

属灵的瞎子——马可福音 8:11-21

Spiritual Blindness—Mark 8:11-21

Introduction, outline

- Scripture reading: Mark 8:1-8:33

1 In those days, when there was again a large crowd and they had nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples and said to them,² “I feel compassion for the people because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat. ³ If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way; and some of them have come from a great distance.” ⁴ And His disciples answered Him, “Where will anyone be able to find enough bread here in this desolate place to satisfy these people?” ⁵ And He was asking them, “How many loaves do you have?” And they said, “Seven.” ⁶ And He directed the people to sit down on the ground; and taking the seven loaves, He gave thanks and broke them, and started giving them to His disciples to serve to them, and they served them to the people. ⁷ They also had a few small fish; and after He had blessed them, He ordered these to be served as well. ⁸ And they ate and were satisfied; and they picked up seven large baskets full of what was left over of the broken pieces. ⁹ About four thousand were there; and He sent them away. ¹⁰ And immediately He entered the boat with His disciples and came to the district of Dalmanutha. ¹¹ The Pharisees came out and began to argue with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, to test Him. ¹² Sighing deeply in His spirit, He said, “Why does this generation seek for a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation.” ¹³ Leaving them, He again embarked and went away to the other side. ¹⁴ And they had forgotten to take bread, and did not have more than one loaf in the boat with them. ¹⁵ And He was giving orders to them, saying, “Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.” ¹⁶ They began to discuss with one another the fact that they had no bread. ¹⁷ And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart? 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 you picked up?” They said to Him, “Twelve.” ²⁰ “When I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?” And they said to Him, “Seven.” ²¹ And He was saying to them, “Do you not yet understand?” ²² And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought a blind man to Jesus and implored Him to touch him. ²³ Taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He asked him, “Do you see anything?” ²⁴ And he looked up and said, “I see men, for I see them like trees, walking around.” ²⁵ Then again He laid His hands on his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and began to see everything clearly. ²⁶ And He sent him to his home, saying, “Do not even enter the village.” ²⁷ Jesus went out, along with His disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, “Who do people say that I am?” ²⁸ They told Him, saying, “John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; but others, one of the prophets.” ²⁹ And He continued by questioning them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered and said to Him, “You are the Christ.” ³⁰ And He warned them to tell no one about Him. ³¹ 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. ³² And He was stating the matter plainly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. ³³ But turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.”

- Outline:

Title: Spiritual Blindness

1. The Problem of Spiritual Blindness
2. The Illustration of Spiritual Blindness – The Pharisees (vv. 11-13)

3. The Catalyst of Spiritual Blindness – The Leavens (vv. 14-15)
4. The Rebuke to Spiritual Blindness (vv. 16-21)

The Problem of Spiritual Blindness

- Every person is born spiritually blind. Ephesians 2:1 says before we believed in the Lord, we were dead in our trespasses and sins. A dead man must also be blind. Spiritual blindness is an aspect of spiritual death.
- The soul/spirit of man possesses faculties such as intellect, emotion, and will. Spiritual life, by God's definition, is to use all these faculties to worship God with all your heart, soul, and strength. Those who are spiritually dead still has intellect, emotion, and will, but they cannot act in a way that worships and pleases God, so they are defined as dead. Among these spiritual faculties, sight represents the intellectual aspect, including the ability to think, understand, and know. Those who are spiritually blind cannot know anything about God.
2 Corinthians 4:4, 6 "In whose case the god of this world has **blinded the minds** of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God ... For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." It is God who has given us spiritual sight, and through it, we see the glory of Christ.
1 Corinthians 2:14 "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he **cannot understand** them because they are spiritually appraised."
John 4:24 "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship **in spirit** and truth." Worship is not an external performance of the flesh, but a spiritual activity with the right thoughts, emotions, and will, from the soul, because God is Spirit. The Pharisees only saw external forms because they lacked spiritual sight and couldn't see any spiritual truth.
- Although Christians have already gained basic spiritual sight, their vision is often still blurry, and their understanding of spiritual matters may still be far from clear. Christians may also experience spiritual blindness.
2 Peter 1:9 "For he who lacks these qualities is **blind** or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins."
Ephesians 1:18 "I pray that **the eyes of your heart may be enlightened**, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,"
Psalms 119:18 "Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law." This prayer presupposes spiritual blindness as the psalmist acknowledges his need for God to open his eyes. Do you see how common the issue of spiritual blindness is?

The Illustration of Spiritual Blindness — The Pharisees (vv.11-13)

- "seeking from Him a sign from heaven": The Pharisees had seen countless miracles with their physical eyes, but their spiritual eyes saw nothing.
- "Leaving them": By this action, Jesus effectively pronounced judgment on the Pharisees, indicating God had already left them, for they would not acknowledge God as God, for their spiritual eyes were completely blind, for they were "blinded by the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4). The biggest idol that blinded their hearts was the system of religious traditions and external regulations that emphasized external appearances.
【Insight】 In real life, Christians often find themselves having to follow many rules, which can be reasonable applications of biblical principles. However, when you become overly attached to these specific external appearances, when you are determined to uphold a particular external form at all costs, you will be like the Pharisees, blinded by these idols, unable to see the true glory of Jesus.

