

# [ savior blind ]

## :: mark 8 ::

Mark chapter 8 is our text this morning. Let's get into it.

**Mark 8.1-38 - In those days, the multitude being very great and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples to Him and said to them, "I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And if I send them away hungry to their own houses, they will faint on the way; for some of them have come from afar."**

**Then His disciples answered Him, "How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?"**

**He asked them, "How many loaves do you have?"**

**And they said, "Seven."**

**So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and they set them before the multitude. They also had a few small fish; and having blessed them, He said to set them also before them. So they ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets of leftover fragments. Now those who had eaten were about four thousand. And He sent them away, immediately got into the boat with His disciples, and came to the region of Dalmanutha.**

**Then the Pharisees came out and began to dispute with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, testing Him. But He sighed deeply in His spirit, and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Assuredly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation." And He left them, and getting into the boat again, departed to the other side.**

**Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, and they did not have more than one loaf with them in the boat. Then He charged them, saying, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod."**

**And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have no bread."**

**But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened? Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?"**

**They said to Him, "Twelve."**

**"Also, when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of fragments did you take up?"**

**And they said, "Seven."**

**So He said to them, "How is it you do not understand?"**

**Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. And he looked up and said, "I see men like trees, walking."**

**Then He put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly. Then He sent him away to his house, saying, “Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town.”**

**Now Jesus and His disciples went out to the towns of Caesarea Philippi; and on the road He asked His disciples, saying to them, “Who do men say that I am?”**

**So they answered, “John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.”**

**He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”**

**Peter answered and said to Him, “You are the Christ.”**

**Then He strictly warned them that they should tell no one about Him.**

**And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, “Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”**

**When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”**

The overall theme of this chapter is that the people around Jesus just weren’t getting it. Of course, we see the Pharisees there in verses 11 and 12 finding Jesus and demanding a sign. That’s certainly something we tend to do to God, demand that He prove Himself over and over and over again. It’s a technique we use when we don’t want to deal with the correction or leading that the Lord has given us. But this text doesn’t spend much time with these Pharisees, so we’re not going to either. They were legalists who hated the Lord and this interaction we see in the middle of the chapter is just business as usual for them.

The great bulk of the text is Jesus interacting with His disciples, who also weren’t getting it. So much so that Jesus eventually says to them in verses 17 and 18:

**Mark 8.17b-18 - Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened? Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember?**

And then down in verse 21:

**Mark 8.21 - So He said to them, “How is it you do not understand?”**

Jesus posed this question to them because He spoke openly to them. He taught in the open. He shared about the future openly (see verse 32). He healed and worked miracles in the open. He specifically called the 12 disciples and told them that He intended to do a work through

their lives and He modeled how that was supposed to happen and gave them all these opportunities.

Yet, throughout this chapter, we see that they just weren't getting it.

And I think we tend to spend a lot of time in this life confused. We get confused about our circumstances and our calling and our choices. But it's not the Lord's fault. Because He's on record as the God of wisdom and the God of understanding. He's the God of clarity and leading and revelation. And if we're frustrated or confused in the way that we see the disciples being, then we're not getting it. And we see in how Jesus talked to them that He desperately wanted them to understand and to move forward in their discipleship.

If we look into this text we get at least one reason why the 12 weren't understanding. We already read it twice in verse 17.

**Mark 8.17b - [Jesus said] Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened?**

And if you pair up that statement with the things the disciples said and did in each set of verses, you find that the hardness of their hearts was related to their own self-centeredness.

In fact, the chapter closes with Jesus talking about how to overcome self-centeredness and really take on our Christianity, by laying *down* our lives and being surrendered to the control of God.

Self-centeredness is something we all have hard-wired within our old nature. And it causes a hardening of the heart when it comes to the things of God. That's what Jesus rebuked Peter for there in verse 33. He said, "you're focused on yourself, on human things instead of the things of God." That's what their disconnect was.

So let's look at a few examples in our text and see what we can see.

First, we have the feeding of the four thousand.

Now, this episode is kind of amazing. Because this exact same scenario had just happened 2 chapters ago. Only the first time the crowd was even larger than it was here in our text. But it seems the disciples hadn't really learned anything from the first time around. Remember, back then they weren't very interested in ministering to the people. They wanted someone else to do it. Same thing here. They weren't really interested in dealing with the needs of this multitude and so they effectively forgot the power of God that was in their midst.

**Mark 8.4 - ...How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?**

Self-centeredness caused them to forget what Jesus was capable of. Whether it was out of laziness or annoyance or prejudice, they weren't interested in serving these people. And, just like the first time with the **five** thousand, Jesus is there *wanting* to get them involved in this incredible miracle. But they weren't thinking about ministry or the potential of God's power. They, in the moment, would've been content to send people away weak and hungry so that

they didn't have to be inconvenienced or have to take a step of faith. And, really, it wasn't that great a leap of faith. They'd already seen Jesus provide in this exact same way.

