

## Mark 8:10-21

### “Earth crammed with heaven”

- I.     **Introduction**
- II.    **Vs. 10-12 Every bush afire with God**
- III.   **Vs. 13-21 Plucking blackberries**

#### I.     **Introduction**

I'm fascinated at the work of the Holy Spirit as He came upon the writers of the Bible. He always places a thread from one section to another and it is up to the student to find the thread so they can determine the garment the Lord wants us to wear. Here in this section the disciples were fresh off of the feeding of the 4000 in the gentile region of the Sea of Galilee. They take sail back to a Jewish area to be met by Pharisees seeking a sign. The oddity of this request of another sign is best understood when considering that they had arrived on the scene 8 months earlier when Jesus had fed the 5000. And instead of realizing that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah they choose to see a violation in the ceremonial washing by the disciples. They wanted a grandiose sign; fire at night or bread from heaven and didn't realize that Jesus had given them "*bread from heaven*". In the next sentence Mark tells us that Jesus again sets sail with His disciples who had forgotten bread and are clueless as to what all of this meant. This leads to Jesus words illustrating the dangers of hard heartedness as it relates to not seeing God. The true seeker of God is not the person looking for God to break into his world in some supernatural event. Instead the true seeker of God recognizes that God is already here and has left evidence of this fact every where the seeker looks. **God is not to be found in just what man calls the sacred places, He is to be found in making the common places sacred!** Poet

Elizabeth Barret Browning wrote, “*Earth’s crammed with heaven, and every common bush afire with God; but only he who sees, takes off his shoes, the rest sit round it and pluck blackberries.*”

## II. Vs. 10-12 Every bush afire with God

Vs. 10-12 Dalmanutha is on the Western side of the sea of Galilee near Tiberias which means that when they got into the boat and left the Decapolis region they sailed over to the Jewish region of the Sea of Galilee. The Pharisees would not have gone to the gentile areas but waited some 8 months in the Jewish area for the opportunity to harass Jesus again. In chapter 3 verse 22 they had seen great signs that they attributed to Beelzebul. And here they began to question Jesus repeatedly as if He were on a witness stand causing a dispute with Him. They were asking for a sign as a way to establish His credentials to prove that He was a spokesman for God. They want a sign in heaven, something specific and spectacular. But in truth they were determined to not believe no matter how much evidence to the contrary. In Deuteronomy 18 the Lord established standards through Moses to determine if what the person spoke was from the Lord and the supreme test was if what they said didn’t happen then the Lord hadn’t spoken. *It is not always wrong to seek a sign; it’s the motive which determines its correctness.*

**There is always enough evidence to convince us of Jesus’ claims and God has no interest in entertaining His doubters in any theater that displays His marvelous works. There are far too many already living by their fleeces instead of their faith.** It is never signs that we need but rather an awakening to act on what we already know to be true! *Jesus’ mission was not to convince His critics, but to give salvation to the brokenhearted!*

Jesus response was grief and disappointment at the hardness of their hearts. It is a sad state when those who have been given authority over others are spiritually blind. There was a tendency in that age to look for God in the abnormal the supernatural. The false Messiah's of that time would promise huge earth shattering events as signs of who they claimed to be. **This was what the Pharisees were demanding in order to believe, something that defied the laws of nature and astonished humanity.** And even though Jesus had done many of these events they still attributed them to satan. ***Their problem was not that they wanted to see the hand of God it was that they were blind to the hand of God.*** This wasn't the first time they had asked Jesus for a sign as we are told in Matthew chapter 12 that they did so. Since Mark is writing to Roman readers he doesn't include the words Jesus went on to say in Matthew chapter 16. There Jesus told them that a "*wicked and adulterous generation*" seeks a sign and that no sign will be given them except the "*sign of the prophet Jonah.*" But in chapter 12 Jesus explains that the sign of the prophet Jonah was that "*as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*" The sign of the prophet Jonah was a sign given him for being rebellious, a sign that personally illustrated that it was futile to try to divert God's plans and will. These religious leaders were wanting to see a sign in the sky that would show them who the Messiah was but there were signs all around them and the biggest one that they didn't see was the hardening of their own heart do to rebellion. The only sign that Jesus would show them was His resurrection to which Jesus said in Luke 16:31 that "*If they do not hear Moses and the prophets **neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.***" Jesus wasn't interested in fueling their unbelief and in Matthew chapter 16 Jesus

tells them that they can clearly distinguish the signs of foul weather from looking to the sky but they couldn't discern the signs of the times around them. The only comfort these Pharisees could obtain is that they weren't any more blind at this moment than Jesus own handpicked disciples.

