

"A Matter of Trust" - Mark 8:14-26

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us this:

"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (Matthew 6:31-34)

Do you trust the Lord?

If you are a Christian, if you have confessed Jesus as your Lord and believe God raised Him from the dead, you are trusting Jesus with the biggest problem you have. No other problem in your life comes even close to the problem you have with sin, because every sin must be judged, condemned and punished by Almighty God. But Christian, you are trusting Jesus to take the hit for you. You're trusting that Jesus' righteousness has been imputed to you and that your name is now written in the Book of Life. You are saved from an eternity of suffering in Hell.

Well, if Jesus can take care of that problem, don't you think He could take care of every other problem you might encounter?

We are so prone to worry. We are so prone to stress out over things that, in the scope of eternity, are incredibly trivial. What should we eat? What should we wear? Should I change jobs? Should I buy a new car? What am I going to do with that incredibly inconvenient child?

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. (Matthew 6:33)

We Christians struggle with trust. Okay, I admit it, your pastor struggles with trust. I am so prone to worry about things I have no control over: that husband and wife who are making shipwreck of their marriage, the many friends who are struggling with serious illnesses and injuries, the people in my sphere of influence who seem completely unconcerned that they are speeding down the superhighway to Hell.

No matter what it is, Jesus can handle it and He's going to handle it in the best way possible. It doesn't matter if we understand or not, He's working all things together according to the council of His will. (Ephesians 1:11)

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)

We need to learn to just give it all to Jesus, and trust Him.

The disciples struggled with trust too. As we pick up Mark's account of Jesus' life and ministry, Jesus and the twelve are back at sea. They had returned to the province of Galilee after a sojourn of 6 months or so in Gentile territory. Immediately, Jesus had been confronted with a bunch of Pharisees who demanded to see another miracle. Our Lord refused, because He knew that no number of signs and wonders would be sufficient to bring those turkeys to faith. He left them, getting back into the boat to travel to the other side of the sea. They would eventually end up at Bethsaida, Galilee, on the Northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was close to where the feeding of the 5,000 took place.

But as we pick up the story, they're still out on the lake in the boat.

*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."
(Mark 8:14-15)*

Obviously, the disciples messed up. It was their responsibility to make sure they were adequately provisioned for the trip and they forgot to pack all the food. They left a couple coolers back on the dock. As we continue, it will become obvious that they were concerned about it. They felt a certain amount of guilt, and their guilt caused them to miss an important spiritual lesson.

Let me ask you, have you ever messed up like that? Have you ever had a responsibility that you failed to fulfill? I sure have. Sometimes it is out of neglect – I just forgot. Sometimes, I'm embarrassed to admit, I've shirked responsibility because I just didn't want to do it. I had other things I'd rather do. I hope I'm getting better about being responsible as I get older, but I still mess up. I'm guessing you've been in the same boat.

Well, let me give you a little life lesson. We live in a temporal world, and we are notoriously bad at changing things that have happened in the past. Generally, we don't get redos. We need to face the consequences of our mess-ups, but it does no good to obsess about things we cannot change. We've got to learn from our mistakes, seek forgiveness when appropriate, and then press on.

In this case, Jesus wanted to impart a spiritual lesson: Beware the leaven of the Pharisees. Beware the leaven of the Herodians.

Now, Jesus was speaking figuratively, here. Obviously, still thinking about the hardness of heart demonstrated by the Pharisees who demanded yet another sign, Jesus wanted to warn His disciples. Leaven, of course, is the unseen substance that causes bread to rise. In the Bible, it is often used as a figure of speech to represent sin. In fact, the eating of unleavened bread at Passover symbolized this principle. The idea He was trying to impart was that the Pharisees, while appearing pious on the surface, had an unholy, hidden agenda. And so did the Herodians.

We need this warning too. We are constantly bombarded by forces that seek to distract us from the pure truth of the Gospel. The Pharisees represent the distraction of religious traditionalism.

'THESE PEOPLE DRAW NEAR TO ME WITH THEIR MOUTH, AND HONOR ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR FROM ME. AND IN VAIN THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN.' " (Matthew 15:8-9)

We must be on guard with those folks who add any unbiblical requirement to the gospel of Christ. Let us not let religious tradition supersede scripture!

The Herodians represent the distraction of secularism. Herod, of course, was a political animal. He firmly believed that the ends always justify the means. Christians are guilty of this when we attempt to advance the kingdom of God by using the tactics of the world. Listen, God's not going to honor such tactics. We need to beware!

