**WATCH OUT FOR THE YEAST OF THE PHARISEES**

Mark 8:14-21

Key Verse 15

“Be careful,” Jesus warned them. “Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod.”

**Introduction**



From this week, we will resume Mark’s gospel study. At today’s passage, Jesus helped His disciples to be careful and watch out the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod. Jesus wanted them to grow as new leaders who can influence God’s flocks for God’s sake. Also they were helped to remind of what Jesus had done for them. We are very limited but we are more than conquerors in Jesus Christ. When we remind of Jesus and His work for us, we become invincible servants of God who can serve God’s disciple making ministry and world mission command continually. Amen.

1. Read verses 14-15. What happened before Jesus crossed to the other side of the lake? (11-13) What did Jesus warn his disciples against? (14-15) What does the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod refer to?

1-1, Read verses 14-15.

14 The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. 15 “Be careful,” Jesus warned them. “Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod.”

1-2, What happened before Jesus crossed to the other side of the lake? (11-13)

***11 The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. 12 He sighed deeply and said, “Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to it.” 13 Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side.***

* When Jesus went to the region of Dalmanutha, the Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven.
* They had already seen and heard so many miracles performed by Jesus, but they asked Jesus to perform another spectacular sign from heaven.
* They denied the factual evidence of all they had already seen and heard. They were spiritually blind and deaf.
* Jesus knew that they came to discredit and destroy his ministry. Jesus sighed out of deep sorrow for their unbelief and miracle-seeking mentality.
* Demanding a "special" sign was an extreme example of the arrogance and pride of the Pharisees towards Jesus.
* Jesus refuses, because His miracles are not done with the intention of convincing hardened unbelievers. Instead, Jesus did miracles to show the power of God in the context of mercy.
* Those who believe that if people see enough signs, they will come to faith, presume to know more than Jesus did. He condemned the generation seeking a sign. Then Jesus left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side.

1-3, What did Jesus warn his disciples against? (14-15)

***14 The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. 15 “Be careful,” Jesus warned them. “Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod.”***

* Jesus’ disciples were thinking about the left-over bread they had forgotten to bring. The disciples had just eaten with the 4000 but now, when they were hungry again, they began to worry about their next meal.
* They regretted that they had forgotten to bring the leftovers. Coincidentally, Jesus said that they should watch out the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod.
* They thought that Jesus was talking about the bread. So they could not understand the meaning of Jesus’ warning.

1-4, What does the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod refer to?

* Yeast is so small it is nearly invisible, but once it was being put into dough, it influences the whole batch.
* In Jesus’ time, a little pinch of dough from the old lump was used to make a whole new lump of dough rise and "puff up."
* So, the old lump with yeast in it was considered an illustration of the work of sin. The presence of a little can corrupt a large amount.
* The Pharisees and Herod were unbelieving and miracle-seeking. They could plant doubt and fear in the hearts of young believers. So Jesus warned his disciples to watch out for their bad influence.”
* This passage may remind us of 1 Corinthians 5:6-11. “Don’t you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? 7 Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. 8 Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. 9 I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— 10 not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. 11 But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people.”
* According to Jesus’ warning, “Be careful, Watch” we must be careful and make conscious efforts to be aware of the upcoming danger.
* The yeast of the Pharisees includes hypocrisy, legalism, self righteousness, spiritual pride, love of money, sign-seeking, studying always but never learning, teaching others always but never teaching themselves.
* The yeast of Herod includes abuse of power and authority, lack of commitment of God’s truths, seeking vain glory in this world and seeking recognition among the people, indulging in sexual immorality, lewdness, lust, carousing and debauchery in wild parties.
* Our enemies are struggling hard to influence young disciples badly through the evil influence of so called cultural Christians.
* But we better constantly struggle to accept one word in our hearts deeply and repent of our sins before Jesus’ words of light and live His words.
* Our standard is not based on what others are doing in the realm of so called Chrisitian norm. Rather it is absolutely based on what the Book says!

2 Timothy 3:16-17 reads,

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

1. Read verses 16-18a. What did Jesus’ disciples talk about and what does it show about them? (16) How did Jesus rebuke them? (17, 18a) What can we learn from Jesus’ rebuke?

2-1, Read verses 16-18a.

16 They discussed this with one another and said, “It is because we have no bread.”

17 Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: “Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? 18 Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear?

