

**Christ Community Covenant Church**  
**The Power of Christ Revealed: Loaves, Fish and Leftovers**  
**Pastor Dave Scherrer - February 1, 2015**

We're going to skip forward a bit and in doing so I don't want to suggest that what happens in the account of Jesus' life in the Gospel of Mark in between chapter 6: 53 and 8:11 isn't important or shaping. In fact it will be important to at least consider some of the content in chapter 7 because it has a direct impact on our understanding of our passage today in chapter 8. (Perhaps you should consider taking a look at chapter 7 perhaps before you hit the sack tonight. Or make a pledge to read it before you watch the game, even better.)

The Gospel of Mark is turning right here. The story is starting to take on a special interest, the scrutiny of the Pharisees. Here in chapter 7 the Pharisees first confront Jesus and then Jesus has some strong words for them for making their oral human traditions about diet and washing more important than the Laws of God.

**Mark 7:1-8**

Now when the Pharisees gathered to him, with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. <sup>3</sup> (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders, <sup>4</sup> and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.) <sup>5</sup> And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?" <sup>6</sup> And he said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written,  
"This people honors me with their lips,  
but their heart is far from me;  
<sup>7</sup> in vain do they worship me,  
teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'  
<sup>8</sup> You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men."

This sect of religious leaders had established detailed rules how to keep the law, complicated religious additions if you will, to specify what spiritual or holy behavior looked like. Holding to ritual washing and cleansing and rigorous diets became more than just evidence of devote religious life. Righteousness itself was seen as adhering to these thousands of small legalistic rules. It was as though the rules saved a person. Or indeed, a person could save themselves by adhering to these rules.

As these oral human traditions held sway, you could dishonor parents as long as you did it a certain way (by 'blessing' or 'gifting' them with a curse.) You could even kill someone, as long as you yourself did not do the dirty work. So even though the scripture said "Thou shall not kill," the Pharisees rationalized that could plot together to kill Jesus because they would get the Romans to do it. Somehow their hearts had become hardened to the truth of God's law by adding layer upon layer of oral *traditions*. And when religious traditions become a trump value over God's word, this is a problem to Jesus. So let's read the passage for today;

**Mark 8:11-21**

The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. <sup>12</sup> 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." <sup>13</sup> And he left them, got into the boat again, and went to the other side. <sup>14</sup> Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. <sup>15</sup> And he cautioned them, saying, "Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod (quoting Jeremiah) <sup>16</sup> And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. <sup>17</sup> 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? <sup>18</sup> Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? <sup>19</sup> 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."  
<sup>20</sup> "And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" And they said to him, "Seven."  
<sup>21</sup> And he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

The problem that Jesus is trying to address is this problem of the leaven of the Pharisees and the disciples don't seem to get it do they. They needed a lesson in sincerity.

### **A Lesson in 'Sincerity'**

Let's look at this verse together and take a bit of Greek language tour this morning. The problem this morning is a problem of leaven and there are two kinds of leaven it seems and they are defined by sincerity. Look at this passage with me . . .

#### **1 Corinthians 5:8**

<sup>8</sup> Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

*"The leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."* What does it mean to be "sincere"? Are we *sincere* in our relationship with God the Father and His Son? In making the point of sincerity, many have given the analogy of ancient pottery makers in Corinth.

As the stories go, there were many fine pottery makers in the Roman world, and it turned out to be a lucrative business. The pottery would be formed and then placed into an oven to cure. The well-respected potter would inspect his pottery after firing, and if any cracks were found, the vessel would be discarded and he would start over. Naturally, this would increase the overall price and value of fine pottery.

Given the same situation, other less reputable potters would take the blemished vessel and rub wax into the crack, perhaps melting it somewhat, then paint over the imperfection and sell it as if it were pristine. These individuals could sell their pottery for cheaper prices, thus undercutting the *sincere* pottery makers. This prompted the honorable pottery makers to hang a sign over the entrance to their stores: *Sincerus...*

#### ***Sincerus***

*Meaning pure or without wax . . .* meaning this store has pottery without wax. The actual definition of the Latin word means to be pure or clean. There is another way of looking at this word sincere, with a different take on the idea of purity. This verse in Philippians demonstrates this . . .

