

The Gospel of Mark

Mark 8. 11-21

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In this passage we see not only Jesus' enemies missing the point of his mission and character, but his friends also. In order to move forward they need to move beyond amazement at the wonders he works, and lean into understanding. What is the meaning behind the wonders? What is the character behind the signs?

Mark 8. 11-13

- Jesus' words to the Pharisees. He has very little time for them at this point. Their hard hearts means Jesus will refuse to engage with them much longer.
- He says they deal in fraudulent holiness. They set up rules that don't reflect who God really is.
- This generation will not get any more "signs" from God. They've had enough signs, their hearts are hard.
- When we divorce God's wonders or signs from his character, we're missing the point.
- God's spirit is grieved because of their hard hearts.
- Jesus isn't there to jump through their hoops, they either accept him base on the proof he's shown them, or not.
- *If we are at all worried that we are like these religious leaders, we need not be! Just the fact that we are concerned that we may be reveals a soft heart toward God. These men didn't even care.

Mark 8. 14-21

- The disciples are fussing about lunch, but Jesus wants them to see a bigger picture. It's not about lunch!

- Sometimes we can lose perspective. We need to remember in the day-to-day not to let the little elements of Christian living supersede God's kingdom work.
- Beware the leaven (or yeast) of the Herod and the Pharisees.
- Leaven was a metaphor for sin for the Israelites. Jesus has just recently taught about how impurity does not come from outside things, but inside things.
- Holiness is not about following about a bunch of meaningless rules. To Jesus, holiness is about how we treat one another.
- Herod – chooses to save face rather than fall in line with God's kingdom. This says a lot about his value on the earthly, here and now elements of life. This is about political pride.
- The Pharisees – Hard hearted gatekeepers of holiness. Making up rules that don't matter. This is religious pride.
- Holiness matters because of what it says about God's character. Do we show Jesus to be great and good, or drag his name through the mud?

Discussion Questions:

- Why is pride so dangerous? Why does Jesus warn us so sternly about it?
- How can we lose perspective in the middle of "kingdom work"? Can you think of an example?
- What is holiness and how have you thought about it in the past?
- "The new holiness is about how we treat each other." – how does this view of holiness change how we live?