But we do this. We get focused on self, and all the needs of others seem unimportant. Or at least *less* important than our comfort or our schedule or our mindset or just us. And all the time Jesus is excited to give us ministry opportunities. He's excited to use us to change lives. But a hard, self-oriented heart gets callused to others and tends to forget the potential of God's power. So if we're never moved with compassion to serve someone or reach out to them, there's a good chance we're spending our time focused on self rather than seeing the opportunities God has brought to us for ministry.

Or, on the other hand, we sometimes forget that our God is a God of provision. He has already done a work of salvation and provision in our lives. Often we get wrapped up in a specific need or struggle and we doubt that the Lord can really do anything about it, but He's already the God who *has* saved us from Hell's fire. And He's already the God who's provided us with much. That's His business. He's a Savior and Provider. Now, we might think He should provide a different menu than He gives to us. Maybe the people here in the wilderness wanted lamb and soup, but they got fish and bread. But the point is, God doesn't stop His work of salvation and provision after the one time we receive it. He is our ongoing Savior, our ongoing Provider.

Something else we see the self-centered heart doing is making everything about the physical while missing the spiritual. We see it in verses 13 through 21. Jesus is taking an everyday opportunity to teach the guys something spiritual, but they're all wrapped up in themselves and they assume He's talking about them not bringing enough bread on the boat.

Then the Lord shows them that these everyday things He's been doing and saying were meant to teach them spiritual truths. And that's something we really need to grab hold of. The fact that God speaks spiritual things to us through our everyday lives. But often, if we're wrapped up in self, then we're not going to be making a lot of spiritual progress, because when God is teaching us something about discipleship we're only seeing what groceries we forgot at the store. But our interactions and our thoughts and our daily situations are meant to be spiritual classrooms where God speaks to us and brings us wisdom and understanding.

Then you have this famous episode with Peter. In one instance Peter is stating that Jesus is the Christ, the next he's actually rebuking Jesus. And, again, it's all with this backdrop of the Lord trying to teach the guys something. But Peter just doesn't want to hear it. When Jesus talks about suffering and dying and rising again, Peter decides that's not the kind of Messiah he wants. So he shuts down. That wasn't palatable in his opinion. He was happy to be the Messiah's disciple, but he had already decided what kind of Messiah the Lord should be. Because Peter had his own agenda and his own thoughts about what would be best for God's people and the future and all that.

And so after all of these events, Jesus finally lays out this incredible set of statements in verses 34-38, let's read them again and take them to heart:

**Mark 8.34-38 - When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole**

**world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”**

That’s discipleship. That’s spirituality. But when we’re self-centered we can’t get this. We can’t understand it. Because the self-centered Christian doesn’t want to serve others. He doesn’t want to see life as essentially spiritual. He doesn’t want to take the correction that the Lord brings to our lives. He just wants to make things more comfortable for himself.

In one sense, the self-centered Christian is like the blind man in verse 24. He’s had an amazing interaction with the Savior, but the vision wasn’t quite right. “I see men like trees walking.” He had *partial* vision. Partial transformation.

Now, if at verse 24 the blind man would’ve said, “ok, I see men like trees walking, and that’s good enough, because I don’t really need to see the other stuff,” we would see that as a failure on his part. We would look at that and think: yeah completely blurred vision isn’t better than blindness. *Sight* is better than blindness.

But when it comes to spiritual vision a lot of Christians get caught in verse 24. The Savior has touched our lives, but then we resist Him coming in and laying His hands on us again to complete the work He started. We choose not to take up a cross, because we allow ourselves to be self-centered, obsessed with comfort and wealth and control of our own lives. That’s the issue. But a self-centered Christian is really of little use. Because he’s not effectively transformed. He’s not picking up on opportunities to serve others, he’s not picking up on the truths the Lord is trying to impart and he’s not really understanding who Jesus is and what His plan is for this world.

Clarity and usefulness and understanding comes to us when we’re willing to let the Lord put His hands on us again and again, to conform us and sanctify us and complete that transformation. Those good things come when we stop focusing on ourselves and choose to acknowledge who God is, what He’s capable of and where He’s called us.

God wants us to get it. There’s a big, incredible life waiting for us out there. One that the Lord can’t wait to give to us. But if we want it, we’ve got to get our heads out of ourselves and onto Jesus. We’ve got to buy into the fact that life is essentially spiritual and that our Savior is extending to us clarity and calling and completion.