2-2, What did Jesus’ disciples talk about and what does it show about them? (16)

***16 They discussed this with one another and said, “It is because we have no bread.”***

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2-3, How did Jesus rebuke them? (17, 18a)

***17 Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: “Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? 18 Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear?***

* We should not let our bread problem harden our hearts. To the disciples, the bread problem was very serious. As soon as they finished breakfast, they had to worry about lunch.
* But in reality it is not easy to overcome our bread problem. Especially in America, we must pay all necessary bills to continue our daily lives.
* We are obligated to make our priority on the bread problem always. But Jesus says, “Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and then all these things will be given to you as well.”
* Jesus’ disciples are living in a different dimension where they are supposed to trust in the Creator God, Jesus Christ who created all things and sustains them.
* We are more than conquerors through our Lord Jesus Christ. What is impossible with man is possible with God always!
* We can still build God’s kingdom today and tomorrow. We must declare each and every day, “We can live as men of mission no matter what happens!”

2-4, What can we learn from Jesus’ rebuke?

* Jesus rebuked his disciples for worrying too much about bread, and for their hardened hearts.
* Jesus had already performed so many miracles. Jesus drove the demon out of a man in the synagogue. Jesus healed many with various diseases and drove out many demons.
* Jesus healed a man with leprosy and a paralytic. Jesus calmed a stormy Sea. Jesus healed a crazy man who was possessed by many demons.
* He healed a bleeding woman of twelve years. Jesus raised Jairus’ daughter from the dead. Jesus fed the 5000 with 5 loaves and 2 fish.
* Jesus walked on water. Jesus healed the Greek woman’s daughter and a deaf-mute man. Jesus fed the 4000 with 7 loaves.
* Through ALL these miracles, Jesus showed that he is the Son of God with endless compassion for those in need.
* Did the disciples need any more proof to trust in him? The disciples should have believed that as long as Jesus was with them everything would be fine. In short, they should have had faith in Almighty God.
* But whenever they confronted problems they completely forgot who Jesus was and what Jesus had done. Instead they were filled with worries and anxieties.

1. Read verses 18b-21. What did Jesus want His disciples to remember? (18b) What events did He remind them of? (19-20) What should they understand through these miracles? (21)

3-1, Read verses 18b-21.

And don’t you remember? 19 When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?”

“Twelve,” they replied.

20 “And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?”

They answered, “Seven.”

21 He said to them, “Do you still not understand?”

3-2, What did Jesus want His disciples to remember? (18b)

***And don’t you remember?***

* To Jesus, their real problem was they did not remember what Jesus had already done. They completely forgot such great miracles Jesus had performed.

3-3, What events did He remind them of? (19-20)

***19 When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?”***

***“Twelve,” they replied.***

***20 “And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?”***

***They answered, “Seven.”***

* In his deep frustration Jesus might have dismissed his disciples and called new disciples.
* But our Lord Jesus is God of compassion. Jesus patiently taught his disciples again and again.
* Jesus reminded them specifically of the two events of feeding the 5,000 and feeding the 4,000. Jesus helped his disciples to remember what he had done.
* Through these two events, Jesus wanted them to learn God’s love, compassion and provision in any situation.

3-4, What should they understand through these miracles? (21)

***21 He said to them, “Do you still not understand?”***

* Jesus wants us to approach human problems by remembering what God has done in our lives. We call this a sense of God’s history.
* A sense of God’s history is to remember the past of what God has done throughout for the person, the church and for the nation.
* It is to remember what God has done in us and through us. It is to learn the heart, spirit and principle of Jesus and apply it in a new setting to create a new history.
* At the beginning the disciples had no sense of God’s history, but later they learned from Jesus.
* During the first century the disciples were under fiery persecutions. But they learned Jesus’ heart, spirit and principles in doing God’s work.
* As a result, they challenged all the adversities, preached the gospel boldly and created a new history for world salvation.

**Conclusion**

From today’s passage we learn that anyone who has a sense of God’s history makes progress and grows endlessly. We can grow through mistakes and problems when we have a sense of God’s history. There are so many problems in our life and in the world. It looks as if problems are never ending. Those who have a sense of God’s history can overcome any situation, grow and grow, and live a victorious life. On the other hand, those who have no sense of God’s history become habitual slaves of their present situation. Pray that we may remember what Jesus has done in our life and live by faith with assurance of God’s blessing. May God restore a sense of God’s history in each one of us and grow endless throughout our life times.

**One word: Do you still not understand?**