

SERMON | BEWARE THE LEAVEN

SERIES | BOOK OF MARK

STUDY GUIDE | ALEC SEEKINS | SUNDAY, MARCH 3, 2024

SERMON SUMMARY

Mark chapter 8 contains a warning from Jesus and a story of what happened when Peter failed to understand that warning. Jesus warns his disciples to, “Beware the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.” Herod and the Pharisees are both focused on the systems of man and on living a life of power and comfort. They both expect the Christ to be a military-political leader, who will wipe out the gentiles, and put Israel in charge of the world. This incorrect understanding of the Messiah, and this focus on the things of man, are what Jesus is warning against.

Jesus’ warning is to make sure that our minds are not set on the things of man, but on the things of God. Jesus was indicating to His disciples that He was not the kind of Christ they expected. They expected a Christ who would come and overturn the systems of the world, conquering with military and political prowess. Instead, Jesus was a Christ who changed the world by caring for them, not the systems they created. He changed the world by dying, not conquering.

Peter didn’t accept this, so the moment of his greatest victory was turned from a moment of glory to a moment of failure and shame. Peter is rebuked by Jesus because he has fallen into the trap of the leaven. He assumes Jesus will be a military-political leader and is looking forward to the benefits of being the right-hand man of the Christ who will conquer the world. So, when Jesus says that He’ll be rejected and killed, Peter rebukes Him, echoing Satan’s temptation of Jesus.

The lesson for us in Mark chapter 8 is to follow Jesus as He actually is, not as we want Him to be. The forewarning is for us to avoid setting our minds on the things of man, rather than the things of God, to deny ourselves, pick up our cross, and follow Jesus.

SCRIPTURE READING

READ THIS WEEK’S BIBLE PASSAGE: Mark 8:14-21, 27-38 (ESV)

The Leaven of the Pharisees and Herod

¹⁴ Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. ¹⁵ And he cautioned them, saying, “**Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.**” ¹⁶ And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. ¹⁷ And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “**Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened?**” ¹⁸ **Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember?** ¹⁹ **When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?”** They said to him, “Twelve.” ²⁰ **“And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?”** And they said to him, “Seven.” ²¹ And he said to them, “**Do you not yet understand?”** – Mark 8:14-21

Peter Confesses Jesus as the Christ

²⁷ And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, “**Who do people say that I am?**” ²⁸ And they told him, “John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.” ²⁹ And he asked them, “**But who do you say**

that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." ³⁰ And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.

Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

³¹ And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³² And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

³⁴ And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. ³⁶ For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? ³⁷ For what can a man give in return for his soul? ³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." – Mark 8:27-38

BIBLE PASSAGE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you in these passages? Did the Lord highlight anything to you? What do these passages teach you about the character of God? What do these passages teach you about mankind? What do these passages teach you about how mankind should respond to God? What do these passages teach you about how to respond to others?

Read these passages again (use a different translation if helpful). How did these passages help to convict, correct, or encourage you?

GROUP DISCUSSION

DISCUSS THESE QUESTIONS WITH YOUR GROUP

1. What do you think Jesus meant by "Beware the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod"? How does this warning apply to you?
2. Are there any ways in which you've been setting your mind on the things of man and not the things of God?
3. In what ways can you deny yourself, pick up your cross, and follow Jesus?

PRAYER

Take some time for prayer requests and pray over one another before wrapping up.

