet, here they were worried that they would go hungry after Jesus had already done these amazing signs for them.

2. **Unbelief causes us to quickly forget what God has done.**

- a. Or, if we don't forget, we don't believe or expect God to do it again.
- b. And *if we listen to unbelief long enough, we end up going hungry even though the one who feeds the multitudes is there with us.*

3. We must learn that Faith isn't only a spiritual exercise.

A. Somewhere along the line, we have managed to separate faith and religion from the rest of our lives.

1. We have compartmentalized our experience and expectations of God.
2. It's ok to experience God at church, but not at work, or at home.
3. Or, we mistakenly believe that faith is only a spiritual or mental exercise.

B. Jesus' line of questioning incorporates the whole person, not just the spiritual life.

Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? ¹⁸ Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember? ¹⁹ When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?"

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²¹ He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"

1. Jesus wanted His disciples to use everything at their disposal to believe and trust in Him.

a. He wanted them to use their senses to “see” what Jesus had done.

b. Jesus wanted them to use their hearing to grasp and comprehend the truth.

c. Jesus asked if their hearts were “hardened”.

1. The heart refers to the seat of will and emotions.

2. He wanted them to experience and believe in Him with their emotions, their passions, their will.

d. Then He asked them why they didn’t understand.

1. Understanding refers to the place of reasoning and thinking.

2. Philosophy teaches, “So a man thinks, so he is.”.

3. What we THINK about Jesus dictates how we see Jesus.

2. Jesus didn’t come to Earth only to do miracles and to perform signs and wonders.

a. He came so that we might experience God at a level humanity had not experienced since the days of Adam and Eve.

b. Jesus wants us to believe in Him and experience Him in ways that invade every aspect of our lives.

1. He wants us to not only to believe in him with our mind but for our senses and emotions believe in Him too.

2. Faith is a whole person exercise and so is unbelief.

3. I can’t walk in faith in one area of my life and live in unbelief in every other area.

- a. When we are walking in unbelief, like the Pharisees and disciples were, it doesn't just stay in one part.
- b. Unbelief, like yeast or leaven, infiltrates every part of who we are.
- c. When I choose to not trust God in one area of my life, I am opening the door to not trusting Him anywhere in my life.
- d. Jesus didn't want His disciples to fall into this trap.

Closing: Mark does not give tell us the disciples' response.

A. The response is still up in the air.

- 1. What did the disciples say?
- 2. What did Jesus do?
 - a. Did he feed them again?
 - b. Did he let them go hungry?
 - c. Did the disciples finally get it and realize that with Jesus there are no such things as obstacles but opportunities?

B. The journey to believing is not instant or immediate but a process.

- 1. The disciples would have moments of brilliance (like in verses 27-30).
- 2. But they also had moments when they displayed their fear and unbelief.

C. Many of us here today are relatively new to the faith.

- 1. Being a Christian is a new thing.
- 2. And now you are facing situations with God's help for the first time.
 - a. Before now, you did whatever you wanted.
 - b. You acted how you thought best and did it all on your own.

c. Now you are dealing with stuff and you aren't sure how to approach this situation with faith instead of fear.

D. The great news is that Jesus wants to help you.

1. He wants to help turn your fear into faith.

2. For some of us here today, today is going to be the day we begin the journey of faith.

3. It begins by confessing our unbelief and then asking for God to infuse us with faith.

As we pray today, the focus is simple: Lord, help me to walk in faith and expectation in every area of my life.

Emotions

Finances

Relationships

May even my senses operate with the hope and expectation of God doing great things in and through me.