### III. Vs. 13-21 Plucking blackberries

Vs. 13-16 Thirteen hungry men and one loaf what ever are they to do? God's people have a tendency to miss God's blessings as twice in less than a year they had witnessed Jesus feeding well over 12,000 people on nothing more than 12 loaves of bread and a few fish. Yet they are still perplexed at what to do when they had mistaken forgot to purchase more supplies. Their problem was forgetfulness but not at purchasing supplies but of forgetting God's blessings! They felt that Jesus warnings against the "*leaven*" of the Pharisees and Herod had something to do with their failure to bring adequate supplies.

Matthew records in chapter 16 a warning of a threefold leaven:

- **The formalism of Pharasitical externalism**
- **The rationalism of Sadduceen Skepticism**
- **The materialism of Herodian relativism**

All three of these influences can misdirect and blind a person from seeing the truth even when it's right in front of them. Nothing was easier to think than acquainting the Messiah with wonders and conquests, miraculous happenings nationalistic triumphs. It is the way with humans, to believe emphatically that God is on our side. But the truth is God is on our side only to the degree that we are on His side!

Vs. 17-21 Jesus makes it clear that there is a direct correlation between and forgetful memory and a hardening heart. When forget the words and works of Christ we begin to

doubt His words and works! Because of the lack of comprehension of His disciples, Jesus asks a series of questions that were aimed at awakening from their lack of understanding:

1. **Use your mind**: Jesus said, “*Do you not perceive nor understand?*” I believe that is always the first place to start, think about where you are and what God’s word has to say about it. I find when ever my heart is stuck it’s usually do to me not using my head and the quickest way to get back on tract is get into the word. In Isaiah the Lord knew that the nation of Israel was stuck in their rituals while their heart was far from Him so He spoke through the prophet Isaiah saying, “*Come now let’s reason together*” then He began to ask them some thought provoking questions about where they were truly at spiritually.
  
2. **Determine where you heart is at**: Jesus asks, “*Is your heart still hardened?*” That leads to the next question one in where we will need to do some personal analysis to determine why our heart hasn’t responded to what our mind has understood. We can mentally recognize something is true but if it’s true and haven’t acted on it than we have a problem not with the head but with the heart. *Truth is designed to move us not entertain us, if we are only excited in the mind but not moved in the heart than we need to pray that what we know to be true in our mind will extend beyond our intellect to our actions!*
  
3. **Look beyond the immediate**: Jesus asks them, “*Having eyes, do you not see, and having ears, do you not hear?*” Often there is a disconnect in what we think we know and what we really know. We see and hear things but are unable to look at what connection they have to our own lives and situations. Twice in the same year these 12 fellows were being fed by loaves and fish and all they seemed to see was

they got a quick meal instead of what the lesson was for. Oh how true this is in our own lives isn't it?

4. **Remember past lessons**: Finally, Jesus asked, "*Do you not remember?*" Every day we are in the class room with Christ and the lessons are not just what we see of the black board. Every situation and circumstance is designed to teach us more about who He is and who we are. The past way in getting today's lesson is to look back and see that He has been trying to teach in the past. That's how you can lay ahold of the truth He wants you to have today! \_\_\_\_\_

The amazing part of this story to me is how the Lord uses it as an illustration of a greater problem as clearly they had not learned the lesson of multiplication when what He has provided us is given back to Him that He make continue to break it to bless people. If 5 loaves were enough to feed 5000 men, and seven loaves were enough to feed 4000 men, would not 1 loaf be more than enough to feed 13 hungry disciples if they would but give it to Him to be blessed and broken? Clearly the problem is not in the lack of provisions but in the forgetfulness in giving what He has supplied to Him.