

**Valley Bible Church**  
**Sermon Notes for March 26, 2017**

**Slow Learning**  
**Mark 8:11-21**

I. The skeptical Pharisees (8:11-13)

A. The demand (8:11)

*The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him.*

-Jesus' tour of Gentile cities with His disciples has come to an end

-Mark 8:10 "And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha."

-Matthew 15:39 states the location of Magadan, which is on the westside of the Sea of Galilee

-We have no record of where Dalmanutha was located but it was probably close to Capernaum since the Pharisees were ready to approach Him

-The Pharisees immediately approached Jesus with evil intent

- "to argue with him"

- Word means to question, dispute or argue

- "seeking from him a sign from heaven"

- They had already seen many signs from Jesus

- We know they weren't satisfied because they attributed Jesus' work to Satan (3:22)

- Thus, they were demanding something new and better than what they had already seen and heard

- Perhaps they were literally requiring a sign from the heavens above as an astronomical affirmation of Jesus as Messiah

- "to test him"

- The word is translated "to test" but is often used to mean "to tempt"

- This is another setup similar to the withered hand man they planted in the synagogue on the Sabbath in chapter 3

- They believed Jesus' attempt to produce a heavenly sign would fail miserably and settle the issue of His identity

- On the other hand, if Jesus declined the performance then they would also emerge victorious from the dispute

B. The dismissal (8:12-13)

*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.” 13 And he left them, got into the boat again, and went to the other side.*

- “And he sighed deeply in his spirit”
  - Jesus sighed deeply when bearing the burden of the sick deaf-mute in Mark 7:34
  - Jesus now sighs as He finds Himself dealing with antagonism of the Pharisees again
- “this generation”
  - Similar to God’s label of the rebellious generation of Israelites in the wilderness wanderings
    - Deuteronomy 32:20 “And he said, ‘I will hide my face from them; I will see what their end will be, for they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faithfulness.’”
- “Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation”
  - Literally the text states, “Truly, I say to you, if a sign will be given to this generation...”
  - Implication of Jesus’ words is something more like, “If a sign will be given to this generation, then may I be punished by God/may I die”
  - This statement solidifies Jesus’ rejection of the Pharisees
  - This is the last interaction Jesus has with the Pharisees in Galilee
  - His next interaction will be in Judea on His way to Jerusalem for His work on the cross
  - The Pharisees had rejected everything that Jesus had done
  - The Pharisees even demanded that Jesus do more of the type of signs they wanted
- Question: Is it possible that God still removes His grace from people today?
  - People still ignore God’s works
    - Romans 1 teaches that God’s wrath has been poured out upon those who have suppressed the truth of God in unrighteousness
    - These are people who have witnessed God’s glory in creation but have failed to honor God or give thanks to Him
    - God’s wrath has come in the form of allowing these people to plunge deeper into the depths of their depravity
  - People still ignore God’s Word
    - The church is even closer to the situation of the Pharisees than the world
    - Knowledge of the bible is not to be mistaken for true saving faith

- The Pharisees knew a great deal of information, yet Jesus is now rejecting them
- Faith that comes from hearing God's Word will show itself in works, not skepticism and dissatisfaction like the Pharisees
- "And he left them, got into the boat again, and went to the other side."
- This brief interaction back in Jewish territory ends abruptly with Jesus' rejection of the Pharisees and departure from the area

## II. The slow disciples (8:14-21)

### A. The caution (8:15)

*And he cautioned them, saying, "Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod."*

- After Jesus' rejection of the Pharisees, He warns His disciples of the same Pharisees
- His warning is hinged upon the illustration of leaven
  - Leaven is likened to yeast that permeates bread dough and causes all of the bread to rise
  - In the NT, leaven is used as an illustration of the influence of evil and wickedness (1 Cor 5)
- What exactly is the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod?
  - Matthew indicates the leaven as their teaching
    - Matthew 16:12 "Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees."
  - Luke indicates the leaven as their hypocritical living
    - Luke 12:1 "...Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."
  - Based on context here in Mark, leaven appears to be a refusal of Jesus the Messiah in spite of overwhelming evidence
    - Herod demonstrated unbelief after the preaching of the 12 (Mark 6:14-16)
    - Pharisees just demonstrated unbelief in the previous verses (vv. 11-13)

### B. The concern (8:14, 16)

*Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat... 16 And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread.*

-By setting the scene, Mark tells us that they only had one loaf of bread with them in the boat (v. 14)

-They were clearly low on food supply

-Jesus' warning in verse 15 drew on the bread metaphor to warn about the unbelief of the Pharisees and Herod

-Verse 16 reveals how the disciples understood and responded to Jesus' warning

-They respond by discussing the fact that they had no bread (little to no bread)

-Potentially the disciples resumed their discussion thinking Jesus was

warning against buying literal bread from the Pharisees and the Herodians

-The disciples' anxiety about physical food mirrors the lack of faith previously demonstrated by the Pharisees

### C. The confrontation (8:17-21)

*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? 18 Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? 19 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, "Twelve." 20 "And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" And they said to him, "Seven." 21 And he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?"*

-Jesus was fully aware of the disciples' concern for lunch and bread

-Next, Jesus unleashed one of the harshest rebukes against His disciples

-He does this in the form of several questions

- "Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread?"

-Jesus tells His disciples that they are missing the point completely

- "Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear?"

-Jesus tells His disciples that they are acting like those outside the Kingdom of God

-Mark 4:11-12 "And he said to them, 'To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, 12 so that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand...'"

-What prompted Jesus to say this statement and preach in parables last time?

-It was the Pharisees' rejection of Him at the end of Mark 3

- " "And do you not remember? 19 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, 'Twelve.' 20 'And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?' And they said to him, 'Seven.' ”

- Jesus recalls both recent feeding events

- In both events, the disciples witnessed the miracle firsthand and helped distribute the food

- “And he said to them, ‘Do you not yet understand?’ “

- This question frames His rebuke of the disciples (vv. 17, 21)

- Jesus identifies that His disciples still do not realize who He is

- The disciples were ignoring God’s work through Jesus in the feedings

- Thus the disciples were on the same path as the Pharisees

- This was the path to unbelief, questioning, and demanding more from God