

Announcements:

1. Women's Coffee talk @ 3pm
2. A couple spots left for Camp out, Sept 18-20, see Bill
3. AWANA's starts Sept 24th, still asking for prayer
4. September 26...National Day of Prayer; details to come
5. Update on opening church to 4-6th grades; prayer
6. Hiring Assoc Pastor of Families; prayer

A Patient Savior

Mark 8:14-21

In March it all began. The mysterious, unknown virus was working its way across the globe and it shut down the world. It was stealth and it was feared that it would kill millions upon millions. Early on it was compared to the Spanish flu of 1918, that killed 3-5% of the world's population. This lurking virus has struck fear in many lives and it has stopped the world in its tracks.

It has caused divisions. The professional community doesn't agree on its level of danger. Scientists don't agree. Churches have had to shut doors and make some really hard decisions. Governments have shut down economies. COVID19 came quick and has wreaked havoc upon the world. It's silent. It's sad to be highly contagious and it spreads fast.

There is another virus that is spreading like wild-fire that is in a league of it's own. It is a virus that is not just deadly, but paralyzing, and absolutely mind altering, character shaping, really soul altering. it's the Leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod. Luke identifies this virus to be hypocrisy. This is the virus that Jesus warned the disciples about. These were people that were with Jesus everyday. These were people in the presence of Jesus, saw the miracles, signs and wonders, ate with him, traveled with him, and talked face to face with him. And we are being warned of the very same virus.

Let's read Mark 8:14-21.

The context is important. Shortly before this, Jesus fed the 4,000+ people who were following Him, listening to him, and many were being healed.

The disciples just experienced this. They saw Jesus take seven loaves of bread and a few fish and miraculously feed over 4,000 people...with 7 large baskets full of leftovers! Jesus did not provide just enough, but more than enough.

After getting into the boat with His disciples and traveling to the other side of the lake, there is a confrontation with the Pharisees and the Sadducees asking Jesus for a heavenly sign, a sign that could only be called down by God, to show He is the Messiah. They had seen Him perform signs and miracles that were identical to those the prophet Isaiah said the Messiah would do, but their motive was to destroy Jesus and the following He had. They were not just angry, but hateful. They had already begun devising a plan to kill Jesus. Why? He was revealing their hypocrisy, their love for power, and their false teaching. He told them they would get only one more sign and that would be the sign of Jonah...which is His death, burial, and resurrection from the dead. That is exactly what happened, and yet they still did not believe He is the Son of God, the Messiah, the one who came to save sinners from the effect of their sin.

These teachers of the law had hard hearts. Their hearts were filled with sin. Their hearts were filled with anger towards Jesus, the visible image of the invisible God. Mark 7:6-7 says,

“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; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”

They looked like they had their act together because they went to church, read the Bible, and did what looked like the right things to do. And yet, Jesus called them hypocrites. Why? Because it wasn't about making much of God, it was about making much of themselves. It was about building themselves up to look like a good person. It wasn't love for God and His commands. It was about love for themselves and using the commands of God to bring them honor. They used the commands to compare themselves with others. It was the old, “I am not as bad as you” comparison. The ‘point the finger at others’ business. This stems from pride. The pride of “I don't want to feel like a bad person” or the pride that blinds to the realization that maybe we don't have it altogether, we aren't good enough.

Hypocrisy is simply the act of hiding behind something. In the Greek language, the word for hypocrisy derived from the word meaning, 'actor' — literally one who wears a mask." The Pharisees hid their pride behind their religious acts and knowledge.

God hates pride. He says, "He hates the proud." He uses very strong words!

One avenue of hypocrisy is comparing. Comparing ourselves to others doesn't work in God's economy. We don't make it in to heaven, we aren't praised by God for being better than the person we look down at and think, "I am not as bad as you".

Galatians 1:10 says, "For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ." You and I can't seek the approval of others or even ourself at the same time as God.

Philippians 2:3 says it like this, "Do nothing from rivalry or conceit."

2 Timothy 2:15 tells us to "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved" In other words, seek to honor God. Point your life to loving what God loves, seeing as God sees, hearing as God would hear, doing as God would do.

The priority is how God sees you. It matters what God thinks about you.

Our character matters. Our actions matter. Our thoughts matter. Our motives matter. This is what Jesus told the Pharisees in Mark 7 when they came to Him pointing fingers at the disciples because they didn't wash their hands and ate with what they called 'defiled hands'. They added to what God had said. They took what God said and made it fit their agenda. It was making their hates the hate of God; their likes the likes of God; their hopes the hopes of God. Do you see the backwards theology here? Instead of looking through the lens of God, they were looking through the pride of their life. The motive was self-gain. It was a motive to give themselves self prescribed value. It was interpreting scripture according to their situation and feelings instead of taking life and responding to it according to the heart of God. They were putting themselves on the throne of God.

Listen to the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector found in Luke 18:9-14.

Then Jesus told this story to some who had great confidence in their own righteousness and scorned everyone else. “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evil doers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ “I tell you that this man, rather than the other [Pharisee] went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Listen to Matthew 7.

Do not judge so that you will not be judged. “For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye. You HYPOCRITE, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye”

The Pharisees had made themselves out to be their own gods. They were the religious people of their day. We are naive to believe that we can’t and don’t do this today. We are naive to believe that this kind of hypocrisy won’t and can’t make it into the church today. We are naive to think we are impervious to this very sick, debilitating cancer that spreads quickly.