#### **Philippians 1:9-10**

<sup>9</sup> And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,  
<sup>10</sup> so that you may approve what is excellent, and so *be pure* and blameless for the day of Christ,

#### ***Eilikrins***

This idea of purity means to be *judged by sunlight, examined with all the light on the subject.* A person could check the purity of the vase by holding it up to the sunlight and observing it with a critical eye. We remember that Jesus Christ is the "Light of the World" (John 9:5). Jesus is asking, "If we are held to the light and brightness of His countenance, will the cracks and flaws in us be open to scrutiny and correction, or will we be found in contempt, vainly covering our flaws and imperfections for outward appearances?"

The purpose of the wax is to cover up the imperfections and the flaws. Its intention is to present something as whole or complete or perfect, when in fact there is deceit and brokenness. In our lives the analogy calls us to be honest with ourselves and our imperfections and brokenness. *To be insincere isn't to be without fault, it is to present the outward appearance of being perfect when in fact we are not. This is what makes a hypocrite.*

Now that we know something of sincerity, it is possible to look at the concept of hard heartedness

**Hard Heartedness- Skērokardia**

Rather than worshiping God with sincerity, the leaven of the Pharisees is to religiously live in such a way that you present the appearance or wholeness or purity or holiness, when in fact their hearts were not for God. They had covered and filled their sinfulness with the wax of religious behavior and ritual rather than confessing and repenting and acknowledging Jesus Christ as the true and one God.

**Matthew 15:8-9 (NIV)**

“These people honor me with their lips,  
but their hearts are far from me.  
<sup>9</sup> They worship me in vain;  
their teachings are merely human rules.”

The Pharisees did acts of religious service to impress people and receive their praises. They wanted special seats and titles as religious honors. They wanted people to see and admire their holiness. Whether or not they were pleasing God really did not matter much to them; what really mattered was that other people *thought* they were pleasing God. [Luke 14:7-11]

This is the interesting part I think - many knew Jesus was from God, but refused to confess Him because they would be cast out of the synagogues. They loved the praises of men more than the praises of God. Even when they did good things, they did them so they could receive honor and praises from people. If they gave a charitable gift or prayed to God, they did it with fanfare, so as many people as possible would know what they did. (right hand not knowing what the left hand was doing illustration)

Sometimes we think to ourselves, it doesn't matter what you believe, as long as we are sincere but that doesn't hold water so to speak. We say, but the Pharisees meant well." That is not the point. It simply means that you are simply sincerely wrong.  
Being false on purpose or false by accident is still false!

**Being false on purpose or false by accident is still false!**

So what is this yeast of the Pharisees and Herod that makes it difficult for even the disciples to see?

**What is the yeast of the Pharisees and Herod and apparently the disciples have in common?**

What they all failed to see, is that there are two kinds of people. But be careful here. It is not friends and enemies and good and bad, religious or non-religious, liberal and conservative. It is those who believe and those who have unbelief. Those who have a hard heart of faith toward Jesus and those who have an open heart of faith toward Jesus.

Remember the setting in our passage where the Pharisees said "Give us a sign." Jesus has just fed 4,000 people and they want a sign. They want Jesus to perform according to their will, and Jesus only performs (so to speak) according to the will of the Father. Jesus knows that they are not really searching for God but trying to undermine Him. The disciples are struggling too, as they look but do not see, and the listen but cannot hear.

**Our real problem: We look but do not see, we listen but do not hear**

So Jesus goes through the evidence with them all over again, 5000 people/12 baskets, 4,000 people/7 baskets. They review the evidence but they don't get it. These are either the 12 stupidest people in the world or there is another issue. Our real problem is not an evidence problem, it is not a proof problem - it is a faith problem.

### ***It's not an evidence problem it's a faith problem***

This is the yeast that Jesus is talking about. It's not an evidence problem it is a faith problem.