The Catalyst of Spiritual Blindness — The Leavens (vv. 14-15)

- "And they had forgotten to take bread": The previous mention of bread is in the first 10 verses of this chapter; and in verses 19-20 Jesus specifically connects the two events. What's sandwiched in between is the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees. Mark often uses this sandwich structure to highlight the connection between the middle content and the two ends. Here, the disciples' spiritual sight wasn't much better!
- "Watch out! Beware!": The literal meanings of both words are "look"! You must look carefully, to see these spiritual dangers! You must think, understand, and know. This is a matter of the soul, not the flesh. You must see these leaven-like things! This is obviously a metaphor. How could Jesus possibly be talking about the leaven used for making dough?
- "leaven": A metaphor for spiritual influence. Leaven is a fungus, a single-celled organism, very, very small, mixed into the dough, invisible, yet everywhere, permeating the entire lump of dough to make it rise. So Jesus used leaven to picture the kind of permeating influence that is invisible yet present everywhere.
- "the leaven of the Pharisees": Hypocrisy, superficiality, formalism, having the appearance without a genuine love for God. This is the leaven that had the most serious influence on the disciples. Jesus had repeatedly exposed this sin before, and the disciples should have been able to see the issue. However, they did not see it, and they were concerned "that they had no bread" (verse 16).

【Analogy】 The air in a dairy farm is foul to city dwellers, but to those raised on a farm, they can't smell anything. Why were the disciples so spiritually dull? The teaching of the Pharisaic externalism was the air they had been breathing since childhood! All kinds of hypocrisy and heartless formality had seeped deep into their bone...

- "the leaven of Herod": Herod was a politician, a puppet of Rome, having no fear of God at all. Politicians are concerned with power, influence, and various worldly interests. In simple terms, the leaven of Herod is secularism and the lust for power.

【Ponder】 What impact did the leaven of Herod have on the disciples? "Who is Herod, and why does he rule over us? We are God's people, and this land is a gift from God! God will lead us to rule ourselves, why should we be under their rule?" This is the sentiment of the Zealots. One of the disciples was a Zealot. On the surface, the Zealots and the Herodians were enemies, but they really had the same heart. They both pursued worldly power! Later on, Peter tried to dissuade Jesus from His death (Mark 8:32), and the disciples couldn't wait to restore Israel (Acts 1:6), both of which reflected the influence of Herod's leaven on them.

【Application】 Don't fight for superiority; don't seek power and control; don't think you have this or that inviolable right in this world! Learn to surrender; guard against the leaven of Herod; and know what's important and what's not. Holy living is more important than anything, and when you care too much about your so-called rights, it's difficult to live out a holy character!

Romans 12:19-21 "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' To the contrary, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

- "The leaven of the Sadducees" (Matthew 16:6): They are the liberal faction of Judaism, who professed faith but in reality believed in nothing at all (Acts 23:8). The God they nominally believed in had nothing to do with their lives. This kind of unbelief leads to all kinds of worldly lifestyle. The leaven of the Sadducees is the leaven of unbelief.

【Ponder】 Did this leaven have an impact on the disciples? When the resurrected Jesus stood right before the eyes of the disciples before His ascension, Scripture says that "some were doubtful" still (Matthew 28:17)!

【Summary】 The leaven of the Pharisees is externalism and formalism; the leaven of Herod is secularism and lust for power; the leaven of the Sadducees is liberalism and unbelief. These "isms" surrounded them like air, causing them serious harm while they remained unaware. These influences still exist in various forms around us today, and Jesus warns us to be cautious and guard against them.

The Rebuke to Spiritual Blindness (vv. 16-21)

- "They began to discuss with one another the fact that they had no bread." The important spiritual teaching was completely misunderstood. How would Jesus have felt at this moment? Were all my teachings but in vain? For over two years, day after day, I've been teaching you spiritual truths, and all you can see is just physical needs? Don't you realize that, with me by your side, you don't even need to worry about physical needs? Have you still not seen the spiritual dangers you should be concerned about? Have you still not seen what the problem of the Pharisees is? Are you still unaware of the serious dangers you face daily for your soul? Are you still worrying about what kind of bread to eat?
- "Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear?" Earlier, Jesus described hard-hearted rejecters in a similar way (Mark 4:12), and here, He rebukes the disciples with similar language! Is this your level of understanding? How many miracles have you seen, and you're still worried about not having food to eat? How much teaching have you heard, and you think the problem with the Pharisees is the leaven they use for bread?
- "And do you not remember?" Many times, the key to solving current problems lies in remembering past experiences!

【Application】 What if you don't have many past experiences in your personal life? The Bible is full of past experiences! When you believe in the Lord, the entire Bible becomes your history. How to face problems in life? Remember past experiences. Remember what God has done.

Summary Application:

Remember that the Gospel of Mark is based on Peter's personal testimony. This passage is a most genuine and humble confession of one's weakness as a Christian. This is the effect of the gospel. The gospel makes people see how blind they are, how helpless, how weak, how unworthy, and how much they need the mighty salvation of God. Only this kind of understanding can make you see the preciousness of the gospel. Only through humility can you know God. Humility is not only a prerequisite for receiving the gospel but also the continuous result brought about by the work of the gospel.