So, there was a spiritual lesson there, but because the disciples were focused on their own failure, they failed to understand what their Lord was teaching them.

And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have no bread." (Mark 8:16)

They heard the word “leaven”, and assumed that it was to be taken literally rather than figuratively. Since leaven is used to bake bread, they made the guilt-fueled leap that Jesus was referring to their failure to bring adequate provisions. Guilt can do that to us, can’t it? When we fail, it’s really easy to obsess about our failure and we assume that everyone else is looking at us, judging us, shaking their heads at us.

The Bible responds in this way: “Of course you’re going to fail, Scooter!”

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (1 John 1:8)

It’s sad, but it’s true; as long as we’re lugging this body of flesh about, we’re going to fail. We’re going to mess up. We’re going to sin.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

Jesus is willing and able to take care of our mess-ups. Our job is to admit it, confess it, repent of it, and give it to the Lord. He will forgive us and He will cleanse us of our unrighteousness. Of course, we may have to endure the natural consequences of our foolishness, but our Lord will even use that for our benefit.

Just trust Him. Trust Jesus, even when you fail. Trust Jesus, especially when you fail.

Our Lord had a pretty stern rebuke for the disciples.

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?" (Mark 8:17-18)

These guys knew what Jesus was capable of, but instead of coming to Him, admitting their mistake, they murmured among themselves. “Oh man, we really screwed up this time. And Jesus knows it. Oh, He’s going to be ticked.”

Did you notice that Jesus doesn’t rebuke them for forgetting the bread? No, He rebukes them for their lack of trust, for their failure to trust Him with their problem.

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?" (Mark 8:19-21)

Jesus is fully able to solve any problem you might have. He spoke this universe into existence, didn’t He? He rescued you from sin and death, didn’t He? Do you really think there is anything in this life He is incapable of getting you through?

Of course not!

It is a matter of trust. Have you trusted Him for your salvation? Then trust Him with every part of your life. Trust Him with every problem you encounter. Trust Him even with your self-induced crises!

As if He wants to underscore Jesus’ ability to handle any problem, Mark now recounts another incident, another healing. Mark is the only Gospel writer who includes this event and he recounts it in detail. I have to believe that it is quite intentional. It reminds us that Jesus is fully able to deal with any problem we might have.

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. (Mark 8:22-25)

One thing I find sort of interesting is that among the healings of blind men we find in the Gospels, at least those that are described in detail, no two are alike. I hope you know that Jesus really didn't need to go to the trouble of spitting on this guy's eyes and putting His hands on Him. Jesus is the Agent of Creation. He brought the universe into existence simply by speaking the words, "Let there be ...". But Jesus did these things to impart a spiritual message.

Like the deaf-mute we looked at last week, Jesus first led him away from any bystanders, away from the town. He wasn't putting on a show for anyone else. He was demonstrating the fact that He cared deeply for this unfortunate fellow. (Benny Hinn would never preform a so-called miracle where the crowds couldn't see him!)

And notice that the healing took place in two stages. I've puzzled about that fact. It can't possibly be because Jesus blew it the first time.

"What do you see?"

"A bunch of men who look like trees."

"Oops, I must have misfired."

No! Jesus was very intentional about this. But why did He do it this way?

Well, first I have to give you a speculation alert. The Bible simply doesn't tell us why Jesus did it this way, but I have an idea I want to share with you. I believe this miracle serves as a sort of illustration, or type of what happens when a person receives spiritual sight. Remember what Jesus told Nicodemus?

"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3)

That's spiritual sight, and it requires that something be done to us. The Holy Spirit has to touch us and give us eyes to see.

*For by grace you have been saved through faith, **and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,** (Ephesians 2:8)*

But when you first come to saving faith, do you understand everything there is to know about being a Christian and having a relationship with Jesus Christ? Of course not! Your faith has to grow, your vision, your understanding has to grow little by little. We start out with a little bit of spiritual vision, but that vision becomes more and more acute as we grow and mature as Christians. And every stage of our Christian growth must happen as a result of being touched by the Spirit of Christ. You can see the kingdom now, but you can't see with 20/20 vision. It's what Paul meant when he wrote to the Corinthians:

For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. (1 Corinthians 13:12)

If you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ, He is going to keep touching you, He is going to continue improving your spiritual sight. And one day, when we stand in glory,

we will have perfect vision. What looks like fuzzy trees walking around now will be perfectly clear in the new heaven and the new earth.

Jesus is going to do that for you. Take Him at His word. He's never let you down before and He never will. It is a matter of trust; and Jesus is perfectly trustworthy.