In a book named “Unchristian”, in a book written by the Barna Research Group, they polled people between the ages of 18 and 30 and the number one reason given by almost all for staying clear of anything God was the hypocrisy of their Christian parents. When you look across America, which group is in least attendance in churches? That age group.

The only comparison that matters at the end of the day is between me and Jesus. But, it isn’t a fair comparison and I don’t stand a chance, but it is the right comparison. Jesus was perfect, I am not. He is creator, I am not. He is law-giver and judge, I am not. He is true love, I am a selfish lover.

He is absolute truth, lies are found within me. I fall short on every comparison. I am not God, nor can I play the part anywhere close to a stellar act. It would be absolute hypocrisy for me to try. For you and me both, it would be the kind of acting job that ended up on the bloopers reel at the end of a movie.

A life that experiences Jesus, compares itself to Jesus, and comes to the wrong conclusion about the importance of Jesus is a life that is filled with hypocrisy. We are all to some degree hypocrites. If you don't believe me, we can go through a list of sins and we will fall into one of them. But, where the difference lies, is this: A Christ follower goes to Jesus, loves Jesus, worships and fellowships with Jesus, lets scripture have say in your life, and gives room, even yearns for the Holy Spirit to begin to change them from the inside out...because that is what He does.

The Christ follower gradually begins to love what Jesus loves and hate what Jesus hates. As Romans 12:9-10 puts it, "Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other." A Christ-follower also gradually moves towards obeying the law, but also the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy, and faith as Matthew 23 says. These are some of the marks of a Christ-followers life. These things take root in our life and become natural responses as we seek to love Jesus first. It isn't done on our own initiative, but by the working of the Spirit of God.

Listen to these verses:

2 Corinthians 5:17—Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

In the O.T., Ezekiel 11:19 says "And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,"

Romans 12:1-2 says this inner working happens by the "renewal of our mind" which comes from "putting oneself on the altar as a living sacrifice"

Galatians 5:22-25 says, "But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. Since we are

living by the Spirit, [the key] **let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.**

Philippians 1:6 says God will complete the good work He began in you.

Jesus was working in the hearts of the disciples. The disciples motive was different than the disciples. The disciples were said to have a hard heart as well. But, there is a difference here. The disciples weren't at a place of anger towards God as the Pharisees had. But, their heart was hardening. Jesus is warning them to beware of the teaching of the Pharisees and Herod. Matthew's account adds Sadducees.

The Sadducees were also about power and greed. But, instead of adding to scripture, they chose to take away from scripture. They chose to believe the parts of scripture that worked for them. Don't we do the same to some degree? We choose to hold to the parts of scripture that don't challenge us or make us uncomfortable or require really turning away and possibly loosing big. It's a lack of faith, a lack of trust that God is better and sweeter than the things or love of the world.

Listen to verse 16 from our passage, "At this they began to argue with each other because they hadn't brought any bread." They had been with Jesus and seen all the great things He had done. They were in the presence of the Messiah. They were with the One who could provide their very need. The One who created enough meals to feed a large crowd with left overs. The One who healed, spoke with authority, cast out demons.

Verse 17 says, "Jesus knew what they were saying, so he said, **"Why are you arguing about having no bread? Don't you know or understand even yet? Are your hearts too hard to take it in?"** When we don't strive towards taking, really seeking to understand the things of God, our hearts become hard and those things do not penetrate or they get choked out by the cares of the world. It's like the seed that was cast out and fell upon the hard soil or the seed that fell amongst the weeds.

Jesus asks more questions: **'You have eyes—can't you see? You have ears—can't you hear?' Don't you remember anything at all?** There is great value and importance for memorials in our lives as to what God has done and is doing in and through us.

God told His people to set up visual memorials as reminders. He told Joshua to have 12 stones taken out of the Jordan as they crossed over to the promised land as a reminder of God's fulfillment of a promise.

God told His people to set up rituals to remind them regularly of His faithfulness. He told the Hebrew nation to eat unleavened bread as a reminder of God taking them out of Egypt as saving act and that eternal salvation was coming.

God told them to write down what He was doing in them and for them. We have the stories of the Old Testament as well as the New.

God told them to speak of these things to Him and also to proclaim them to the nations. Psalms 105:1 says, "Give thanks to the Lord and proclaim His greatness. Let the whole world know what He has done." Why is it good to proclaim them? It makes God real. It makes God more than something out there, but personal, involved, and caring.

When I fed the 5,000 with five loaves of bread, how many baskets of leftovers did you pick up afterward?" "Twelve," they said. "And when I fed the 4,000 with seven loaves, how many large baskets of leftovers did you pick up?" "Seven," they said. "Don't you understand yet?" He asked them.

Matthew's account ends with this, "Then at last they understood that he wasn't speaking about the yeast in bread, but about the deceptive teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

They began to get it. Jesus is the Bread of life. He is the source, their nourishment. He is what our sole needs. Diet has a huge impact upon our body and it's ability to work, If you feed yourself just junk food, eventually your body becomes sluggish, overweight, and unhealthy. But, if you feed upon the good stuff, your body stays healthy and is able to fight off things that plague the body.

Jesus is a patient savior. For those that seek Him, they will find Him. He is patient in our 'not getting it.' He will work with us and grow us. What opens us up to this is a humble heart. Psalm 139:23-24 says, "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!"