It means we look Jesus right in the eye and don't believe him. I have heard some say, even if they proved that Jesus rose from the dead, they wouldn't become a Christian. It is not a problem of proof; it is a problem of faith. The reason he uses the Pharisees and Herod as examples is that they are the poster boys for covering over their flaws with layer and layer of sealing wax until their hearts are so hard they cannot see their own lack of faith. What does it mean to have faith in Jesus? It means you have to put your final trust in Him. You repent or turn from being a God to your own life and believe instead Christ to save and lead you. You surrender your life, your will, your purposes, your rights to Him. We hear Jesus describe it as to die to ourselves, pick up our cross and follow Him. I believe in their heart of hearts Herod saw that Jesus was indeed the true King, not Herod and that the Pharisees knew that Jesus was the true Priest, not their Pharisical religious system. They had the evidence, but they would not believe.

The gospel invitation has always been a call to self-denial, it's always been a call to submission, it's always been a call to sacrifice, it's always been a call to repentance and Jesus never eased up. His standard was even higher than the Pharisees! You must confess Him. You must deny yourself or deny Him. Take your choice. He says "You can deny Me and I'll deny you, or you can confess Me and I'll confess you." But confessing Me, Jesus says, means denying yourself. That's what the gospel offers. It is an invitation to give up your life. It's an invitation to say I will lose my life to find it.

Sadly, today to often the gospel has been stripped of repentance and stripped of confession of Jesus as Lord, and stripped of submission, and stripped of self-denial, and stripped of obedience and reduced to nothing more than praying a prayer, accept Jesus into your life, ask Jesus into your heart, invite Jesus into your own life, make a decision for Christ. By the way, those are familiar phrases, but none of which will you ever find in the Bible. Nowhere in the Bible do we ever read the phrase "accept Jesus...ask Jesus into your heart...invite Jesus into your life...or make a decision for Christ." These sentiments are not so much wrong but what you will read in Scripture is "If you want to come after Me, deny yourself, take up your cross, follow Me, repent, believe, confess Me as God, confess Me as man, confess Me as Lord.

The more we look at him and he asks us to yield our hard heart of stone to him so that he can give us a new heart and instead of covering up our brokenness, He can fill those flaws and sins with Himself. But if we refuse to listen and to give in to His supreme authority, our hearts get harder and harder until instead of seeing the love in His eyes all we see is His competition for the throne of our lives. We didn't know that Jesus was God and King and Lord of every area of my life but . . . we knew.

### ***We didn't know but we knew***

The first Nazi concentration camp liberated by the U.S. Army was at Ohrdruf and was liberated on April 4, 1945, by the 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division and the 89<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. The ghastly nature of their discovery led General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe, to visit the camp on April 12, with Generals George Patton and Omar Bradley. Captain Jack Holmes, a 20 year old infantryman wrote these words in his journal of that event.

*General Patton, along with General Eisenhower and General Bradley, got to the camp on April 12th. I watched General Eisenhower closely. As he was looking at all the bodies, he had tears in his eyes, and I could tell he was getting angry. He walked through the entire camp and the burial field outside the camp. General Patton couldn't force himself to look inside the sheds with the bodies in them. After a while, he stood by himself looking somewhere in the distance.*

*After the generals left, Colonel Sears rounded up some men, and they drove two miles to the town of Ohrdruf. They brought the mayor of Ohrdruf and his wife back with them and forced them to tour the entire camp. These dignitaries of the city were made to help dig the graves for the decaying bodies. They worked until dark and then went to their homes. When the mayor did not return the next day to finish the*

*digging, they went searching for them. They were found at their home having taken their lives by hanging. They left a note saying simply, "We didn't know but we knew."*

Here is the good news. This table is for the faithful. It is the only evidence we need to yield our lives to Christ. It is the living word picture of God's love for us, so deep and so amazing. To imagine! He sent his only son to die for us to save us from our brokenness. And this meal, this last supper was a reminder of His sacrifice.

***Apostles Creed (a confession of our faith)***

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.  
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.  
Amen.

***Prayer of Examine (Paul in the letter to the Corinthians)***

Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

***Elements***

The Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

***Please meditate on the song sung by Gloria and Melissa, a hymn of gratitude and witness***

*Grandeur earth has quaked before - Moved by the sound of His voice  
Seas that are shaken and stirred - can be calmed and broken for my regard  
Through it all, through it all My eyes are on You  
Through it all, through it all, It is well with my soul*